

BUT THE DISTILLERIES
WENT ON:
THE MORRISON BOWMORE
STORY

The History of a Scotch Whisky Company
1951–2014



IAN BUXTON



IN ASSOCIATION WITH

MORRISON BOWMORE DISTILLERS LTD



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The Moss, Islay

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FOREWORD

Foreword

FOREWORD

Mike Keiller

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

2000–2014

Morrison Bowmore Distillers (MBD) started life in 1951. As this history receives its finishing touches, 2014 will represent the final chapter as the business is subsumed into the new Beam Suntory, thus becoming part of the Scotch Whisky Industry's rich history.

We decided to commission Ian Buxton to write this account of the business after being greatly impressed by his other work for John Dewar & Sons, Glenglassaugh and particularly his commemorative volume for Glenfarclas' 175th Anniversary. These very different books sparked our desire to ensure the MBD story was also documented to provide a record of a truly remarkable business that rose from whisky broking to become a leader in the premium Single Malt business. The past sixty-three years have seen huge change in the world and MBD's story also contains many highs and lows.

It might have seemed more obvious to commission a history of Bowmore Distillery which dates back to 1779, and

we thought long and hard over this option, but finally opted for the “MBD story”. However, for those readers interested in distilleries you will be pleased that Ian has provided chapters dedicated to each of our Islay, Lowland and Highland ‘homes’.

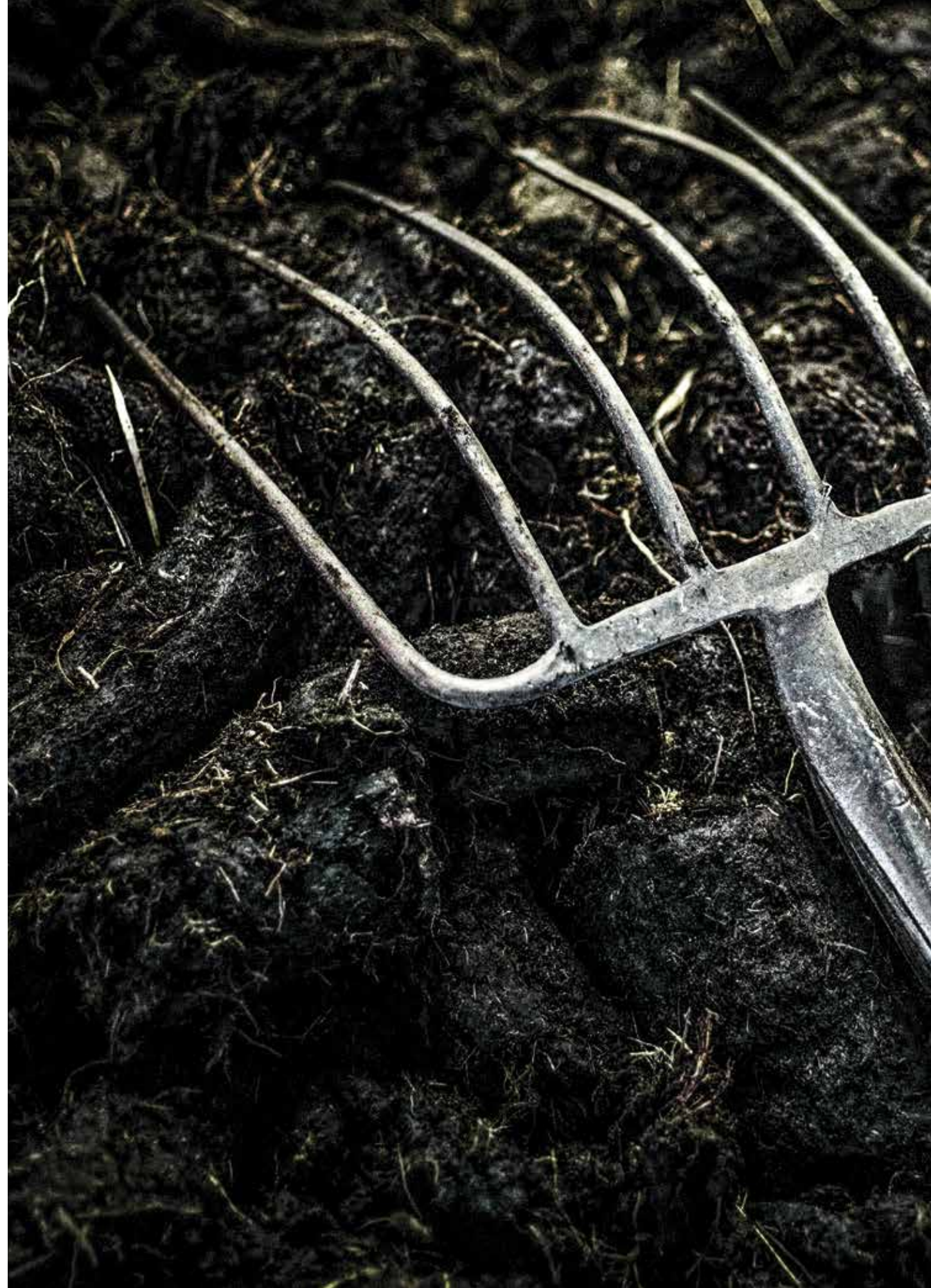
We hope this book will fulfil several very laudable aims:

- ◆ It should be quite simply a nice read
- ◆ It could act as a training and reference book for the many trade personnel who interact with our business such as barmen, customers, distributors and sales people
- ◆ It could be a gift
- ◆ It would be sold in our visitor centres
- ◆ It would provide a historical record for future generations

Writing the book, gathering the facts, chasing employees, directors, and shareholders past and present, has proved a real challenge for Ian, but I would like to thank all the contributors for their personal efforts helping him complete this history. Hopefully you will enjoy reading about a business and the people who developed it over the last sixty-three years.



Springburn, Glasgow, September 2014



CHAPTER ONE

Origins

ORIGINS

BUILDERS AND WHISKY MERCHANTS

The Morrison family have left an indelible and distinctive mark on their home city of Glasgow, not simply in the world of whisky. Stanley P. Morrison may have laid the foundations for the firm which carries his name, but his family laid foundations before him. John Morrison (1839–1919), Stanley’s grandfather, was a builder of some distinction: in partnership with Thomas Mason (what better name for a builder?) he created many of the fine Victorian buildings that give Glasgow its distinctive character.

The firm of Morrison & Mason specialised in building waterworks, docks, railways, tenements, villas and public

and commercial buildings. Among these are the General Post Office, George Square (1875–78); Her Majesty's (now Citizen's) Theatre, 121 Gorbals Street (1878, façade destroyed, 1977); the Clyde Navigation Trust Building (now Clyde Port), Broomielaw (1882–1908); Great Western Road Bridge (1895); Ruchill Hospital (1895–1900) and extensions to Rottenrow Hospital (1905). Also amongst their work was the Queen's Dock Pump House (1877) which, in a curious twist, will shortly be re-developed as a craft distillery at a cost of some £10 million by his great-grandson Tim Morrison.

In 1886, the firm of Morrison & Mason was responsible for relocating and rebuilding the Old College Gateway as the Pearce Lodge, University Avenue, but their most important building in Glasgow was and remains the striking City Chambers (1882–90), built to architect William Young's dramatic Beaux Arts design. Inaugurated by Queen Victoria, it expresses all the confidence, exuberance and wealth of what was then the undisputed Second City of the British Empire; prosperity built not least on burgeoning exports of whisky.

