



Feints and Foreshots



WELCOME TO

Feints and Foreshots #27

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MWSOA CONVENTION: ANOTHER VICTIM OF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

The 2009 Convention has been postponed. Chairman Craig Daniels tells us why on **P. 14**

ALEX BRUCE FROM ADELPHI TALKS MALTS

Alex Bruce from reputed Scottish Independent Bottler took some tastings in Australia: we were there and caught the show **P. 7**

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WHISKY TALES

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES: WHISKY DRINKING IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

This edition of Feints and Foreshots has a wealth of not only interesting stories but also vital information for our subscribers! A special open letter to members by our Chairman Craig Daniels talks about the current state of whisky sponsorship and investment in Australia (p14), while Alex Bruce from Adelphi distillery outlines that his niche market for boutique single malts has never been better (p7). Bars all over Australia are experiencing difficult times, and some of the more specialist bars serving higher quality alcohol - including single malts - are offering extraordinary specials and theme nights trying to ensure their doors stay open. It's definitely a time to support your local purveyors of single malt, as well as, of course, your local distilleries and importers where you can. The availability of single malts by the glass has never been better than it is right now so take advantage of the great range of choices out there and special events/tastings. We'll feature as many as we can, and of course if you are running an event or tasting, please let us know.



APRIL EVENT LISTING

Melbourne - April, date TBA

Whisky matching dinner at Libertine Dining Room, North Melbourne organised by Australian Gourmet Pages' Franz Schuerer. Find out more at: <http://www.libertinedining.com.au/main.html>

Brisbane - Narangba Malt Whisky Club meets last Saturday of month at various locations. Contact Bryan for details as below:

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WHERE TO DRINK WHISKY IN...

Adelaide

The City of Churches has more than one kind of holy water available! The water of life otherwise known as a good dram of single malt is available by the glass at the following establishments hand picked by our chairman Craig Daniels.

The Wheatsheaf

Nestled away in the inner suburb of Thebarton, the Wheatsheaf is a sprawling pub which offers live entertainment, boutique beers and an ever changing malt whisky selection which always features some intriguing malts. Currently on the menu are: Knappogue, Benromach Organic and a Macallan 1950s. They also feature a whisky taster which gives you three tastes for \$15.

39 George St, Thebarton - +61 8 8443 4546 www.wheatsheafhotel.com.au

The Rob Roy

Situated in the heart of the city in Halifax Street, The Rob Roy is well placed to serve after work or after dinner drinks. They have an extensive and impressive whisky list and are known to run Whisky Degustations from time to time. Currently featured on their menu are a couple of unusual malts: Tullibardine John Black Selection 2 1987 57.2% and the Adelphi Caol Ila Bourbon cask 1993 59.4%. Last but very much not least, the Rob Roy are a sponsor of the MWSOA so all the more reason to drop by for a dram.

106 Halifax St Adelaide, SA 5000, Australia +61 8 8223 5391 www.robroyhotel.com.au

Any more suggestions of places offering a great selection of single malts in Adelaide? Email us on fnfeditor@mwsOA.org.au and give us your additions!



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New on Retail Shelves

Our good friends from Gordon & MacPhail would like members to know that there are new malts now available from interesting and venerable distilleries which are not readily available in official releases.

Gordon & MacPhail have a great reputation for producing fine malts from more obscure, yet estimable distilleries.

Currently on retail shelves are an interesting and representative Speyside selection such as:

- **Longmorn 12yo 40%** - very well regarded Speyside malt of middle weight and considerable elegance. The G&M bottlings are often richer and rounder than the distillery releases.
- **Mortlach 15yo 43%** - a sadly neglected Dufftown malt with an enviable reputation amongst malt fans. Michael Jackson calls it a "Speyside Classic" and the G&M releases are one of the very few ways you can savour it.
- **Connoisseurs Choice Inchgower 1993 43%** - one of the major constituent malts for Bells blended whisky, it is not currently available as an OB. A nutty and malty Speyside that also has coastal characters.
- **Benromach Peat Smoke 2000 46%** - Peated malts from Speyside distilleries are still quite rare. Malts from Ardmore and Benriach will give you some idea, but Benromach have released one with malt phenols at 35ppm (which is in the peating vicinity of Bowmore).

Available from a Dan Murphys in your state. www.danmurphys.com.au



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CASK STRENGTH BLUES

Andrew Derbidge

In deep Bruce Ferrier announcer voice:
“The following article contains drug references. It is intended for mature audiences. The MWSOA advises reader discretion.”

