

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 island 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 another cycle of closures.

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 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.

1998 Ardbeg Distillery purchased and reopened by Glenmorangie. Find and taste this malt – a classic Islay!