

# Feints & Foreshots



#25

## **MWSOA Chairman Craig Daniels wins Whisky Tasting Championship for 2008!!**

*Congratulations, Craig!*

Franz Scheurer reported in Australian Gourmet Pages:

The Scotch Malt Whisky Society resurrected the venerable Australian Malt Whisky Tasting Championships and put on a great competition last Saturday night at Guillaume at Bennelong. People travelled from afar to take part and the level of whisky knowledge, assembled in one room, was astounding.

They travelled from afar and you could feel the tension in the room. Some 'trained' for the event, some were just there for the fun. They had eight commercially available Single Malts placed in front of them and were given a list of ten possible choices.

The competitors then had 30 minutes to select what they thought were the correct eight whiskies, in order, and after marking the entry forms the judges found there were two winners with four correct whiskies and five winners with three correct entries. The taste-off followed and the competitors had a list of six possible whiskies and had to name the three correct ones that were placed in front of them. The results of the taste-off confirmed the first three places.

The competition whiskies were:



Balvenie 12 Double Wood  
Bushmills 10  
Cragganmore 12  
Glenkinchie 10  
Glenrothes Select Reserve  
Johnnie Walker Green Label  
Old Pulteney  
Tamdhu NAS

and the taste-off whiskies were:

Bushmills 10  
Glenmorangie 'Original' 10  
Tamdhu NAS

The winner of the Australian Malt Whisky Tasting Championships for 2008 is:

**Mr. Craig Daniels from Adelaide** being presented with the **1ST PRIZE - "Tasmanian Whisky Experience"**

A 7-day trip for two to Tasmania including flights, accommodation and car hire. The main feature of this trip will be a four-day "Tasmanian Whisky Experience" courtesy of Bill Lark at Lark Distillery.



*Craig Daniels with his prize*

Runner up was former Champion Mr. **David LeCornu**, also from Adelaide winning **2ND PRIZE - Bottle of Glenfarclas 1980 Cask 3164** and

**3RD PRIZE - Four complimentary tickets to attend SMWS tasting events** went to Ms. **Jennifer Darin** from Sydney.

*\*article and photos courtesy of Franz Scheurer, Australian Gourmet Pages*

# Feints & Foreshots



#25

## Oldest Case of Glenfarclas Goes On Display!

July 2008 - As part of the National Museum of Scotland's new gallery *Scotland: A Changing Nation*, the oldest unopened case of Glenfarclas Single Highland Malt Scotch Whisky goes on public display this week. *Scotland: A Changing Nation* explores how cultural, social, political and economic influences have impacted on people in Scotland since the First World War.

The history of the oldest unopened case of Glenfarclas is intriguing. It was one of fifty shipped to H Albrecht and Company of Illinois in the 1930s. Mr Shrive, an engineer, purchased six cases. Surprisingly, despite the recent repeal of prohibition, the stock was not consumed very quickly. By 1994 there was one case and one bottle remaining. Mr Shrive's son wrote to Glenfarclas offering the remaining bottles to the distillery.

Realising the significance of the case, John Grant, Chairman and 5<sup>th</sup> generation of the family that own and manage Glenfarclas, and the distillery's Sales Director at the time, Malcolm Greenwood, travelled to the US to collect the whisky. So precious was the consignment that British Airways arranged a First Class seat for the case on its journey home.

Robert Ransom, Director of Sales and Marketing at Glenfarclas, commented: *'We have no plans to open this remarkable case of Glenfarclas. It is fitting that it will now be on public display and form part of the Scotland: A Changing Nation gallery, thus helping to illustrate the importance of the whisky industry to Scotland.'*

*Scotland: A Changing Nation* gallery opens at the National of Scotland in Chambers Street, Edinburgh, on 11<sup>th</sup> July.



## LARK DISTILLERY WINS INTERNATIONAL AWARD... FOR GIN!

By Ian Neubauer

A Tasmanian gin has become the first Australian gin made in copper pot stills to win international recognition at an awards event. [Lark Distillery](#) was awarded a bronze medal for its Pepperberry gin at this year's International Wine and Spirit Competition in London.

Lark Distillery global sales manager, Ross Dinsmoor, said he was ecstatic about the win.

"It may not be a gold or silver but it was still considered the best Australian gin at the competition," he said. "And it's also the highest award ever given to an Australian made copper pot still gin."

