



# SCOTCH WHISKY REVIEW

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## PERNOD-A-GO-GO!

Loch Fyne Whiskies is proud to feature, for the third boss running, the head of malt distilling for the industry leader, UDV. Previously we have interviewed Alan Rutherford of UD and Ronnie Martin of DCL. That all three have been head of the same group of distilleries but with different owners reflects the condition of commerce in Britain at this time. Our talk with Mr. Hutton highlights his attention to efficiency, but with an overriding consistent quality proviso. Both are essential for commercial survival but quality and variety of character are the particular desire of the readers of Scotch Whisky Review.

At present Federal and European Commissions are considering the disposal of Seagram's alcohol enterprise.

As it stands, a joint bid from the parents of UDV and Campbell Distillers has won with a £5.5 billion deal. The Chivas group, Seagram's principal Scotch interest, will go to Pernod Ricard (the parent of Campbell) for their £2.1bn contribution. The Chivas deal rockets Pernod from 'small fry' with three malt distilleries (Aberlour, Edradour & Glenallachie) to Scotland's distilling number two owning twelve. Furthermore, Scotch will become the biggest sector of the Pernod group.

LFW has yet to be impressed with Pernod (to be at least polite); evidence is that of volume over style, growth over attention, failing particularly in understanding customer expectations for single malts.

The list of distilleries from Seagram includes many, if not lemons, at least sourplooms. Glen Keith and Benriach are recent official bottling casualties, so what chance the automated Allt à Bhainne, Braeval, or Caperdonich? When reviewing their new and daunting portfolio Pernod will look to establish focus. Aberlour, Glenlivet and Glen Grant are secure, but what of the quality and potential of Longmorn and Strathisla and how about making bottlings of all their assets available—such as UDV do.



## BRUICHLADDICH HEROES

Would you buy malt whisky from these crazy Laddies? We hope so! The new board of Bruichladdich Distillery meet for their first dram together in our shop in February after their successful and historic acquisition of the distillery. Pictured are the fund raising heroes: Simon Coughlin, Mark Reynier and Gordon Wright (collectively known as Murray McDavid), Jim McEwan and Andrew Gray.

*The Gospel according to Jim; page 4.*

## SEAGRAM PULL OUT

Subject to the approval of monopolies and merger authorities, it looks as if Allied Domeq have lost their yearlong battle to buy the drinks business of the now entertainment-driven Seagram empire. A joint bid from Diageo and Pernod Ricard of \$8.15 billion (Diageo \$5bn, Pernod 3.15bn) has been accepted. Diageo, who through UDV is already the Scotch whisky leader, will pass up all Scotch interests (except Windsor Premier—big in Korea) for the wine, rum and brandy interests. Pernod, with current Scotch sales of 1.8m cases (principally Clan Campbell), will become an 8.4m case enterprise bringing it to 3rd place—very close to Allied. Industry analyst Alan Gray of ING Barings said "This is more good news. To see another committed big player will help to vitalise the market."

## SMALL ADS—WANTED

Would anyone with a couple of spare pot stills please get in touch with Springbank Distillers?

Chairman Hedley Wright has bought the buildings of Glengyle Distillery, just up the road from Springbank. It was started by his great uncle William Mitchell but closed in 1925 during Campbeltown's gloom years.

This is a significant commitment of expenditure; the buildings are in good order but bare of equipment. Already the search is on for a pair of stills; Rosebank's and various Speysiders are already under consideration. Production is anticipated to start in 2005.

Mr Wright's decision to buy the site is clearly an emotive one. Apart from the family connection, he wishes to see Campbeltown producing more great whiskies, as before.

## THE HELMSMAN



**We are honoured to feature Turnbull Hutton of United Distillers & Vintners. UDV is the spirits section of Diageo's GuinnessUDV, which is the new name for the merged activities of Guinness and Grand Metropolitan, soon to be a 'Total Alcohol Beverage Company'.**

**LFW: What's your job?**

I am Operations Director of Distillation and Spirit Supply, which involves the production of all spirits right up to the point of bottling. I am responsible to the head of GuinnessUDV Global Supply which includes Guinness and all overseas spirit production.

A wide range of spirits is now produced in Scotland, including gins (Gordons, Tanqueray), vodkas (Smirnoff) and others such as Malibu, all of which are produced at Cameronbridge in Fife. I have responsibility for 27 malt and two grain distilleries, three maltings and eight warehouse complexes holding 1.1 billion litres of alcohol. I also have a coppersmithing company and four cooperages as well as research and quality control facilities. We also have a half share in the North British Grain Distillery.

My job is to interpret the predictions of our sales teams (and apply a sanity factor!) and to ensure that the goods are delivered to the packaging plant, on time and in good order. Efficiently.

**LFW: Do you have enough distilleries?**

Yes, I think I have the number just about right. If you look at the number of brands that we are supporting and selling we would be struggling with anything less. We have sustainable production levels, no surplus stock, distilleries in good condition and now are passing the tests which big businesses apply; best utilisation of assets, lowest costs in the industry and high quality products. We are a superb operation just now.

**LFW: What about Rosebank; any chance of re-opening?**

A fine distillery, but no chance. I'd rather

retain the 27 we have. The investment required is too great. It has been considered because of the new canal project but how many more visitor-centre distilleries do we need?

**LFW: And Port Ellen?**

The vandals have done a pretty good job and I would rather remove it but we have a preservation order slapped on us "because it's got pagodas"—yes, corrugated-iron pagodas! It's a rundown eyesore of a place.

As for selling it, we have a maltings sitting there which is important to the island and having a distillery at the back owned by someone else doesn't make any sense. Lagavulin and Caol Ila are very important to us and I don't see any benefits for UDV in doing anything with Port Ellen other than tidying the site.

**LFW: Have you any good news?**

I started this job with 27 malt distilleries and when I retire I intend there will be 27, all running efficiently plus two grain distilleries running flat out. From the 1970s we had 30 years of closing things but that's over now. We became a world class closer-down. Well not any more.

I've seen growth and closure. My first job in the mid-sixties was for the Distiller's Company as a bond clerk in South Queensferry, the best training ground as it was a blending and packaging plant for all the small DCL brands—a lot of variety. They gave me six months in each area: cooperage, bulk blends, bond department, warehouse rents etc. By the late 1960s they were shutting down various small plants around Edinburgh to move to Leven in Fife. I managed to wangle a job managing the bond department where I spent six years before I moved to production headquarters to work with Ronnie Martin who took a shine to me, despite our being very different.

My job was stock scheduling and Secretary to the Production Committee. At that time DCL had 45 malt distilleries, all necessary because sales were growing at a constant 10% per annum. No one was going to cut back production with sales growing like that. Then there was an oil crisis, the Americans took up jogging and British youth rebelled against whisky—suddenly sales were flat!

Now everybody's an expert on overstocking, but with decades of growth and the long delay between making and selling, it was inevitable we would get a whisky loch. We were an aircraft carrier going full pelt—if you have one or two distilleries you can be pretty quick and cut back production, but we had 45 and communities dependent on them. You can appreciate the company hoped this was a temporary hiccup; if not, then they had major social problems and they were well aware of their responsibilities. It was tough, very tough.

It became clear we had over twenty distilleries and three packaging plants too many. We had to close some. We took two

goes at closing them—we were hoping that the first closure might be enough but after two years we had to do it again. Eventually a total of 21 malt and three grain went. We then had a further ten years to manage the surplus stocks out of the inventory. I think we did that responsibly; we didn't dump, we over-aged and sold surpluses instead.