Born in 1900, Stanley Pringle Morrison was the second child of John Morrison's son, also John. Eventually, John was to have four children: Iain, an elder brother to Stanley, and



A young Stanley P. Morrison

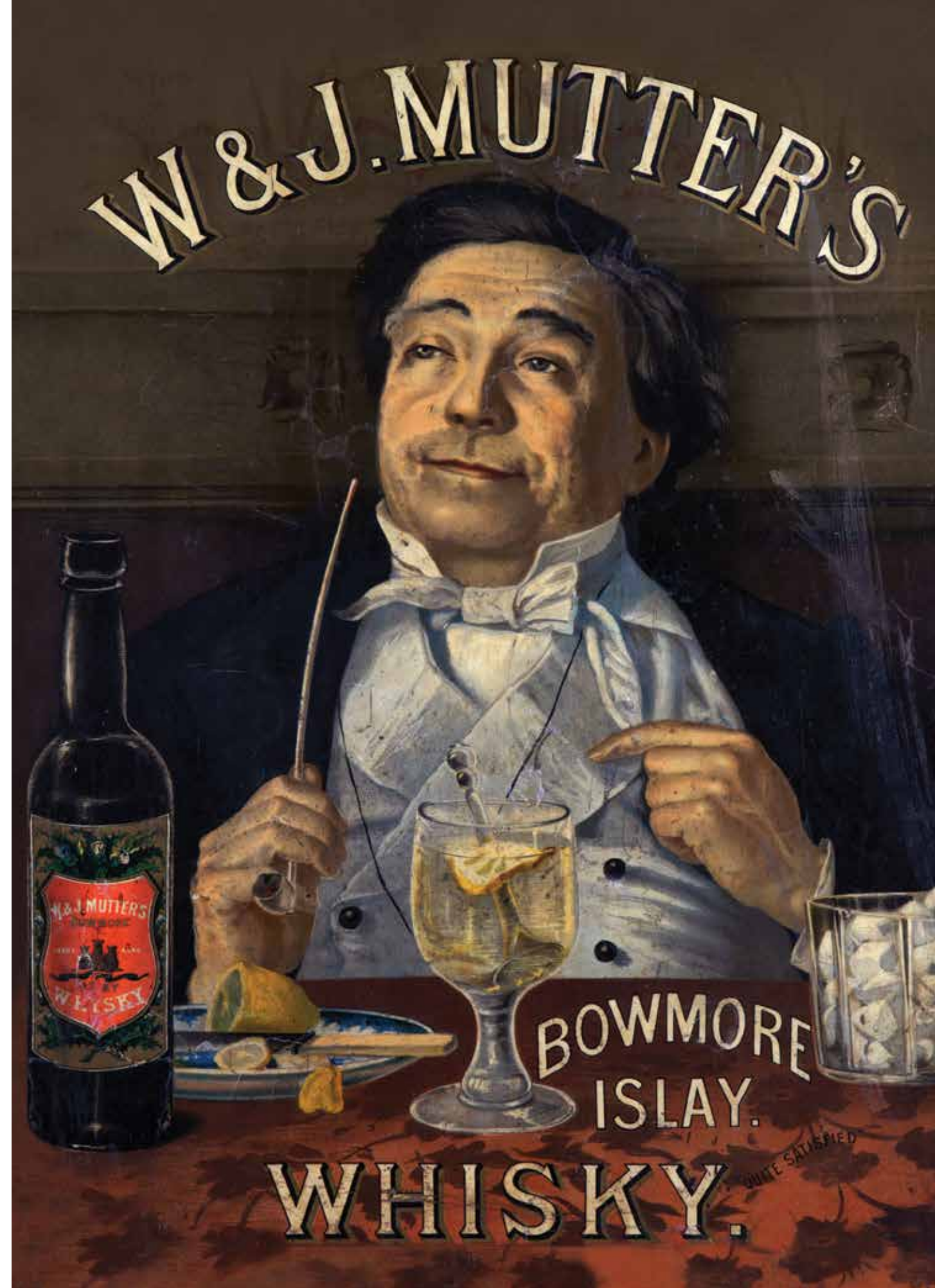
in effect, ‘building blocks’ to create a more finished, balanced and above all consistent product.

Writing around 1893⁴, Alfred Barnard described this process: “We do not approve of sticking closely to one whisky in a district. In order to keep up the average of a blend, say, for instance if there are five parts Glenlivet in it, we prefer to draw our supplies from two or three Glenlivet distilleries, thus a better average is got, and the expert is less able to pick out what makes are used; besides if a brand becomes scarce, one is not left at the mercy of a single distillery.”

Barnard also laid great stress on marrying the blend, stating that this is the only method by which “a continuity of quality [may] be kept up”.

So, by the end of the nineteenth century, the basic principles of blending which hold true to this day had been firmly established. Remember that within a very few years from the mid-nineteenth century blended Scotch completely dominated the market—‘self’ or ‘single’ whiskies (today’s

Opposite: A pioneering approach to the promotion of single malt whisky: Bowmore served with ice, and lemon!





*James Howat addresses the ball.
Both partners were enthusiastic golfers—
much business was done over 18 holes*

Bowmore & on

How, indeed, was it to be paid for—especially as the distillery’s reputation did not then stand high.

In fact, to put it bluntly, the distillery was run-down and antiquated. It had only one customer, Robertson & Baxter. They had ordered 400 butts—less than a tenth of the distillery’s capacity, considerably less in fact, and that only because their own distillery at Bunnahabhain was closed for modernisation. Without their one order for the 1962/63 season, Bowmore would have lain silent. As it was, it was scarcely a blur of movement and frenzied activity even by Hebridean standards.

His partner’s concerns were not entirely unfounded, then.

In the meantime, there was a new family member to integrate into the business. In 1964, Tim’s younger brother Brian



joined the firm straight from school and was immediately sent to the Roseburn Bond in Bridgeton's Broad Street for his induction. The area is not the most salubrious in Glasgow—one imagines that his father adopted a 'sink or swim' approach to training; either that, or he had a strong sense of mischief! This was just four years after the disastrous Cheapside Street Bond fire and the building was typical of its period, innocent certainly of today's health and safety and fire prevention regulations. As well as warehousing and blending operations, there was a cooperage with four or five coopers and facilities to despatch cased goods.

John Brian, now with the security team at Springburn, joined Roseburn just prior to his 18th birthday in January 1977. He recalls it offering "an education in life" (by which I took him to mean that there was considerable informal dramming by the older employees) and that it was "dirty, but a great laugh" (football was played in the yards during the lunch break, as often as not with bottles of whisky to mark the goals). Dirty it certainly was, if the photograph is any guide and the contrast with today's working conditions is a marked one.

Roseburn Bond was then under the immediate control of Alistair Ross and George Fotheringham, who had started

Shared Bounty

THE CHARITABLE LEGACY

The distilling industry has been notably charitable over the years. Examples—only a few—might include the eleemosynary work of the Robertson Trust (owners of the Edrington Group); the many donations to their spiritual home of Perth by John and Tommy Dewar; the Gannochy Trust, established by Arthur Bell; more recent work with Help for Heroes by Bell's; and Glenfiddich's Walking with the Wounded campaign.

In their own quiet way, the Morrison family and the company bearing their name have played their part. An early example was set by the Covenanted Bequest to Bowmore School to mark the 1979 Bi-Centenary and later by the donation of land in Bowmore village square and the old warehouse adjacent to the distillery, sold to the community

New directions

A SINGULAR FOCUS

By the end of the twentieth century it was becoming clear that the business model which had served the company so well for some fifty years was increasingly under threat and becoming outmoded. The senior management team—by now reporting to Suntory's European office in London—was then led by CEO James Forbes with Brian Morrison continuing as Vice-Chairman. They faced a series of inter-related challenges that would eventually result in the first loss in the company's history, a significant restructuring with accompanying painful redundancies and an entirely new direction for the business.

Though the initial years of the company's history were exciting, it later stabilised and by the mid-1980s the business had become a small but firmly established, and even



respectable, part of the Scotch whisky community. Sales of single malt, especially Bowmore, were successfully developed through the 1990s and by spring 2000, Bowmore had broken into the 'Top Ten' of global single malt brands, based on sales volume. However, by the first year of the second millennium, it was becoming clear that the new world order would present as many challenges in the future as the early years had provided the original founders. It is no exaggeration to say that how MBD responded to those challenges may now be seen as a case study in the management of change.

Though the major structural changes in the whisky industry since the 1950s had greatly reduced the need for the broker and the opportunities for deals that so characterised Stanley Morrison's trading style, the consolidation in the brewing sector meant fewer and fewer customers and on the High Street the demise of the independent wine and spirit merchant increased the stranglehold of the major supermarket groups. It would be some years before the full implications worked themselves out.

As the smaller independent distillery companies were acquired one by one, so the power of the large, internationally consolidated drinks companies grew. Not only were they

less dependent than their predecessors on the broker to supply whisky, their portfolio of other spirits and alcohol brands made them a fearsome competitor. To compound the problem, international distributor companies were increasingly acquired by the major groups, thus presenting increasing difficulties for their smaller competitors in gaining a high quality of market access. Much management time was diverted into establishing distributor relationships, many of which lasted for only a few years.