Pepperberry gin is crystal clear in colour with aromas of fresh grated pepper on a floral bed of herbs and spices underpinning juniper notes. Rose petals and juniper combine to create a dry, clean and complex palate, finished with lemon peel dryness.

Lark's range includes its flagship single malt whisky, pepperberry vodka, bush liqueur and Slainté, a blend of single malt whisky with a distilled spirit of herbs and spices.

# Feints & Foreshots



#25

Ask the Expert: Whisky tasting winner **Craig Daniels** outlines the secrets of winning a tasting, and some tipping tips for beginners!

Q: This is your second win in the whisky tasting championship: what do you think it takes to make a good whisky taster?

**A: An intense interest if not a passion and a good palate, especially a good nose and a willingness to try and compare a lot of whiskies and build a 'library' of tasting notes over time; but mostly a passion that reflects an intense and visceral engagement with the spirit.**

Q: What do you enjoy about it?

**A: The thing that really blows me away about single malt whisky as a category is the amazing range of aromas and flavours and how the production process from malting through to maturation can influence the final product that ends up in your glass, maybe 5 years or maybe even 25 plus years later. As a bit of a student of brown spirits in general, the other thing that really attracted me to SMW was that there wasn't a linear progression from OK to good to great based on price. In this way SMW is more akin to Armagnac rather than Cognac as the best single malt scotches are not the oldest or the most expensive. You can buy "rolled gold" great malts for less than \$100 and those malts are always highlighted through blind tastings.**



Q: Can tasting skills developed in wine tasting be carried across to whisky tasting? Are there similar principles at work in your opinion?

**A: Yes very much so. If someone can discern that a wine has been matured in American oak as opposed to French oak, then the same discrimination can be applied to whisky. A lot of the descriptors are common across both wine and whisky. I figure a good palate is a good palate regardless of the liquor under examination, but experience and familiarity across a broad spectrum within the category is also critical to long term tasting success and credibility. I dabbled in wine options and did alright, but my knowledge of wines from France, USA and Italy was insufficient for that particular game.**

# Feints & Foreshots

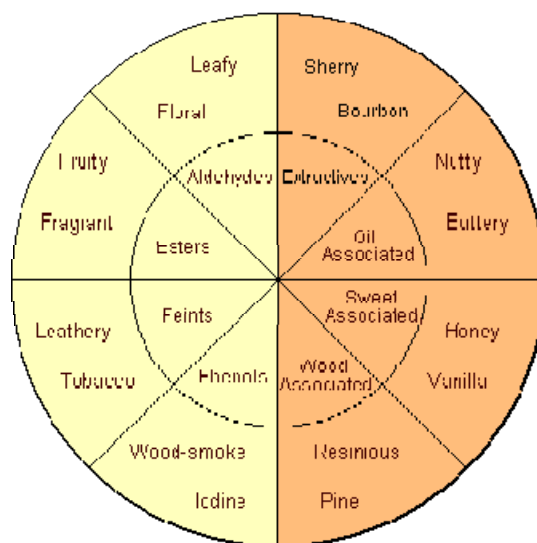
Ask the Expert: interview with Whisky tasting winner  
**Craig Daniels** continued...



#25

Q: Are there any tips for young players out there: how do you increase your accuracy as a taster – are there any things you should avoid?

**A: Lots of practice then nosing and tasting different whiskies in different company, but always set up in the same way. Always do your tasting with a fresh palate and never do it with any strong aromas in the room. Don't wash your hands with perfumed soap before you sit down to nose. Don't wear perfume, eau de cologne or scented deodorants. Never do your practice tasting whiskies after a meal or after drinking wine or beer.**



Q: Nose vs taste: which gets you over the line?

**A: Nose is 80% of the decision making process. Firstly there are more discernible aromas than tastes and secondly anyone in a competition should avoid drinking malts for as long as they can, for two reasons; one the alcohol dulls both the olfactory equipment and anaesthetises the palate and secondly one's decision-making becomes less reliable as the alcohol impacts on the brain.**

Q: Do you rate any of the whiskies you had to taste and if so which and why?

**A: When I'm putting together my tasting notes, malt markers and nutshell comments I always try and score the whiskies. It can help in a competition if the decision gets down to a choice between two whiskies and one scores 85 and one scores 80. If the whisky is performing well then it is likely to be the higher scoring whisky. Of course it doesn't work all the time, but it's another factor in the decision making mix and you have to make use of what all your senses are telling you.**

Q: What was the hardest whisky or style of whisky to pick and what was the easiest?