I'm reliably informed that alcohol is a drug. People use it, abuse it, rely on it, swear *by* it, and *at* it. It alters our mental state and makes us do things we might not otherwise have done if we were sober or clear-headed. For example, the other day, with a few under my belt, I found myself drinking a blend. Fortunately, there were no witnesses...

In the case of some drugs, long-time users find that the small doses or weaker concentrations they started off with no longer satisfy. We hear countless stories of addicts who started on something soft; found their experience reached a plateau; then they upgraded to something stronger to reach a new high. I'll leave the chemistry of it to the scientists, but in layman's terms, our receptors grow dull and bored and need a stronger, more powerful hit to get excited again. As is the case for most substances of addiction, be it alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, or narcotics, we develop a *tolerance* over time.

A similar analogy exists with food. Those whose diets are high in salt find that unsalted dishes taste bland. Chillies and heat are another example – an Indian colleague I used to work with admitted that if the curry wasn't hot enough, he simply couldn't

taste anything. See where this is going yet?

If your whisky journey is anything like mine, then you probably started off drinking blends. Ignoring the issues of blends versus single malts for a moment, the important thing to note is that the whiskies would have been bottled at 40% alcohol by volume, and the corresponding level of alcohol burn was what your tastebuds calibrated themselves to.

One day you did your tastebuds a favour and got into single malts. In the case of some brands and bottlings, this meant that the odd whisky came bottled at 43% ABV. Shortly afterwards, things got even more interesting when a few brands decided to release some expressions that were non-chillfiltered. For some fairly scientific reasons that deserve their own separate article, these whiskies were bottled at 46%.

At this stage in the game, your tastebuds were seriously indebted to you. The absence of chillfiltration left the whisky chock-full of all the oils, congeners and goodies that deliver the flavour and the mouthfeel. And at 46%, the whisky was less diluted and started to grip your mouth and nostrils.

Of course, some companies felt that another step up the rung was necessary. Douglas Laing's "Old Malt Cask" bottlings deliver the goods at 50%. Their marketing guff suggests that this is the optimal strength for enjoying single malts. It supposedly strikes the perfect balance of flavour yet without excessive burn. Whilst I have no major objection to that notion, I strongly suggest that economics also played a role in their decision...you can sell far

more bottles from a cask if you bulk it out with water first!

So at this stage in your journey, you've taken your palate from 40% whiskies to the dizzying heights of 46% or 50%, and there's one final mountain to climb: The Cask Strength Malt !

Wind the clock back 10 years or so, and cask strength malts were a pretty rare beast. Certainly in this country, the only commercially available OB (*official bottling*) expressions I can recall being on the market at the time were Glenfarclas 105 and Aberlour a'bunadh. Those of us in whisky clubs might have had access to the odd private bottling or special import of a single cask bottling, but there's no denying that a cask strength whisky was a rare and cherished item.

And so it was that many of us took our first sip of cask strength and gave our jaded tastebuds a new high. Yes, there was a new burn to overcome and a kick that took some getting used to. And then - you'd conquered it!

Having reached the top of the mountain, two things suddenly become very apparent. First of all, you can't go any higher! The cut taken for the collection of spirit will be anywhere between 80% and 65%, depending on the distillery, but let's take a crude average of 72%. Many distilleries then reduce to 63.5% at filling stage, and so the *average* 12yo Scottish single malt will come out of the cask at somewhere around 55% – 60%. So unless you start drinking new make spirit, you'll rarely find a scotch that's stronger than 60% anyway.



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CASK STRENGTH BLUES continued

The second thing that becomes apparent from the top of the mountain is that all the whiskies below you suddenly seem less exciting. Returning to the original analogy of the drug addict, someone who is used to experiencing the intense high of heroin probably isn't going to get too excited by the prospect of marijuana. And so it is, personally, for me: The majority of whisky I drink these days is cask strength, single cask, single malt. Not because I'm precious, snobby, or elitist about the stuff, but I am confronted with a fair chunk of it in my role with the *other* Society. And so when I pour myself a garden variety OB at 40%, I must confess that my tastebuds have to work a little harder to rise to the occasion.

That's not to say I don't enjoy the 40% or 43% whiskies – give me an OB Glenfarclas 15 or OB Lagavulin 16 anyday! But – for fairly obvious reasons – the impact they have on my palate is less powerful than my preferred cask-strength drams. And having spoken with many whisky colleagues on this subject in recent times, it appears I'm not alone. Roll out the cask strength blues.

