



# UNFILTERED

FOR MEMBERS OF THE SCOTCH MALT WHISKY SOCIETY

*Welcome to your  
Society world*



THE SCOTCH MALT  
WHISKY SOCIETY

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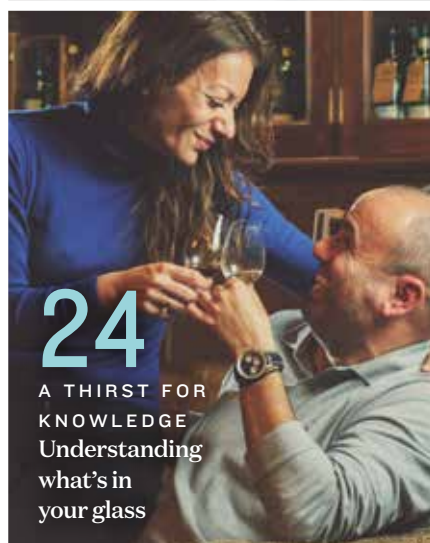
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WELCOME

# Dive right in

**F**irstly, a warm welcome from myself, the Society team and your fellow members in the club. You have taken the first step into what we hope will be an amazing experience for you. We are all here to help you get the most from the club and experience all it has to offer. Ready to immerse yourself?

You never quite know what you're going to encounter when you join The Scotch Malt Whisky Society. But we can guarantee it's going to be an adventure, with a celebration of sharing incredible whisky at the heart of everything that we do.

That sense of adventure goes back to the foundation of the Society and the group of friends in Edinburgh who discovered single cask whisky as the ideal reason to get together and enjoy each other's company. As word of mouth spread about how exceptional

this unadulterated whisky was, friends of friends started to get involved. That circle grew to become a community, and then a club of kindred spirits. And I'm delighted that our founder, Pip Hills, told me recently how he can see that our sense of camaraderie – and fun – is as central to the SMWS today as it was when he kicked things off with his pals almost 40 years ago.

We've come a long way since 1983, involving thousands of members and proudly kick-starting the careers of many whisky industry professionals across the world. At our heart, we're a club of people who want to share their passion for a fantastic dram (and find the next epiphany).

We've always done things a little differently, so we wanted to bring together an overview of what the Society is all about and how to get the most out of your membership, whether you're a

newcomer or whatever stage you're at on your whisky journey.

This special issue of *Unfiltered* is the place to find out everything you need to know – from where we come from to where we're going, how to decipher the information on a Society bottling, add to your understanding and appreciation of whisky and even host your own tasting with friends or family at home. You should find the answers within these pages, and we also have a wealth of information about everything to do with the Society and the whisky world online, including an exclusive members-only edition of *Unfiltered* every month.

Jump in and I hope what you see helps motivate you to get involved not only with the most exceptional whiskies, but with all the opportunities for exploration and adventure that your membership brings. We like to think of ourselves as the “all together unique” whisky club, and that's down to the curiosity, diversity and warmth of our members.

So whether you're a new friend or a long-standing member, it's great to have you on-board and I hope you immerse yourself in an experience that's as rich, fulfilling and intriguing as our endless variety of single malt whiskies. Slàinte! ●

David Ridley  
MD and Chief Member Champion



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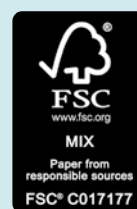
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COVER PHOTO:  
Mike Wilkinson





Raising a glass to  
SMWS founder Pip  
Hills at The Vaults  
Members' Room



**DIVE IN  
TO OUTTURN**  
We release exceptional  
new bottlings on the  
First Friday of every  
month. Visit [smws.com](http://smws.com)  
or your local branch  
website

**“This special issue  
of *Unfiltered* is the  
place to find out  
everything you need  
to know – from where  
we come from to  
where we’re going...”**

DAVID RIDLEY



Explore intriguing  
pairings at our  
tasting evenings



A Society Single  
Cask Spirits event  
in London





Our SMWS Flavour Ambassadors gather at The Vaults



Hairy legs and worm tubs at Lochranza distillery

# All together unique

A fireman in fishnets. An angel in a sauna wearing wellies. A real charmer. A bittersweet eccentric character. We're manly and medicinal. Perfumed, sweet and summery. Lip-smacking and cockle-warming. Sumptuously simple but far from dull. Distinctive and delectable. A haven in a heartless world. Like our intriguingly named whiskies, we're all different, and we all have our own personality...

WORDS RICHARD GOSLAN

**B**ut we are united and constant in our passion – to share the world's best whiskies, and to make you proud to belong to the world's most colourful whisky club. Like our whiskies, our members are all together unique.

## DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Since we were formed in 1983, we've



Rum ambassador Ian Burrell



Distiller Shane Fraser at  
Wolfburn distillery

believed in doing things differently. As unconventional whisky experts we seek out whisky in its purest form, prize flavour above everything else and give each bottling a curious name.

We discovered the delights of whisky drawn straight from the cask – undiluted and unadulterated – when it was considered too quirky and challenging. Overlooked and unappreciated, it had been left to languish in warehouses across the country, unknown to the wider public.

## THROW CAUTION TO THE WIND

We shared our discovery when industry experts said there was no demand for it.

As our founder Pip Hills has written: "The people who said it couldn't be done were so dull!"

Pip and his pals watched word of mouth spread, unearthed ever more treasures, and then opened a club to unite people with a passion for flavour, for variety and for fun.



A sensory tasting event in Paris



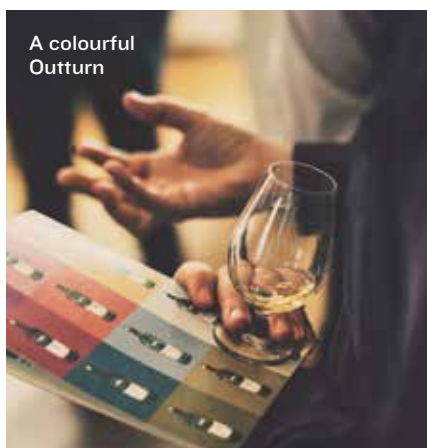
## A NEVER-ENDING FLAVOUR JOURNEY

You're cooied in to the fireplace with the one you love on a chilly winter's night. You're surrounded by the sweet aroma of gorse bushes on a springtime stroll. You're toasting a marshmallow over the embers of a mid-summer campfire at the beach. You're walking through a pine forest after an autumnal rain shower, with the smell of petrichor in the air.

At the Society we love to explore flavours and share our discoveries



Hi-jinks at our Islay Festival Open Day



A colourful Outturn

throughout the year, with a new Outturn for members every month of whiskies hand-picked by our expert Tasting Panel.

Our members enjoy exclusive access to whiskies from more than 140 distilleries in Scotland and beyond. We (usually) bottle them at cask strength and offer a constant variety. How you drink them is entirely up to you. And you never quite know what might be coming next.

## A PASSION SHARED

We don't just bring you amazing whisky – we bring our members together to share

their passion, at our Members' Rooms, tasting events, festivals, and our network of partner bars around the world.

Ever tried whisky with a beer chaser, with an unusual food pairing, the perfect hot toddy, cocktail or a custom cask-matured dram?

We're constantly serving up not only stunning whisky, but intriguing ways to enjoy the experience, where you can both learn more about our latest bottlings and share the love with your fellow members.

