

The Good Life Journal

June 2007 * Vol 4 *

Mc Beth On Whisky Club Newsletter

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BEST OF MOMENTS

Without a doubt May will be remembered for great SA rugby results, an all SA super 14 final. Then the very best of moments drubbing the old enemy not once but twice with 50 points ,nana nana nana nana hey hey hey do it right. England current world champions and without a doubt the most feeble of excuses for a Rugby team , boy I enjoyed writing this. I will continue to dram about it for pretty much the rest of the year too. Please join me as we salute the players in the Various SA rugby teams. Well done boys!

FEATURED PERSONALITY

It seems appropriate that looking at the success of William Grant and sons over the last decade that we mention the bloke that started it all. William Grant was born in Dufftown on 19 December 1839. While working as a bookkeeper then manager at Mortlach distillery he dreamt of his own distillery. He and his family of 9 children built the Glenfiddich distillery and 1887 the first Spirits flowed of what would become the biggest selling single malt in the world. Four generations later the Grant-Gordon family still own the company.

STRANGE BUT TRUE

Plastics take 500 years to breakdown(yet plastic toys break in .500 seconds)

Crocodiles are the only animal and reptile to shed tears while eating (Very sad.)

The whisky exports from the UK in 2006 generated over R 1000 per second.

Grain whiskies are 40% cheaper to produce than malt Whisky

Awards And More

The International wine and spirits awards have released their results for both Scotland and Ireland. Notably Cooley's were the strongest in the Irish category winning best in class in 6 of the 12 categories. Leading the race by far in Scotland is independent William Grants with 13 Gold 11 best in class and a big haul of silver too, only drinks giant Diageo can compete with 12 golds and 21 silver. The guys behind the Famous Grouse managed a respectable 5 gold and 7 Silver and a very good showing from Inverhouse with 5 Golds and 5 Silvers their brands are brought to SA by Tops at Spar. Whyte and Mackay managed 3 Golds and a whopping 17 silvers. Looking closer at distillery medal counts The Balvenie managed 5 gold medals Glenfiddich, Highland Park Glenmorangie and Islay Distillery Laphroaig all walked away with 4 Gold medals no mean feat. What does that mean for you and me the consumer, well, nothing much really! Other than being expected to pay a bit more for those donning their latest stickers in shiny gold. Luckily its not likely that the SA market pays much attention to this. Whisky mag readers will have seen the latest results of their annual awards in which Talisker 18 was voted best single malt in the world. So there is much to celebrate although I still do not believe there is such a thing as the best, just your personal favorite, here is hoping you have a wee dram of your best available Till then
'Slainte Mhathe' Hector Andrew Mc Beth



FEATURED DISTILLERY

Name: Laphroaig (beautiful hollow)
Region: Islay Scotland
Established: 1815
Owners: Beam Global.
No of Stills: 3 Wash 4 Spirit
Grain: Oat
Water Source: Kilbride reservoir
Expressions: 10 15 and 30 and new ¼ Cask
Wood: First fill Ex Bourbon mostly Makers
Mark barrels as opposed to hogsheads
Peat :(40ppm Port Ellen)(43ppm Laphroaig)

Laphroaig is a Gaelic hybrid which means "beautiful hollow". The distillery was founded by the two brothers Donald and Alex Johnston. As so many other distillers at the time the two farmers only started their production to satisfy their own domestic needs. However the whisky from Laphroaig quickly became well-known due to the quality of the water they used and to the natural talent of the Johnston brothers.

Naturally they soon began to sell some of their whisky for a nice profit. This illegal business was made easier since the area surrounding Laphroaig was ideal for smuggling.

Because of the illegal beginning, the early history of the distillery is not completely known. However Laphroaig officially claim that they were founded in 1815. We also know that Laphroaig gained their license in 1826. Donald Johnston bought his brother's share of the company in 1836 and ran Laphroaig himself until his death in 1847. By then his son Dugald was only eleven years old and could not take over the business immediately. The business was therefore leased to a trustee of Johnston's estate, a man named Alexander Graham who also ran Lagavulin. Dugald took over in 1857 and ran the company until 1877 when he died. Alexander Johnston became the new owner and continued to develop Laphroaig which by then already was a highly appreciated whisky.

At the turn of the century Laphroaig wished to cancel Lagavulin's agency which still remained from the time when Alexander Graham was alive. This created some tension between the two companies and they met in court several times until 1907 when the lease ran out and Laphroaig refused to renew the contract.



