

## THE GLENKINCHIE STORY

Edinburgh Castle, which was opened by Magnus Magnusson in May 1988, again reflecting the new-found popularity of the industry as a tourist commodity.

In 1995 the mash house was rebuilt, although the existing wooden washbacks were retained.<sup>51</sup>

In December 1997 Guinness and GrandMet agreed to merge. A substantial part of this merger would be the coming together of the whisky and gin brands owned by Guinness' spirits division (ie. United Distillers) and the vodka and liqueurs owned by GrandMet's drinks business, International Distillers and Vintners (IDV) – which had been acquired by GrandMet in 1972. The new company was called Diageo plc with the new spirits arm called, perhaps not surprisingly, UDV. Today they own 27 malt and 2 grain distilleries with a 50% share of a third.<sup>52</sup>

## GLENKINCHIE TODAY

Glenkinchie still owns that 85 acres of the surrounding arable ground but doesn't use it. They currently rent it to a local farmer who, as chance would have it, used the ground for barley this year. The distillery still has an active relationship with the local farming community although not as direct as that described by Barnard back in 1887. Of the three waste products, only two are of any use to farmers. The wet draff, or barley residue, stays within the Lothian area where it is sold to farms as cattle feed. Pot ale is transferred to (very) local pig farms. Spent lees, on the other hand, don't constitute a viable foodstuff. They go through an effluent treatment system and are returned to the burn as clean water often of a higher standard than the burn water itself.

As well as that 85 acres of arable land, the distillery itself occupies an area of 17 acres. Its water supplies now come from a spring uniquely situated deep under the vast bulk of the warehouse and fed from the nearby Lammermuir Hills. The reservoir sits in the same catchment area that feeds the Kinchie Burn.

There are only nine full-time manual workers employed by the distillery now. (There are other distilleries which have as few as five). Glenkinchie had about 40 or 50 employees in the 1920s. The current manager, Charlie M. Smith, suggests there would have been about 20 staff at Glenkinchie when he joined the industry in 1975. Employees used to have to spread

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themselves around a variety of rooms to carry out a variety of tasks on a variety of pieces of equipment. The production process is now semi-automated and much more centralised than it was in the 1970s. (Some other distilleries have totally automated, but Glenkinchie has no plans to follow suit.) Only two operators are required to work at any one time.

Of course, Glenkinchie now employs a number of others on the tourism side. The Visitor Centre which incorporates the Museum, avoids the rigid timescales applied at some attractions because of its entirely rural setting and happily accepts the passing tourist on an 'as and when' basis. That way the tour and visit are as unhurried as the process itself and allow the traveller time to savour and reflect both on Glenkinchie – the malt and on Glenkinchie – the place where it is distilled.

Approximately 20 000 visitors make the journey each year to see this jewel of East Lothian. Large numbers are from the UK itself but the number and variety of overseas accents seems to increase every year. Many come almost as a pilgrimage; others because Glenkinchie is there. But it is sincerely believed all go away refreshed and enthused. To run this aspect of the operation successfully demands a manager and two other full time staff, augmented by six or seven part-timers in the summer.

Today duty on whisky is £20.56 per litre of alcohol.

### **Glenkinchie – The Classic Lowland Malt**

Every race that can lay claim to producing a great drink has something that is so prized that it becomes the standard by which all others are judged.

For the Scots these are the single malts. Subtle variations in water, weather, peat and of course the distilling process itself, will lend to each single malt its singular characteristics. These variations are sometimes so local that within just a few miles of each other the fruits of neighbouring distilleries will display highly differing eccentricities.

Knowing that nothing can stimulate the palate or exhaust the vocabulary more than a journey by way of sips and sniff to each far flung distillery, the decision was taken in 1987 to launch a range of whiskies. Unique in their own right, each would convey to the eager consumer the deep, rich variety that is available in Scotch Malt whiskies. The range would divide Scotland into six regions and provide for the whisky traveller,

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novice or expert, a journey of discovery as they travelled through the regional styles of six highly individual malts. They are quite simply Scotland's finest, the 'Classic Malts'.

It was no surprise that Glenkinchie, long admired and a favourite drink in the Edinburgh area, should be chosen to champion the Lowland style, with its pale golden colour, reminiscent of the local barleys, its sweet light grassy nose, its sweetly dry, warming taste, with its sudden intense spicy and for some a smokey finish.

Following consumer research and the knowledge that Classic Malt drinkers were keen to experiment with different versions of their favourite whiskies the Distillers' edition was introduced in 1998 to provide a range designed to complement the existing distillery character – so critical was this that considerable experimentation was required before the final selection was made. Ultimately Amontillado sherry cask wood was found to be the ideal partner for Glenkinchie.