That makes the SMWS the perfect place to start out on your whisky journey, or take it to the next level. ●



Ready to welcome members to our Sensory Bazaar tasting at Edinburgh's Balmoral Hotel





Kindred spirits at The Vaults



Our 35th anniversary event in Edinburgh



A night out with members in Glasgow



Members' dinner at 28 Queen Street



Relaxing with a dram and good company at our summer party in Queen Street Gardens



Expand your whisky knowledge and appreciation



Sharing a Spicy & Dry flavour profile bottling at 28 Queen Street





# The tie that binds us



From being a passionate member in the early days of the Society, John McCheyne is now our master brand ambassador, taking his passion for whisky and the SMWS to a global membership

constructed language was actually all you had in common.

Esperanto is still in use today, but it hasn't developed in the way the concept and community hoped. It doesn't have a founding in something real. There is no underlying passion.

Later, I was destined to come across something very passionate and real.

## POWERFUL REVELATION

Over the last decades people internationally have shown a desire to learn about other cultures and languages, and travel the world doing so. There's a 'culture of connoisseurship' developing. Food and drink are primary in that desire, and whisky is central. And Scotch is a byword for whisky the world over.

**I**n my youth, I studied Esperanto outside formal education (alongside learning the accordion – but that's another story!)

Esperanto is a hybrid language – its concept was that people from across the globe could learn and adopt it, and come together in pursuit of knowledge, friendship and understanding of different cultures, as

a benefit of having a common form of communication.

As an Esperanto speaker you earned a lapel badge. That badge announced that you were a member of a community, with the ability to connect with others without knowing their native language. So, wherever you travelled you could recognise and be recognised and have common ground with a stranger – perhaps only to discover that this



In the 1980s, I found a gathering of people who also signified inclusion in something by a lapel badge. But this was a membership of a community with a love and passion for the same thing, who could share and discover and develop their knowledge and passion together. It was The Scotch Malt Whisky Society.

It was a powerful revelation. They could express that passion with other members who enjoyed the togetherness and real feeling of 'society', irrespective of any other interests or opinions on life, love and the universe. It started out in Scotland. Now that membership has spread over the years since 1983, from the first International branches in the early 1990s to around 25 countries today, with whisky as the common language.

.....  
**"Every bottle is different, and members discover and share the epiphanies of flavour together"**  
 .....  
 JOHN McCHEYNE  
 .....

## JOURNEY OF WHISKY DISCOVERY

And a journey it truly is. A never-ending monthly experience of bottlings from existing, first-time and new distilleries. And this isn't just 'whisky'. This is a limited, unique expression of a moment in time and a period of maturation available only to those with that lapel badge, showing membership of the Society. Every bottle is different, and members discover and share the epiphanies of flavour together. Many say that they can approach and understand single malt much better now because the Society's bottlings have educated their nose and palate to recognise flavours from the different types of wood. The Society was an important first step on their journey of whisky discovery.



ABOVE ☛ With whisky friends in Shanghai

That journey has continued through the Society's continual innovation, from non-Scotch whisky expressions to blended malts and other Single Cask Spirits from around the globe.

Members enjoy the range of flavour profiles, and appreciate that the Society can develop so many profiles from the same new-make spirit through its innovative and imaginative maturation programme. And the exact dates of distillation can often be an added thrill when that date coincides with an important date or anniversary in a member's life.

## NO ORDINARY WHISKY CLUB

Meeting in Society Members' Rooms, partner bars, and each other's homes,

they share that passion and the knowledge and entertainment that comes from *Unfiltered* magazine, podcasts and social media stories providing educational pieces on distilleries and the wider whisky world. Meeting each other, building lifelong friendships with members and Society people, extending their network through social media, events, festivals and gatherings.

This is no ordinary whisky club. This is an ongoing experience of flavour, friendships and fun. From the love of whisky flows everything else.

And it is wonderful to see how important this sharing means to members.

Often, they will enjoy the whisky only in the company of others.

So, I'm proud to have had that lapel badge for so long – I now sometimes wear all three versions, new and historical, when at events and abroad – and I'm delighted that whisky and SMWS is part of me and my life. Member, then ambassador.

And when I think back to my youth and Esperanto, I'm grateful that I found a real language that unites me with members and friends across the globe.

If I could go back in time, perhaps I would offer my Esperanto teacher a large glass from distillery 29, and the chance to wear a very different lapel badge. Now we're talking my language! ●



John at the Society's warehouse

# A club uncorked

With unconventional origins, the Society has developed some distinctive practices over the years. Here's what you need to know about how we end up offering such a fantastic range of whiskies – and how to make sense of what's inside our iconic green bottles

WORDS RICHARD GOSLAN

**S**o there you are, SMWS membership card in hand, entering one of our Members' Rooms or opening up our web page and suddenly being confronted with a seemingly endless array of green bottles.

But wait a minute. None of them has a distillery name on it – only a stripe of colour on the label distinguishes it from the next one. What are you to do?

First of all, relax. You're in good hands and the bottom line here is that any liquid that's ended up in a green Society bottle has been approved by the discerning noses of the Tasting Panel. You may all have slightly different preferences, and the Society caters for everyone, but there's a guarantee that if it's been bottled, it's great stuff.

## THE TASTING PANEL

That guarantee of quality is thanks to the Tasting Panel, which has existed in one form or another since the Society started

out in the kitchen of founder Pip Hills's home on Scotland Street in Edinburgh. He describes that group as a "motley bunch", made up of a cross-section of Edinburgh society who "had experience of drinking whisky and were also handy with words. In the Scotland of 1983, a fair proportion of the population could be said to have met those criteria," recalls Pip in his book *The Founder's Tale* (essential reading for an insight into the Society's origins).

As well as evaluating the samples of whisky, the Tasting Panel started to explore a language they could use to describe single cask, single malt – something that had never been done before. In the early 1980s, whisky was described only in terms of how old it was or where it came from, but with little reference to its actual *flavour*. All that was about to change.



Charlie MacLean

## HOW IT WORKS

That original Tasting Panel was tasked with ensuring the sample in front of them was worthy of ending up in a Society bottle, and with creating Tasting Notes to accompany

it. The Panel's role has remained unchanged with the passage of time, with only the personnel changing over the years, although it is still a combination of both Society experts together with independent authorities from the wider whisky world.

Among the long-standing participants are renowned whisky writer Charlie MacLean and the 'Whisky Bard' Robin Laing, who has been a chairperson for the past 20 years.

"We have members of the Tasting Panel who have been involved since the early days of the Society and bring all those years of experience and whisky knowledge to the task," says the Society's spirits manager Euan Campbell, who co-ordinates the Panel and selects the samples for its assessment. "Whenever a new panellist joins the group they come with a recommendation from an existing member, and then have to pass





a sensory evaluation to be able to qualify as a panellist.”

## THE JUDGING PROCESS

The Tasting Panel meets regularly to judge a selection of samples, assessing the colour, nosing and tasting the whisky neat, then with a drop of water. The participants discuss each sample, decide whether it's of the required quality, award it an overall score and assign it a flavour profile – but are under no obligation to pass any of the casks they have sampled.

“Quality is obviously a prerequisite,” says Euan. “But we're also looking for something unique and curious in prospective Society whiskies – something that gets us talking.”



Robin Laing

## THE TASTING NOTES

After the Panel has passed judgement, the chairperson gathers the notes from each of the contributors and comes up with a distinctive name and Tasting

Note for the bottle, which capture an element of the whisky's personality. Most Society members will be able to recall a bottle name or Tasting Note that has made an impression, raised a smile or maybe even sent them off to search out the meaning of an unfamiliar reference.