People had certain views on the DCL. They thought it a sleeping giant if somewhat disconnected. With hindsight maybe so but the management were hugely supportive of the operational side of things. They had built the business on acquiring production assets and they were very cognisant of their social responsibilities; the ordinary employee of the DCL thought it a good company to work for, sons followed fathers.

They were gentlemen and in something of a time lock. I don't think their alleged long lunches were a bad thing. There are a lot of good things in the whisky industry and long lunches—when you drank your product—was one of them. Now we eat sandwiches and drink fizzy water, it's terrible. I try to resist that!

**LFW: Then along came Guinness.**

At that time DCL had five stockholding companies, Walkers, Buchanans, Dewars, White Horse and Torphold (the other brands) all effectively competing with each other. After Guinness we set about consolidating them, a plan we had drawn up prior to the takeover. Over four or five months we picked up one company per month, consolidated the stock, gathered the recipes, reclassified the malts and moved on. We then had control over inventory and realised the industry's surplus was all ours! Everyone else was short of stock because they had over cooked their cutbacks or their markets had developed and they didn't have the right stock profile. So we made quite a lot of money dribbling out our surplus and re-established trading links with the industry. After being so remote for twenty years we were to become a part of the industry and take on a leadership role. Soon people were willing to take malt fillings, grain whisky or warehouse with us and as a consequence the Inventory & Supply Department became quite a big profit centre.

I established the Commercial Division which encompassed the inventory as before but also warehousing and coopering—the whole middle part of the process between distilling and packaging. In 1998 when the merger with IDV was proposed and Alan Rutherford was retiring as Distilling Director I was given the job of distilling as well.

I'm no distillery technician, which Ronnie and Alan were, but I believe if you have the right people in the right structure you let them get on with it. If the boxes are right and the individuals are right then you're okay.

We've invested a lot in warehousing and

produced big efficiency gains after a long lack of investment. We've looked at our maltings (we are the third largest in the UK) and the distilleries have been attended to. My team helped me decide our strategy for the business which is based on cost, quality and service. Cost is important because if we are not an efficient producer our owners are going to question the need for an operational side. Quality is vital; if we don't maintain the quality aspect we have nothing to sell. Service—we have to make sure that orders can be processed timeously; if we are supplying the packaging plants who are our immediate customer, we have to be sure the goods are there at the right time. Now, three years since the merger, we believe that we have real cost and service advantages. There is belief that, because you are big, you are dumbing everything down, but I refute that absolutely. I think it works the other way, it's because we are big we have the resources and capital to do the best job. We have the efficiency of scale and I don't think there is anyone more stringent in terms of quality control than we are.

**LFW: Do you want self sufficiency?**

We have self sufficiency in terms of volume but we will always exchange with other producers. Each year we have about sixty distilleries represented in our stock. I don't see any future in anybody becoming insular. It is too small an industry, too important and we all need each other.

**LFW: Don't you need to increase production at some distilleries?**

Our flagship distilleries, the Classics and others such as Cardhu and Royal Lochnagar, are not designed to be volume sellers. I tend to look at these as Morgan cars, they are hand crafted. If demand exceeds production because of the hand crafted nature then the price paid is for a scarce commodity. I would always resist increasing the size of a distillery; I'm not going to bastardise a distillery by putting in extra stills.

These distilleries are extensions of the marketing arm so we maintain them as showpieces where visitors are welcome. They operate on five days production and seven days fermentation and we rest the stills. Some distilleries can run full time without affecting the character of the whisky, but there are others where, if we run them for seven days, we get a nutty characteristic due to the shorter fermentation time. Not only will that manifest itself in the single malt but eventually it will bugger up every blend we've got. The proposition of quality is lost. Malts are a business within the business. J&B, Black and Red Label are high volume, fast moving, consumer goods. Malts are hand crafted and a different packaging proposition. We have a malt marketing team that we work very closely with; we've adopted each other into a seamless relationship. They focus on the

higher margin malts that make better profits. We have the provenance, we own the distilleries and we have the stock in our warehouses. If a malt connoisseur wants variety we have it with things like the Rare Malts and Distillers Editions, legitimate niche products that are making serious money for us.

**LFW: And the other distilleries?**

My job, just now, isn't telling the malt distilling team up north how to make whisky and it is not telling the inventory department how to make up the blends, they know that. My job is giving them all enough space to do their jobs and I have to convince those above that what we are doing is right. We've got flagship distilleries and we've got bloody efficient six still units, some of which are recognisable firsts in any classification and will remain that, but they don't have visitors in. Health and safety is paramount, quality is paramount and the focus is for consistency, but we ain't necessarily going to whitewash the walls twice a year as we do at Lagavulin or its sisters.

**LFW: Will we see character changes?**

No. Clynelish will still be Clynelish, the character remains unchanged.

There is a perception with newcomers to the trade that if you have been in it for 30 years you either must be some kind of fool or lack ambition. These guys arrive from other businesses and they're confronted by some tetchy Scot; they think 'luddite'. However there are enough individuals in the operations side who are way ahead of the game. If we present the facts robustly enough no bean counter or marketeer is going to take the chance of tampering with the nuggets that we have.

I'm not against using technology at malt distilleries; I don't buy the myth that if you put in sensors linked to a computer you take away some of the human craft element. We are giving the operators better information to make a decision. A stillman after a bad night or with his mind elsewhere is going to make some bad judgements so as well as all the training, experience & skill, some information that helps him get better and more consistent quality is a good thing. Technology is essential. Of old, people drank whisky and felt that it did you a power of good. Now some dickhead comes along and starts to analyse the thing to death—if you feed a rat a particular component then it becomes an elephant—so people begin to panic. If we just sit back and let some lunatic with a gas chromatograph bugger up our product's reputation we deserve to suffer, so we have to understand. If in developing that understanding we learn more about the process, great! But we're not going to take anything away.

**LFW: How do you prepare a blend?**

When we get the forecasts in we consider the best use of our stocks, we decide our forward distilling requirements and

draw up a specification that reflects the recipe of each blend. That goes through to the sample room as a submission for the make up of that blend for the year ahead and we check that proposed blend against the previous years.

Then the blend is checked throughout the gathering process; we do a sight check before we tip it, we nose samples when they are in tanks or vats and we have a final sample that comes in here which we compare with our standard blend samples. If a bottle finishes in Kuala Lumpur and someone tells us it is not quite right we can dig out our blend, tanker and cask sample and compare it with the 'complaint'; we can go right back to the individual casks that went into that blend.

We know from the forecasts how much whisky we need. We know how much stock we have at packaging plants and what the bottling line is producing, so spirit supply is a replenishment job. We should never hold up a bottling hall because we have stocks of blended whisky waiting in tank farms and we are working ahead of the game. There are peak months of July to September, when packaging deplete what blended stock we have, but we will try and even out our blending over the year. I try and avoid overtime at warehouses; why pay premium rates if you have sufficient blended storage and you know what orders are coming along?

We make 35-40 different blends each week, varying in batch size. Blackgrange which is only one of our eight warehouse sites empties 10,000 casks a week, filling 120 tankers transporting to one of two tank farms and then to one of three bottling plants. We produce 35 million cases of Scotch every year; 120 products including 70 separate blends.

**LFW: You've seen a lot of change.**

There are a lot of prophets of doom in this industry. If you listen to some of the pronouncements, every time there is a minor change in duty somewhere hundreds of jobs are created and then because someone wants to check on the quality of water thousands of jobs are at risk! I don't think we do ourselves any favours by these mad statements.

**LFW: Your desert island dram?**

Black Label is the finest blend. For malt, probably Cragganmore, that was until a while ago when I attended one of our tastings in New York. Talisker was last and enjoyable as always; then it was suggested to take a glass of ice and add another miniature of Talisker to see how the flavours profile had reversed. I was sceptical, I thought it stupid in fact—but it's amazing! Now I'm a Talisker on the rocks fan, maybe that's because I'm a young hip transitional!