In the UK, the passing of the Resale Prices Act in 1964 heralded the rise of the supermarket chains and brought to an end decades of minimum resale price maintenance which had protected profitability in distilling. Though it would be some years before their influence was fully felt, this landmark legislation fundamentally changed the nature of the UK off-trade business as buying power was increasingly concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. Being primarily multiple grocery businesses, they were not necessarily culturally compatible with the historic attitudes and trading practices of the distilling industry and inclined to buy ever more aggressively on price at low margin. While much of the saving was passed on to the consumer in the form of discounted retail

prices, loyalty to a supplier or brand counted for little.

The purchasing of own-label supplies was pursued even more assertively, with the larger groups increasingly unwilling to commit to the long-term stock holding essential to the aging of whisky. Retail pricing of whisky stagnated under these conditions, with little or no premium achieved against unaged products such as gin and vodka, with their lower production costs. The wholesale pricing of own label supply increasingly became a race to the bottom, with predictable consequences for the supplier's profitability—not that this appeared to be of any concern to the buyers when another vendor appeared ready to step forward to accept what was increasingly seen as a poisoned chalice.

Further structural change followed the passing of The Supply of Beer (Tied Estate) Order 1989 and The Supply of Beer (Loan Ties, Licensed Premises and Wholesale Prices) Order 1989 together known as the Beer Orders. This legislation, enacted to the surprise of the brewing industry by the Conservative Government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, had the effect of restricting the number of tied pubs that could be owned by any one brewery and resulted in the creation of so-called 'pub-co's: essentially property-based pub-

was not involved in the direct production of whisky only the blending, they made an open invitation that if I was ever in Scotland to make a turn with them.

“The next year I was travelling on business in Europe and made arrangements to visit MBD at their Springburn offices in Glasgow. There I met Brian Morrison the then MD. I remained in contact with the senior management of MBD and in 1989 I was informed that I was to be given extensive work experience with MBD in Scotland. Little did I know at that stage, that on my return I would be given the role of overseeing, along with our technical services department, the re-location of our SA whisky operations from our small little R. & B. (Robertson & Buxton) distillery in Stellenbosch to the James Sedgwick distillery in Wellington.

“My period with MBD in 1989 had me working at all three of their distilleries—Auchentoshan with Stuart Hodgkinson as Manager, Glen Garioch, Willie McNeil, and at their Islay distillery Bowmore, which was then under the leadership of the now legendary Jim McEwan. I worked in all aspects of

Opposite: David Gressick, Chief Chemist





by, indifferent or ignorant of the riches here. Surrounded by rolling, fertile farmland this, one feels, ought to be a prime whisky-producing region but, though there were distilleries in the valley of the Garioch in the past, none of the others prospered, leaving Glen Garioch in splendid solitude.

In his inimitable style, Alfred Barnard describes the locale thus: “a fertile, highly cultivated and well sheltered valley, bounded on all sides by a range of hills, which command extensive views of the Foremartine and Buchan districts, and the lofty Bennochie”. This he termed the “Granary of Aberdeenshire”, considering the town itself “both interesting and historical”, though he thought the streets, “although they contain a number of good houses, are very irregularly built”.

But Glen Garioch is, above all, a survivor and, it’s fair to say, those who know it rate this distillery and its single malt very highly. None more so than Morrison Bowmore’s Master Blender Rachel Barrie, who relates that “at the tender age of seven, my grandmother gave me a dose of Glen Garioch 8 Years Old single malt in a hot milky toddy (made with honey, warm milk and Glen Garioch) to cure my earache. I remember liking it so much, that I feigned earache several times thereafter, always asking for a ‘nippy’ toddy to sooth my pains.”

A generous, not to say extravagant grannie, then, but today, Rachel values Glen Garioch for its “waxy, meaty and spicy notes” stressing that this is a spirit best enjoyed in the non-chill-filtered style at the higher than normal bottling strength of 48% abv. This, she explains, shows the creamy mouth feel and spice, cream and fruit notes associated with the fatty acid esters derived from Glen Garioch’s short spirit cut, short fat stills and extended lyne arms.

Whyte & Mackay’s well-known Master Blender, Richard Paterson²⁰, praises Glen Garioch as one of “the playboys” of single malt, suggesting that it adds “excitement, complexity, muscle and authority” to a blend. Glen Garioch he describes as one of “the Vikings of the North”, possessed of “grit and brashness” and capable of adding “an extra lift” to a blend. From a blender of his experience and reputation that is high praise indeed and his company records suggest that Whyte & Mackay have been purchasing Glen Garioch since 1904, and possibly earlier.

Other long-established customers for fillings of Glen Garioch have included Bells, Ballantine’s William Grant & Sons and Drambuie: its high reputation is widespread within the industry.

M^r. James Thomson

Bought of **JOHN MANSON & CO.**

1844	Aug ^r 31	23 Gal - cyma - 11 O.P. - 10/-	£ 11 10 .		
1845	Feb ^r 26	9 3/4 " " " " " "	4 17 6		
	Sep ^r 30	9 3/4 " " " " " "	4 17 6		
	Nov ^r 13	9 3/4 " " " " " "	4 17 6		
1847	July 24	10 " " " " " "	6 . .		
	Nov 27	9 3/4 " " " " " "	4 17 6		
			<u>£ 37 . .</u>		
Cr.					
1845	Aug ^r 21	By Cash	£ 6 . .		
1846	Feb ^r 26	" Cash	3 . .		
	April 21	" Cash	2 . .		
1847	Jan ^r 12	" Cash	3 . .		
	July 22	" Cash	6 1 6		
			<u>20 1 6</u>		
Balance due			£ 16 18 6		

The distillery can claim to be one of Scotland's oldest, dating back to 1797, prior to which there was a tannery and a brewery on the site. Accounts of its foundation vary: Charles Craig²¹ has it founded by one Thomas Simpson, whereas Alfred Barnard, writing in 1887, credits it to Ingram, Lamb & Co. (Craig dates their ownership to 1827-34). There is also a reference in the Statistical Account of Scotland to a distillery and brewery "lately established" in Old Meldrum in 1794.

The distillery's own website suggests the brothers John (1762-1838) and Alexander Manson (1770-1847) were the original proprietors. Curiously, they appear to have sold the distillery to Ingram, Lamb & Co. in 1825, but repurchased it from them in 1837. All sources agree that the Manson family came to control operations around 1837 as part of their wider business interests, when they re-acquired an operation that had been expanded by Ingram, Lamb to be capable of an annual output of some 10,000 gallons under the then Manager, one William Robison.

Certainly it is the year 1797 that is embossed into the glass of every bottle and the Founder's Reserve expression further honours the achievements of John and Alexander Manson.

From 1825, John Manson & Co. had also operated the



Turning grain in the steeping tank
in the old Glen Garioch maltings.
A laborious task at the best of times

SCOTLAND'S OLDEST?

Though Morrison Bowmore only claim Glen Garioch to date from 1797, there have been suggestions that it may be older—and possibly even Scotland's oldest distillery.

In December 2007 the *Glasgow Herald* reported work by researchers at the Scottish Brewing Archive at Glasgow University who uncovered evidence that Glen Garioch—not previously included as one of the oldest distilleries—may, in fact, be the first.

Iain Russell, an archivist at the university told the paper:

“A report in the *Aberdeen Journal* from 1785 refers to the sale of spirits at the Meldrum distillery which we believe is almost certainly the former name of the Glen Garioch distillery. The owners previously believed the distillery was not founded until 1797.”

He added: “It is still too early to say for sure that we have found Scotland's earliest distillery as whisky companies themselves may have more evidence to prove their antiquity.

“However, the challenge to establish the facts once and for all has been made to the distillers. To be crowned the oldest distillery in Scotland is a rich reward indeed.”