This allows the sherry cask wood to stand alongside, rather than swamp, the malt giving the spirit a bright sunny gold colour, and imparting a delicate sweet fragrant nose. The taste is intense biscuity sweetness followed by sugar sweetness intertwined with an intense oaky dryness. Then follows an astonishingly long, dry, soothing finish, in total contrast to the short, spicy smokiness of Glenkinchie in its Classic Malt guise.

As well as a wonderful 'straight' dram this light lowland malt is excellent as both aperitif and digestif, but for those who might desire a longer drink, it also lends itself completely to the world of the cocktail. Sacrilege? Nonsense! Its distinguished history as a single malt has been achieved by being different and this is no less than would be expected of one of the few left to boast the Lowland style.

For those inclined to try, a simple recipe devised by Gary Regan, a noted creator of cocktails to celebrate the first 'Glenkinchie in the Gardens' concert is:

*One shot (generous) of Glenkinchie  
Splash of Cointreau or Triple Sec  
Splash of Amaretto*

*Stir ingredients together and serve over ice. Alternatively,  
stir with ice and strain into a chilled martini glass.  
Garnish with maraschino cherry or slice of lemon.*

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*Glenkinchie also works superbly well as a long summer drink, sometimes called a 'cooler' – try it in a long glass as an iced punch with ginger ale, lemons and mint or for the more formal version try soda water as a substitute for ginger ale.*

But why stop here? To quote Rabbie Burns 'whisky and freedom gang th'gither' but what of whisky and food?

For a number of years now the concept of substituting grain for grape has gained favour and five course dinners exploring the idea of drinking malt whisky whilst eating have been tried and tested with fascinating results.

In the 1990s UDV took this on board and invited award-winning writer and food consultant Richard Whittington, who is a specialist in this matter, to be responsible for the creation of Classic Malt whisky dinners. He notes that quite clearly there were some foods which by their preparation were never going to partner malt whisky, as the choice has to be based on good taste and balance of flavours on the palate.

A whisky dinner he concludes should encourage shared exploration, mutual discovery and vigorous debate. It should be lively but never raucous but above all be an event that provides education and pleasure.

One of the features of such events is the laying aside of any preconceptions as to how the whisky will be served. The standard 'pub' glass is nowhere to be seen. This is a dinner after all and the use of wine glasses gives an opportunity to play tunes with the presentation and the perception. Generally large wine glasses are better than small. They are aesthetically more appealing whilst giving every facility to nose and appreciate the strikingly individual bouquet of each malt.

Glasses where the whisky is to be drunk neat as with desserts and cheeses for example, may be dessert wine, port or brandy style. Champagne flutes can be used with startling effect with some of the lighter styles of malts.

Chilling whisky is normally not recommended but there are a few which are of a more floral and grassy aroma and these can be served from the freezer in a chilled glass. This suppresses the nose but still allows the flavour to come through particularly the thick texture of the Glenkinchie malt. As the whisky warms to room temperature it opens up revealing changing nuances of flavour with each sip.

Glenkinchie works very well when served in a champagne flute with poached salmon, potted shrimps, foie gras, smoked

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haddock and sweetcorn chowder such as the famous Cullen skink, prosciutto and black figs, deep fried oysters and mussels, sushi, scallops and when served in a red wine glass – wild mushroom risotto, or in a white wine glass – cock-a-leekie soup.

### **Glenkinchie – The Edinburgh Malt**

Glenkinchie's beginnings as the Edinburgh Malt can reasonably be said to have been a result of the formation of the Glenkinchie Distillery Company in the 1870s.

When the re-opening of the distillery by the consortium of wine merchants, brewers and blenders took place in the early 1880s considerable quantities were readily available to an eager market and the light refreshing Glenkinchie was no doubt to be found in ample supply in the drawing rooms and studios of the time.

More recently, famed whisky writer – Edinburgh's own Charlie MacLean, wrote: 'Since the Scottish Assembly was established a few years ago, Edinburgh has enjoyed another renaissance and although it would be an over-statement to compare this with the golden age of enlightenment of the late 18th century, nevertheless the capital of Scotland is experiencing a boom today which once more gives it the atmosphere of a European capital. And once again Glenkinchie is finding its place as 'The Edinburgh Malt'. In the elegant drawing rooms of the classical 'New Town' you may well be offered Glenkinchie (with soda or water) as an aperitif, instead of gin and tonic. In pubs it is drunk as a