**LFW: Thanks, man!**

*Our interviews with Mr. Hutton's predecessors, Alan Rutherford and Ronnie Martin, can be read at [www.lfw.co.uk/swr](http://www.lfw.co.uk/swr).*

## RESURRECTION!

By James McEwan

I am proud to be part of the new team responsible for the seventh Islay Distillery, Bruichladdich. The distillery was sold by Jim Beam Brands who had acquired it from Invergordon Distillers in 1994 since when the distillery has hardly worked. A consortium of investors including Ileachs, men from Islay, has been assembled by the directors of Murray McDavid and their offer of £6m for the distillery and stocks resulted in a transfer of ownership at the beginning of 2001.

After consideration of their business plan and without much further persuading I have decided to join the new Bruichladdich Distillery Company after 37 years with Morrison Bowmore with whom I maintain good relations. This job gives me the chance to get back to Islay and to be part of the revival of this truly exceptional distillery.

Bruichladdich is special and is known as one of Islay's most characterful malts—it is what the locals drink. It would be a tragedy to let the distillery die—it has a magical quality and heritage which must be preserved. I hope our move will encourage others to see that other closed distilleries like Scapa, Glendronach and Glen Scotia will someday return to their former glory.

As I write we are distilling. Bruichladdich has the potential for producing 1.8 million litres per year. We propose to produce around one third that much in 2001. Initially we have created seven jobs. We are considering an on site bottling hall which will accommodate the Murray McDavid bottlings as well and this will bring the employment up to about fifteen. Islay will benefit by this and the new construction involved. Since coming home I have divined a new spring which has beautiful clear water in abundance, so look out for the return of Islay Water!

Over the last few months I have been going through the maturing stocks that we acquired with the distillery and soon we propose to launch a standard 10, 15 and 20 year-old range plus some single casks aged as much as 36 years on Islay. Those familiar with the 27 year old Stillman's Dram selected by my friend Richard Paterson of JBB will know that Bruichladdich had produced some of the finest single malt whisky possible and some of the casks residing here now are truly exceptional. Fans of Murray McDavid bottlings will appreciate our plans not to colour or chill-filter and to

bottle all our whisky at 46%. This gives the full character of the whisky without going to the expense of cask strength. The distillery character is of soft over-ripe fruit, tons of sweet oak, lemon meringue and barley sugar. It is luscious on the palate with no heat whatsoever. Bruichladdich also has potential for trading with the rest of the industry; we will supply blenders and consumers with our regular spirit or with the option of a heavily peated variant called "Port Charlotte" which will be malted to 40ppm phenols. I have also increased the specification of the regular spirit from 3 to 10ppm, still a relatively light peating but which I expect will give even more complexity to the dram. I want Bruichladdich in the glass to reflect the skill and art of the distiller as an old fashioned whisky. I know it can take this level of peating and bring with it more appeal. I have a bottle in my office of pre 1961 Bruichladdich at which time peating levels were usually about 30-35ppm—fairly heavy and it is superb. So we have something to offer blender and single malt lovers to whom we are also offering the opportunity to purchase casks of new spirit of either type in a variety of size and specification, direct from the distillery. See our website for more information ([www.bruichladdich.com](http://www.bruichladdich.com)).

## *Bruichladdich is what the locals drink*

Another first will be the "Bruichladdich Valinch". This will be special casks selected from our cellars but held duty paid. From now, when you come to visit us you can fill your own special 50cl bottle direct from the cask. You and one of the distilling team will then sign the label—it's cool! My first choice is three 31yo hogsheads of 1st refill American oak, average strength 47%alc., distilled in 1970; for £50.00 per bottle—it's a steal! And the spirit is magical. The Bruichladdich Valinch will be an ongoing project. My next selection is already made; a second refill sherry butt, 10 years old, young but it knocked me to the floor when I tried it! My dream of an academy for single malt



whisky is to be realised. Whisky fans (especially customers of Loch Fyne Whiskies) from all over the world will be welcome to attend seminars on this beautiful island a learn the intricacies of what makes this industry so special. Warehouses will be converted into residential tasting suites where enlightenment and fun will be the order. There is so much to talk about, so much to explain and understand. I'm very much looking forward to this aspect, to continue my 'ambassadorial' work I was doing with Bowmore without leaving the island is a dream I never dared consider in the past.

The courses will help to finance the distillery and its operations. This is a bold step taken by our team and investors and there will be a long lead time developing the market for Bruichladdich before the distillery is a self supporting concern. I'm confident that the funds raised will see the necessary improvements to the distillery and see us distilling long into the future.

It has been an emotional roller coaster ride for the past months, I can tell you. We have hired the old crew and they are so full of enthusiasm, it's touching. I'm amazed at the response of the whole island to Bruichladdich reopening and I am proud to be one of them. Their Celtic spirit burns brightly over Lochindaal but we need your help to make it work. Without the consumer support the circle of the water of life will never be complete. Spread the gospel of Scotland and whisky, both malt and blend, wherever you can. Do it for Scotland!





*“The wonderful thing about whisky, apart of course, from drinking it, is that it contains more bluffing elements than almost any other subject—far more than supply-side economics, more even than wine. Wine breeds envy, discord and snobbery, whisky promotes fellowship, amiability and quiet, unassuming superiority. Supply-side economics produced Donald Trump.”*

*David Milstead  
Bluffer’s Guide to Whisky*

## NEW CUSTOMER PAGE

The busy summer season in the shop gives Loch Fyne Whiskies the chance to welcome new customers to our growing band of happy whisky fans. The following pages are for those who are developing an interest in the marvels of Scotch Whisky.

We feature some explanation of the bottlings from our Stock List—OB, A, C, G&M, MM, MP, OMC, S etc., but we’ll start with by far the most often asked question:

**I can’t remember the name but it came in a dumpy green bottle, can you help?**

Bunnahabhain! (Boo-na-ha-venn).

**What is whisky?**

Literally the alcohol spirit produced by distilling fermented cereals. Whisky is produced in many countries, historically those with climates more suited to growing cereals rather than grape-into-wine production.

*Scotch Whisky* is the world’s most popular spirit and by law must be (amongst other things) made and matured in an

oak barrel for not less than **three years in Scotland**, otherwise it cannot be called *Scotch*. It must also be bottled at 40% alcohol or more in order to retain flavour—see the note about how to drink below.

**How is whisky made?**

Easy—mix some processed grain with water, add yeast and let it ferment in the same way that beer is produced. Boil up your beer and collect the steam which will be mostly alcohol. Voilà, whisky! Throw this away as it is probably poison, your hair will fall out—and apart from that it’s illegal.

*Scotch* whisky must contain barley and *Malt Whisky* must be made exclusively from water, malted barley, yeast and nothing else. Maturation (the biggest contributor to flavour) must be in oak, traditionally former sherry or bourbon casks.

**What is the difference between a single malt and a double malt?**

A **single malt** is the product of one malt whisky distillery and that one distillery only. There is no such thing as a double malt unless you are with your rich father-in-law at the bar (technically—‘a large one’). Single malts are enjoying considerable acclaim at the moment, they are no longer Scotland’s biggest secret. Their intensity and complexity of flavours, previously thought to be a handicap to wider sales, are now being sought throughout the world.

Malt whisky is one of four types of Scotch. The most common is **blended whisky**, a mix of many different single malts and grain whiskies prepared by a blender using his sense of smell and years of experience. 95% of all bottled whisky sold is blended whisky and it is

appreciated the world over for its satisfying subtlety and complexity.