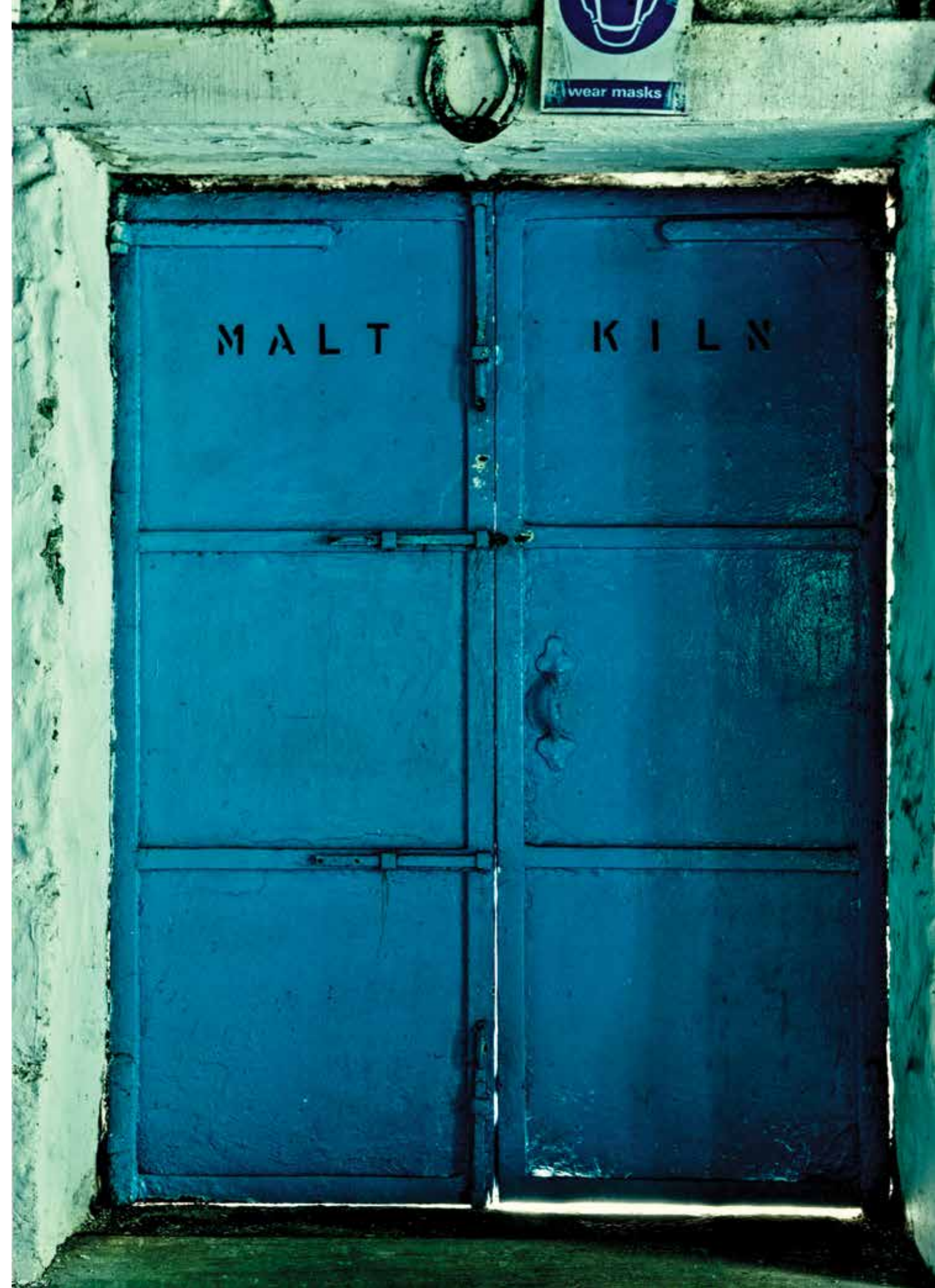
Strathmeldrum distillery (now lost), assumed to be nearby, though the precise location is no longer known. In any event, this was closed in 1839 and the family concentrated their attentions on Glen Garioch, which may account for Barnard dating their involvement to 1840.

They continued to work Glen Garioch until the deaths of John Jr²² (1877) and Alexander Manson (1883) when his executors sold it in 1884 to the important and well-established firm of Leith merchants and blenders J. G. Thomson & Co. (founded 1709).

The Mansons had expanded the distillery with new buildings in the 1860s and, strangely in view of the subsequent sale, again in 1884 when new stills were added and the still room expanded. One explanation may be that contracts had been signed for the work prior to Alexander's death and his executors were obliged to complete this.

While Thomson took sole control on 11th June 1884, thus marking the end of the Manson family connection two years later, with blended whisky all the rage, they in turn sold a 50% share to William Sanderson, then MD of the North British Distillery in Edinburgh.

North British Distillery ('the NB') had been established





in 1885 by a noteworthy group of merchants and blenders including Sanderson, Andrew Usher—credited by many authorities as the pioneer of blending—and John Crabbie, all of Leith (which was then a significant centre for whisky blending), and George Robertson of Robertson & Baxter, the renowned Glasgow blenders (today part of The Edrington Group). They were seeking independence from the DCL, which at that time controlled the entire output of grain whisky in Scotland. The DCL thus exercised a degree of control over rival production of the increasingly fashionable blended whiskies that had become widely distributed across the British Empire. It was becoming clear that successfully running a blended whisky business could be the key to great wealth and, with real fortunes to be made, these commercially clear-sighted gentlemen were determined to be in control of their own destiny.

Sanderson knew that the NB would come on stream in 1887, producing over 1 million proof gallons of grain whisky annually and thus he required a reliable supply of quality malt

Opposite: Norman Taylor: peat firing at the maltings

for his blends. Chief amongst these was VAT 69 which he had launched to considerable success five years earlier. It quickly achieved an excellent reputation for quality and Glen Garioch soon became the 'heart of the blend'. Sanderson also launched s.v.g. (standing for Specially Vatted Glen Garioch) and o.b.g. (Old Best Glen Garioch) as well as the short-lived VAT 68 and VAT 88. In a distinguished career, William Sanderson was variously also a local councillor, magistrate, a Leith Docks Commissioner, a Director of the Clydesdale Bank and of Royal Lochnagar Distillery near Balmoral.

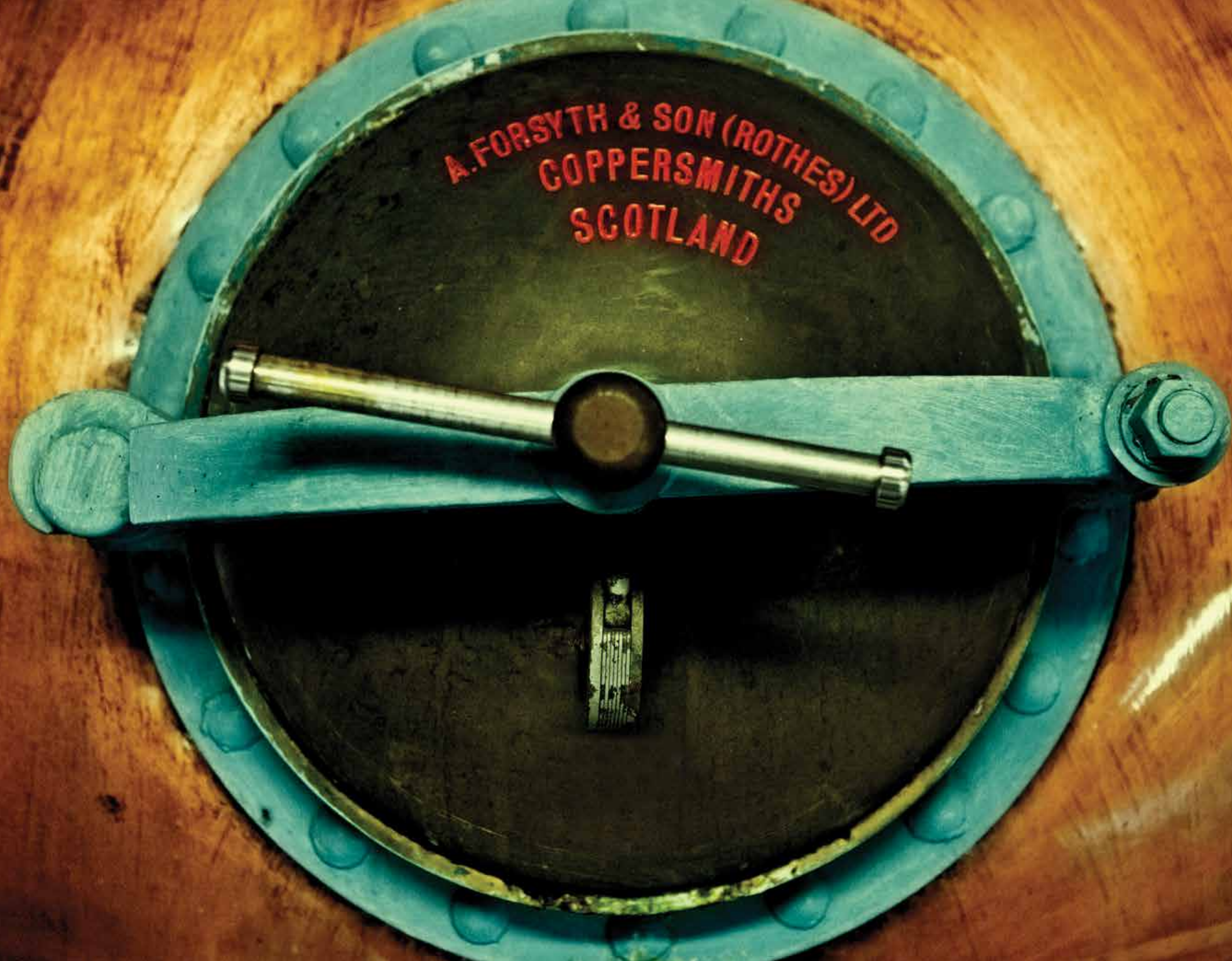
Alfred Barnard made his visit in either 1885 or 1886 and described the distillery as follows:

"The work is under the practical supervision of Joseph F. Thomson, one of the partners [i.e. of J.G. Thomson], who resides on the property. It covers one and a half acres of ground, and is situated in the valley of the Garioch.

"The works are enclosed, and consist of two Maltings, fine stone buildings, 100 feet long and 60 feet broad, of two floors each, the top used for storing the barley, which is all grown in the neighbourhood, and the ground floors for malting purposes. The Steeps are placed at each end of the Barley Lofts; one of them is composed of concrete, the other iron. Adjoining this



A. FORSYTH & SON (ROTHES) LTD
COPPERSMITHS
SCOTLAND





department is the Kiln, built of the same materials as the Malt-ings, floored with perforated iron plates, and heated with peat.”

He continues:

“The Still House, a newly-erected structure, is of modern arrangement, and contains a Wash Still, holding 1,900 gallons [8,626 litres], and a Low-wines Still, holding 1,500 gallons [6,810 litres]; also the Safe and the usual Receivers. Outside this building is a fine Worm Tub, an oblong vessel, 40 feet long and 5 feet deep, constructed of timber.”

According to his account, there were then three bonded warehouses, containing about 1,000 casks of whisky and a fourth warehouse under construction (these would all have been dunnage style warehouses). Twelve men were employed at the distillery, which was powered by a steam engine. The water source was then located on the Percock Hill, “on the beautiful estate belonging to Meldrum House” and Barnard described it as “of fine quality, and most suitable for distillery operations”. The annual output of the distillery is given as

*Opposite: Syd Cummings worked in the cooperage
sorting casks ready for filling*

50,000 gallons [227,000 litres]—as a point of comparison, Barnard records the entire annual output of Scotland as 17,982,338 gallons with distilleries such as The Glenlivet then producing 200,000 gallons and The Macallan (which he considered only worthy of a scant seven line entry) about 40,000 gallons. At the same time, a large grain distillery such as Carsebridge was making between 1.4 and 1.7 million gallons annually.

From this account, it is clear that the Thomsons had continued to invest in the distillery, installing the “newly-erected” still house and building a new warehouse. While the water source was evidently more than adequate at that time this would later come to represent a problem for Glen Garioch and a change in its fortunes. Sadly for us, Barnard did not include a picture of Glen Garioch with his account and, as was his style, omitted to provide any tasting notes.

Blended whisky continued in the ascendancy for many years after the end of the nineteenth century but this was a difficult time for the distilling industry, with the Pattison scandal and

Opposite: Stillman Sandy Donald checking the still door





GLEN GARIOCH DISTILLERY

subsequent crash; an economic depression going into the early twentieth century; and the punitive tax increases of the 1908 and subsequent Budgets under Lloyd George. Fortunately, the Royal Commission on Whiskey had reported in favour of the blending industry, a small crumb of comfort, but sadly William Sanderson had died in April 1908. His eldest son, William Mark, a partner since 1892 and who had been heavily involved in the sales and marketing of VAT 69, took over the family firm and, with a depressed home market, began an energetic export drive, visiting Australia, the USA, Scandinavia, Belgium and France with some success.

A NEW CENTURY

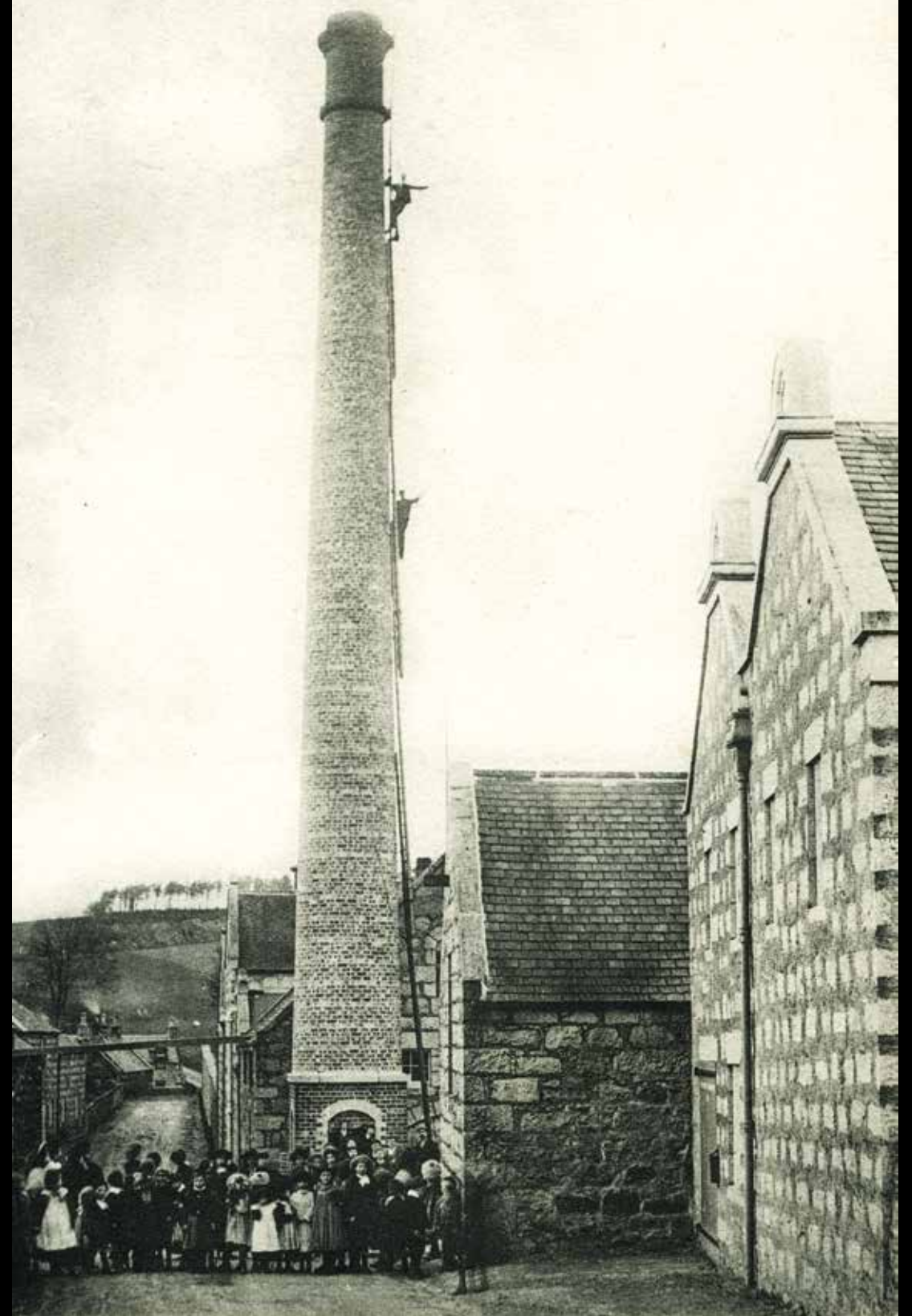
The twentieth century saw more changes at Glen Garioch. Jimmy Shand, who had begun work as a gardener at Meldrum House and then joined the distillery, had been appointed Manager in 1886 and was still in charge and oversaw significant improvement and expansion at the turn of the century. This had included the installation of steam engines for the wash house and a 12hp oil-fired engine which powered the maltings.