“People like Charlie and me are guys of a certain age who grew up in Edinburgh and a lot of the time when you are nosing and tasting whiskies, it brings back childhood memories,” says Robin Laing. “Those memories can be specific, often to do with medicines that you had as a child, or Scottish sweets.”

Not all the references are particular

to Scotland, however. The Tasting Panel has always been multinational and includes both women and men – so everyone brings their own points of reference to the whiskies. “The main thing is that the Tasting Notes have to be informative, relevant and accurate,” says Robin. “But it's also good to have a bit of fun.”

## SCIENTIFIC INPUT

With almost 40 years of experience in selecting and describing whiskies, the Panel is well-versed in the process, but is always looking for ways to enhance its ability to identify a whisky's qualities. With that in mind, the Society is now a member of The Scotch Whisky Research Institute (SWRI), the industry-funded research and technology organisation.

The Tasting Panel works with SWRI's flavour and sensory science experts to increase its ability to measure the intensity of individual flavour characteristics – as well as identifying unfavourable elements.



## CRACKING THE CODE

Now you have a bottle of this precious whisky in your hands, approved by the Tasting Panel and ready to savour. But what does all this information on the label actually mean?

Once again, we need to dip back in time, to when the first Society bottling was released to a small but passionate group of members: Cask No. 1.1.

That bottling gave birth to a coding system that's still in place today, with the first number representing the distillery the whisky is from, and the second representing the number of single casks that the Society has bottled from that particular distillery.

In that first bottling list, Cask Nos. 1.1 and 1.2 were openly identified as bottlings from Glenfarclas. Cask Nos. 2.1 and 3.1 only referred to as a Speyside and an Islay from unidentified distilleries. The cask coding system grew from there, and is now iconic within the whisky world. Some particularly devoted members may immediately be able to name a distillery based on its number.

### Why not just put the distillery name on the bottle?

First, a little background about why the system started in the first place. The Society code was initially devised to protect the brands of the distilleries which supplied us with these single casks. Distilleries invest a great deal in creating consistent whiskies to a strict

flavour profile, by skilfully combining the contents of hundreds of casks into each bottling batch. Each of these single casks, however, has a unique character that – although potentially fascinating – may differ significantly from the distillery's target flavour profile.

By not naming names in the early days, the Society was able to show those initially sceptical distilleries that their valuable brands would not be damaged by single casks that might not represent their usual flavour profile.

Of course, what started out as a straightforward coding system has become somewhat more complicated over the years. As the Society's range of bottlings has increased, the coding system has developed to include classifications such as A for Armagnac, B for bourbon, C for cognac, G for grain whisky, GN for gin, R for rum, and RW for rye whisky.

The Society's coding system has come a long way since Cask No. 1.1 was released in 1983. Rest assured, there are many more numbers coming your way to savour – and maybe even to memorise.

## FIND YOUR FLAVOUR

Even for the seasoned member of The Scotch Malt Whisky Society, each new Outturn represents such an embarrassment of riches that it is often difficult to know where to start.

That's where our 12 flavour profiles provide another layer of information

to help you navigate the hundreds of Society bottlings released each year.

"Our flavour profiles are deliberately very broad strokes," says spirits manager Euan Campbell. "Rather than trying to describe exactly what makes a whisky special – which is still the job of the Tasting Notes – they're simply a way of navigating the whiskies, so you can begin to pin down what you're looking for."

### What do they mean?

Each of the 12 flavour profiles is colour-coded for ease of reference, and range from Light & Delicate to Heavily Peated. Though it's perfectly possible to have a dram that is both Old & Dignified and Peated, the profiles were chosen to pick out the dominant characteristic of each bottling.

The idea of agreeing a common language for describing character is, of course, nothing new. The standard flavour wheels widely used by blenders and other industry professionals set out agreed points of reference – such as "leathery", "medicinal", and "vanilla" – which act like waypoints on the complex landscape of flavour.

While perhaps not as evocative as the Society's Tasting Notes, these more objective descriptions are invaluable when trying to convey an accurate description.

Think of the flavour profile as providing a top-line description of what to expect from the whisky, while the detailed Tasting Notes reveal its soul. ●

**By not naming names, the Society was able to show those initially sceptical distilleries that their valuable brands would not be damaged by single casks that might not represent their usual flavour profile**





# The anatomy of an SMWS bottle label

## 1. THE NAME

Each bottling is given a descriptive name based on its essential flavours and characteristics.

## 2. THE TASTING NOTE

Each bottle also carries a unique whisky Tasting Note, a description of the flavours in store when you delve into the magical malt. A more detailed and expressive Tasting Note is published online with the First Friday Outturn every month.

## 3. THE CODE

Each bottle of Society whisky carries a bottling code. The first number represents the distillery the whisky is from; the second represents the number of casks that have been bottled from that distillery. So this bottle shown is the 86th cask bottled from distillery number 37.

## 4. THE FLAVOUR PROFILE

Every bottle is colour coded according to the Society's unique 12 flavour profiles, from Young & Sprightly through to Old & Dignified, which we introduced to help whisky lovers navigate the hundreds of bottlings we release each year.

## 5. OUTTURN

Unique and limited, SMWS whisky is

pure, undiluted, unadulterated cask-strength whisky, and each bottle is drawn directly from a single cask. Each cask may only yield a few hundred bottles or much less – and once it's gone, it's gone forever.

## 6. THE AGE

Our bottlings clearly show the whisky's age, unless it is one of our occasional no age statement (NAS) releases.

## 7. DISTILLED

The precise date this precious one-of-a-kind liquid was created.

## 8. CASK

The previous contents of a cask, and the number of times it was used, can tell you a lot about what the whisky will taste like. Society bottles carry the cask type on every bottle.

## 9. REGION

Another useful signpost is this indication of the whisky's origin, without specific reference to its distillery.

## 10. STRENGTH

The Society's cask strength whiskies are undiluted for your drinking pleasure, and are sure to pack more of a punch than your average single malt, which is usually watered down to around 40% abv.



Open up your horizons with our 12 flavour profiles



YOUNG & SPRITELY

SWEET, FRUITY & MELLOW

SPICY & SWEET

SPICY & DRY

DEEP, RICH & DRIED FRUITS

OLD & DIGNIFIED

LIGHT & DELICATE

JUICY, OAK & VANILLA

OILY & COASTAL

LIGHTLY PEATED

PEATED

HEAVILY PEATED



# In at Number 1

PHOTOS MIKE WILKINSON

## SMWS founder Pip Hills describes how he and a 'motley bunch' ignited a revolution in the world of whisky appreciation

**I**t's been almost 40 years, but there's no sign of the passion and enthusiasm that drove Phillip 'Pip' Hills to found The Scotch Malt Whisky Society diminishing. Sitting in his study, he expounds about the book he's writing on the Stirling engine, invented by 24-year-old minister Robert Stirling in Kilmarnock in 1816, or a previous project to restore a Norwegian Kirkenes pilot boat from the 1920s. He's equally absorbed in his research into the Ismaili form of Islam, or in relating stories about his youth scaling new routes in Glen Coe with Scottish climbing legend, Dougal Haston.

We should all be grateful, however, that in the late 1970s Pip's focus turned to single cask, single malt whisky – and the question of why more people didn't know about it.