**Grain** whisky is industrially produced from a variety of cereals including malted barley. The spirit is not fully distilled—a degree of impurity is required to add character.

Occasionally you may come across a bottle of single grain whisky (which will taste light and slightly oily) but its use is mainly as a carrier for malts in blends. The fourth category of whisky is a **vatted malt** which is a blend of several malts but no grain. Malt bottles lacking the word ‘single’ may well be vatted; other clues are descriptions such as ‘Pure Malt’ or ‘100% malt’. Some are very good for example Famous Grouse Vintage Malt, our Bottling of the Year for 2001.

A single malt is a happy accident of science, nature and circumstance. Blended and vatted whiskies are one man’s opinion of what he thinks you think a good whisky should taste like. Many members of the industry claim to appreciate blended Scotch the most.

**Why don’t you stock a certain brand I had once?**

Whisky brands tend to fade away faster than get created as the industry changes from hundreds of brand owners to just a few. As big companies expand by the acquisition of small they find that they have two brands on the same shop shelf at the same price so one has to go. Some brands are only available overseas because they are better established there than in the UK.

**How many Scotch Whiskies are there?**

The Scotch Whisky Association draws attention to the Clave Vidiz collection in Brazil of over 4,000 bottles of Scotch. Not all of these will be available today and Campbell Evans of the SWA reckons that there are about 200 in the UK and 2,000 around the world.

Loch Fyne Whiskies has the most comprehensive range of UK available malts with examples from about 120 distilleries. There are currently about 80 open and working; others are either mothballed, closed or demolished. There have been about 750 distilleries licensed since Ferintosh in 1689.

**How am I supposed to drink my malt whisky?**

How you like! Although it does seem a shame to mix a £25 malt with a sweet, fizzy mixer. Addition of water (anything from a drop to 50:50, depends on the bottling) often reveals more character. The main compounds responsible for flavour (congeners) in whisky are very soluble in alcohol but less so in water. At bottling strength 40% or above, these congeners remain locked in the solution. When water is added, the congeners become less soluble and are released as vapours into the atmosphere. So experiment with each new bottling.



## OFFICIAL, OWNERS OR ORIGINAL BOTTLINGS (OB)

When bottled by the owner of the distillery, we call such bottlings official, owners or original bottlings. These ‘official’ presentations are examples of the best in quality, packaging and design and a guarantee of consistency and quality. Here is a range of OB sizes, ages, presentations and lavish point-of-sale material for The Macallan.

## NEW CUSTOMERS II

Bear in mind you have four senses of taste and these are on your tongue, not in the back of your throat. Plus you have some 30 or more senses of smell so use the schnoz. Ice in malts is a no-no; you put ice on bruises and in blended Scotch in hot climates.

Part of the fun of malt whisky is the testing and breaking of these rules! Try ice or mixing too different malts together.

### How do I know which malts I will like?

Most single malts will have the region of origin on the label (either Lowland, Highland, Speyside or Islay) and these give a clue to the character of the contents—but there are many exceptions to the rule. The **Lowlands** are the most gentle; mild, almost wine-like. The **Highlands** can be further divided; those from the south are akin to the lowlands, those from the north are fuller flavoured. **Speyside** is a category of its own within the Highlands. These whiskies are complex and half of Scotland's distilleries are found here. The most fully flavoured whisky is produced on the island of **Islay** (pronounced eye-la). Islay whiskies are unguided missiles in the wrong hands—you will either love them or wonder what the attraction is in smelling hospitals.

### How come they taste so different?

Malted (germinated) barley has to be dried before milling and fermentation and traditionally this has been done over an open fire. In Scotland a variety of fuels is found locally including peat (decomposing heather) and coal. The amount of **peat** that is used to dry the barley has a big influence (on Islay it is the only source of fuel). Other influences are the style of apparatus employed in the production, particularly the **still** and how that still is operated by the stillman. The final major influence is the type of oak **cask** or barrel employed to mature the spirit; it could be one of many categories from a brand new barrel to a well-used second-hand sherry or bourbon cask. A recent development in malt

whiskies is the production of 'finishes' where the whisky has had some of its maturation in a cask that has previously held a wine or port for example. This creates a huge potential for variety.

### What are 'Cask Strength' Whiskies?

Whisky matures in the barrel at about 65%. Prior to bottling it is diluted to 40% so as to incur the least alcohol duty (originally a wartime measure). Cask strength whiskies are at natural, barrel strength which provides more impact and immediate flavour. These whiskies should be diluted in the glass after exploratory sips otherwise anaesthesia will numb the pleasure. Because of the variety of casks employed in the industry, each *single-cask* bottling will have the character of the barrel variety as well as that of the distillery so there is great variation.

### What's this about 'chill-filtering'?

In the mid-1960s, the Scotch Whisky industry introduced a policy of chill-filtering their whiskies. This is done by reducing the temperature to as much as minus 8-10°C and filtering through paper filters to remove oils that emulsify at low temperatures, giving the whisky greater clarity and eliminating clouding at low temperatures, e.g. when ice is added.

The process also removes many of the quality features of nose and taste (congeners) from the whisky and now, after the lead set by Pip Hills and the Scotch Malt Whisky Society, very few independent bottlings and many official bottlings (e.g. the new Ardbeg 10yo) are not chill-filtered.

Similarly there is a movement away from the use of spirit caramel colouring in single malts, employed to standardise colour in the bottle.

### Why are some whiskies so expensive?

The first thing to check is the age of the whisky. If it is say 21 years old (the time spent in the cask—once bottled it does not 'age'), it will be dearer because of the additional storage required. Also whisky evaporates in the barrel by about 2% each year so after 21 years only two thirds remain. The other thing to look

out for is the degree of alcohol strength as duty is applied according to percentage alcohol. Most whiskies are bottled at 40% alcohol by volume (abv), some at 43% or 46%—15% stronger and so dearer than the 40%. We stock many whiskies with strengths of up to 65% so these are the equivalent of over a bottle and a half!

### Does a whisky improve with age after bottling?

No. Unlike wine, spirits are fixed once in the bottle and there is no benefit in keeping it. You should open and enjoy it as soon as possible!

### How long can I keep the whisky in the bottle?

Unopened, a bottle should stay as good as when bottled assuming the seal is in good condition. Keep the bottle away from direct sunlight, heat or variations in condition. Once opened, oxidation will act on the whisky with a noticeable effect in between one and three years. The balance of characters will change, not always for the worse, but eventually a whisky will become 'flat'—another good reason for enjoying your dram without delay. Saving the last inch of a very special malt is usually disappointing when finally poured, so enjoy it now!

### Books are useful sources of information and we recommend in particular:

Most informed—Charles MacLean's *Malt Whisky* £25.00 or *Scotch Whisky Pocket Guide* £8.99.

The Taster's bible—Michael Jackson's *Malt Whisky Companion* £12.99.

To keep you up to date visit our website: [www.LFW.co.uk](http://www.LFW.co.uk).