Mackie and Co, the then owners of Lagavulin, responded by cutting off Laphroaig's water supply. This resulted in another round at court which Laphroaig won. In 1908 Mackie and Co bought over the distillery manager at Laphroaig. Their goal was to create exact copies of the stills at Laphroaig and create an identical whisky. The venture failed and Mackie and Co instead made several offers to buy Laphroaig but their offers were turned down every time. Ian Hunter took over Laphroaig in 1921 and made several modernizations, for example the production capacity was doubled in 1923. Ian Hunter also introduced the concept of storing the whisky in bourbon casks. During WW2 production was completely shut down since Laphroaig was used as a garrison. Ian Hunter died heirless in 1954, but in his will he left the entire distillery to Bessie Williamson. Bessie was the niece of his accountant and had worked at Laphroaig ever since one summer in the thirties when she had been appointed Ian's temporary secretary. She was a pragmatic owner and soon realised that Laphroaig needed a strong financial partner to meet the increasing competition. She therefore sold the company to Long John in the sixties. In 1990 Laphroaig was bought by Allied Distillers. Allied was bought by Pernod in 2004 and sold off Laphroaig to Beam Global the current owners. In 1994 Prince Charles visited the distillery and presented them with the Royal Warrant. A Royal Warrant is an official approval that can only be bestowed by a few members of the royal family. By giving this honour to the Laphroaig distillery Prince Charles declared that he is of the opinion that Laphroaig is the best whisky in the world.

The Laphroaig fan club is named 'Friends of Laphroaig'. You may become a member if you buy a bottle of Laphroaig and register the bottle's barcode at their website. As a member you will also be the owner of one square foot of Islay just outside the distillery.

Whisky cheers to eastern promise

THE new Indian owner of Invergordon Distillery plans to invest around £10 million in the plant and double its output, creating new jobs, it has been revealed. Vijay Mallya, the drinks billionaire who last week snapped up Whyte & Mackay for £595 million, proposes turning Invergordon Distillery into the biggest whisky plant in Scotland to satisfy booming demand on the sub-continent. Mr Mallya's investment in the distillery through his United Spirits business will see its capacity increase from 40 million litres of alcohol a year to 80 million litres. The whisky produced at Invergordon will be shipped in bulk to India where it will be bottled. The company is targeting India as next April will see the removal of tariff barriers on the sale of whisky which will put the drink within the reach of ordinary consumers. Currently there is a huge demand for whisky among India's middle classes. A spokesman for the company said the plans were likely to mean new jobs at the distillery but could not say how many.

With the multi-million pound investment, Invergordon will rival Diageo's huge Cameronbridge plant in Fife and the Diageo/Edrington North British distillery in Edinburgh. The move was this week welcomed by Maxine Smith, one of the new Highland councilors on the Cromarty Firth ward.

Ms Smith said: "I'm absolutely delighted, for two reasons. Firstly because it means Scotch whisky will be promoted all over the world which is good for the Highlands and for Scotland, and secondly it will be tremendous for Invergordon because we really need that regeneration." "This will underpin the security of the existing jobs at Invergordon Distillery and also create new jobs, and because this is Scotch whisky industry and a high quality product, I'm sure these jobs will be long term." She added: "There has been a period of uncertainty at the distillery while these negotiations have been ongoing and I know the employees have not been given a Christmas bonus for the last two years because nobody knew what was happening. This news will end that uncertainty." Vijay Mallya now plans to spend a week every month at Keillour Castle in Perthshire, one of 26 homes which he owns worldwide, from where he will oversee Whyte & Mackay.

Meanwhile Whyte & Mackay employees, including those at Invergordon Distillery and the Dalmore plant in Alness, are to share a £26 million bonus after their outgoing chief executive offered to pay it out of his own pocket. South African tycoon Vivian Imerman, who sold Whyte & Mackay to Vijay Mallya, has offered to pay all 500 employees the equivalent of three month's salary as a thank you. Mr Imerman bought Whyte & Mackay in 2005 and turned around the business. He said he wanted to reward staff for the hard work they had put in to help transform Whyte & Mackay's fortunes.

Article Courtesy of Highland News

Scotch Whisked To England

The Scottish master distiller responsible for various Laphroaig and Chivas malts, Iain Henderson, is to manage the launch of England's first whisky distillery, the St George's Distillery in Roudham, Norfolk. The distillery has already produced 250 casks of spirit which will be available for purchase in 2009 having been aged in oak for the required three years. England's first single malt is expected to be light-bodied with sweet toffee flavours.