The story of Pip's discovery of whisky taken from a quarter cask of Glenfarclas when he visited a friend in Aberdeenshire is well enough known. What's remarkable to reflect upon now is how few people had experienced whisky in this form at that time.

"I was brought up in Grangemouth where my dad was a docker, and whisky was Haig, that's all it was – blended

whisky," he says. "I grew up knowing it was our national drink but frankly not liking the stuff very much. In the 1970s, malt whisky was practically unknown outside Scotland, and very little known within it.

"What opened my eyes was drinking this farmer's Glenfarclas that he'd drawn from his own cask and brought over to my friends' house in a lemonade bottle. I thought it was just wonderful."

Pip wasn't the only one who thought it was wonderful, and soon he'd formed a syndicate in Edinburgh to share in the cost of their own quarter cask of Glenfarclas.

After dividing it up, he began to

get phone calls from an ever-increasing circle of friends – and strangers – asking if they could also get their hands on some of this amazing whisky.

"That's when I started thinking to myself, why is somebody not selling this stuff?" says Pip. "I had no background in whisky, but I got introductions to various people in the industry and they all said: 'Oh there's no market for that, if there had been we'd have done it before'. But the people I spoke to who said it couldn't be done were so dull, there was no imagination. They were all pulling in big salaries from their companies and they

were all selling blended whisky, and they were surprised that anybody would want malt whisky, which showed how little they knew! But my main motivation was fun. It was a fun thing to do."

The fun grew into a formal company named The Scotch Malt Whisky Society, formed in 1983 with the purchase of The Vaults in Leith.

"I spent quite a bit of time in Leith, mostly to do with pubs and boats, and it was a very scruffy place," says Pip. "But I liked old buildings, and at the time the wine merchant J G Thomson occupied The Vaults. I thought that would do fine and I walked up the stairs one day and asked to buy it. It just so happened they were about to move out, and accepted the offer."

Pip formed the Society's first Tasting Panel, selecting what he calls a "motley bunch" to set about exploring a language they could use to describe single cask, single malt – something that had never been done before.

"I thought it best to get people who knew whisky but who were literate, but they were by and large useless, despite my care



BELOW ● The Vaults in Leith back in 1970





**“I spent quite a bit of time in Leith, mostly to do with pubs and boats, and it was a very scruffy place. But I liked old buildings, and at the time the wine merchant J G Thomson occupied The Vaults. I thought that would do fine”**

PIP HILLS



**“There was a process going on at this time with the rediscovery of the ‘real’ Scotland, something of a cultural revolution, and we were part of that movement”**

PIP HILLS

Pip helped to open up the world of single cask whisky to friends and beyond

in selecting them,” says Pip. “Hamish Henderson was there, one of Scotland’s foremost poets and songwriters, who should have been brilliant. I said: ‘How would you describe this whisky, Hamish?’ ‘Oh,’ he said, ‘It’s a lovely whisky, just a lovely whisky’. I could get nothing more out of him except that it was a lovely whisky. So although you may have great literary qualities, it doesn’t follow that you can describe a whisky.”

Positive coverage followed in the

national and international press, possibly thanks to Pip preparing a stew of roadkill hare and pheasant collected on a tour of distilleries with *The Wall Street Journal*’s wine correspondent, Paul Levy. In *The Sunday Times*, wine writer Jancis Robinson waxed lyrical about the SMWS discovering “storehouses piled high with casks of gently maturing liquid gold, each one subtly different from the next”.

For her, as with Pip, the mystery was in why the distillers were so reluctant to let

drinkers get their hands on this whisky.

“There was a process going on at this time with the rediscovery of the ‘real’ Scotland, something of a cultural revolution, and we were part of that movement,” he says. “The rediscovery was also lots of fun, and it was poking our fingers up the noses of all sorts of terribly respectable members of the establishment, who all adhered to the old ways and were drinking blended whisky in tumblers filled with soda.

“I was convinced that there had to be a market for something as good as this single cask, single malt that I had discovered, but it took the whisky industry 10 years to waken up to what we were doing at the SMWS.”

Pip describes the foundation of the Society as a “very small revolution” within the whisky industry and within Scotland’s wider cultural awakening and growing sense of self-confidence. His part in that process brought us whisky in its purest form, and set in place the world’s leading whisky club. For that, we raise a glass to SMWS member #1. ●





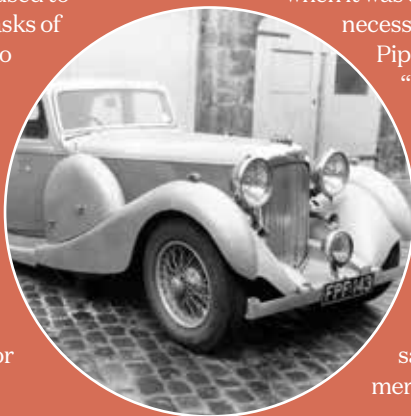
# One for the road

Pip's classic car played an early and central part in the Society's story

A quirky whisky club needs a quirky car to play a central role in its story. And they don't get much quirkier than the 17-foot

long Lagonda that Pip used to transport those first casks of whisky from Speyside to Edinburgh.

The LG45 Saloon model was built in 1937 and unusually for the time was fitted with a four-cylinder diesel engine from Gardner in Manchester – quite a revolutionary move for the time.



"I bought it in 1974, when it was already 37 years old and I used it every day for the following 25 years, barring a few spells when it was off the road for

necessary repairs," writes

Pip in *The Founder's Tale*.

"I could never have been classed as an old-car enthusiast, for I didn't much care about old motors other than the one I happened to be driving. That this was a Lagonda 4.5 litre pillarless saloon was a matter of mere chance. I bought it



for £500, drove it for about half a million miles and sold it for about 20 times what I paid for it, so it has to be classed as one of my better transactions."

The car went on to play a role in many more Society adventures, that you can read about in Pip's book. We were delighted in 2019 to reunite Pip with his Lagonda during our Gathering celebrations, when the car's current owner visited The Vaults. Pip was even able to demonstrate how he squeezed a quarter cask into the Lagonda's boot, and take the beautifully restored car for a short spin around Leith. Whisky club creator, and classic car, reunited at our spiritual home. ●

Pip reunited with his 1937 Lagonda at The Vaults in Leith



## MAGIC NUMBERS

The Society's vital statistics reveal a worldwide web of whisky fans enjoying drams from different distilleries across the globe. It all adds up to a unique experience for our members

the SMWS

distilled

ESTABLISHED IN

1983

IN EDINBURGH

ALMOST

150

DIFFERENT

MALT DISTILLERIES  
(PLUS GRAIN, RYE  
AND BOURBON)

WE BOTTLE OTHER  
SINGLE CASK

SPIRITS

INCLUDING  
COGNAC, RUM,  
GIN AND ARMAGNAC

MORE THAN

26,000



MEMBERS IN

20

COUNTRIES

AN INTERNATIONAL

CLUB

225

THE AVERAGE OUTTURN  
BOTTLED FROM A  
SINGLE CASK

SOCIETY PARTNER  
BARS PRESENT IN



20

COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE

EACH  
BOTTLE  
HAS A  
UNIQUE  
TASTING  
NOTE



THE CODE

EXPLAINED

26

26 is the  
distillery number

89

89 is the cask  
number

A bottle with  
the code 26.89  
is from the 26th  
distillery the  
Society bottled  
from. This is the  
89th cask from  
that distillery.