**A: The easiest is the Irish; there's something in the grassy, soursob, resin, vine cane sap, oil of wintergreen spectrum which is unique to Irish single malts (and blends for that matter), that tends to scream Irish at least to me. The hardest without any sense of irony were the ones I got wrong. I find mass market commercial Speysides very difficult to sort out as there is a certain flattening of aromas with very similar profiles.**

Interview: Nic Lowrey

# Feints & Foreshots

Great Southern Distilling Company:  
*Life at the forefront of whisky distilling Part 1*



#25

By Tony Browne

**If somebody had said to me** in the mid 1990s that in 2007 I would be out in South Western Australia, about as far away as you can get from Northern Scotland without bumping into a Southern penguin, distilling malt and grape spirit I would needless to say have referred them to a good 'shrink'. But here is 2007 and by a riotous, sometimes not always pleasant, set of circumstances I am doing just that. Since beginning distilling in mid December 2005 we have made about sixty barrels of spirit, roughly half grape and half malt. The grape is just nudging ahead at the moment due to us acquiring a large amount of Riesling wine locally in February, most of which is now in spirit form in barrels.

**Products so far** have been malt and grape distillates, which will, of course, not come of age until early 2008, but we have also ventured into the vodka and gin game, distilling permeate wine in the pot stills then carbon filtering it over a five week period giving a very pleasant neutral spirit, which is slowly gaining momentum in sales getting some much appreciated cash flow back for our founder Cameron, who is suffering serious open wallet surgery as a result of this project!



**Our Citrus Vodka and Distilled Gin** are getting good public reaction so far, and once we are in our new permanent home in the next few months, I am sure a good few bottles of that will shift then. As I am not gifted with the Michael Jackson bloodhound nose, my work on the Gin and vodka stops at the distilling stage, if I had to formulate the recipe I would be in trouble, so that is where our Ben comes in, and it looks like he has hit the button nicely, on the Gin especially.

Much of the above was a substantial learning curve for all including myself who's previous experience was making malt whisky, and nothing but more malt whisky, but we seem to have got there, even if it did cause the odd grey hair.

## **Our process**

**At present the only brewing** and fermenting we do is for an eventual malt whisky, which can only be called that after two years on wood in Australian law. Although the same basic principles are employed as say the Scotch Whisky industry, there

are differences notably in the brewing and fermentation stages due to our different scale, and the limitations on the raw materials we have in this part of the World, i.e. we are pretty well forced to use beer malt instead of distilling malt as there is not the demand for the maltsters here to produce the higher diastatic malts used in distilling. As a result we will never achieve the 420 to 450 litres of alcohol per tonne they expect in Scotland, but more is not always better.....

**On that subject** I was looking at our barrel stock from the last year and a half, it would just about equal a days production at my former Scottish distillery, but again please refer to the previous sentence. **The distilling principles** we use are the same regardless of the material involved, but I will run through the brewing and fermenting processes and try to compare with the Scottish industry method, as like I had already said there are differences - most notably the scale!!

## **Milling**

**Here is where we enter the process:** I have no experience of malting, and hope it stays that way, although Cameron is hinting at trying some peating, but that is another story. Now *that* I would like as I find the smell of peat that overpowers you most days as you arrive in Bowmore intoxicating. They say the perfect grist is a 70/20/10 one, which is 70% grist, 20% husks and 10% flour. That is all very nice but in a perfect World this is rarely the case.

**In the Scottish distilleries** constant monitoring of the grist is essential, as there is always variation from one batch of malt to another. The old tried and tested sieve box is used and works very well. The most important thing to avoid is definitely too much flour, usually resulting in stuck mashes, loss of extract etc.

# Feints & Foreshots

Great Southern Distilling Company:  
*Life at the forefront of whisky distilling Part 1*



#25

**Now for the Western Australia analysis** method, as follows...Day one: set the mill rollers at 0.95MM apart and see what happens!!! Initially this flying blind method compared to the exacting way of doing things in Scotland was a tad alarming. When I asked some of the established distillery guys out here, it seemed to be 'take a look, if it looks alright, then leave it alone', "What?!" Says me? After all get this bit wrong and the other disasters will follow

**So into the dark I go**, and eighteen months later I now wonder what all the fuss was about, it has been the case since a few minor adjustments to the mill rollers, leave it alone, if it's not broken don't fix it. And the yield figures seem to speak for themselves, so here ends the sermon on milling.