*"The proper drinking of Scotch Whisky is more than indulgence: it is a toast to civilisation, a tribute to the continuity of culture, a manifesto of man's determination to use the resources of nature to refresh mind and body and to enjoy to the full the senses with which he has been endowed."*

David Daiches

*Scotch Whisky, Its Past and Present*



## HOW MANY DISTILL

J&B have produced Ultima — a blend containing the largest possible number of malt and grain components. Ultima contains 116 malts: Nevis, Ben Wyvis, Benriach, Benrinnes, Benromach, Bladnoch, Blair Athol, Bowmore, Braes of Glenlivet, Brechin, Brora, Bruichladdich, Dhu, Dalmore, Dalwhinnie, Deanston, Dufftown, Edradour, Fettercairn, Glen Albyn, Glenallachie, Glenburgie, Glencadam, Glen Craig, Grant, Glen Keith, Glenkinchie, Glenlivet, Glen Lochy, Glenlossie, Glen Mhor, Glenmorangie, Glen Moray, Glen Rothes, Glen Scotia, Knockdhu, Lagavulin, Laphroaig, Ledaig, Linkwood, Linlithgow (St Magdalene), Littlemill, Lochside, Longmorn, Macallan, Macduff, Brackla, Royal Lochnagar, Scapa, Speyburn, Springbank, Strathisla, Strathmill, Talisker, Tamnavulin, Teaninch, Tamdhu, Tomatin, Girvan, Invergordon, North British, North of Scotland, Port Dundas, Strathclyde. Distilleries that could not be represented are Killy



## INDEPENDENT BOTTLERS

**(Where's *Cadenhead's/Connoisseurs Choice/Gordon & MacPhail's Distillery?*)**

Loch Fyne Whiskies favours a few independent bottlers who buy the malt whisky from a distillery by the cask and bottle outwith the supervision of the distillery owner. With all independent bottlings look for the distillery name which will be in smaller print.

### **ADELPHI (A)**

A relative newcomer to the sector, The Adelphi Distillery Company has no distillery but is very fussy about the quality of the malt they bottle at cask strength, and so their releases are only occasional. Their minimalist labelling allows the whisky to sell itself.

### **MURRAY McDAVID (MM)**

The most recently incorporated on our list, Murray McDavid is gaining great

respect for a small range of excellent and unusual whiskies bottled at 46%. In our view this is the perfect bottling strength, just strong enough to tingle the tongue!

### **CADENHEAD (C)**

Campbeltown in Argyll is home to independent bottler Cadenhead's, who buy and also mature casks of whisky and bottle each cask individually at natural cask strength, occasionally as high as 67% alcohol. At 150 years, Cadenhead's is the oldest bottler in Scotland.

### **DOUGLAS LAING & Co. (DL)**

A long established firm of blenders which has moved recently into single malts with two jazziily presented expressions: *McGibbon's Provenance* is bottled at 43%, *Old Malt Cask* at 50% (or less if the cask is not up to that strength). As blenders they have access to some rare and unusual stocks.

### **GORDON & MACPHAIL (CC, Cask, G&M)**

The leading and most respected independent bottler, G&M bottle a bewildering range of single, vatted and blended whiskies from their Elgin home. G&M are unique amongst independent bottlers in that they mature all their whiskies from new and have done so for over 100 years. G&M still hold stocks of long gone distilleries—history to take advantage of! In 1998 G&M became distillers with the revival of Benromach Distillery. Shown above are examples of their *G&M*, *Cask* and *Connoisseurs Choice* ranges.

### **SIGNATORY (S)**

For ten years Signatory of Edinburgh have bottled malts at both 43% and at cask strength. They have produced some outstanding and very rare whiskies and are consistently good value.



### **Who or what is LFW?**

Loch Fyne Whiskies is a small privately owned shop in Inveraray, a popular visitor stop in the West Highlands of Scotland. The business is owned and managed by Richard & Lyndsay Joynson and

is not part of a chain, has no shareholders to satisfy and does not have any branches (I hear mutterings of 'one centre of excellence'). We employ Andy Burns and Laura Simpson plus our greeter Donald, pictured left who is 'voluntary' rather than employed; his job is distributing drams of the Loch Fyne. Our shop stocks all the whiskies in our Stock List, at the published price, as well as a range of other whisky related items—glassware, hip flasks, whisky flavoured confectionery and preserves and the most comprehensive book shelf possible. There is also a gallery of collectors' and rare bottles on display including a selection of whiskies from around

the world with such unlikely places as Malta, Poland and Austria represented! Visitors to our shop enjoy our service and most get to do some sampling from our extensive tasting stock before they buy. We pride ourselves on our attention to our customer requirements, principally sound knowledge of our products, a fair price for our goods and a top class and speedy mail order service.

We are proud of our business, the respect we have earned, this newsletter and our blend 'The Loch Fyne'. Our customers are worldwide, very loyal and very much appreciated.



## WERIES ARE THERE?

s: Aberfeldy, Aberlour, Allt A Bhaine, Ardbeg, Ardmore, Auchentoshan, Auchroisk, Aultmore, Balblair, Balmenach, Balvenie, Banff, Ben  
 igh, Bunnahabhain, Caol Ila, Caperdonich, Cardhu, Clynelish, Coleburn, Convamore, Cragganmore, Craigellachie, Dailuaine, Dallas  
 g, Glendronach, Glendullan, Glen Elgin, Glenesk, Glenfarclas, Glenfiddich, Glenflagler, Glen Gairloch, Glenglassaugh, Glengoyne, Glen  
 Glen Spey, Glentauchers, Glenturret, Glenury-Royal, Highland Park, Imperial, Inchgower, Inchmurrin, Inverleven, Jura, Knockando,  
 f, Mannochnore, Millburn, Milntonduff, Mortlach, Mosstowie, Oban, Ord, Pittyvaich, Port Ellen, Pultney, Rhosdu, Rosebank, Royal  
 Tomintoul, Tormore, Tullibardine, and 12 grain whiskies: Caledonian, Cambus, Cameronbridge, Carsebridge, Dumbarton, Garnheath,  
 loch, Kininvie, Ladyburn and Speyside (although someone will know probably better).



**The LIVING CASK**

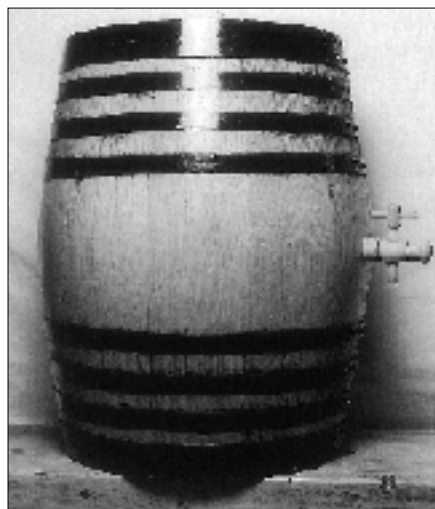
*A unique recreation of the storing and serving of malt whisky*

Not a single malt, but a living vatting of suitable malts, The Living Cask takes its inspiration from *Notes on a Cellar Book* by renowned connoisseur Professor George Saintsbury, published 1920, in which he writes:

*"...The more excellent way—formerly practised by all persons of some sense and some means north of the Tweed—is to establish a cask,...fill it up with good and drinkable whisky,...stand it up on end, tap it half way down or even a little higher, and, when you get to or near the tap, fill it up again with whisky fit to drink, but not too old. You thus establish what is called in the case of sherry a 'solera', in which the constantly changing character of the old constituents doctors the new accessions, and in which these in turn freshen and strengthen the old."*

And that is what we do. When half drawn down a new malt is introduced and the character changes. Each top up is described as a Volume and this is marked on the 'spine' of our book-style label which has Saintsbury's instructions on the back. Each 'Volume' is bottled as a 20cl sample, dated at the time of drawing from the cask with the prevailing strength noted. As this is the natural strength it is in the region of 60% alc.

Living Cask enthusiast Jack Mangus writes, *"The folks at Loch Fyne Whiskies have cleverly produced a continually marketable and intriguing vatted whisky. I can't wait for the next volume! Thanks to Professor George Saintsbury for his inspiration and LFW for The Living Cask!"*



**The LIVING CASK**

**VOLUME IX**

At the time of writing volume IX has just been created by the addition of some 23 year old rich, sherry cask matured Speyside malt to volume VIII which was a beefy, meaty, old fashioned highland/island style.