The absolute of it all is that distillation is the art of producing

flavoured alcohol. The flavour of the whisky is in the alcohol first, then tamed and expanded by the contribution of oak during maturation. And so it follows that, in reducing the strength of the whisky, we are not just diluting the alcohol, but – by definition – we are also diluting the flavour. And there, my friends, is the rub: All things being equal, a whisky at 40% alcohol has less flavour than a cask-strength whisky at, say, 58% alcohol. Ha! But, of course, things never *are* equal, are they?

Yes, other factors are at play, and it's not just the lower alcohol that makes some of these OB's seem relatively weaker in flavour. The vast majority of these lower strength bottlings will have been chillfiltered, whereas most of the independent bottlers who bottle at cask strength leave their whiskies unchillfiltered. Furthermore, many of the commercially available OB's have spirit caramel added – a substance that darkens the colour but can dull or mask a malt's more subtle notes and complexities. Conversely, most of the independent bottlers make a point of *not* adding caramel to their cask strength malts – again, allowing the whisky's full flavour to shine.

So for these three reasons, namely (i) more flavoured alcohol, (ii) no chillfiltering, and (iii) no caramel, the vast majority of cask strength whiskies on the market will definitely deliver a richer, fuller,

and more flavoured taste experience.

So before the seasoned drinker gets a case of the cask strength blues and dismisses all 40% whiskies, it's important to realise that you're no longer comparing apples with apples. Yes, your palate has developed a tolerance for higher strength alcohol, but you've also allowed your tastebuds to become accustomed to non-chillfiltered, non-caramel-added drams. Some might even go so far as to say you've spoiled yourself! The trick, then, is to be alert to what is going on and to re-train your palate. In many ways, this is a good thing – your tastebuds need to learn to look harder for the subtleties and nuances of a malt, rather than have them splashed up in big capital letters. You'll actually develop a more delicate and sensitive palate that can work at both ends of the spectrum.

Again, please – let no one interpret these musings as me shunning, dismissing, or being critical of the humble 40% OB. We should always enjoy going back to where we started. Er...except for that bit about the blends.

Andrew Derbidge

(Andrew is the Cellarmaster for the Scotch Malt Whisky Society in Australia – an organisation that bottles cask strength, single casks!)



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GREAT SOUTHERN DISTILLERY:

LIFE AT THE FOREFRONT OF WHISKY DISTILLING: PART 3

BY TONY BROWNE

In the first two installments Tony took us through the process of brewing, mashing, the tricks of temperature, rogue yeast and the feints and foreshots in distilling a malt whisky. If you missed the first two installments or you'd just like to refresh your memory, they are available on the MWSoA website in our previous two journal editions.

Click here to see installment one:

http://www.mwsoa.org.au/web_images/FEINTS_AND_FORESHOTS%2024%20Sept.pdf

Click here for installment two:

http://www.mwsoa.org.au/web_images/FnF%20December%202008.pdf

Tony finishes with:

A note on wine distillation

Wine spirit is made in the same way as whisky with only one difference, it must be said.

Due to the higher strength of wine than malt wash, the low wines will generally be over 30% ABV, above this strength some of the heavy oils can dissolve into the ethanol and can ruin the spirit quality on the second distillation. This is never an issue with malt wash as it will rarely be over 25% ABV.

Consequently, prior to the spirit distillation, wine, low wines and feints will be diluted to below 30% ABV to avoid this problem, otherwise the process is identical.

And finally - the barrel

Many say this is the most important part of the process: maturation. Despite all the complexities of the process, which I have tried to abbreviate (honest!), the final part - the contact with the wood in the barrel over

a period of years - is vital to produce whisky and brandy.

This is not my top subject by any means yet, it could be said we are all on a learning curve here. We are using a mixture of American Oak (more friendly to malt spirit) and French Oak (nice for the brandies). Barrels are a mixture of ex-winery, some re-toasted, which I think are going to do the business on malt nicely, the odd bourbon one and eventually some ex Jack Daniels ones re-made to 100 litre capacity which should be just the job for our malt spirit.

There are so many variables here, only time will reveal the final picture. One thing we do know is not to totally mature malt in ex red wine and/or French Oak, the results will probably be disastrous. A fair amount of re-racking of spirit was carried out last year to keep on top of this and early results definitely look promising. I look forward to next year when our malt comes of age, where I will do some quality control testing of my own... it's a tough job but somebody has to do it.

And on that note, here's to the future malts and brandies, the ten year olds, the fifteens, etc, etc.