In 1901 the distillery was extensively remodelled with a new chimney and kiln, the opening of a fourth warehouse and expansion of the mash house. The roof of the kiln saw the installation of a twin pagoda roof to the familiar design of renowned architect Charles Doig. William Mark Sanderson and his brother Arthur Watson Sanderson developed export markets for VAT 69, shipping to the USA and Australia, then a substantial export market for Scotch whisky, and won gold medals in important international competitions. The War Office Times and Naval Review praised the blend as “the finest whisky sold at the present time”.

However, though William and his brother had prudently increased sales efforts and promoted VAT 69 vigorously, there was nothing they could do about the impact of World War I and the political consequences of that conflict on the greater whisky industry. Following the failure of various offensives in the early months of the war, Lloyd George, the ardent Prohibitionist Chancellor, turned on the drinks industry,

*Opposite: An eager school trip defies
all health and safety regulations*

Glengarioch Distillery, Oldmeldrum—Steeple Jacks at Work





During the difficult times of the 1930s warehouse rents were doubtless a welcome source of income

accusing it of contributing to the moral weakness of the nation²³, but reserving particular venom for the whisky trade.

The Control Board (Liquor Traffic) was established in an effort to reduce the consumption of alcohol and Lloyd George proposed in 1915 a draconian doubling of the rate of duty on spirits. This was rejected in favour of the Immature Spirits Act which brought in the requirement to mature whisky for a minimum of three years, greatly to the benefit of the better quality blenders. By 1917, however, the exigencies of war were such that pot still distilling was suspended completely and the requirement to sell at 40% abv was introduced.

The industry, recognizing the need to hang together, founded the Whisky Association (later, the Scotch Whisky Association) in 1917 as a body capable of “adequately voicing the opinions and defending the interests of all Scotch and Irish²⁴ whisky distillers, blenders and exporters”. However, the combined effect of the Government’s measures, along with further restrictions and duty increases after 1918 and the advent of Prohibition in the important American market led many distillers to abandon the whisky business entirely. The DCL, under the austere direction of William Ross, began expanding. They acquired a number of companies, mainly for



stock, closing distilleries and generally rationalizing the trade. It was a painful and trying time for all concerned.

Jimmy Shand, Manager of Glen Garioch since 1886, eventually retired in 1918 at the age of 74 having seen out the war years. The distillery appears to have continued filling during the war, as auction records from the 1920s and 30s show the sale of butts, hogsheads and quarter casks all distilled between 1914 and 1918. Glen Garioch had been noted for its fine pigs, which fed on the waste products, and Jimmy diligently maintained farm operations, ensuring a supply of fresh meat and milk for all associated with the distillery. His virtue and conscientious service was rewarded with a long retirement and he did not die until he had reached 93 years of age.

Despite the difficulties of the trade as a whole, William Mark Sanderson was evidently made of sterner stuff than many of his erstwhile competitors. He elected to expand the firm by acquisition and brought his son Kenneth into the business, making him a Director at Glen Garioch in 1921. Notwithstanding the economic difficulties, the firm continued its export drives, vigorously promoting VAT 69 at big international exhibitions such as the British Empire

though it must be acknowledged entirely unwittingly!

However, one swallow does not a summer make and Sanderson concluded that it was no longer possible to continue as an independent company. In 1935 Booth's Distillers Ltd suggested an amalgamation with Sanderson's, contributing their three distilleries in the far north. Described as a merger, it was in effect a takeover, as Booth's Oswald Bertram became Chairman of the new company with K.W.B. Sanderson the sole other Director, though William Sanderson & Son remained nominally independent.

Interestingly, this was the same year that one Stanley P. Morrison set up his first whisky broking business with R.D. Lundie, having been in partnership with his father-in-law William Walker since 1925. Given the trade and economic background it is possible to gain some measure of his confidence—or his reckless nature.

Sanderson himself had now been elected a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Distillers and Freeman of the City of London. In 1936–37 he had great success following another global tour but, as all Europe knew, another World War was looming—on 1st April 1937 Booths Distilleries Ltd and William Sanderson & Sons were formally absorbed into

the DCL, by that time home to John Walker & Sons; Haig & Haig; John Dewar & Sons; Buchanan's; and many other famous old names.

It was the DCL style at that time to give the companies a great deal of autonomy, leaving them free to compete with each other in the market. The distilleries themselves, remote from the sales and marketing teams, were operated by a subsidiary company Scotch Malt Distillers Ltd (SMD) which controlled production—no visitor centres or fripperies such as a 'brand home' in those days!

During the War, production at all distilleries was heavily curtailed. The Glen Garioch malt barns were pressed into service as temporary barracks, with accommodation for officers being provided in Meldrum House (it offered "superior billets" apparently). By 1941 production was reduced to just one-third of the 1938–39 level, reduced further to just one tenth the following year and the distillery ceased production in 1943, remaining silent until late 1944, when the 1941 level was reinstated.

In fact, even after the end of the War there were severe limitations on distilling, including rationing of grain for malting and Government directives to export whisky to earn

*The vertiginous Glen Garioch chimney—long since demolished—
no doubt to the utter dismay of the local steeple jacks
who seem to be loving the view*







THE TRIPLE DISTILLED
AUCHENTOSHAN
SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY

AUCHENTOSHAN?
OR AUCHINTOSHAN?
1817? OR 1823? OR 1825?

It's confusing. No one really knows with absolute authority when Auchentoshan was founded. Alfred Barnard (the go-to guy for all whisky writers anxious for a few hundred words of copy) says he was told 1825—but then he styles it Auchintoshan and could only manage a miserable thirteen lines and precious few details. There is a little nugget in there, of course, to be revealed in due course.

So 1825 it is, except that the distillers themselves now say 1823, suggesting that it may be synonymous with the Duntocher distillery, first recorded as operational in 1817. If that is the case, then the founders were John and Archibald Bulloch, corn-dealers but they only managed to survive five

years before the distillery was sequestrated (effectively seized against debts) and Archibald (John's son) took over, only for the venture to fail again in 1826.

Or perhaps, if we accept the Duntocher location³¹, the history may go back to c.1800 and an unknown founder... but no one really knows for sure. Sadly, any early archives that may have existed were lost or destroyed in the devastating Luftwaffe strikes of 12–13 March 1941³², so Auchentoshan's early history is more conjecture than established fact.

Not a happy start, then, but not an unusual one in the history of distilling in the early nineteenth century when the Lowland distillers especially suffered from poor crops, constant changes in legislation, competition from illicit Highland stills (and here, no doubt, from a number of operations on the islands in nearby Loch Lomond), the aggressive business practices of the great Stein and Haig distilleries, and a rash of under-capitalised and inexperienced operators entering the whisky business as a result of the reforms of 1822 and 1823.

It's not completely clear who took over from Archibald Bulloch, but during the nineteenth century the distillery changed hands several times and was progressively expanded. It passed through the hands of John Hart (1830–34, he had

been employed by the Bullochs), and various branches of a long-established local farming family the Filshies controlled it until 1877/78, when a disastrous harvest forced them to sell up. However, they may have been responsible for some significant rebuilding in 1875 (coincidentally, nearby Littlemill was also rebuilt in the same year). After that, Auchentoshan was owned by C.H. Curtis & Co. of Greenock c.1896, when Alfred Barnard passed by with so cursory a glance; by Alexander Ferguson & Co. at the turn of the century; and then it passed to the brewers G. & J. MacLachlan Ltd (eventually MacLachlans Ltd) in 1903.

MacLachlans was a substantial concern with, at various times, breweries in both Glasgow (Castle Brewery, Maryhill) and Edinburgh (also Castle, Craigmillar). Auchentoshan was not their only distillery, as in 1896 they had acquired James Lipsey & Co. of Belfast, Northern Ireland, Irish whiskey distillers. They owned a number of pubs in and around Glasgow, with The Castle Blend of Old Scotch Whisky being the 'house' blend—it may not be fanciful to imagine that this contained a good measure of Auchentoshan (and possibly, as was not unusual at the time, Lipsey's Irish whiskey). There was also a thriving export trade to South Africa and India, so

TELEPHONE No 10953, CENTRAL.

Telegraphic Address: "DISTILASA: LONDON"
CODE, A B C 5TH EDITION.

BELFAST OFFICE,
JA^S LIPSEY & CO
ESTD 1790.

CASTLE BREWERY,
DUNDEE,
EDINBURGH.