## Mashing

**Here lay the next culture shock** compared to Scotland, 300kg mash instead of 12 tonnes, and where is the mash tun stirrer, oh sorry that's you and a shovel Tony! The first major difference now occurs after mashing in, which took a little development, but now works beautifully even if I say so myself. First is the strike temperature between the water and the milled malt. You would be aiming to get the mash strike temperature of 63 to 64 degrees C with Scottish distilling malt, due to it's different diastatic properties, in fact as I remember if you went over 65 at this stage, start worrying.



**But as I am using brewing malt**, 66 DEG C is wanted here, so add a couple of degrees to the water temp, oops sorry liquor, I forgot the word water upsets some in the business. In a typical Scottish malt distillery, draining the mash tun begins almost straight after mashing in due to the ferocity of the enzymes in distilling malt which apparently are still beavering away even in the fermenter or washback. Now with the more laid back enzymes in the beer malt, the mash has to be left at least 90 minutes to ensure a good starch conversion, which should have occurred after 45 minutes or so, but the same time again is needed to give the correct glucose/dextrins ratio, too much dextrins resulting in a poor or stuck fermentation.

# Feints & Foreshots

Great Southern Distilling Company:  
*Life at the forefront of whisky distilling Part 1*



#25

**This different way of mashing** was not too much of a shock as I have been making grain beers for a hobby for twenty years; the only difference is that I am not boiling it with hops here, of course. After mashing in a 20 minute recirculation of wort is also carried out, I think that is supposed to give the enzymes a good mix and kill a few bugs, but don't quote me on that one, it was always a subject of debate at my distillery in Scotland from experience, so we just did it and shut up. After 100 minutes rest the wort drain to an intermediate vessel begins. Here was another culture shock for me, where is the underback I ask?



**For those who don't know** what that is, it is basically a small intermediate vessel which is first filled slowly with wort from the mash tun before it is pumped and cooled and then sent to the washback. It's purpose it to stop the mash bed being pulled down hard using basic physics: that is keeping the mash tun level and underback level the same or as near as. If the underback gets too low then the mash bed can be pulled down, and then usually the rest of the drain is a nightmare. Instead, to hold the mash back but also to pump out the wort at the same time from the tun, we have a device called a diaphragm pump, which operates by positive displacement. Cameron tells me "no please don't ask me any more, all I know is watch the oil level". A rough rule of thumb here is wort flow rate from the tun of 1 litre every 17 seconds, but I am afraid I have started using the same eye I use for the grist analysis for that one – again, if it's not broken don't fix it! Once the wort has drained to about an inch of the top of the mash bed, sparging begins to rinse out the remaining sugars. I have settled for 80 degrees c for this. I am not going to bore myself or you with times etc, as no two mashes are generally the same: I like to think my trained eye takes care of things nicely. After about four hours hopefully the fermenter volume has been made up to about 1250 litres and the sweet wort with yeast can be pumped to our stainless steel fermenter for the final conversion to alcohol.

By Tony Browne

***To be continued in Part 2 next Feints and Foreshots!!!***

# Feints & Foreshots



#25

## EVENT REVIEW:

### Islay Whisky Dinner at the Parmelia Hilton in Perth

By Franz Scheurer

Many of the more interesting whiskies simply aren't sold or available in Perth and after a successful Scotch Malt Whisky Society dinner a few months ago, where I organized the menu and matches, I was asked to hold an Islay specific whisky dinner.

Looking around for a suitable venue I considered Michael Schmidt, executive chef at the Parmelia Hilton, to be my man, and I was right. The Parmelia Hilton's resources are immense and nothing is too much trouble for the helpful staff and the very accommodating management. I set a date and went to work, selecting the whiskies and discussing the requirements and the menu with Michael Schmidt. This is the final menu and whiskies we came up with:

#### On arrival

Gougères  
Ardbeg Uigeadail

Entrée 1  
Clear Consommé with Pork Dumplings, Ginger and Lemongrass  
Bowmore Enigma, 12 y/o, 40% a/v

Entrée 2  
Brioche with Bone Marrow  
Laphroaig 12 y/o, 1994, 46% a/v

Entrée 3  
Double-Baked Cheese Soufflé  
Caol Ila, No age statement, 59.2% a/v (possibly about 11/y/o)

Main  
Slow Roasted Wagyu Beef Shins with Red Wine Risotto  
Bruichladdich Infinity, No age statement, 55.5% a/v.  
(4-5 y/o heavily peated Port Charlotte with older, lighter Bruichladdich whiskies)

Dessert  
White Chocolate Crème Brûlée with Candied Orange/Grapefruit  
SMWS 33.65-Ardbeg, May 98-Nov 07, 9 y/o 57.6% a/v

Thanks to the tireless energy from local whisky nut Brian McSkimming and the support of the Scotch Malt Whisky Society and its members, the dinner sold out in record time and I am happy to report that the matches were absolutely stunning.