The result is a rich, nutty, furniture-polish liqueur that would please a lover of Springbank 21yo at its best. A full refund if not satisfied! Strength 59%alc., add plenty of water!

**LIVING CASK™— 20cl 59% £14.90**



**Living Cask**

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

For the Living Cask enthusiast there is a subscription service where we will automatically send you each new volume, once it has settled in. New subscribers willing to buy the next five volumes are offered a **FREE** copy of *The Malt Whisky Cellar Book* (£15) that provides space for you to record your impressions of each volume—and more! Postage £2/£3. Ask for details!

We have other Living Cask items, keyrings & bottle stoppers (£4.90 each)—Be hip! Show them you're a whisky lover!



**THE INVERARITY RANGE**

**adopted as our house malts**

The Inverarity range is bottled by Inverarity Vaults and has been adopted as our house malts because of its quality and great value. There are three malts, two single and one vatted, which complement each other and demonstrate the range of styles in malt Scotch Whiskies.

Our first house malt, The Inverarity 10yo, is an all-day everyday dram which our customers have been enjoying for many years. It remains for the moment a bourbon cask matured Aultmore.

**Inverarity 10yo, price £ 19.90.**

**ANCESTRAL FROM BALMENACH**

For Ancestral—the digestif in the range—Inverarity Vaults' Hamish Martin has selected a 14yo sherry cask matured Balmenach. The whisky is extremely smooth with a great strength and complexity, very slightly sherry-cloying in the mouth. A wonderful after dinner dram. **The price of Ancestral is £ 27.90.**

**INVERARITY ISLAY**

The Inverarity range is completed by Inverarity Islay, a ten year old all-Islay vatted malt made up of four components. Launched at the end of 1999, sales to Islay fans have been fantastic. There is a very emphatic phenolic and medicinal character—peat and iodine—which is classic Islay; a good oiliness, powerful flavours yet also a breeze of fresh air. This is an excellent variation on Islay malts which will provoke much debate among Islay fans as to where the four components come from—and we're not telling!

**Inverarity Islay 10 years old, £23.90.**



**OUR LOCH FYNE MARMALADE**

The Loch Fyne makes a great whisky marmalade and two are produced for us, a standard (£2.50) and our deluxe thick-cut, dark, spicy *Double Scotch* (£2.90)





# The LOCH FYNE™

Blend of

## SCOTCH WHISKIES

### THE MALT DRINKERS BLEND™

We're very proud of our unique blend created for us by Professor Ronnie Martin, O.B.E., former Production Director of industry leader United Distillers. Slightly sweet and slightly smoky, The Loch Fyne appeals to malt whisky fans as an easy-drinking, well flavoured blended whisky; something to drink and enjoy rather than concentrate on. We have given The Loch Fyne to the three top professional tasting writers and while all enjoy it, their tasting notes are completely different—proof that it is something for everyone!

Michael Jackson's note is characteristically analytical;

*Colour: rich, sunny, gold.*

*Aroma: fruity (honeydew melon?)*

*Body: medium, slightly syrupy.*

*Flavours: light heather-honey, grassy, fragrant, smokiness develops, especially in the finish.*

With typical eloquence, Charlie MacLean's tasting note wins by a nose: *"The deep amber colour of this whisky, (darker than many blends) implies age and this is supported by the (undilute) nose, which is rich and vinous, with no trace of grain. All the indications of mature fillings. There is an interesting aroma of apple dumpling (suet crust), and this remains when water is added, enlivened by lighter citric notes (oranges and tangerines), and by some oil-related aromas (walnuts, linseed oil). Phenolic notes are slight, and express themselves more as 'roast meat' than peat smoke. Medicinal phenols are present in a very slight trace of oilskins. Overall the nose is subtle and relatively closed. Not much water is needed for this whisky.*

*The mouth-feel is smooth and well balanced, engaging the whole palate with acidic, salty, sweet and dry flavours, and coming down ultimately on the side of sweetness. The overall impression is fresh and smooth—mellow without being flat. The finish is quick and clean, and surprisingly warming. It is extremely easy to drink.*

*Conclusion: A true premium blend which has clearly used well matured fillings. There is no harshness in it, no cereal notes or feints, no artificial caramel notes. A whisky which is appropriate for any time of the day.*

**Perilously smooth, mellow and easy to drink."**



### IWSC BRONZE 1996

Soon after its launch The Loch Fyne won the bronze award in the blended whisky class at the influential International Wine & Spirit Competition. The Gold Medal went to the world's top selling Scotch, Johnnie Walker Red Label.

More praise comes from Carol Shaw's Collins Gem 'Whisky' which describes The Loch Fyne as 'A malt drinker's blend, full flavoured, with a raisiny, sweet spiced nose, mellow smoothness of taste and a warming finish. A very easy to drink whisky.'

All this praise is supported by the rate of sale in the shop after a wee taster!



LOCH FYNE	70cl	£ 15.30
GIFT PACK + DRAM GLASS		£ 18.30
LOCH FYNE	20cl	£ 5.90
LOCH FYNE	10cl	£ 3.90
LOCH FYNE miniature	5cl	£ 2.60



### THE DISTILLERY

Our label depicts the Glendarroch Distillery sited on the Crinan Canal that links Loch Fyne with the Sound of Jura. Also known as Glenfyne, the distillery was built in 1831. A succession of owners held the distillery until 1919 when it came under the ownership of the Glenfyne Distillery Co.

The cameo by Gail Gordon depicts the distillery at the time of Alfred Barnard's visit in 1885. Barnard's detailed description of the buildings enabled us to recreate the floor plan and Gail was able to complete her task from this combined with etchings in his book.

Barnard was clearly taken by the setting, the distillery and hospitality afforded him. His book devotes six pages to his visit, much taken up with details of the buildings e.g. "a new kiln, one of the finest we have seen in Scotland, it is 51 feet square" but also with the location: "It is built at the foot of the Robber's Glen which runs upwards from the banks of the canal into the heart of the hills in the background; this glen was once the haunt of smugglers, and no more romantic spot could have been chosen for the distillery."

Glendarroch was complete and well laid out. Barley was unloaded from the canal direct to the malt barns then moved through the process clockwise around a courtyard to the kiln, tun room, still house and warehouses. Whisky was then shipped to market via the canal. Eight houses were available for the workers and two for the excisemen. There was also Glengilp House and Glendarroch House for the manager and the owner respectively. At the end of his day's visit Barnard's party "donned our 'war paint' and proceeded to Glendarroch House to enjoy the hospitality of the owner".

The distillery closed in 1937, unusually as there was a distilling boom at that time, although the warehouses continued to be used for storing whisky until the mid seventies. A brief life as a joinery followed until the eighties when a salmon hatchery made use of the buildings and water which was also the drinking water supply for Lochgilphead.

In 1990 the Regional Council acquired the water rights and every last trace of the distillery has since been removed.

*Additional Information*

**Brian Townsend, SCOTCH MISSED.**



Of all the bottles we stock, and there are plenty of them, we elect just one as our bottling of the year. How do we decide? Many factors come under consideration but by far the most important is the response from our customers. Through our very positive active tasting policy in the shop, we can test malt whiskies and decide by virtue of democratic vote which is a goodie worthy of our recommendation—our customers vote with their taste buds!

## THE FAMOUS GROUSE VINTAGE MALT

An inspired vatting of several malts combined together to make up a delicious rich dram.

Master Blender John Ramsay who created the whisky told LFW: "When I heard that this was going to be part of The Famous Grouse family I completely re-thought my original plans for a vatted whisky.