HEAD OFFICES & WAREHOUSES,
CASTLE CHAMBERS, GLASGOW.

ESTABLISHED 1820.

AUCHENTOSHAN
DISTILLERY,
FOUNDED 1823.

G & J MACLACHLAN, LTD
DISTILLERS, BREWERS.
WINE & WHISKY MERCHANTS.
41, EASTCHEAP, WINE & WHISKY MERCHANTS.
101, LEADENHALL STREET,
LONDON. E.C. 2nd October 1906

BONDED WAREHOUSE,
6 JAMES WATT LANE, GLASGOW.

LIVERPOOL,
3 BRUNSWICK STREET.

CAPETOWN,
2 LLOYD CHAMBERS,
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DYER & DYER LTD.

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M. VAUGHAN & CO.

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CALCUTTA,
G. F. KELLNER & CO.

TASMANIA,
JOHNSTONE & WILMOT
LAUNCESTON.

CAIRO.

MENTONE,
V. HARDING.

PARIS,
A. CHEREAU.

F. Turner Esq.,
White Hart,
Buckingham.

Dear Mr. Turner,

Re A/c £51/9/5.

I am somewhat surprised at not having received a reply to my various communications respecting settlement of above long overdue amount. I regret very much to inform you that unless your cheque reaches me before Tuesday next, my Firm have decided to issue a writ for the amount. Needless to say this step will much grieve me after our long business connection.

Yours faithfully,
Donna Court

PROPRIETORS OF "FIVE CASTLE" LIQUEUR AND SPECIAL "IONA" WHISKIES
AS SUPPLIED TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS.



By the look on his face, it clearly did not pay to trifle with Mr George MacLachlan (opposite). History does not record Mr Turner's response, but he was, no doubt, suitably impressed both by the tone and the splendid letterhead



MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
2550

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
2551

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
2552

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
2553

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
2554

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
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MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
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MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
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AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
1921

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
1916

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
1937

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
1935

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
1935

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1989
1935

MORRISON'S DISTILLERY
AUCHENTOSHAN
1991
4363



AUCHENTOSHAN DISTILLERY

GLITTERING PRIZES

This meticulous approach is winning recognition, as a shelf full of awards and medals proves: Auchentoshan is a consistent winner of bronze, silver and gold medals at the International Spirits Challenge and the International Wine & Spirit Competition. Morrison Bowmore themselves were iWSC 'Distiller of the Year' in 1995 and capped this with a three-year run of Queen's Awards from 1996–98.

Though some of the distillery's 1.7 million litres annual output still goes for blending, most is reserved for sale as a single malt. In fact, going back to January 2003 when I visited Auchentoshan for *Whisky Magazine*, I was told then that stocks were being laid down on the basis that single malt sales would double over the next five years, an ambitious target were it not that so much has already been achieved.

One surprise, particularly given the distillery's location between the people of Glasgow and the Loch Lomond tourist hot-spot, is that for many years there was no visitor centre. Ironically, there was a small, rather modest centre developed under previous owners, but this was shut in the 1980s so that investment could be concentrated on the distillery itself.

ESTD 1779

BOWMORE

ISLAY

SINGLE MALT

SCOTCH WHISKY

If you can't find a Bowmore to fall in love with, you may have to consider very seriously the possibility that you're wasting your money drinking whisky at all.

IAIN BANKS

Raw Spirit: In Search of the Perfect Dram

EARLY STIRRINGS

It is not entirely clear why Islay of all the Hebridean islands should have such a rich distilling heritage. All have water in abundance, most have peat, some sufficient agricultural land to grow bere or barley. But here it is: Islay has all of that but, in addition, there is something quite magical about this place, which has drawn forth the cratur as nowhere else on earth. Over the years, many distilleries have flourished here: some briefly and a select few, as we shall see, have maintained their operations over the centuries.

About twenty lost distilleries are recorded as having operated at one time or another. The earliest operation currently identified was Killarow, near Bridgend (1760–1818), which was operated initially by one David Simson³⁴, of whom more later. The most recently silent site, apart from the well-



Main Street, Bowmore

known Port Ellen, is that of Sir Peter Mackie's tiny Maltmill, which operated within Lagavulin between 1908 and 1962. Maltmill was, of course, the unwitting silent star of Ken Loach's good-humoured whisky comedy *The Angels' Share* (2012). Port Ellen remains lamented long and loud by enthusiasts of its robust and uncompromising style, who also yearn for even the smallest glass of Lochindaal or Port Charlotte—alas this would seem to be today a whisky of legend, though tales continue to circulate of furtive bottles which one day may emerge blinking into the light.

But these are all the lost legal distilleries, operating in the sight of the Excise officer and thus recorded, however partially. Islay's reputation, though, was founded initially on a fearsome tradition of clandestine and illicit distilling, far from the eyes of the gauger. In his marvellous account of island distilling, Neil Wilson³⁵ gives a list of 233 Ileachs brought before the Justices of the Peace in Argyll in February 1801 by Angus Campbell, the Collector of Excise for the Argyll North Collection (clearly an officer of exceptional zeal and perspicacity, careless of his personal reputation amongst the local populace), for breaches of the Excise Acts, mainly distilling privately or selling spirits without a licence. All were found guilty!

We may surmise from the date of Campbell's purge that the unfortunate miscreants were under the misapprehension that a curious omission in the Act of Union of 1707 (which provided that level duties on excisable liquor should be levied in Scotland as in England) still applied. This exempted both Islay and Jura from the national tax regime, duties there being 'in farm' to the Campbells of Islay, a concession which remained in place for some ninety years. As the concession was withdrawn only four years prior to the prosecutions, perhaps their namesake was trying to make a point.

An earlier traveller to the Hebrides Thomas Pennant observed in 1772 that "in old times the distillation was from thyme, mint, anise, and other fragrant herbs"—so perhaps they were closer to today's artisanal gin styles than to our perception of whisky.

Other contemporary accounts mark out Islay for the scale of its distilling industry, though not approvingly. In 1793 the Reverend Archibald Robertson of Kildalton observed bitterly in his report for the Statistical Account of Scotland that "This island hath a liberty of brewing whisky without being under the necessity of paying the usual excise duty to the government. We have not an Excise officer in the whole

been around 1875 when Isle of Jura was rebuilt. Whatever the date, evidently the Mutters had greater ambitions for their new acquisition.

WILLIAM AND JAMES MUTTER
(1837–1892)

Like the first David Simson, the original William Mutter was a man of some parts—merchant, distiller, a ‘scientific’ farmer who made many improvements to farming on Islay, and Vice-Consul in Glasgow for Portugal, Brazil and the mighty Ottoman empire. Under his influence, Bowmore seems to have flourished: the distillery was expanded, a new water source (which still serves the distillery today) was constructed in the 1840s and the make was later sold as single malt. Barnard described him thus: “As a landlord and neighbour, a benefactor to the poor and [a] philanthropist, he was much beloved and won the esteem of all classes”. Not all commentators were so generous: John Murdoch the advocate of land reform, working in the 1840s on Islay as an Exciseman at a time of agricultural depression and widespread hunger,