**Michael Schmidt's** food was exactly as planned with touches of brilliance, perfect timing and surprisingly agile and friendly service. There was nothing 'function' about this dinner, but a gathering of gourmands enjoying a few drams with some superb food. Congratulations to everyone who made the night a success and thanks to all the patrons for supporting such an esoteric event.

### Franz Scheurer's Quick Tips for Whisky Matching with your meal!

- ❖ The art of matching whisky to food follows the laws that govern wine & food matching, with the added dimension of high alcohol.
- ❖ You need to either match a dish (same aromas and flavours prevalent in both) or contrast the dish (salt opposite sweet, heat opposite sour and hard versus soft textures).
- ❖ The difficult part is to build a taste memory in both food and whisky so you can recognize a match or contrast immediately, without hours of trial and error.



# *Feints & Foreshots*

## ENDNOTES



#25

### *Musings from the Chair:*

a monthly view on malts by Chairman of MWSOA, Craig Daniels

I don't necessarily recall how often I get asked, but I guess it averages about once a fortnight when people heading off to Scotland request recommendations on which distilleries to visit, so I figured why don't I put my thoughts on paper and get them into *Feints & Foreshots* and then I can just e-mail a link when next I'm asked.

So here goes, my recommendations on the **Best Distilleries to visit in Scotland**.

I've been to Scotland twice and managed to visit around 80 distilleries, not all of them open and most of them not open to the public (and some of them not even open to the most insistent of malt tragics) but I just wanted to see as many of them as I could, as a sort of pilgrimage or a pildrassage as some of my more lexically adventurous malty acquaintances have termed such expeditions.

Some of the distilleries were pretty hard to locate, as some of them were now car parks or shopping centres; other were stuck down country lanes (**Balblair** and Braes of **Glenlivet/Breval**) and some had entry roads under motorways (Dalmore) and a couple of them totally defeated me – **Speyburn** and **Glen Spey**, I just couldn't find even with a decent map.

Of the ones I visited I'd recommend the following.

Near Glasgow in the lowlands, **Glengoyne** is definitely worth a look. It is most picturesque with a lovely peaceful and serene aspect and a nice rusticated tasting room and the tour end dram is solid too.

In Speyside I'd visit **Glenfarclas**, **Aberlour**, **Glen Grant** and **Glenfiddich**. **Glenfarclas** has probably the best visitor centre in Scotland and the salvaged stateroom from the *SS Empress of Australia* is a sight to behold. **Aberlour** has one of the best tours and one of the best tastings at the end. It's relatively expensive but six drams at the end is worth it. They may also have a couple of casks in the tasting room where you can fill your own 'valinch', for a price. It's not cheap but it is a rare dram as the yield from the casks is fairly modest at cask strength. **Glen Grant** is worth a look for the magnificent gardens and the tasting room is nice even if it has a slightly jarring Scandinavian 'blonde' wood feel to it. **Glenfiddich** is a must, not only because it's the 'brand' that led the single malt charge, but also because the place has a great feel, the staff who work there live and breathe **Glenfiddich** and who knows you might get a chance to tour the mythic **Balvenie**, still one notch on my belt that I don't yet have.

If you're not on a tight schedule and can afford time to make the diversion to Forres, then both **Benromach** and **Dallas Dhu** are more than worth a look; **Benromach**, because it has a nice feel and is a beautiful example of a compact distillery where all the production processes are logically connected and the overall mashing and distillation process is made crystal clear. **Dallas Dhu** isn't producing, but it is a museum and you can get close to the whole process and get a feel for the scale of what and how artisan producers operated. They'll more than likely serve you a blend Roderick Dhu, so if the thought of a blend fails to thrill, prepare beforehand and fill your flask with a charge of independently bottled **Dallas Dhu**, or just go with the flow and nod politely when they offer you the blend.