By Tony Browne

<http://www.distillery.com.au/>





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Alex Bruce from Adelphi Independent Bottlers, Scotland, in conversation:

Tasting @ Melbourne City Wine Shop Wed 4th March, 6pm



Alex Bruce is the sales & marketing director and also, with “chief nose and industry guru” Charles MacLean, does the tasting for Adelphi: when they are offered a sample of whisky to purchase, Alex participates heavily in the choosing process. He joined Adelphi in 2004, after working in the wine industry both in marketing and ordering/tasting for a number of years. Due to its strict selection process, Adelphi Distillery only manages to find approximately 40 to 50 casks of whisky per year - of the samples they are offered, on average only 1/40 is of acceptable quality for their requirements. They choose whiskies for their ‘interesting’ qualities more than anything, although, due to the nature of single cask selection, the type and palate of the whiskies they buy vary considerably.

According to Alex, developing a nose for whisky is “all about experience. When Charles was first introducing me to nosing whisky he handed me a glass and asked me to identify what I found. “It’s a bit woody” I said. “Spot on!” he replied. “It’s the scent of the wood shavings on the floor of a sawmill.” He has an anecdotal visualization and association with the flavours in whisky.

He introduced the first of the whiskies:

Clynelish 1993, 14 year old Highland at 57.0% vol. Cask no. 7541

According to Alex “most Diageo whiskies have a “taste catch phrase” and the catch phrase of Clynelish is “honey/waxy”. The story goes that a few years ago the distillery decided to replace a cast iron receiving tank during annual maintenance. They went to great expense to get an identical receiver built from stainless steel. They put the whisky through it and then gave it to the usual lab nuts to sample and then... all hell broke loose. They had lost the waxy texture from the whisky!!! They had to have the receiver rebuilt in cast iron, and after a few months of use the waxy flavour began to emerge again. The belief is that it was some kind of “terroir-based bacteria” which coexists in the receiver at this particular distillery and gives Clynelish its’ waxy texture and scent. Aged in a refill American oak, ex-bourbon cask, Alex and Charles have assessed this malt as having “fruit salad, mandarin, honey, wood spice and dusty chocolate characteristics on the nose, with some ‘nose prickle’. Add just enough water to your malt to avoid the nose prickle, ideally. With water, the waxiness of this malt really comes out.”

As a side note to mentioning the cask type, Alex said that there is a phrase in the trade that ‘the wood makes the whisky’. He explained that ‘oak used to cask whisky is usually either from America and from casks previously filled with Bourbon, or from Europe and from casks previously filled with sherry. Scotch whisky very rarely goes into virgin oak. American oak gives whisky a pale to dark golden colour depending on how many times the cask has been



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refilled. It also lends a sweet taste to the malt: notes of coconut on the nose and palate. European casks give whisky a mahogany chestnut colour and coffee, dried fruits and tannins on the nose and palate.”

The second whisky was then introduced:

Dalmore 1990, 17 year old Highland at 59.7% vol.. Cask no. 7327

Alex gave a very entertaining and indirect description of this malt:

“It’s a European oaked cask with typical sherry characteristics. There were 590 bottles made of this whisky, bottled at cask strength with no chill filtering. There is some very minimal filtering done of our whiskies as it is filled into the bottling headers, just to get rid of materials like hessian and charcoal inside the casks. Scotch whisky is filled into cask at around 63.5% alcohol, sometimes higher, but if it goes in at 70% or higher, you are legally not able to transport the whisky without additional licences: it’s considered a flammable substance at this strength! Also we’ve found that if you fill into cask at too high a strength it interacts with the cask differently and absorbs “nasty bits”. Speaking of casking, we have seen a trading relationship between Scotch whisky distillers and Australian wineries – Glengoyne have finished a unique whisky in Glenguin barrels, and I believe that Springbank (owners of the Longrow brand), have been looking at using Long Row barrels.

“Despite the continued growth of single malt, 85% of Scotch whisky is still goes for blending. Most of the Top Class distilleries, e.g., Mortlach and Linkwood, still mostly make for blending. These “top” distilleries command a higher value for their make against other makes.

These bottles we’re tasting today are from the Adelphi Selection range. We have another range, the Breath of Angels range, which currently includes a Speyside, Highlands, Island, and Islay. These are single cask, single malts that have come to us from secondary sources, and where the original distillery should remain nameless.

On tasting the whisky: “I have a story about the famous Richard Paterson, who recently hosted an event on stage at Whisky Live in Tokyo. There were five and a half thousand people in the room and he’s renowned for his very tangible presentations. For example he is very against ice in whisky, as it dulls the nose, and has been known to throw ice at the audience to emphasize the point. He has also picked up whisky and thrown that at the audience! Anyway, he says ‘never cup a whisky glass’. While others say that whisky is ideally warmed to room temperature, Richard is referring to the fact that if you cup a whisky and then nose it, you may well be nosing the smell on your hands instead.”