Made using the same techniques as in Scotland, the English whisky cannot, however, be referred to as Scotch, a label this week granted more protection from the European Parliament. The move has been introduced in a bid to tackle misleading practices overseas and also addresses unfair practices such as the addition of flavours or sweeteners to whisky.

Article Courtesy of Berry Bros & Rudd

McBeth on Whisky goes on the road.

Hector announced he will be doing his first official club meeting in Johannesburg on July 3 & 4. The venues have not been confirmed yet. Those traveling to Knysna for the oyster festival will be able to catch him on 9 & 10 July at the Wade Bales Wine festival.

Pezula golf course is hosting the the festival for the second year running. Last years festival proved very popular so much so that a smaller whisky festival may be on the cards in the not to distant future.

For more info contact Hector on 0833771113

Diary of Events June & July 2007

June 13 Club Tasting: FBG Green market Square Contact Anthony: @ 021 426 1651
June 27 Club Tasting: Royal Cape Yacht Club: Contact Brigitte @ 021 421 1354
June 28 Marimba Tasting: Marimba Restaurant and Cigar Bar: contact Ntombi @ 021 418 3366
July 3 Club Tasting : Johannesburg TBC : Contact Hector on 083 377 1113
July 4 Club Tasting : Johannesburg TBC : Contact Hector on 083 377 1113
July 9 & 10 Wade Bales Wine Festival: Pezula golf estate Knysna: Contact Gavin @ 084 582 7140
July 31 Club Tasting: FBG Green market Square Contact Anthony: @ 021 426 1651

Featured Whisky

This month I feature some smaller distilleries that are maybe less known. The first being **Speyburn**. Established in 1897 just in time to serve a wee dram at Queens Victoria's Silver jubilee. Speyburn is situated on the foot of densely wooded hills in the Spey Valley it is reputed to be the most photographed distillery and it really is picturesque. The spirit itself is soft and fruity with a rich pleasing oak character and a hint of smoke in the long satisfying finish one I think will really surprise.

Speyside distillery is one of the newest distilleries in Scotland. Construction began in 1962 and finished in 1989 the first spirits flowed in 1991. Now that's what I call patients (no patients is correct) my builder recently went two weeks over his deadline and nearly witnessed my wrath first hand. He was saved by a wee dram the wife managed to pour on time to calm the nerves. Having said that it was hand built by Alex Fairlie a dry stone dyker. The whisky is lightly peated and aged in ex bourbon casks and a few sherry butts, which give a slightly rich spicy character.

An cnoc originally Knockdhu founded in 1894. The area is perfect for producing whisky with plenty pure springs and fertile farmlands. An abundance of surrounding crofters and the railway line were a bonus too. The spirit has a lemon honey freshness and a sweet fruit and nut palate and well worth drinking. **Edradour** the smallest distillery in Scotland you will remember I featured last month as distillery of the month is finally back in SA. With its floral fragrant honey nose and sweet creamy malt and hints of smoke i feel it will please many of you.

Tullibardine only built in 1949 is more famous for its waters or should I say infamous, legend has it that King Magnus lost his wife Helen while trying to cross the River Allan. Those of you that have been to the Gleneagles Hotel and golf course will be familiar with the Tullibardine moor. Built on the site of a brewery. The whisky is creamy and light with hints of sherry and vanilla.

Isle of Jura superstition. With only one road on the island that leads to the distillery a population of roughly only 250 people (red deer outnumber them at 30 to 1). You know this has to be whisky making country. Rather than heavily peat like their neighbors on Islay they create a spirit that speaks of the islands rugged landscape yet rich heather and nutty caramel are as dominant.

Talisker the only distillery on Skye built in 1830 against the protestations of the minister Macleod. The greatest curse as he described it was recently voted by whisky magazine as the greatest single malt in the world for their 18 year old rendition. The 10 offer a rich body with peppered spices and dried fruit and a pungy peaty fullness that leaves one breathless.

Abelour founded in 1897 a firm favorite in SA especially with the Cigar fraternity. The spirit is soft and layered with spice fruit and malty toffee described as the definitive Abelour the 10 year old delivers great character. A medium bodied whisky with a long lasting finish.

Macallan well what can we say If you have not tasted this beauty yet, then you still have to discover the perfect balance that sherry wood can give to whisky. This month I also feature 3 Vatted or Blended malts as they are now known. **Jon Mark and Robbo's smoky peaty one and Peat Monster are well... as their names suggest, rich smoky peaty whisky**. Lastly I feature the **Famous Grouse Malt** 12 years Old a good Speyside malt with loads of sherry spice and all things nice. Till next month have keep dramming.

**Comments and inquiries to admin@whiskyshop.co.za
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