"With the quality of packaging and the Grouse name this had to be a rich and sumptuous vatting drawn from our Groups distillery stocks; Macallan and Highland Park taking the lead with plenty of Glenrothes too. Tamdhu is the carrier on which all these elements hang so gracefully. I'm very pleased with it. Loch Fyne Whiskies is happy to deduct £3.00 off the usual selling price for the duration of the year.

### THE FAMOUS GROUSE

VINTAGE MALT 1987 40% £19.30



## THE RIGHT TOOLS



GLASSWARE

A traditional whisky tumbler is fine, even a pleasure, for a blended whisky but for malt whisky appreciation there is a better glass for the job.

Our *classic nosing glass* has a generous belly to accumulate aromas, a narrow rim to focus those delights for consideration and a lid to keep them for you rather than the fairies. Engraved graduations allow accurate dilution.

For more relaxed malt drinking we recommend our *port glass*. Its wider rim and better balance aid contemplative enjoyment.

We also enjoy using our simple *water carafe*, far less fuss than a lipped jug.

**Classic Nosing Glass £7.90**

**Port Glass £3.50**

**Water Carafe £3.50**

When evaluating a dram it is helpful to have more than one kind in order to prevent familiarity setting in. Sampling in increasing intensity and then going back again will reveal more than concentrating on one alone. Many LFW customers enjoy 'one-to-five' parties where whiskies are selected according to our taste score of 1 to 5 from our stock list for a convivial evening of descriptor bandying.

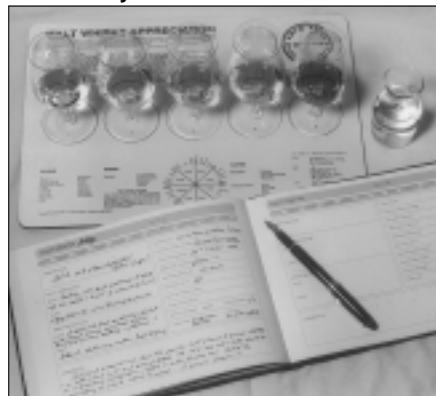
### LFW Tasting Mat & Cellar Book

The LFW melamine tasting mat is a white, wipe clean mat for five glasses and an aide memoire of descriptors to assist discussion and note taking.

Finally, to record those inspired sensory discoveries, *Neil Wilson's Malt Whisky Cellar Book* is a handsome tome to treasure those thoughts and memories of your most special tasting sessions.

**LFW Tasting Mat £4.90**

**Malt Whisky Cellar Book £15.00**



**Special! Five classic nosing glasses, a carafe, tasting mat and cellar book £55.00**

## COLLECTING WHISKIES

### Some points to consider

The satisfaction of collecting whiskies holds considerably more pleasure than all of today's 'manufactured' collectables (e.g. plates, thimbles or die-cast models) as here we have a legitimate and scholarly subject with no less than five hundred years of provenance.

But wait!

If you want to buy whisky as an investment opportunity—walk away now, buy lottery tickets. Every collector has gems worth several times their cost but the whole collection may not have improved at all. You should assemble your collection for your pleasure not your future.

So what do you want to collect? A question worth considering early on otherwise you will create a diverse, confused and near worthless collection that has near bankrupted you in its creation.

The sooner you can focus, the more pleasurable your collection will be. Specialise, create a set of rules for your collection and try to stick to it. Generally the thoughts are: malt or blend? (usually malt); single malts or any? (usually single); only official bottlings or any? (usually OB first choice, then independent if necessary); what maximum price? (are you prepared to be victim to a lavishly presented rarity, fifty times more expensive than the norm?)

One simple specialisation may be fancy shaped bottles. Other collections are of ranges such as the Rare Malts series.

The most popular choice is to seek a representative of every possible distillery, first choice being the official bottling but it will be necessary to default to independent bottlings in some cases. Some may then go on to collect cask strength bottlings only, trading in their first specialisation to finance the next project.

Others home in on one region or even one distillery; Glenmorangie, Macallan & Springbank are favoured for a steady trickle of interesting releases. By contrast, in this case, Glengoyne have blown it because of too many, too expensive and too frequent variants.

Limited or numbered editions are not always desirable; the ratio of number released to price is an important factor and you should be advised the total number produced in the world (don't be fooled by the UK number.) A release of up to 600 uniquely presented bottles is scarce; 2,000 bottles and a sensible price is worthwhile. Bowmore's release of 300 bottles at £4,000 is wrong (there aren't that many fools in the world,) however Macallan's '1874' release of over 20,000 at £64 was a winner because many were opened and soon after the supply finished prices had leapt three-fold.

Whatever your choice, you are guaranteed much pleasure in something that will add decoration and interest to your home, and you shouldn't lose money to boot!

## SCOTCH WHISKY RIOTS

John Haydock

Whilst the glare of the world's media fell on central London and Oxford Street on May 1st I chose instead to focus my gaze on the annual Mayday Dufftown Whisky Riots—so often overlooked by the industry press, but to the people of Speyside a yearly reminder of how closely single malt whisky and global anarchism are aligned. Imagine a cross between a seventeenth century Pope-burning, an eighteenth century apprentices' riot, the bacchanalian bravado of a nineteenth century holiday fair-fortnight at the seaside, and the unfettered aggression of an east Fife football riot and you begin to have something of a picture of the fearsome spectacle that descends on malt-whisky's most famous town. When I walked down the high street towards the landmark clocktower at 11.50 I felt like Gary Cooper approaching High Noon. Deserted streets, the occasional twitch of a net curtain, a glimpse of an anxious face peering through a window, the bark of a stray dog. Shop windows boarded-up, corrugated-iron barriers straining in the wind in front of innocent domestic doorways. In the side streets sinister armoured vehicles carrying cargoes of heavily protected riot police, with dogs and horses straining like greyhounds in the slips, and overhead, like the opening scene of *Apocalypse now*, the deep throated throb of Chinook battle-cruisers, hungry wasps around a half-empty jar of straw-berry jam.

Of course it all started many years ago with the strike against the heart of the then DCL in Elgin, when the newly completed office built for fortress-malt distilling was destroyed by a suicide bomber who claimed allegiance to the shadowy IPLSM (International Patriots for the Liberation of Single Malts). On the evening before the building's official opening a still-unidentified terrorist secreted himself in the Managing Director's lavatory, igniting an incendiary mixture of liquid explosive and cask-strength Glenfarclas with a Bunsen burner—committing himself, and much of the building, to eternity in the cause of liberating some of the Distilling behemoth's marvellous malts from the hands of the mercenary blenders. No surprise then that when I drove through Elgin on my way to Dufftown the reconstructed offices in Trinity Road were sandbagged and bunkered down—nor

that the beleaguered faceless men of malt had apparently wired Harrods—'Riot imminent, send guns' on hearing of a possible diversionary attack from the KKK (Karamel Killers Kollektive).

In Dufftown it was all set to kick off at midday at the clock tower, and as I got closer I could see all the usual old faces. The softies, set up by the puppetmasters of disorder to put the forces of law and order at a misguided ease before the hard-headed footsoldiers of terror set to work. Every bizarre fringe group you could imagine was to be found was there. The baggy trousered Skateboarders for Scotch, campaigning for the introduction of a Red Bull finished Glenmorangie; the stern and silent Frankfurt Front for More Limited Editions of Macallan 1956 24 year old; the New Age Maltsters Alliance, digging up the streets and planting hand nurtured low-yield barley genetically mirrored on 200 year old beare-barley, the middle aged, prim and proper



Indigent Ladies Association for the Listing of Historically Insignificant and Decayed Distillery Buildings; and the pony-pulling, pony-tailed Hippy Collective for Making Malt Whisky More Like it Used to be in the Old-Days Man. In the almost carnival-like atmosphere these innocent stooges created were the hazily defined KMFF (Keep Malt Filtration Free), the self-styled and bombastic CCMMB (Craze Chemists Make Malt Better), the rather tasteless OLMMBB (Own Label Malt Makes a Better Buy), and the prickly Avenging Sons and Daughters of Rosebank. All these groups are united in their denial of any relationship to the militant Lunatic Fringe for Whisky (LFW).

