

THE QUIET TASTING - MARCH 21, 1998

Hosted by Tim Bachelder

A tasting of single malt whiskys from a selection of distilleries that are either mothballed and currently not in production, or are lost forever.

Tasting Order

Littlemill, Lowland
Dallas Dhu, Speyside
Scapa, Orkney Islands
Glen Scotia, Campbeltown
Bruichladdich, Islay
Port Ellen, Islay
Brora, Northern Highland

This tasting sequence is my best shot at ordering the whiskys to be tasted today from light and subtle to dark and intense. The final whisky order for this tasting will be discussed prior to the start of tasting and could be altered prior to implementation, as appropriate.

Littlemill, 8yo Distillery Bottling (likely from 1989 operation), Lowland

Lost - last operated from 1989 - 1992, closed in 1994, and dismantled in 1996.

Littlemill was established in 1772 on the site of a 14th-century brewery and claims to be the oldest distillery in Scotland. It has a long history of production interrupted by periodic closures over the years. This distillery also produced malts named Dumbuck and Dunglass (a vatted malt) at one time or another. It was last modernized in 1988, but only operated from 1989 through 1992. In 1994 Littlemill went bankrupt and was purchased by Glen Catrine Bonded Warehouses, Ltd. They did not restart the distillery, however, and demolished the stillhouse in 1996 to make way for a housing development. The warehouses are still intact but Littlemill is unfortunately lost.

Dallas Dhu, 17yo Signatory Bottling (1978), Speyside

Lost - converted to museum in 1983

Dallas Dhu was established in 1899 at the height of the whisky boom. It was originally to be named the Dallasmore Distillery, but the name was changed to Dallas Dhu by the time it began production. It was acquired by DCL in 1929 and operated until 1939 when the stillhouse burned. The stillhouse reopened in 1947 and stayed in continuous production until 1983 when it was mothballed. The license was canceled in 1992, the facilities were preserved in place, and the property was converted to a distillery museum that is managed by Historic Scotland. It's a very good representation of a typical small Highland distillery from about the turn of the century and is fun and educational to visit because they let you get a lot closer to the equipment than is typically possible at operating distilleries. (No "wee drams" to sample here though, if I remember correctly... 8^)

A posting to the Malts-L listserv in early March 1998 noted that the last cask was reportedly bottled from the distillery warehouses that week and that all existing stocks were therefore bottled or in the hands of independent bottlers. Get this one while you can! (...although I haven't tasted it yet and reviews of other bottlings I've seen have been mixed.)

Scapa, 12yo Distillery Bottling, Orkney Islands

Mothballed in 1994 - will likely restart

This is one of only two remaining distilleries in the Orkney Islands -- the other is Highland Park. Scapa was built in 1885 by a speyside distiller named John Townsend. It was saved from total destruction by fire during the First World War through the assistance of navel personnel billeted in the area, who arrived by the boatload to help put out the blaze. The distillery was bought by Hiram Walker in 1954 and rebuilt in 1959. Since that time there have been many additions and expansions at the distillery to accommodate growth, and the distillery complex now covers over 7 acres. Allied Distillers, the current owners of Scapa, mothballed it in 1994 but reportedly plan to reopen it in the near future. Hiram Walker has embarked on an aggressive marketing scheme in the US called "Defenders of the Malt", marketing Scapa along with two other malts they distribute here -- Glendronach and Laphroaig.

Scapa has just recently been introduced to the US market as a distillery single -- it was previously only been available as a single from independent bottlers. Scapa is a key ingredient in the Ballentine blends and is a very interesting single malt.

Glen Scotia, 12yo Distillery Bottling, Campbeltown

Mothballed in 1994 - distillery for sale

This is one of the two remaining distilleries in Campbeltown -- home at one time or another to over 33 distilleries. The other remaining Campbeltown malt is Springbank, who arguably makes the finest whisky in Scotland!

At the height of production there were over 2 dozen distilleries in Campbeltown in operation and when Barnard did his famous survey of the whisky industry in the 1880s there were still 20 left. Most were still operating in 1914 and although mothballed during the First World War (due to restrictions over alcohol in general and rationing of grain purchases), most reopened after the war was over.