WE HAVE BOTTLED WHISKY FROM DENMARK, ENGLAND,  
INDIA, IRELAND, JAPAN, SWEDEN, TAIWAN, US & WALES









## THE KNOWLEDGE

.....

**“We’d rather  
concentrate on  
flavour and character  
than commandments  
about what we can  
and can’t do”**

EUAN CAMPBELL

### AN EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

We offer members an alternative to our single cask bottlings with a regular release of blended malts, giving us the opportunity to become even more imaginative in our quest for new flavour experiences





# It's about single casks (mostly)

At The Scotch Malt Whisky Society we celebrate the delights of the single cask, but that's not the whole story, as our spirits manager *Euan Campbell* explains

**T**he Society's first love is for single cask whisky, bottled at cask strength, un-chillfiltered – whisky in its purest form, and always an absolute treat. But when you find yourself walking away from being able to create or bottle an incredible whisky because it doesn't meet our strict focus on 'single cask', that's very hard to take. And it's happened to us more than once in recent years.

On the last occasion, we found ourselves questioning the wisdom of sticking so rigidly to the Society's mantra of 'cask strength, single cask' whisky. Why would we deny you the chance to experience amazing drams, even if they weren't bottled at cask strength or didn't have a strict 'single cask' provenance?

A recent example was when we had the opportunity to offer you a 25-year-old whisky from a now-demolished Speyside distillery. It was an extraordinary dram, but came from a stock of single malt that had previously been consolidated, so it wasn't from a single cask.

After sampling the whisky, we figured we'd be doing you a huge disservice by not snapping it up and getting

it into a Society bottle. Our expert noses on the Tasting Panel agreed. If the whisky scores highly enough, surely we should make it available, whether it came from a single cask or not?

## NO BARRIERS TO CREATIVITY

But we're not only talking about bottling mature whisky, with or without a single cask provenance. As the Society has embraced its independence, we've also found ourselves free to seek out amazing flavours and grasp the opportunity to be more creative. That means developing our programme of additional maturation, carrying out our own contracted distillations, and getting more inventive in our range of experimental blended malt bottlings.

We love the way our focus on additional maturation has been bringing results with the incredible

whiskies we've been able to bottle. We've been relishing the chance to work with a huge range of cask types from across the worlds of bourbon, sherry, wine, brandy, rum and beer, allowing us to nurture our stocks of whisky and offer our members both quality and diversity. Both your feedback, along with a healthy haul of top industry awards, tell us that our creativity and expertise in this area is paying off.

Now the Society has started creating our own new-make spirit. We're working with different distilleries to carry out distillations to bespoke production recipes and specifications, managing the maturation for future release to members.

And with our blended malts, we developed Exotic Cargo, Peat Faerie, Old Fashioned, The Beachcomber, Big Swirl and beyond to offer members an alternative to our single cask whiskies, usually with a strength of around 50% abv and at an inviting price. Crafting our blended malts has allowed us to grasp the opportunity to become even more imaginative in our pursuit of new flavour experiences.

## AN OVER-ARCHING MARK OF QUALITY

The upshot is that we're planning on getting ever more inventive. That might mean our own distillations, more intriguing blended malts, more small-batch experiments, more creativity in our additional maturation. More of everything, while we embrace being able to take a more active role in all the variety of whiskies and flavours we're able to offer.

Single cask whisky is the core of what we do, and always will be. But we don't let it limit us. We'd rather concentrate on flavour and character than commandments about what we can and can't do. An over-arching mark of quality will always be our driving force, the same as when we started out in 1983. As our founder Pip Hills

tells us: "It's the quality of the whisky that matters, not how that quality is produced." Whatever you drink, we want you to think the same as we do – this is incredible stuff, and we can't wait to share it. ●







# On a whole new level

The Scotch Malt Whisky Society has played a key role not only in the growing appreciation for cask strength, single cask whisky, but in our understanding of what we're drinking. A thirst for knowledge has always been as important to us as a thirst for the whisky itself



## Cast your mind back – if your mind goes that far back – to the year 1983, and think about the whisky scene at that time. What whiskies were available in your local shop or pub?

How did you drink them? Were they more likely to be blends than single malts? And could you even have imagined such a thing as a cask strength whisky drawn from a single cask?

With our 40th anniversary on the horizon, we can reflect on how different the whisky world is today, and The Scotch Malt Whisky Society's role in that development.

"Single malt in the early 1980s was the preserve of the intellectual: artists, poets, doctors, lawyers (and

being Edinburgh there was a wheen of those), the informed dreamers," says whisky writer Dave Broom, in his reflection of the period that the Society was born. "But there were rumours that somewhere in darkest Leith (Leith? In the early 80s?) there was a cabal of true believers, heretics and keepers of the flame gathering and plotting."

That cabal of true believers gathering and plotting in Leith were the founding figures of The Scotch Malt Whisky Society. But as well as bottling whisky from single casks, they realised that sharing an understanding of what was in the cask was essential to building a knowledge and appreciation for the whisky.

Society founder Pip Hills reflected on the whisky scene prior to the Society's birth, in his book of essays, *Scots on Scotch*.

"All Scots drank whisky, or were supposed to," he wrote.

"The whisky they drank was blended whisky. Few asked where it came from or how it was made. Despite the prominence of whisky in the national identity, it was commonplace for Scots

to know nothing of its manufacture, and less of the process of maturation."

Since 1983, the Society has made whisky knowledge a key part of its offering to members, from providing detailed information about the whisky's age, maturation and character on the bottle itself and in the accompanying Tasting Notes, to wider reflections on how best to nose and taste whiskies and on to various aspects of the whisky-making process.

"For some of us, depending on how long you've been enjoying whisky for and how you came to be introduced to this wonderful spirit, the Society may have played a major role in your whisky journey and shaped how you approach whisky today," says Andrew Derbidge, the Society's cellarmaster and NSW manager at The Scotch Malt Whisky Society Australia.

Whisky knowledge has always been a central feature of the Society's member magazine, *Unfiltered*, which has tracked down industry experts and insiders to illuminate us about every aspect of whisky's production, and magic.

From barley varieties to strains of yeast, fermentation times, water sources and differences in distillation, *Unfiltered* has delved into every detail of how whisky is created. In our first relaunch issue in November 2008, in an examination of maturation, Highland Park's Russell Anderson told us: "We do not have all the answers. We won't have them in my life. Whisky is a 'black art' and long may it continue."

The examination into the black art of whisky-making will certainly continue, serving up a mix of insight and entertainment for Society members in the pages of *Unfiltered*. And if you're concerned that the more we delve into the mysteries of what makes our single cask, single malt so special, the less romantic it becomes, we'll leave the last word to James Brosnan, director of research at The Scotch Whisky Research Institute.

"For me, the more we find out about Scotch, the more interesting the story becomes."

We'll drink to that. ●



Andrew Derbidge



Dave Broom

BELOW ♥ The more we find out about Scotch, the more interesting the story becomes'





ABOVE 🍷 Dr Andy enjoys the camaraderie that sharing whisky brings

# A spirited education

Expanding your whisky knowledge will help you to appreciate it and bring you into an inner circle of like-minded people, says SMWS spirits educator Dr Andy Forrester

**A**s well as features in *Unfiltered* and on our website, which is an ever-present source of whisky education, our team of whisky experts can be found in our venues or at events and tastings around the world, meeting members far and wide. For me, back in my own early days of discovery, this was one of the most valuable benefits of being a member of the Society. Nearly 20 years later, it is now my job, as the Society's spirits educator, to help equip our current band of whisky experts with that knowledge.