About the whisky itself: “a possible catch phrase for Dalmore might be ‘Nuttly Oily’”. Being matured in a European oak cask, the nose contains fruitcake and dried fruit notes, coffee dregs, brazil nuts, grappa, and on the palate creamy rice pudding, Italian sponge cake and citric notes. Watered, the rich oiliness really becomes evident.”

Malt 3: Linkwood 1989, 18 year old Speyside at 55.6% vol. Cask no. 7323

The third whisky was a Linkwood, which has always been a personal favourite of this writer. “Usually this malt can be found in US oak casks, this one was matured in a European oak puncheon, therefore interacting differently with the wood because of the different shape and surface area of the cask. There were 590 bottles of this malt produced. The nose has ginger snaps, chocolate and a dusty chocolate quality to it. There is also a hint of “matchbox striker – a very slight note of sulphur” When whisky is distilled, sulphur can be naturally occurring, but is usually removed by contact with the copper in the stills or condensers. The taller, and narrower the neck of the still, the higher the copper contact (eg Glenmorangie distillery) and they have a lighter less sulphury make. If at the end of the distilling process there are still sulphur notes present, these can be removed by maturation in an American oak cask - they have been through a process known as charring: a black layer of charcoal forms in this process on the inside of the cask, and that filters out the most extreme elements from the malt, including sulphur. In European casks, the sulphur will still appear as there is no charcoal on the inside of these casks, as they are just ‘toasted’ and not charred.



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We will accept up to “matchbox striker” levels of sulphur in our whiskies, but certain tasters will mark down whiskies with any sulphur notes. This malt has a very slight touch of sulphur in it which gives it a slightly egg-like note which combines with the sweetness to have almost a crème-brûlée like quality, or crème caramel.”

Malt 4: Bunnahabain 1997, 9 year old Islay at 59.6% vol. Cask no. 5265

“Bunnahabain in gaelic literally translates as “mouth of the river”. This whisky is heavily peated despite this distillery usually producing the least peat-laden Islay malts. This one has around 50 phenols per million, and has an oily pickles and vinegar flavour to it which is unusual. From a refilled European oak cask, this malt has also has a dry finish: pickles and vinegar, smoked salmon, sausages, coal tar soap, on the palate the vinegar is very strong, also – as Charles describes it – rotting kelp on the tide line. It has that peated burning and antiseptic/medicinal smell. Sweet, then salty then smoky. It’s 9 years old, and quite brash but very complex. One thing that I did want to mention is that at Adelphi we’re very much into variety, and these four malts are all very different – no two casks are ever the same and we’re against consistency in whisky and for promoting uniqueness.

And with this, Alex farewelled the tasters and wished us all a goodnight. But that’s not the last of it for lucky MWSOA subscribers, as Alex took some time out for a personal chat for subscribers.

ALEX BRUCE - EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW FOR MWSOA

How does a person end up being taster, raconteur and marketing director for a successful and boutique bottler like Adelphi?

“It was the fulfillment of a lifelong dream. In the last year of university I had to do some language study, so I had connections in the whisky industry through my parents and went to work for a Cognac distiller in France. From that moment I was hooked on spirits. However after work the best opening I could find was working in the wine industry and started working in the sales department for the wine merchant, Justerini & Brooks (famous for their J&B whisky). After seven years, I then started my own regional department for another UK merchant with a French friend and would still be doing that if Jamie Walker hadn’t decided to sell Adelphi in 2004: he knew of my interest and rang me up. Working with wine definitely seasoned my palate well for tasting but I started as very green to whisky: that’s why Charles is so fundamental to the company – he taught me a lot. And this is what I always wanted to do: work exporting a famous “product” (although I hate that word when used for whisky) from home, and combine that with getting to work with a quality product and a company that buys low volume as opposed to having to do mass marketing to sell it.”

Does he fear the economic downturn and how that will affect whisky, in particular Adelphi?

“I think we’re at the right end of the industry, actually: we haven’t been affected by the current recession. At the moment the biggest thing we’re worried about is the weakened pound which has devalued the export pricing of whisky. Also stock and buying is the hugest risk: not finding enough unique single casks to fulfill the demand. We are at the top end of the malt-pricing, too, because we don’t buy a cask at birth, when it’s cheaper. As bottlers, we buy when we know the whisky has matured well with its cask, and therefore at current market prices, so our prices reflect that.”