Unfortunately, most did not survive the effects of prohibition in the United States. Also, the local coal supply for the region's distilleries located near Machrihanish was exhausted in the 1920s, driving distillery fuel costs up significantly. Loss of the coal trade also proved to be the demise of the local narrow-gauge railway that serviced Campbeltown. This combination of factors are believed to have led to the closure of all Campbeltown's distilleries except for three by 1930.

Glen Scotia was established in 1835 by Stewart, Galbraith & Co. and sold to West Highland Malt Distilleries in 1919. Duncan McCallum purchased it in 1924 and mothballed it between 1928 and 1933 during prohibition. Glen Scotia was purchased in 1930 by the owners of Scapa, who operated Glen Scotia from 1933 through 1954 when they sold both Glen Scotia and Scapa to Hiram Walker. Hiram Walker sold Glen Scotia in 1955 and it was apparently run until 1980, when it was refurbished. It was reportedly reopened by its new owners, Gibson International, in 1989. They went bankrupt in early 1994 and the distillery was sold to Glen Catrine Bonded Warehouses, Ltd. (owner of Littlemill -- see earlier description) who has not restarted the distillery and while reportedly is using the warehouses, has placed the distillery on the market for sale. Single malts are becoming increasingly rare for this distillery.

The 12 yo being sampled as part of this tasting is likely from operation prior to refurbishment in the early 1980s.

The distillery is said to be haunted by the ghost of a previous owner who drowned in the Campbeltown Loch.

Bruichladdich, 10yo Distillery Bottling, Islay

Mothballed in 1995 - will likely restart

Established in 1881 on the shores of Loch Indall and built with a newly patented material named "concrete". Much of the equipment still installed at the distillery dates from the original configuration, including the cast iron mash tub and the riveted (rather than welded) wash tub. The distillery has passed through several ownerships over the years, was mothballed from 1929 through 1937, was doubled in size from 2 to 4 stills in 1975, and was last sold to Whyte & Mackay in 1994 who subsequently mothballed it in 1995. The distillery is still intact and it has been recently reported that tours of this fascinating distillery can still be arranged through prior arrangement with the Jura Distillery. The distillery is considered to be still viable and likely to reopen in the future. Many bottlings available, both distillery and independent.

Port Ellen, 13yo Signatory Bottling (1983), Islay

Lost - closed in 1983 (but still intact)

Established in 1824, this distillery was used shortly after it opened by Aneneas Coffey (the inventor of the Coffey Still) to test his newly-invented spirit safe to determine whether it would harm the whisky (it didn't). The first owner went bankrupt almost immediately and the distillery was quickly passed along through a series of other family members who had similar problems. In 1836 John Ramsey took control from other family members and built the distillery business successfully from that point until he passed away in 1892. His son took control in 1906 at the start of the great industry downturn, forcing him to sell the distillery to the firms of John Dewar and James Buchanan (JD/JB) in 1920. This firm was subsequently absorbed by DCL in 1925 and Port Ellen was mothballed by DCL in 1930 as part of the huge wave of mothballed distilleries -- it reopened in 1967, silent for 37 years!

The distillery suffered the industry downturn in 1978 and was mothballed again by DCL in 1983. However, the maltings and warehousing has been in continuous use to supply and support other Islay distilleries, even today. The distillery is reportedly still intact, but not likely to restart and is considered lost. Available bottlings are from 1967 - 1983 run.

Brora, 1972 Spirit of Scotland - No age statement (est.~20 yo range), North Highlands
Lost - Closed in 1983 (only production available is 1969 - 1983)

This distillery was established in 1819 as Clynelish, and reportedly ran continuously thru a series of owners and bankruptcy in 1912 until it was first mothballed from 1931-1939. After it was reopened, demand outgrew production capacity and the owners, SMD, built another distillery nearby that opened in 1969. They transferred the distillery name "Clynelish" to the new distillery and renamed the original Clynelish distillery "Brora". So in effect, Brora is actually "Old Clynelish". Both distilleries operated for the next 14 years but Brora was mothballed in 1983 and although still thought to be intact, it is considered "lost" by the malt industry. This is a very intense single malt that I don't believe Clynelish has been able to reproduce... I consider the loss of Brora to be both a significant and tragic loss that I still take a little personally! I hold out hope that the distillery is eventually reopened rather than being dismantled (if indeed it still is even salvageable).

CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS IN SCOTLAND'S DISTILLING HISTORY

Whisky has been produced in Scotland for hundreds of years as an integral part of farm life and sustenance living in the countryside. It is thought to have migrated across Scotland from Ireland or perhaps the islands of Islay. This listing presents the major events that have shaped the malt industry in Scotland over time and hopefully demonstrates the forces that are at work, even today, to determine what single malts survive the continuous cycles of boom and bust that characterize the malt whisky world.

- 1494 Considered the "Official" date of the first distilling of scotch whisky. From the Scottish Exchequer Rolls of where it's recorded eight bolts of malt to Friar John Cor wherewith to make aqua vitae. However, it's believed that the Scots have been distilling whisky much earlier since it was considered popular and profitable by 1500.
- 1644 Britain imposes first duty on ale
- 1707 Act of Union - created Excise Board with broad powers of taxation
- 1790 - 1820 Terrible weather patterns in Scotland trigger abysmal harvests and widespread famine. Grain restricted from distilling purposes and targeted for food supplies only. Illicit distilling rampant across Scotland during this time due to restrictions.
- 1823 Excise Act of 1823 passed implementing system that allowed first legal distilling in the United Kingdom. Three rules established: 1) minimum sized still is 40 gallons; 2) License fee of 10 pounds annually with 2 crown duty per gallon (a big decrease from the 5 shillings and a sixpence in place before the Act); and 3) a rebate of threepence per gallon for whisky exported to a foreign country, including England.
- 1830 Aeneas Coffey invents the patent still (the Coffey still), a continuous process still that allows distillation of grain alcohol from a range of cereals for the first time, greatly lowering cost of production from that of the single malt pot still.
- 1848 Repeal of the Corn Laws scrapped taxes on cereal crops and allowed the importing of barley and other grains from foreign countries, especially from the United States.
- 1870 Aphids invade and devastate the vineyards of France, destroying the brandy and cognac industries. For several years in the 1870s no cognac or brandy are available and the British brandy-drinking classes switched to scotch.
- 1870 Sherry is begun to be imported into Great Britain in large casks. Industrious distillers in

Scotland took advantage of these used sherry butts and began to use them to age malt whisky. (At the time, it was merely a cost-saving measure rather than make new oak casks. Today sherry casks bring a high premium and sherry finished whiskys generally cost more because of this.) This transformed the scotch taste to that closer to brandy and is thought to have helped move many brandy drinkers over to scotch whisky.

- 1880s Introduction of glass mass-produced bottles. Whisky was sold in stoneware jugs, small casks, or hand-blown glass prior to this.
- 1887 Alfred Barnard publishes "the Whisky Distilleries of the United Kingdom". That year there were 160 distilleries in the UK producing whisky, 129 of which were in Scotland.
- 1900 - 1909 Late Victorian boom ends with the rise of temperance movement. France's production of cognac and brandy are rebuilt and many distilleries close for good as sales fall back off.
- 1909 Chancellor of the Exchequer raises tax on whisky to 15 shillings per proof gallon, partially in response to temperance fervor. Major protests ensue. The resulting drop in demand of legal product actually produced a loss in tax revenue! This triggered a series of excise tax increases that raised this initial duty sixfold over the next 11 years. Many more distilleries close.
- 1914 -1915 Output lags from Britain's munitions factories during World War I and alcohol consumption is blamed for loss of production. Bar hours were severely curtailed and barley supplies rationed. Many distilleries were mothballed during this time, although the patent or Coffey stills operating in the lowlands were put into full production to provide industrial-strength grain alcohol needed by the military and industry during the war. Most distilleries mothballed at this time survive the period of closure.
- 1919 Big rush back into production following the end of World War I - proved a mistake for many distilleries as the 1920s prohibition movement in the US wiped many of these reopened distilleries out.
- 1920 - 1933 Prohibition in US in effect from 12:01 am on January 17, 1920 through 5:32 pm on December 5, 1933.
- 1920 In December of this year, Scotland held a national referendum on prohibition which was strongly rejected by voters. Historians point out that simply the fact that the referendum was held demonstrates how powerful and widespread the temperance movement was worldwide at this point in history.
- 1929 Wall Street Crashes