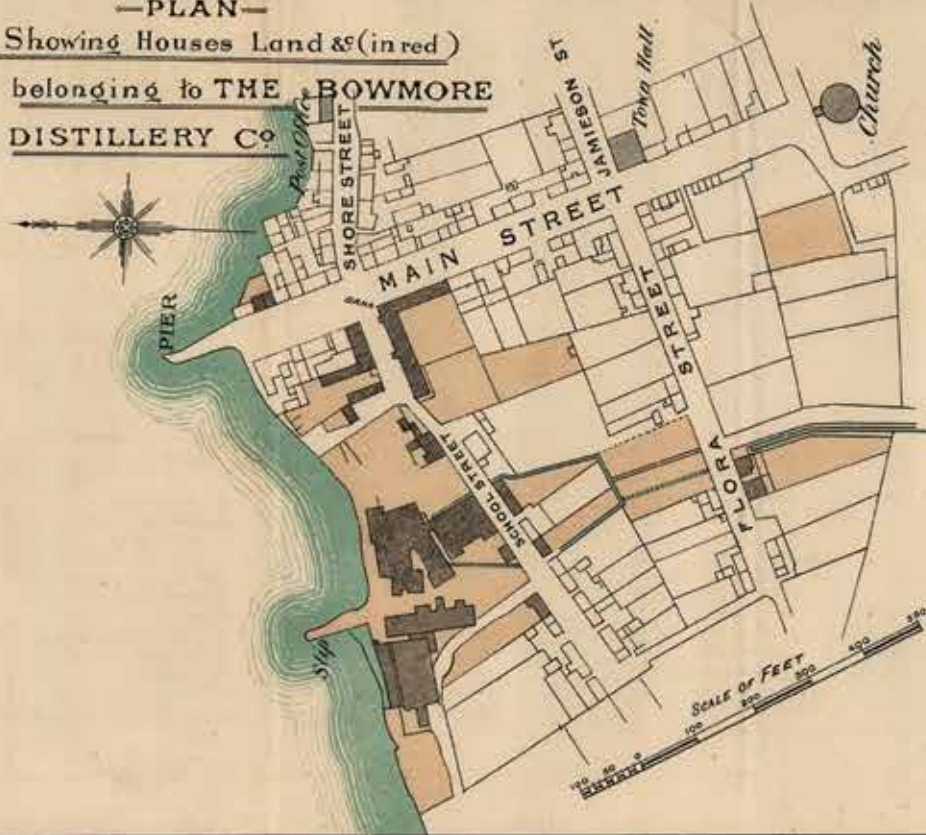




BOWMORE DISTILLERY, ESTABLISHED 1779.



—PLAN—
Showing Houses Land & (in red)
belonging to THE BOWMORE
DISTILLERY CO



Ship

The
BOWMORE DISTILLERY Co.
Limited
BOWMORE ISLAY, N.B.
London Offices
2 & 3 IDOL LANE, E.C.
GLASGOW,
41, Ann Street.

SCHOOL STREET

PARTICULARS—PLANT.

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. WEIGH HOUSE. | 13. KILN. | A. BOILER. | N. SPIRIT PUMP. |
| 2. DISTILLER'S HOUSE. | 14. EXCISE WAREHOUSE. | B. HOT WATER COPPERS. | O. LOW-WINE PUMP. |
| 3. COOPERAGE. | 14A. MALT FLOOR. | C. MASH TUN. | P. SPIRIT SAFE. |
| 4. BARLEY LOFT. | 14B. BARLEY LOFT. | D. STEAM ENGINE. | Q. LOW-WINE RECEIVER. |
| 4A. MALT FLOOR. | 15. GENERAL STOREHOUSE. | E. WASH PUMP. | QA. " CHARGER. |
| 5. KILN. | 16. EXCISE WAREHOUSE. | F. TURBINE. | R. WASH CHARGER. |
| 6. BARLEY LOFT. | 16A. MALT FLOOR. | G. CENTRIFUGAL PUMP. | T. STILL. |
| 6A. MALT FLOOR. | 16B. BARLEY LOFT. | H. UNDERBACK. | V. PATENT CONDENSERS. |
| 7. MALT BARN. | 17. GLEANER STORE. | I. MILL. | W. WORMS. |
| 8. SPIRIT STORE. | 18. EXCISE WAREHOUSE. | J. WASH BACKS. | X. SPIRIT VAT. |
| 9. OIL STORE. | 19. " OFFICE. | K. REFRIGERATORS, above Javel Works. | Y. WATER WHEEL. |
| 10. GENERAL OFFICES (Excise) | 20. STILL HOUSE. | L. WORTS RECEIVER, ditto. | Z. WATER SUPPLY & FILTER. |
| 11. PRIVATE OFFICE. | 21. DRAFF HOUSE. | M. SPIRIT VAT. | |
| 12. LAMP ROOM. | | | |



gas-fired steam heating and direct firing was abandoned at.

As described in chapter 1, on the death of James Grigor, his widow decided to sell the distillery and, famously, Stanley P. Morrison stepped in at the very last moment to snatch the distillery from under the noses of the intending Spanish purchasers. It is said that Kay Grigor was unhappy for the firm to pass out of Scottish ownership and thus was receptive to Stanley Morrison’s bold approach. Whatever her reasons, the outcome was a happy one.

STANLEY P. MORRISON LTD /
MORRISON BOWMORE
DISTILLERS LTD
(1963–2014)

And so we come virtually to the present day. This has surely been Bowmore’s time.

In the early years, one of Islay’s best-loved characters the

Opposite: Robert MacLugish, kilnman in the 1980s



The Distillery on the shores of Loch Indaal

But all was well. Urgent phone calls were made; the correct parts were flown to Islay that afternoon; local mechanics worked into the night assisted, it is said, by the local policeman who was shut into the boot so that he could try to push out a dent! By whatever the desperate measures, by the time the Queen stepped into 'her' car for the day, all was once again well with SGE 47N, proudly flying the Royal Standard. A memorable day for any vehicle, even a Rolls.

The day was also marked by the ceremonial filling of two casks, resulting in two very special commemorative bottlings. The first The Queen's Cask (#5775) was bottled in 2002 as a 21 year old in honour of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, but these bottles were never available for retail sale. Instead, the entire consignment of 648 bottles was given to the Queen who uses them as gifts to visiting dignitaries and official guests at Buckingham Palace. One bottle of the Queen's Cask 21 year old was auctioned in 2003, raising £9,200 for the Children's Hospice Association Scotland.

The charity connection continued with the partner cask (#5774) which was purchased personally by James Howat. Following his death, the cask was passed to The JTH Charitable Trust (see chapter 4) who arranged for an official bottling as

a 30 year old expression. Morrison Bowmore designed and carried out a special bottling, yielding 156 bottles at a natural strength of 46.7%. A number of bottles were bought by the Howats' family and friends or went to auction to test the market.

The JTH Charitable Trust subsequently sold the remaining 120 bottles from the cask to leading specialist retailer The Whisky Exchange⁴¹ using the proceeds from the sale to further its good works in Scotland.

There is a further and very public connection to HM The Queen. On 4th July 2014 at Rosyth, she launched the Royal Navy's new aircraft carrier, the 65,000 tonne, £3 billion HMS Queen Elizabeth, the largest (and most expensive) ship in the Navy, which is expected to enter service in 2016, with her F35 stealth fighters arriving two years later. But she did not launch it with the traditional bottle of champagne. HMS Queen Elizabeth was launched with single malt whisky. But which whisky to choose? You've guessed: Bowmore was







*Eddie MacAffer, left, with the author, looking out over
Loch Indaal from the Distillery*

fortunate enough to be chosen; I shall let others speculate on why this distillery was preferred above all others...

A one-litre (why economise?) bottle of Bowmore Surf was used for the ceremony. “We wouldn’t generally recommend smashing a bottle of Bowmore, but given our special relationship with Her Majesty, we were delighted to make an exception on this occasion and be a proud part of the launch ceremony”, Mike Keiller, CEO of Morrison Bowmore Distillers said at the time. After all, HMS Queen Elizabeth is the single largest item ever manufactured in the UK and a testament to the country’s enduring engineering excellence. The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir George Zamballas called her “a national symbol of renewal and confidence”.

Mike also presented a bottle of Surf to the Lord Mayor of London at an associated Naval Dinner in London, also attended by the First Sea Lord and David Raines, from the Worshipful Company of Distillers. Guests toasted the future success of HMS Queen Elizabeth and HM The Queen herself with a Bowmore 25 Years Old. As Admiral Zamballas later wrote to Keiller “let us hope that not in 25 years, but in 50, the crew of HMS Queen Elizabeth will take a dram of Bowmore”.

And so our history concludes, looking not to the past but to the future.



Bowmore no more ...



...by royal command



THE DISTILLERY TODAY
THE FACTS AND FIGURES

Annual capacity: 2.2 million l.p.a.

Current output: 1.8 million l.p.a.

Malt variety: Concerto and Optic

Peating: PPM: 25–30

Mash tun: 8.00 tonne semi-Lauter

Washbacks: 6 Oregon Pine

Washback capacity: 40,000 litres

Wash Stills: 2—each has a capacity of 30,940 litres

Spirit Stills: 2—capacities of 14,750 and 14,637 litres

Boiler: Cochran Thermax 10,000 lbs/hr

Shell and Tube Condensers: 4 (2 Wash, 2 Spirit)

Yeast: 25 kg Kerry and 75 kg Mauri per Mash

On site floor maltings: Approx. 4,360 tonnes p.a.,
about 30% of requirement

Production staff: 14

Visitor Centre: 5 Star



“The granary of Aberdeenshire”