For me, that knowledge has always been an important element of the enjoyment of whisky. Sure, I liked the way a whisky tasted, certainly the way it made me feel (!), but most of all I was utterly fascinated by *why* it tasted like

it did, where all the complex flavours and aromas came from, why these spirits were all different, how was whisky made? So, that first truly memorable dram (Bruichladdich 10-year old, if you must know) was not only the start of a never-ending journey of exploration of the amber nectar itself, but also the beginning of a lifelong quest for knowledge and understanding. For me, the two are inseparable. The understanding enhances the enjoyment of the whisky, and without the whisky, well, the knowledge is... well, just that. Maybe that's the scientist in me, but I think, actually, it's common to all whisky lovers.

And it is not just the 'academic' aspect that makes a little knowledge increase the enjoyment of the dram in your hand. There's practical matters too – like knowing when and why to add a little

water (it brings out the flavours), how to nose and taste to get the most out of your dram, what kind of glass works best for tasting. Then there is how a little knowledge can help you choose a whisky you will like – what kind of cask has it been matured in, is it peaty or not, what kind of flavours can you expect. Of course, our unique flavour profiling system helps with that, but dig a bit deeper, understand more about how the spirit was made and matured – and you can be sure you are getting what you expect – with the caveat that every single cask is unique and different of course – which is what we celebrate here at the Society.

Finally, let's not forget that whisky is all about sharing – so having a bit, or even a lot, of knowledge up your sleeve to share with your mates is a big part of the enjoyment of whisky. We all like to impress our friends with a nugget of know-how or insider information. And remember, knowledge is valuable currency at whisky festivals and gatherings the world over. It can unlock conversations and lifelong friendships.

I hope, that as a (new) member, you will enjoy expanding your knowledge of this wonderful liquid as much as I have. I consider myself blessed to have worked with and learned from some of the most experienced and knowledgeable people in the industry. The real pleasure however is in sharing that knowledge with others.

And if you have a question and want to learn even more, just ask one of our whisky experts in our Members' Rooms. They are always happy to chat and share what they know. If you are further afield, drop me a line at [askthedoc@smws.com](mailto:askthedoc@smws.com). We may even publish it in our regular feature in *Unfiltered*. Regardless, I promise to get back to you with an answer – either from me, or from one of the many distillers, whisky makers and scientists we are connected to across the industry. That's the unique and wonderful thing about this industry – the friendship, the camaraderie and the desire, freedom and willingness to share our experience and expertise with one another.

Welcome to the inner circle of whisky knowledge and whisky passion. It's there for the taking. ●

**In good spirit, Dr Andy**

**ASK DR ANDY**  
Andy is a regular monthly columnist in the digital edition of *Unfiltered*. Send your whisky-related questions to: [askthedoc@smws.com](mailto:askthedoc@smws.com)



**“Knowledge is  
valuable currency  
at whisky festivals  
and gatherings  
the world over.  
It can unlock  
conversations  
and lifelong  
friendships”**

DR ANDY FORRESTER

Being a member of The Scotch Malt Whisky Society means having an open mind, a thirst for knowledge, and a spirit of adventure and curiosity. We are here to satisfy all of those personality traits. Membership opens the door to a unique circle of friends around the world, kindred spirits united by a love of exploring the finest single cask whiskies. Here's everything you need to know to get your whisky adventures underway



# Set sail for

## THE SINGLE CASK

We do whisky a little differently. Most of what we offer members is whisky taken from a single cask, so each bottling is unique and by definition a limited edition. The whisky is also out-of-this-world fantastic, with a kaleidoscope of flavours for you to taste and explore. This does mean bottles can sell out fast and can never be repeated, so be sure to order quickly to avoid disappointment. Look out for some of our other intriguing bottlings along the way, as we're a curious bunch and you never know what else might be coming your way.



## FLAVOUR PROFILES

We believe the best way to enjoy whisky is to focus on its flavour and not where it's from. Our 12 unique flavour profiles can help you find your taste preference, represented by the coloured strip and cap on the bottles. You can find more information about each category at [www.smws.com/flavours](http://www.smws.com/flavours) and in our Outturns.

## MONTHLY OUTTURNS

Every first Friday of the month we release our Outturn bottling list with details of our new whiskies. Typically, we release around 20 new single casks every month. As well as a new release of incredible whisky every month, we're constantly serving up

different ways to enjoy the experience, where you can discover a different side to our whiskies, learn more about our latest bottlings and suggestions on how to share them with your fellow members.

## YOUR PREFERENCE

By signing into 'My Account' you can modify your preferences at any time. By visiting the 'Newsletters' section, you can make sure you're signed up to our email alerts and be the first to find out about new and exclusive bottle releases, offers, news and competitions.

## TASTINGS & EVENTS

What better way to get to know whisky – and to meet your fellow members –





## HOW TO PLACE AN ORDER

Order online at [www.smws.com](http://www.smws.com) or call + 44 (0) 131 555 2929 Monday-Friday, 9am-4.45pm (UK time). If you need any help choosing your whisky or have any questions, email us any time at [memberservices@smws.com](mailto:memberservices@smws.com). International members should check their local websites for up-to-date information on bottlings, events and tastings

# adventure

than by attending one of our tastings? The Society hosts an adventurous programme of tastings and events, where you can get together with fellow members and enjoy a dram (or more) in the company of one of our knowledgeable ambassadors. Members can buy discounted tickets for themselves and all their guests. Check your branch website for an up-to-date listing of all our events.

## YOUR PRIVATE TASTING WITH US

Whatever the occasion, the Society has the perfect space to make it memorable, from informal tastings with friends to grand celebratory dinners. Ask us for more details, we'll be happy to help.

## MEMBERS' ROOMS & PARTNER BARS

If you're in town, come and see us at one of our exclusive Members' Rooms or partner bars. The Society has Members' Rooms at our spiritual home of The Vaults in Leith, as well as 28 Queen Street in Edinburgh, 19 Greville Street in London and 38 Bath Street in Glasgow. You can sign in up to three guests at each location. We also have partner bars around the world that have exclusive selections of our single cask whisky. You'll find a list of these on our website.



## NEW DISCOVERIES

We love the finest things in life – and that means exploring the world beyond single cask, single malt whisky. Members can also explore our Single Cask Spirits collection, including the finest bourbon, rum, cognac, armagnac and gin on offer.

## A WORLD OF WHISKY KNOWLEDGE

### UNFILTERED MAGAZINE

Our members magazine has been maturing nicely over the years, just like a beautifully balanced single cask bottling. Since we started out, *Unfiltered* has





TV naturalist  
Nick Baker



Holyrood distillery's sensory room



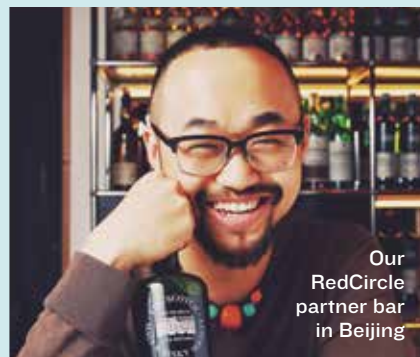
Get ready to savour your first bottling



SMWS member Sam Heughan shares a Society dram with fellow Outlander actor Graham McTavish and *Unfiltered* editor Richard Goslan



Our Members' Room at 28 Queen Street in the heart of Edinburgh's New Town



Our RedCircle partner bar in Beijing



developed from a brief newsletter to a publication in its own right, produced exclusively for members four times a year.