What about what is rumoured to be a worldwide shortage of single malt?

“Well, hopefully, the boom and bust is over, and producers in the industry now have more experience getting the production volumes right – not too much and not too little. It’s getting slightly better every time. But the outlook for artisan whiskies is better. The only way we can work with it is trying to ensure that the Adelphi name is consistently associated with high quality whisky – and that’s all we can ever promise.”



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ALEX BRUCE TALKS ADELPHI MALTS... continued

What is the difference between Adelphi and other independent bottlers?

“If we’re looking within the industry, you could really ‘tar us all with the same brush’ as we’re doing more or less the same things. You know that we’ve sometimes been called ‘parasites’? But from our point of view we’re promoting the best bits of the whisky industry. If not for independent bottlers, there wouldn’t be the huge demand there is now for single malts: independent bottling altered the industry image for the better, arguably.”

What kind of whiskies get accepted or rejected by his and Charles’ tastings, as we’re aware that only 1/40 samples they are given make it through to bottling.

“I like whiskies in their most natural form: natural strength, or at least 46% or above, unchillfiltered. Whiskies that are interesting, expressive. The ones I reject are ones which have had little involvement with their cask. Pale in colour, sometimes an overly ‘newspapery’ smell. These are not suitable for single cask bottling, but are perfect for blending. Every now and then we get a really interesting cask from a private investor that isn’t normally available. In the main they’re not that exciting but we got a cask 2 years ago of a 30 year old Macallan from a friend who used to own a whisky shop and had invested in this and had forgotten about it. He just discovered it and offered it to us. It was much darker than a usual Macallan – we called it the Black Mac. It had amazing notes of jaffa cakes and was really intense and the finish went on and on... It sold out immediately and went on to be the highest scoring bottling from Macallan in the Malt Maniac Awards. It’s not perfect – At 30 years old it’s quite fragile and doesn’t take water well, but it’s interesting and the fruitiness is extraordinary.” Before my time Jamie selected another outstanding malt: our flagship malt “The Whisky That Cannot Be Named”. It’s 50 years old and has matured very well: you get flavours in it that are not in other whiskies and it’s still at 54%. Some one has left this unbottled for 50 years which is a huge risk: but its all the better for it.

“The most controversial malts we’ve bottled recently were from Glentrothes first fill sherry casks distilled in 2000: very young and volatile, they got a lot of press because they were so developed for their age. They were pure, in your face flavours including balsamic vinegar, thick toffee and cream. We put one into blind tastings and in 3 tastings most people put it as a 25 year old malt.

“We miss out on what may be amazing malts from time to time because we won’t buy blind: if someone can sell the malt without having to offer a sample and wait for the answer that’s much faster and simpler for them.. But we have a couple of sources who will always wait for us to taste the sample: that’s another reason we’re more expensive than some distilleries – we’ll pay for samples so the seller will hold onto the whisky for us while we sample it – and that cost ends up going into the price of the bottle.”

Alex Bruce, in conversation with Nic Lowrey





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Whisky Dinner at Glass Wine Bar February 2, 2009



By Franz Scheurer

A couple of dozen lucky whisky aficionados had the chance to partake in a superb whisky dinner at Glass Wine Bar, inside the Sydney Hilton, a collaboration of Luke Mangan and myself.

A cocktail started the evening, followed by six courses and six matching whiskies. It was the first time for everyone to taste the Octomore and it was a most interesting experience. The Longrow and the Consommé were possibly the best match, although closely followed by all the others. Service was absolutely superb, the food sublime and the whiskies memorable, and even if I say so myself: the matches were perfect. Let's do it again, soon!

Here is the menu:

Dixie Whisky Cocktail
Anchovy and Parmesan Crisp

10.62 Peated 11 y/o Bunnahabhain
Gougères with Foie Gras and Truffle

Octomore 5 y/o 46% 80.5ppm
Salmon and Beetroot Terrine with Quail Egg and Gold Leaf

Longrow 18 y/o 46%
Custard of Crab with Consommé and Kaffir Lime

David Le Cornu Macallan Cask # 17113
Poussin with Maple Syrup, Potato Purée, Mushrooms,
Pea Agnolotti and Lavender Sauce

Ardbeg Renaissance

Oeufs-à-la Neige, Fig, Summer Berries, Frangelico
Anlaise

Glenmorangie Astar
Shortbread

Tasting Notes – Glass

Dinner:

Dixie Cocktail: This is an interesting mix of new and old. The Southern Comfort Reserve gives it Bourbonesque notes and combined with the syrup a touch of sweetness. The gin and the soda counterbalance this and the bitters bring out the earthy flavours. The lime finishes it off with a touch of acid that lengthens the finish. The salty Anchovy and Parmesan Crisps finish off a hot, sweet, sour, salty combination perfectly.

