

HELEN'S DECEMBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

November and December simply disappeared in a flurry of special events including the Leiden Whisky Fair in Holland, tastings and meetings, so to keep you informed on what has been happening in the whisky world here is a taster of what has been keeping me out of mischief.

The first thing to report is that the recent **IWSC Competition** featured many special whiskies as well as some old favourites. Here are just a couple of highlights. **Cooley was named European Distiller of the Year** for the second year running a real coup for Ireland's only independent whiskey distiller and they won a total of 10 gold medals and nine Best in Class Awards as well. **Chivas Brothers Pernod Ricard** also won a handful of Golds as well as being named **IWSC Distiller of the Year**, and Strathisla won UK Distillery of the Year and I make no apology for this but my great friend Desmond Payne, did it again. His Beefeater 24 won the **IWSC Greenalls Gin Trophy** – Beefeater has won this trophy seven times in the last ten years, so clearly Desmond is doing something right.

At other special awards, **Glendronach 15 years won the Dutch Whisky Awards 2009 and was voted Best Single Malt Whisky of the Year in the Netherlands**. As my business partner Caecil Gerrits of Versailles Dranken in Holland is Glendronach's agent this is a very special award for me.

Drambuie launched a special The Royal Legacy of 1745, which won a Gold Medal at Cannes. This is a very special expression of the traditional Drambuie and is available at 46% principally in Travel Retail for £125.

Highland Park has been very busy launching several really special whiskies over the past month including 1964 and 1968 Vintages. The latest is Earl Magnus, which is named after the amazing cathedral in Kirkwall, situated less than a mile from the distillery. When I started my public relations agency in 1982, my business partner, Patrick Gallagher and I visited Highland Park on a glorious summer day in February. I can remember Patrick standing in front of the gates to the distillery and saying 'welcome to my distillery', luckily our host Matthew Gloag had a sense of humour.

Max MacFarlane, Whisky Maker has created this special Earl Magnus 15 year old which includes some older casks from the 19902. Bottled at 52.6%, Earl Magnus is golden in colour and on the nose there are hints of tropical fruit, warm honey, light smoke and the aroma of the Orkneys on a warm summer's day, blossom, pine woods and spicy fresh air. All of these aromas are replicated in the mouth with lots of vanilla, warm spice and a lingering silky finish.

Friday 27th November was an extraordinary day. Firstly, I met up with **David Baker of Bakery Hill Distillery**, Australia in Berry Bros & Rudd's St James' headquarters in the company of Doug McIvor their spirits supreme. David had brought with him some of his 7 years old single malt bottlings and they

are superb. David said he was inspired to set up his distillery after reading my second book Whisky Uisge Beatha-The Water of Life – what a responsibility!

The distillery currently only has a small 1,000 litres still, which he uses to distill the whisky twice. He hopes to build a 3,000 litres wash still soon, so that the smaller one can be properly designated the spirit still. Production is currently limited to 2,000 bottles.

David does four different expressions all unchillfiltered, 7 years Classic 46%, Double wood (6 years in ex Jack Daniels casks and then 11 months in new French oak) 46%, 7 years lightly peated 46% and 7 years lightly peated cask strength 65%. The whisky is really very good even at this young age. The Classic's nose is light and floral with apple, Doug also found dolly mixtures and fruit gums. The single malt is warm light honeyed with an oak kick in the back of the mouth, with a fresh full finish with a hint of lemon zest. The peaty versions have all the light floral notes with hints of light smoke. The cask strength expression still has floral apple honeysuckle with bigger smoke filled leather armchair aromas.

After this I was privileged to be at the launch of my fellow lady drinks' writer, **Geraldine Coates' book launch**. Geraldine calls herself Miss Juniper and her latest book is The Mixellany Guide to Gin – congratulations Geraldine from Miss Whisky.

Glendronach has launched a new miniature gift pack, which means that you can now in the words of their Regional Sales Director Alistair Walker, 'try before you buy'. The miniatures are of the three Glendronach expressions, 12 year old Original, 15 year old Revival and 18 year old Allardyce – a great stocking filler for Father Christmas.

The Glenlivet launched a new Cellar Collection on the 16th November and some of you will already have had the pleasure of tasting this at the Leiden Whisky Festival in Holland. This new expression has been produced by the new Master Distiller, Alan Winchester. The Glenlivet 1973 Vintage is matured half in sherry butts and this helps produced The Glenlivet's trademark aromas and flavours. There are only 853 individually numbered bottles available at 49%.

Glenfarclas that very special family owned distillery are currently sponsoring a very special Cross Country Series of races in the UK and Ireland. I was very honoured to be invited to share their hospitality at the Cheltenham Racecourse, not far from my home, on Friday 11th December. John Grant, Chairman of Glenfarclas, and his lovely wife Isobel were our hosts and fellow guests included Peter Russell of Ian Macleod Distillers and his daughter Lucinda who is a race horse trainer and owns the Arlary House Stables. Sadly her horse didn't win, but this certainly didn't spoil the day. Glenfarclas' range of single malts is unique and for those of you lucky enough to find any of the Glenfarclas The Family Casks range my advice is buy one.

And finally, an invitation to you all to join me at a very special **Whisky Tasting Dinner to beheld at the Army Headquarters in Hereford on 4th March 2010**. To find out more simply e-mail at helen_arthur@btinternet.com and I will send you details.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a healthy, happy and successful 2010.

Helen