

# *MWSOA's "To the Islands" 2020*

*Whiskies curated by Craig Daniels*

*Whisky Notes and Backstories*

In tasting order:

## **Redbreast 12 40% (OB) Single Pot Still – (Ireland)**

Redbreast 12 is one of the whiskies that both defines a style of whisky and delivers a classic exemplar. Single Pot Still (previously known as Pure Pot Still) is a peculiarly Irish style of whisky and its origins are found in excise regimes when taxes were levied on the amount of malted barley that they used in distillation so there was incentive to use unmalted barley in the mash. They also found that the unmalted barley reduced the actual alcohol yield so it became a balancing act to find the sweet spot that reduced the tax but didn't reduce the resultant yield too much. Mash bills are commercial-in-confidence so the proportions of malted and unmalted barley are not public knowledge. While it's a uniquely Irish style there are some aroma and flavour characteristics that creep in from other related yet wildly geographically distant styles, especially rye and bourbon. Lots of Irish whiskies have grassy notes but few have many herbal and spicy notes and the sherry barrels used are top notch.

## **Arran 14 46% (OB) – (Arran, Scotland)**

Lochranza Distillery on Arran was built in 1994 and commissioned in 1995. Geographically it sits on Arran, an island adjacent to Ayrshire, Argyll and Bute. It's closer to the Campbeltown distilleries than anywhere else but reminds me more of unpeated Island malts than lowlands or Campbeltown. The 14 is an old fashioned unpeated island malt and its closest kissing cousins are Bruichladdich 10 and 15 bottled before 1994 and almost anything that comes out of Scapa. It's almost certainly from a combination of first fill and refill bourbon barrels and has the vanilla, honey and yo-yo biscuit profile in common with those malts.

## **Talisker NAS Select Reserve "Game of Thrones" 45.8% (OB) (Skye, Scotland)**

Talisker is one of my favourite distilleries. They tend to get the balance between savoury, leathery, sweet and peat pretty spot on with the savoury and the peaty notes more forward in the younger expressions and the sweet and fruity leather more obvious in the older expressions. 5 years ago there was only 1 NAS in their core range, the 57deg North. Now there are at least 5 with the latest the Select Reserve from the Game of Thrones series. The SR has lots of earthy notes and big hints of yeast extract (like vegemite, Maggi seasoning and/or Mushroom ketchup). There's highland peat closer to Jura, Ledaig and Ardmore and little sweetness, more like 'Storm' rather than the 10yo.

## **Hellyers Road 15 "Original" 46.2% (OB) (Burnie, Tasmania)**

I've known the folks running Hellyers Road since 2003 and the MWSOA was lucky enough to secure their international launch at our 3<sup>rd</sup> Malt Whisky Convention in 2007. Their whiskies may not be to everyone's taste but their Peated NAS (> 6years old) was judged Best Australian malt in our MWSOA Malt Whisky Competition in 2010. All the HR 'Original' series are matured in 200-225litre ex-bourbon barrels. The 15yo Original has scored very high marks from fellow Malt Maniac and WhiskyFun blogger, Serge Valentin and local whisky blogger Luke McCarthy.

## **Overeem OHD-004 61.5% (OB) Bottled for the MWSOA January 2012 (Kingston, Tasmania)**

For every tasting we try and include a 'unicorn malt' and this is it. This was the Society's Bespoke single cask, single malt cask strength whisky in 2012. There were only 96 bottles at 61.5% and it was only ever released in Australia. Casey Overeem kicked off his distillery in 2007 and OHD-004 was distilled in April 2007. In November 2011 he sent me 5 cask samples but he kept OHD-001 and OHD-002 for himself for obvious reasons. We had a tasting panel of four that put the 5 samples through their paces at my place and picked OHD-004 which was 100% sherry cask matured for 4.5 years. This is an incredibly rare dram, bottled for the Society before Overeem became famous around the world. A little bit of history and unique because we asked Casey to bottle it at natural cask strength. The distillery's normal cask strength releases were all at 60%.