- 1930- 1934 The Great Depression
- Early 1930s Only eight (8) functioning distilleries in operation in all of Scotland. In Ireland, only two distilleries are left operating out of 28.
- 1933 Prohibition scrapped in US
- 1938 Whisky production soars to 38 million gallons, highest since the turn of the century.
- 1943 Most distilleries mothballed during the War due to rationing.
- 1945 More than 30 distilleries reopened by January 1945 as a result of Churchill's announcement near the end of the war that the distilleries should be reopened because they were a key national export earner.
- 1945 - 1950s Post-war labor government hampers industry by forcing export quotas on distilleries where they must sell 4 cases overseas for every one sold on the home market. Produced a briefly thriving black market for whisky in the United Kingdom.
- Late 1950s Scotch widely marketed overseas and demand outstrips production capacity. Industry enters a period of distillery restoration and construction. Many distilleries that had been mothballed for over 50 years were restored and restarted during this time, including a number of which had been abandoned and significantly damaged over time.
- 1957 - 1983 25-year boom period for whisky industry. Market share continued to rise during this time despite the increase in taxes by other countries attempting to protect local liquors from Scotch's growing popularity world-wide. As the output from distilleries continued to rise, there began to be periods of overstocking in the second half of this period and distilleries were often mothballed for short periods of time to adjust standing stocks. A downturn in the industry beginning in the early 1980s triggered the cycle of closures that represent most of the whiskys being tasted at today's gathering.
- 1983 DCL mothballs 11 distilleries and other producers mothball a number of their facilities as well. Distilleries that remain closed from this time frame but whose malts are almost impossible to find today include:

Banff
 Caledonian (grain)
 Cambus
 Carsebridge
 Garnheath (Glen Flagler & Killyloch)

Glen Albyn
Glenesk
Glenlochy
Glenugie
Interleven and Lomond
Lochside
North Port
St. Magdelene
Strathmore

*Note: Lost distilleries where samples of their malts **are** still reasonably available are listed below under the section titled "Shopping for Rare, Threatened and Endangered Whiskys - Hints and Tips".*

1993 Early 1990's recession caused closure of Bladnoch, Balmenach, Pittyvaich, Rosebank by UM&GD.

ACRONYM AND REFERENCE LIST

ACRONYMS

AD	Allied Distillers
ADP	Amalgamated Distilled Products
ASD	Associated Scottish Distillers
DCL	Distillers Company Limited
DrE	Dr Entropy
DSWG	Distilling Sector Working Group
IDV	International Distillers and Vinters
J&B	Justerini & Brooks
JD/JB	John Dewar and James Buchanan
NB	North British Distillery
PLC	Public Limited Company
SMD	Scottish Malt Distillers
SWA	Scotch Whisky Association
UD	United Distillers
UM&GD	United Malt & Grain Distillers (distilling arm of United Distillers)
WG&S	William Grant & Sons

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SHOPPING FOR RARE, THREATENED AND ENDANGERED WHISKYS

HINTS AND TIPS

There are dwindling supplies of single malts from these "Quiet Distilleries" that are still reasonably available at specialty liquor stores. In some cases they are even affordable, but I've seen samples for all of these on retailer's shelves over the past year or so. They are getting more expensive all the time as stocks are depleted and most bottles that are available today are from independent bottlers / importer of whisky into the US, as follows:

Adelphi
Cadenheads
Connoisseur's Choice
Cooper's Choice
Glenhaven
Gordon & Macphail
Michel Couvrier
Signatory
Whyte & Whyte

There are other importers also but these are the independent bottlers you will likely run into on US liquor store shelves.

Cask strength malts and other perplexing questions

When shopping for single malts, be sure to check for the strength of the whisky when doing comparisons. Many independents bottle at cask strength which can run from 104 to 128 proof. You always have the option of diluting it down to the 40 - 43% level that the distillery dilutes it's whisky down to before bottling and stretching out your bottles.

But then again, sipping the cask strength whiskys at full strength also has its own rewards!

Since I've never seen this printed anywhere, I developed this ^Atheorem for dilution[@] one evening while drinking malts with my friend Ron. (Well, we roughed it out that evening and perfected it the next morning, if truth be told... Ron still is concerned that we are ignoring evaporation in this approach... yup... we sure are!)