Scotch Malt Whisky Society bottling 10.62 is a peated Bunnahabhain and as such a pretty rare beast. Bunnahabhain experimented with peat a couple of times but the powers to be at the time deemed it inferior and continued with an uncharacteristically unpeated Islay. This whisky is powerful and slightly oily. On the nose you get heather and peat and on the palate it is textured, mouth-filling with flavours of a field of flowers on a summer afternoon after some rain. It finishes long and dry.

Octomore 5 y/o 46% 80.5ppm has been released far too early and, in my opinion, should be cask strength. On the nose it is reasonably restrained with (surprise, surprise) peat being the dominant aroma. On the palate the peat is confirmed, backed by a typically Bruichladdich elegant spirit, which no doubt was a very narrow cut. Unfortunately there is nothing underneath the peat. No smoke, no perceptible maritime flavours, no salt, in fact it tastes slightly watery. It finishes medium long and slightly bitter. We paired it with a soft-textured, earthy Salmon & Beetroot Terrine and the Quail Egg added the textural bite the whisky was missing.

Longrow 18 y/o bottled at 46% was a cracker! Probably the best Longrow I have tasted and probably their oldest, bottled stock. Very few bottles have been made and even fewer found their way to Australia and that's a pity. It is a glorious dram, full of subtle aromas of peat and smoke, underpinned by some citrus peel



Feints and Foreshots

Whisky Dinner at Glass Wine Bar February 2, 2009 *continued*



By Franz Scheurer

Longrow 18 y/o bottled at 46% was a cracker! Probably the best Longrow I have tasted and probably their oldest, bottled stock. Very few bottles have been made and even fewer found their way to Australia and that's a pity. It is a glorious dram, full of subtle aromas of peat and smoke, underpinned by some citrus peel and roasted hazelnuts. On the palate it is satisfyingly warm, mouth-filling and incredibly rounded. This is a whisky in perfect balance and it brought out the Asian flavours in the consommé. This was probably the best match of the night.

David Le Cornu Macallan Cask # 17113 is, in my opinion, the best Macallan on this Earth. It is a pity that only a few people Down Under ever got the chance to try this whisky but full marks to David Le Cornu for recognizing the quality and buying it immediately. It's the colour of dark mahogany and its signature Sherry aromas and flavours are unmistakable. On the nose it echoes Christmas with hints of pudding, hot chocolate, fudge, mandarins and roasted nuts. On the palate it is long, warming, nutty and a fruit pudding explosion unequalled in the Macallan stable. This is a glorious whisky and it was, without the shadow of a doubt, the best whisky of the night. It paired beautifully with the subtle chicken flavours, augmented by a touch of maple syrup, but never overwhelmed by the food. It stood tall and proud!

Ardbeg Renaissance – a whisky that is proof that Dr. Bill Lumsden not only knows what he's doing, but he's brilliant at it. This cask strength beauty is typically Ardbeg. Choc-a-bloc full of maritime flavours with a good hit of peat and smoke it oozes working harbour flavours and it was a match made in heaven with the

sweet, ethereal flavours of the egg white in the dessert. I just wish I had more of it!

Last but not least, we finished a superb dinner with a glass of **Glenmorangie Astar**, the best Bourbon you ever taste that's a Single Malt from Scotland. Much has been written about the special barrels from White Oak in the Ozark Mountains. Suffice to say this is, in my opinion, the best commercially available whisky and incredible value for money. It finished a roller coaster of tastes and textures by slowly bringing us all back down to Earth and if it's the last thing you do, you **MUST** try it.

Finally, here is the recipe for the cocktail:

Dixie

© Franz Scheurer

In a tall glass pour 1 nip of Southern Comfort Reserve and 1 nip of The Simple Syrup Co.'s Pomegranate & Tahitian Lime syrup. Top with ½ nip of Old Raj Gin and 3 drops of Peychaud's Bitters, then add 3 thin slices of fresh lime. Add lots of ice, top with a splash of soda, stir and serve.