Now we send out a new issue of *Unfiltered* every month, in a digital format that allows us to include video interviews, podcasts and stunning photography.

*Unfiltered* is created with your whisky enjoyment in mind – so settle down each

month to delve into a distillery profile, an interview with a leading figure from the whisky world, whisky knowledge from the best writers in the business and stories that share our members' passion for whisky in general and the Society in particular.

## A DECADE OF READING

You can also dig into our extensive archive of magazines, dating back to the first issue of *Unfiltered* in 2008. If you're looking for any topic in particular, use the search function to look through every issue.

## WHISKY TALK

We also produce a regular podcast, Whisky Talk, which features interviews with distillers, our founder Pip Hills, and

visits further afield to explore the world of sherry casks in Jerez. Look out for regular updates at [www.whiskytalk.fireside.com](http://www.whiskytalk.fireside.com)

## VIDEO

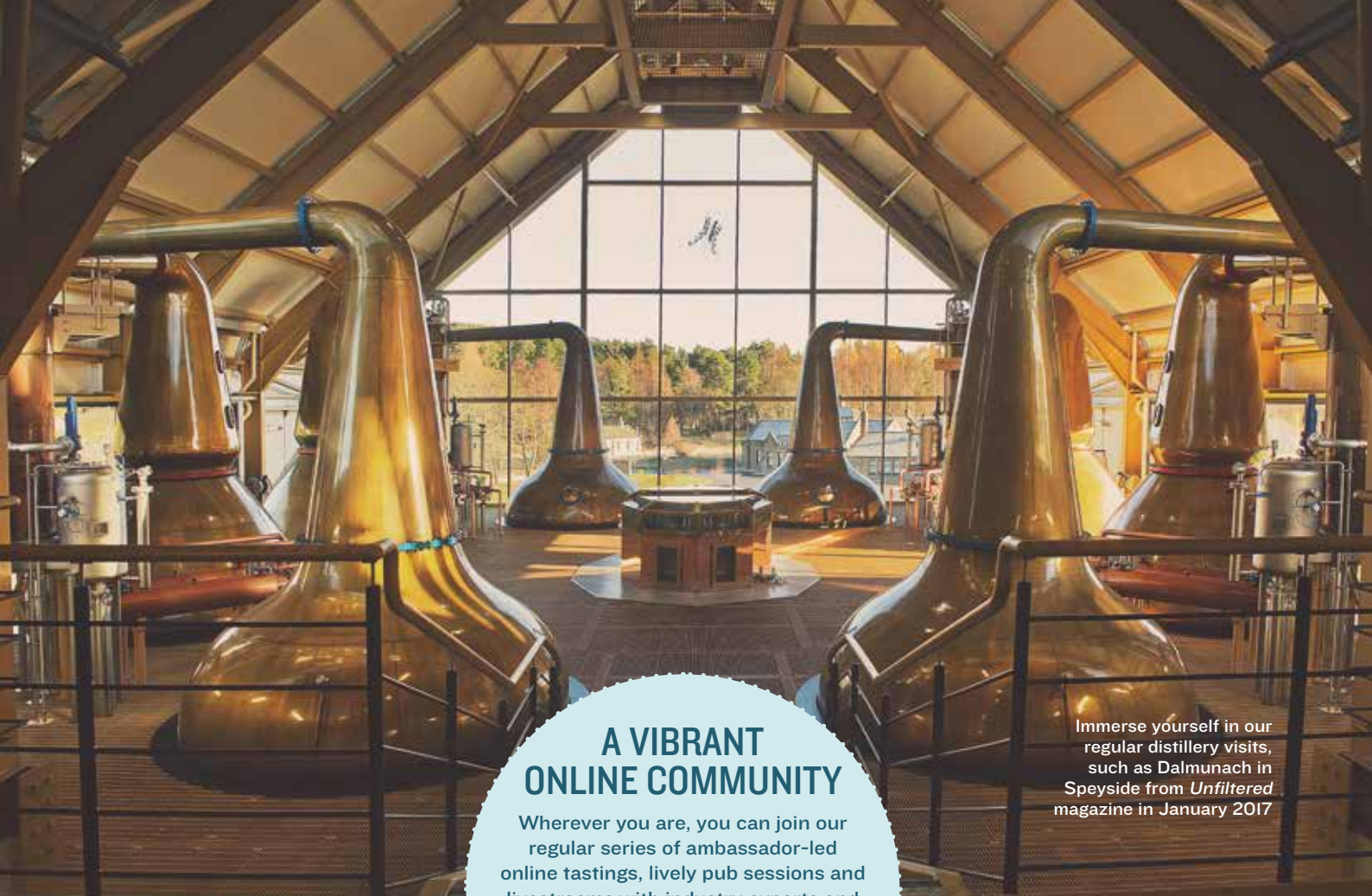
On YouTube we bring our whisky adventures alive at SMWS Silverscreen, including a range of distillery visits, whisky adventures around the world and regular bottle reviews and ambassadors sharing their Society whisky knowledge. ●



ELIZABETH MACHIN







## A VIBRANT ONLINE COMMUNITY

Wherever you are, you can join our regular series of ambassador-led online tastings, lively pub sessions and livestreams with industry experts and whisky personalities, as well as soaking up whisky knowledge and entertaining features in our monthly digital issue of *Unfiltered* magazine and regular Whisky Talk podcasts

Immerse yourself in our regular distillery visits, such as Dalmunach in Speyside from *Unfiltered* magazine in January 2017

The magic of the Islay Whisky Festival, from *Unfiltered* magazine in May 2015





BETTER WHEN SHARED







We don't just bring you amazing whisky – we bring our members together to share their passion at our Members' Rooms, tasting events, festivals and our network of partner bars around the world. That makes the SMWS the perfect place to start out on your whisky journey

# Welcome home...

WORDS RICHARD GOSLAN

**E**very member should at some point visit The Vaults in Leith, where we started out in 1983 in a historic building that you can still see at the heart of the Society monogram.

Much of The Vaults' history may be lost in time, but the vaulted cellars that still exist underneath the Members' Room are thought to date back to before 1200. Within the cellars is a rare fungus, known only in the oldest wine cellars of Europe, and brought over with the claret from Bordeaux stored here in exchange for dried fish and coal.

Over the centuries, The Vaults has survived and thrived and is now an amalgamation, culminating with the addition of a fourth storey that was added relatively recently – in 1785. Wine merchant James Thomson leased the building in 1753, and it subsequently became home to JG Thomson & Co – and then to The Scotch Malt Whisky Society in 1983. A combination of good timing and a sense of adventure led to Society founder Pip Hills buying The Vaults as the home of The Scotch Malt Whisky Society – thereby assuring the historic building's continuous use in the liquor business for more than 600 years



BELOW ♥ Bring your whisky to life at a Society tasting



The Tasting Room at The Vaults in Edinburgh





ABOVE 🍷 The snug at our Members' Room at 38 Bath Street, Glasgow

## MORE MEMBERS' ROOMS

As the Society's membership has grown, we added Members' Rooms at 19 Greville Street in London's Farringdon district in July 1999, handy for the famous Hatton Garden jewellery quarter. That was followed by the opening of a splendid Georgian townhouse at 28 Queen Street in the heart of Edinburgh's New Town in spring 2004 (in Edinburgh, everything has to be taken in context, and the 'New Town' refers to the area of the city developed from the 18th century – as compared with the medieval-era 'Old Town').