So, Introducing --

DrE=s Universal Dilution Formula for Cask Strength Whiskys and Other Substances...

$$(Amount\ of\ Whisky) \times ((\ \%cask / \%desired) - 1) = Amount\ of\ water\ to\ add\ to\ glass$$

where %cask is the original liquid to be diluted and %desired is the final concentration desired.

That=s about all there is to it (unless I=m wrong...)

Fire Sales

Rumor has it that Glenhaven is liquidating it=s stock in parts of the US through Trader Joe stores. Some folks out west have found some great deals -- \$30 - \$40 dollar range for hard-to-find cask strength bottlings. It might be worth checking the local yellow pages if you=re traveling over the next month or so.

Specialty Malt Distributors

Attached is a copy of a report from my whisky database listing whisky retailers across the country who have large selections of malt whiskys to choose from. Happy hunting!

ADDITIONAL LOST DISTILLERIES WHOSE WHISKYS CAN STILL BE FOUND IF YOU LOOK CAREFULLY AND PAY ATTENTION

- Bladnoch** est 1814, mothballed in 1993 by UD and converted to museum in town of Bladnoch, Wigtownshire. This is a lowland malt that is scarce, but should remain available in limited quantities for years to come. Rumors that it might go into limited production in 1997 have not been confirmed yet.
- Coleburn** est 1897, closed in 1985, Attempts to convert to housing units were met with resistance in 1996, stalling the project. Distillery remains intact and could be restarted. No predictions here whether or not it will survive.
- Convalmore** est 1894, mothballed in 1985, Lost distillery. Sold to William Grant & Sons (WG&S) in 1987. Distillery equipment stripped out in following years and complex now used as warehousing facilities by WG&S.

Glen Mohr est. 1892, mothballed in 1983, demolished in 1986. Lost. A North Highland malt.

GlenuryRoyal est 1836, rebuilt in mid-1960s, closed in 1985, and converted and/or demolished for residential development in 1992. Lost. An East Highland malt.

Milburn est. 1876, closed in 1985, Lost. Converted to steakhouse named "The Auld Distillery" in 1990. A North Highland malt.

Rosebank est. 1840, survived the largescale DCL closures of 1983 but mothballed in 1993. Considered by many to be one of the finest lowland malts, an excellent whisky and a recommended buy. It's still available in a range of bottlings, although difficult to find. Although it could conceivably be restarted, most consider this distillery to be lost.

ADDITIONAL MOTHBALLED DISTILLERIES WHOSE WHISKYS CAN STILL BE FOUND IF YOU LOOK CAREFULLY AND PAY ATTENTION

Balmenach est. 1825, mothballed by United Distillers in 1993, still intact and could reopen. I have remnants of a bottle of 11 yo opened in Denver 3/98, available for tasting in my library of malts. This is a very classic speyside malt that should be tasted early in the evening.

Pittivaich est. 1970, mothballed in 1993, will likely reopen. Owned by United Distillers.

Tamnavulin est. 1966, one of the most modern, automated single-malt distilleries on the Speyside, Mothballed by Whyte & Mackay in 1995. Will likely reopen.

RECENTLY REVIVED DISTILLERIES OF NOTE

Ardbeg est. 1815, 1/3 capacity production from 1989 through February 1997 when it was purchased by Glenmorangie. They are reportedly ramping up production and planning interesting bottlings of this excellent single malt. Highly recommended but expensive (I haven't seen any Ardbegs for less than \$70, but there are supposedly more affordable 17yo offerings recently released in the US to mixed reviews.)

Glengarioch est. 1884 (also Oldmeldrum), Mothballed by Morrison Bowmore in 1995 and put up for sale. Reopened in early 1998. Many bottlings available at very reasonable prices -- look for special bottling from 1987! Generally a good, affordable, solid highland malt for everyday drinking. Haven't tried the 15yo yet.

file: LOST-DTL.WP5

June 13, 1999 (3:37PM)

The Quiet

~~Tasting~~

THE QUIET TASTING - MARCH 21, 1998				
SINGLE MALT WHISKY	COLOR	NOSE	PALETTE	FINISH
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