Feints and Foreshots

FEINTS AND FORESHOTS

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Would you like to submit an article or review, or would you like further information about any of our articles? Do you have a letter to the editor you'd like published? Just email the Feints and Foreshots editor at fnfeditor@mwsOA.org.au!



view of Bowmore from the coast of Islay by Martine Nouet

Jim Murray's Whisky Bible 2009

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A book review by Franz Scheurer

Jim Murray's Whisky Bible has to be the most used Whisky reference book worldwide and this in itself is a recommendation. It's comprehensive, easy to use and whether you agree with his views or not, Jim Murray is consistent. This makes the Whisky Bible eminently useable. Once you know his likes and dislikes, you can 'read between the lines'. I for one use it a lot and find it extremely helpful.

The 2009 edition rates over 3,850 whiskies, 210 blended Scotches and 250 American whiskeys. Let's not forget Irish whiskey, Canadian whisky, Japanese whisky and European whiskies (divided into Austria, Belgium, England, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and Wales and he talks about World Whiskies, encompassing Argentina, Australia, Brazil, India, New Zealand and South Africa). So you see, the word 'comprehensive' really is applicable here.

Each whisky is given a rating out of 100. Twenty-five marks are given to each of four factors: nose (n), taste (t), finish (f), balance and overall complexity (b). Each whisky is tasted and rated without the addition of water (or ice) and using an identical glass.

Jim Murray's Award Winners take up a whole page and **Ardbeg Uigeadail** is his **World Whisky of the Year**. His ranking for this gem is 97.5. Maps of Scotland, Speyside Malts, Ireland, United States, Canada and Japan are included to give you an idea where the distilleries are located.

This is another brilliantly consistent Whisky Bible and I suggest you have one at home and one with you, just in case!

The Odd Whisky Coy in Adelaide sells it for \$25 plus postage.

For orders go to their [Web Site](#)



# Feints and Foreshots

**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

## Notice to Members

### **MWSoA committee decides to postpone Fourth Convention**

by MWSoA Chairman Craig Daniels

On 11 March 2009, the committee met to review progress with preparations for the Fourth Malt Whisky Convention scheduled for Hobart at the end of August 2009. After consideration of the position of the Society, a motion to postpone the Convention was put and passed unanimously.

#### **Background**

Sponsorship packages were dispatched after the AGM, being posted on 24 and 25 November 2008. Follow ups occurred through December and January. Between 24 November 2008 and 5 March 2009 a total of 33 companies were contacted. Responses were slow with only three registrations of interest received and a further six verbal commitments but without securing any major sponsors. Sponsorship attraction has proved much more difficult for Hobart 2009 and ROIs and execution of Memoranda of Understandings were more significantly more advanced in both 2005 and 2007.

Without major sponsors, we don't have a fleshed out program to promote to members and other interested parties. In addition, 6 previous sponsors or exhibitors from Sydney and Melbourne have declined to be involved and there was only one potential 'new' sponsor who had shown interest. Experience across the three previous Conventions indicates that we were unlikely to pick up more than a total of 11 Sponsors and Exhibitors, compared to 19 in 2007 and 16 in 2005.

#### **Observations & Analysis**

While the global financial crisis was undoubtedly impacting on our ability to attract sponsors and definitely affecting commitment and level of contributions there were other factors in play and various reasons for the difficulties, including:

- Several of our past sponsors used previous Convention trips to Australia to secure distribution in Australia. Once they have secured distribution they are much less likely to come out here again.
- Previous strong supporters are changing their marketing strategy and investing their sponsorship budget through sponsoring non-whisky events. Some have also withdrawn from various Whisky Lives held around the world..
- Competition from other events – Dram Fest in New Zealand and Whisky Live in Australia. Several of our previous sponsors attended Dram Fest and have said that their travel budgets won't extend to another trip to the antipodes in 2009.
- Smaller independent distilleries and bottlers are having difficulties finding distributors in Australia and won't exhibit without distribution channels in place.
- Hobart was not seen as a major market and many firms felt it was not worth exhibiting. Also for firms distributed through the main liquor chains, Hobart is not prime territory.
- Turnover of staff in the liquor distribution companies. We may have built up good relationships with people from 2003 through 2007, but virtually no-one we were dealing with in 2005 still works for the same company or in the same position. This meant that a lot of effort goes into relationship building and often negotiations become protracted and can peter out.
- Lack of brands to promote at the Great Whisky Exposition – even with every possible sponsor coming on board we'd have less than half the brands that were represented in Melbourne.
- Lack of headliners and Saturday Masterclasses meant we didn't have concrete attractions to promote and left a huge hole in the event program.
- Without the sponsors and a quality program, there was concern that we wouldn't deliver a quality event and that it was preferable to postpone the Convention rather than risk running a poor event and exposing the Society to unacceptable financial risk.