Most recently, the Society crossed Scotland's Central Belt to open a Members' Room at 38 Bath Street in the heart of Glasgow – Scotland's largest city (and some say most welcoming, although it depends who you ask).

Wherever you visit, as a member you'll receive the warmest of welcomes at each of these locations, and you can also sign in up to three guests at a time for them to experience the special atmosphere of a Society Members' Room for themselves.

Elsewhere across the UK the Society has a presence in various partner bars, where you can find SMWS bottlings and kindred spirits on both sides of the bar.

## A GLOBAL REACH

The Society also now has an international presence in Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore and the US. Each branch releases Outturns of new whiskies throughout the year and hosts events for members and non-members.

The SMWS also has a growing network

of international partner bars that have been exclusively selected to offer Society whisky. The partner bars provide a home from home for Society members and whisky lovers alike, offering a unique range of exclusive single cask offerings for you to delight in – and share a dram with friendly faces, wherever you are.

## TIME FOR A TASTING

Our membership is as varied as the whiskies we bottle. But we all find common ground when we get round a table and prepare to savour a selection of Society drams, served up and introduced by one of our fantastic ambassadors.

Our programme of tasting events brings our whiskies to life every month with our new Outturn, as well as introducing different themes, pairings, guests, music or more. You may start the evening as strangers, but you're likely to

leave as friends. You can find tastings at our Members' Rooms, partner bars and beyond, in the UK and across the world. Take the plunge and you'll find that 'better when shared' is much more than a slogan – it's a Society way of life.

## HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Of course you don't even have to leave the comfort of your own home to share your passion for Society single malts. How about setting up a home tasting and inviting some friends or family over to spread the love – and maybe bring a new member into the fold?

If you're as fortunate as some members, such as Jim Coleman in Scotland, you'll already have the perfect space set up to host a whisky tasting. Jim has built a cosy wooden cabin in his garden to share the delights of a dram.

"I like to do a five-dram tasting, and choose the whiskies depending on who's attending," Jim says.

When it comes to choosing bottlings, there are endless options: maybe it's a tour of the five main whisky regions, using the Society's flavour profiles to showcase the diversity of single cask flavours. Or try a blind tasting of casks from the same distillery. Whatever you line up, encourage everyone to come up with their own flavour descriptors. And download the Society's tasting mats, tasting forms and flavour profile chart to keep things on track. ●

## YOUR HOME FROM HOME

SMWS members are guaranteed a warm welcome at our partner bars around the world. Search 'partner bars' at [smws.com](http://smws.com) for our full list and present your card for potential discounts



BELOW 🍷 Partner bar, The Malt Vault, Utrecht





LEFT ● Olaf finds the perfect bottling

# Tips to help open up our world

Our Society experts have some advice of their own to help you convert a newcomer to the delights of single cask appreciation

## JOHN MCCHEYNE, SMWS MASTER BRAND AMBASSADOR

I find the best approach is to ask a newcomer to nose the whisky blind and focus entirely on the flavour – most people will be pleasantly taken aback. Sometimes, a simple sniff of a single cask whisky – maybe something with a whiff of dark chocolate in a summer meadow, or a stormy harbour on an island – can be enough to get the olfactory glands going and cause surprise or astonishment. But the first sip has to be measured and chewed in the mouth. Then add a little water to deal with the fear of that cask strength whisky in the glass.

## EUAN CAMPBELL, SMWS SPIRITS MANAGER

Finding out what other drinks people enjoy is always a good place to start. By selecting an active first fill barrel for a bourbon drinker, you are already in familiar territory for the new Scotch drinker. Perhaps a heavily sherried

whisky might go down well with a spiced rum drinker, with its flavours of fruitcake, cinnamon and cloves. Once you notice the similarities between matured spirits it becomes easier to try new things and discover whole categories of previously uncharted enjoyment.

Another good entry point for people who haven't given whisky a chance is a tasting with some food. Chocolate matches very well with all styles of whisky, and can help to accentuate the fruit and vanilla flavours in the drams. It can also make the texture a little more manageable for those who are not used to high strength drinks.

## FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVEN'T GIVEN WHISKY A CHANCE, DO A TASTING ALONG WITH SOME FOOD

## HANS OFFRINGA, SMWS HONORARY AMBASSADOR, THE NETHERLANDS

If someone isn't used to drinking cask strength whisky, I recommend that they take a sip of water first, then the whisky – to the point that they appreciate the taste but are not offended by the bite of the high alcohol percentage and avoid the burn of the alcohol in their mouth. It's like diluting the water with whisky, instead of the other way around.

## MATT BAILEY, SMWS AMBASSADOR, AUSTRALIA

Going from non-whisky drinker to an SMWS single cask convert is best done by pouring them three glasses of Society whisky: one grain, one sherry-casked and one ex-bourbon.

Start with the grain cask. Add three to four teaspoons of water and wait a moment for its inner-sweetness to blossom. Then ask them to have a nose and a small lip-coating taste. Talk about the unique white-sugar-like sweetness a great grain often exhibits.

Do the same for the ex-bourbon cask, but if possible try using a slightly spirit-heavy dram, for example from our Juicy, Oak & Vanilla flavour profile. Then again with the sherry-casked whisky. Don't worry about small details – work out which dram sits best for them, which flavour profiles they most like from those, and go from there.

As for peated whisky? I'd recommend a selection from the Society's Lightly Peated, Peated and even Heavily Peated profiles. As my fellow SMWS ambassador John McCheyne says: "Don't graduate to single cask, start there."

## OLAF MEIER, SMWS AMBASSADOR, SCOTLAND / GERMANY

Choose a selection of whiskies that are very different – the Society's 12 flavour profiles are a great help but you can also choose by different maturations from different kinds of casks. That also gives you different colours, and there's nothing nicer for a feast of the eyes than a range of colours. You could go for old whiskies versus young, smoky versus non-smoky. The choice is endless, but go for one theme – don't overdo it the first time. ●



## THE SCOTCH MALT WHISKY SOCIETY

CAMPBELTOWN KARAOKE • CHERRY CREAM CHEESE  
CUPCAKES • A RUMMAGE IN A HANDBAG • VIVACIOUS  
VITALITY • CHASING CHAMELEONS • STRANGELY  
SOOTHING • BATHING IN BRANDY • THE LIGHTNESS OF  
BEING • DEATH BY FLORIST • ARCHAEOPTERYX PAELLA  
RED DIESEL • RIESLING HOT TODDY • MALT AND STUFF  
COLD CURE? • **ALL TOGETHER UNIQUE** • PETALS AND  
PEACHES • SUGARY ESPRESSO IN A MECHANIC'S CUP •  
HERBAL TITILLATION • CARAMEL, CURRANTS, COCONUT  
AND CARPENTRY • RIDING A DUCK BAREBACK UP MOUNT  
ETNA • MARGHERITA JAGERBOMB • RINGO GEORGE •  
TAKING THE HIGH ROAD • HONEY ON A CRICKET BAT •  
A LITTLE EXTRAVAGANT • DEMERARA DELICIOUSNESS