But these naïve innocents unwittingly harboured vipers in their breasts, and before I knew it I was walking in the company of some of the most dangerous men in the shadowy world of malt mayhem-makers. The most frightening be-

yond doubt were the World Alliance of National Know-it-alls, a shadowy Internet-linked group who trade graphic and almost pornographic images over the web of arcane distilling equipment. To be a member the test is to possess at least four hundred different images of wort-coolers, and to show their metal they intimidate hapless distillers with questions of hopelessly irrelevant and devilishly contrived detail. 'We want your fermentation rates and we won't wait', they chanted through their facemasks, fists raised to the sky. The atmosphere amongst the fun-loving crowd quickly changed as they pushed and pulled their way through, pausing only to share the contents of their photo-albums with like-minded souls. Suddenly the sky turned black as the sun was eclipsed by a shower of worthless pointed, yet somehow pointless books, hurled towards the advancing lines of riot-police by the WWWGF (Whisky Writers Want Greater Fees), some of whom I swore I recognised beneath

their heavily bearded faces. Try as I might I couldn't escape the crowd, whose anger was only further incensed as we were cordoned into a tight circle around the clock tower and taunted by the baton-wielding stormtroopers, who periodically broke into the crushed crowd to pull out a suspect, many of whom were heavily beaten before being forced to drink large quantities of Bells and Whyte & Mackay as an act of indignant vengeance.

How I survived I will never know. Afternoon passed into evening as the frustrated and increasingly dispirited crowd remained pinioned within sight of Dufftown's famous seven hills, and seven or so stills. Even I felt sympathy with some of the misguided souls who, fortified only by occasional drams of Mortlach (succulent sherry sweet with citrus, hints of bananas and over-ripe kiwi-fruit, with a suggestion of peat perhaps ?) and Balvenie (rich fruit-cake flavours with sweet-shop jars, corned beef sandwiches and, perhaps, peat ?), gradually realised that for yet another year their attack on the bastions of Malt Distilling was doomed to failure. And yet, as I later reflected over a dram of surprisingly peaty Craigellachie, they would be back next year, as sure as summer follows spring, straining at the leash of social order, barking savagely, and lunging ferociously to bite hard at the hand that feeds them. And, of course, so would I.



## STAGE ONE—DONE!

It has taken three years to build lfw.co.uk although it does seem considerably longer, but now we are satisfied that Stage One is complete!

Stage Two starts soon(-ish)!

Lfw.co.uk is designed to be simple and quick but here is a guide to give surfers some tips and short cuts. It is not our intention to abandon the non-connected (see below) but using lfw.co.uk will give you, dear customer, truly up-to-date information.

Headings here reflect the left hand navigation frame. Tip: if you lose the frame click on the logo in the top *right* hand corner.

## News

**News** is the busiest part of the site, although only one page long (broken up for speed) it reflects changes in stock as they happen, updated within hours of changes. We are aware that many customers check this on a daily basis; it takes seconds to learn of changes, if any. The **News** section is used by many in the industry and also by many other retailers. From here you can check prevailing Deals as well.

The rest of lfw.co.uk can be considered to be in two parts: **Browse & Buy** and the rest.

## Browse & Buy

This is the major part of lfw.co.uk, where the biggest investment in time has taken place. **Browse & Buy** is an illustrated catalogue of all our whiskies, books and hardware. It is here that you should check the current availability of an item. The lobby to **Browse & Buy** has information regarding delivery prices and terms of sale for all destinations so be sure to check these.

To continue to the catalogue check the secure option. Ordering on lfw.co.uk is secure and certificated by a respected authority; click the locked padlock on your browser for assurance. Tip: If you have trouble after entry because your computer has security fire-walls in place (*should you be doing this from work?*) then the unsecure option will give hassle-free access, but you

...who after having their picture taken with Donald R. Greeter have chipped in a few coins for local children's groups. Donald stands at the entry to lfw.co.uk (left) and at the door to the shop. Last year he collected over £1,000 in his tumbler! We blew it all by taking 50 under-fives to see the BBC's Tweenies—Live! in Glasgow. Fabroonnie!

## THANKS TO ALL OUR CUSTOMERS...

should be cautious about revealing your card details if your padlock is 'open'. You can still order without revealing payment instructions. At check-out there is the option to print out a completed order form and fax or post it to us with card details added manually. Some of our repeat customers request that we use card details we have on file Tip: enter "Use card details on file" in **Special Requests** (below your address details) as you start to check out, then choose 'Send Separately' for card details. You can of course 'phone or fax us as normal.

**Browse & Buy** lists prevailing prices and availability with our unique comments that many find enjoyable to browse without buying. Go take a look—no obligation to buy or even show yourself!



Tip: Options along the top include **Review Order**; here you can adjust quantity or cancel items before checking out.

Check-out tip: Once you have entered your card details, clicking Next> concludes the transaction; there will be no going back. You will then get an e-mail automatically (unless you have given the wrong e-address!).

Our practice is to retrieve orders at 10am and 3pm and to despatch that day, (but no guarantees); changes should be 'phoned faxed or e-mailed immediately.

## Search

If you know what you want then the **Search** function is highly recommended. A product or descriptor can be entered with an option of price range. Keywords employed throughout **Browse & Buy** include, for example:

- 'Peaty' or 'Sherry' / 'Sherried' etc.
- 'Ace'—regarding individual bottlings (Δ).
- 'High Regard'—regarding distilleries.
- 'Limited' or 'Collectable'.
- 'Closed' or 'Motheballed'.

Dates, such as '1966' or '34yo'.

Specifics, such as '46%' or 'Single Cask'.

All our distillery profiles include our unique taste scores as explained on the back of our Stock List. Tip: These can be searched by entering colon+the score you seek —e.g. to view a list of our taste score 2 suggestions then enter :2 (no space).

## Our Shop

**The Loch Fyne  
The Living Cask**

**House Malts from Inverarity**

These four sections give information about us and our specialist items.

## Scotch Whisky Review

As well as items from the current and back issues of SWR this section includes some entertaining photo diaries of whisky happenings and topical informative items.

## Contact Us

Please check in and join our mailing list. List members are not pestered; checking our **News** section each week will keep you adequately informed. We only circulate the list when there is a new item in short supply that we think subscribers deserve to know about first.

I value comments and notification of problems so please keep me informed; my e-mail address is shop@lfw.co.uk

## Site Overview

If you get lost or bamboozled **Site Overview** will help you out. Scroll down for quick jumps to various pages within lfw.co.uk—listings, order forms, terms of sale, etc.

## LUDDITE? DISCONNECTED?

If you don't wish to get on-line but want to be informed, send us a stamped addressed envelope and we will return a printout of lfw.co.uk's **News** page.

**SCOTCH WHISKY REVIEW** is free to all *bona fide* mail order customers. **If you have not bought by mail order from the last (Autumn) selection and do not buy from the accompanying (Spring) list then we will not be troubling you again.** We are no longer sending out Stock Lists and SWRs to prospective customers more than once. If you or a friend would like a current stock list please ask and you will be sent one with a back-issue SWR. Your name will not be placed on our mailing list for further mailings until you have bought by mail order from us. Your name will not be passed to any other organisation.

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