# Feints & Foreshots

## ENDNOTES



#25

### Musings from the Chair:

a monthly view on malts by Chairman of MWSOA Craig Daniels...CONTINUED

If you have time to head north, then **Glenmorangie** near Tain is worth a visit. The tour is very good and they give you a choice of dram at the end – I'd recommend the 15yo or the Nectar D'or – both a step up in class from the ubiquitous 10yo.

Of course no true whisky lover could leave Scotland without travelling to Islay (pronounced eye-luh) and if the truth be told, four of the very best whisky tourist experiences are contained within a fairly small piece of real estate. All of the distilleries on Islay are worth a look but in my opinion you'd be a mug to miss **Ardbeg**, **Laphroaig**, **Bruichladdich** and **Bunnahabhain**. No surprise about the first two as there are plenty of people (me included) who'd have a handful of expressions of **Ardbeg** and **Laphroaig** in their best ever drams compendium, but the sites are special too. There is something both magical and slightly spooky about the seascape around the south coast trio and sitting on the rocks at **Ardbeg** with a dram and something seafoody (like freshly shucked oysters with shredded rocket and lime juice) is a treat. **Bruichladdich** is also well worth a look – it's much more of a time capsule than the others, most of the equipment survives from the 1880's and people and not computers control the production process. There's a passion about **Bruichladdich** that's hard to deny and even harder to ignore, even if they are the best self publicists in the game.

**Bunnahabhain** might surprise a few, but I've always liked the whisky and I fell in love with the distillery locale. All that grey granite and slate gives it a certain gravitas and a slightly mournful visage hinting at a reflective melancholia. A trip out to the end of the pier with a picnic of pork pie and/or scotch egg and a very generous nip of the 12yo is highly recommended. Of course that leaves **Lagavulin**; it was fine but it just didn't push the right buttons – more reserved, (even crusty) and much more corseted and sedate than **Ardbeg** – a bit like the whisky. And I've left out **Bowmore** and **Caol Ila**. The latter is worth it for the view from the still rooms to the Paps of Jura and while **Bowmore** is fine it just lacks the élan and ambience of the others.

If you have either cause or reason to motor into the Borders, then I can highly recommend **Bladnoch**. The dram is usually solid and the folks at the place are friendly, knowledgeable and utterly without side or guile. The surroundings are quite beautiful and there's great little picnic spots scattered around the immediate environs, as long as you remember to stock the larder at a suitable large supermarket on the journey there. Lemon sorbet and a dram of un-sherried **Bladnoch** would make a fitting match and a rewarding interlude.

Of course there are plenty of 'tourist destinations' that I haven't mentioned and **others** might like to offer **their** thoughts on **alternative destinations** that they'd like to recommend.

If you'd like to agree or disagree, drop me a line on [clandrum@picknowl.com.au](mailto:clandrum@picknowl.com.au)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

For 2008's Feints and Foreshots we encourage all members to write in with any questions, feedback, event reviews, event information or anything else you'd like to add to Feints and Foreshots! Email the editor at [fnfeditor@mwsOA.com.au](mailto:fnfeditor@mwsOA.com.au) .

# Feints & Foreshots

## ENDNOTES



#25



THE NEWS YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!!!!



### **2009 MWSOA CONVENTION: FIRST ANNOUNCEMENTS!**

- ⇒ Australia's 4th **Malt Whisky Convention** in Hobart runs from 6.30pm on **Friday 28th** to 5.00pm on **Sunday 30th August 2009**.
  
- ⇒ The tentative program is a Welcome Party at **Lark Distillery** on Friday evening with the rest of the Convention at the Old Woolstore Apartment Hotel with the plenaries and exclusive tastings during the day on Saturday with a Gala Dinner on Saturday night and the Great Whisky Exposition on the Sunday. The final program including 3 tastings and guest speakers should be ready about February 2009.
  
- ⇒ As a separately ticketed event, our first ever MWSOA organized, lead and sponsored **Whisky Tour** is a two day event which runs from **9.00am on Thursday 27th August until 5.30pm on Friday 28th August 2009**. There are limited places on the whisky tour, nominally titled "Celebrate the Grain" so please send any indication of interest in this part of the Event Programme to Craig Daniels: [clandrum@picknowl.com.au](mailto:clandrum@picknowl.com.au).

### **STOP PRESS**

**Malt Whisky Society of Australia website is**



**A new bigger better more useful MWSOA website is on the way with plenty of features and even more information about Malt Whisky!!!**