



## Object of the Newsletter

*To promote the appreciation of fine Scotch Whisky (and the drinking of it) amongst my friends and to spread the word on the joys of single malt. By the way, I do not profess to be an expert, I am merely expressing an opinion on the whiskies I am tasting. "Slange."*

### THE THUNDER GOD IS UNLEASHED!!!

Lucky me, my wife Tracey bought me a bottle of Highland Park's "Thor" from their Valhalla collection for my birthday. This whisky is aged 16 years and is housed in a unique wooden frame that echoes the dragon's head prow from a Viking longship. With only 1,500 bottles being released in the United States, you will have to move fast to get one. Be warned, this is an expensive whisky, and the nice Oak Stand probably hasn't helped keep the price down. I like Highland Park whiskies, and I have to say that this may well be my favorite from them. At 52.1 ABV it is a little stronger than normal (low to mid 40's) and I find that I prefer it with a little water, which also helps release the flavors. I was pleasantly surprised at how fruity it was for a Highland Park, and I liked the hint of smoke. I am looking forward to trying the rest of the Valhalla Collection Loki, Freia and Odin, when they are released (or should that be "UNLEASHED").

### Tasting Notes;

**Nose** - Sweet, peach, ginger & vanilla

**Palate** - Honey, smoke, vanilla, apple

**Finish** - Fruity, spicy with a hint of smoke



*If you have a personal favorite and you would like it to feature in future "Slange" newsletters, please let me know. I can be contacted at my website [www.scot-talks.com](http://www.scot-talks.com)*

*"Slainte Mhath"  
Paul Bissett*



## A wee bit of History

The first Viking raids in Britain are recorded in the 780s, by which time it seems likely that the Norse already had a foothold in Orkney. The islands' strategic position, off the northern coast of Scotland and at the centre of the Viking "sea roads", made them the obvious choice as a base for further expansion and raids into Scotland and Ireland.

The extent of this early settlement is unclear, but although there had probably been some contact between Orkney and Norway for some time - either trade, settlement or raiding - it is generally accepted that the Norse only began moving to Orkney in significant numbers at the start of the 9th century.

But however and whenever it began, within a few generations Orkney was a distinctly Norse earldom, from where the earls controlled Shetland, the Western Isles and large areas of northern and western Scotland.

The Norse settlers had achieved complete dominance in the islands, their language replacing the indigenous language and their place names wiping out those that had gone before.

In 1468 Orkney was pledged by the king of Norway, as security against the payment of the dowry of his daughter Margaret, betrothed to James III of Scotland. As the money was never paid, the Orkney islands passed to Scotland.

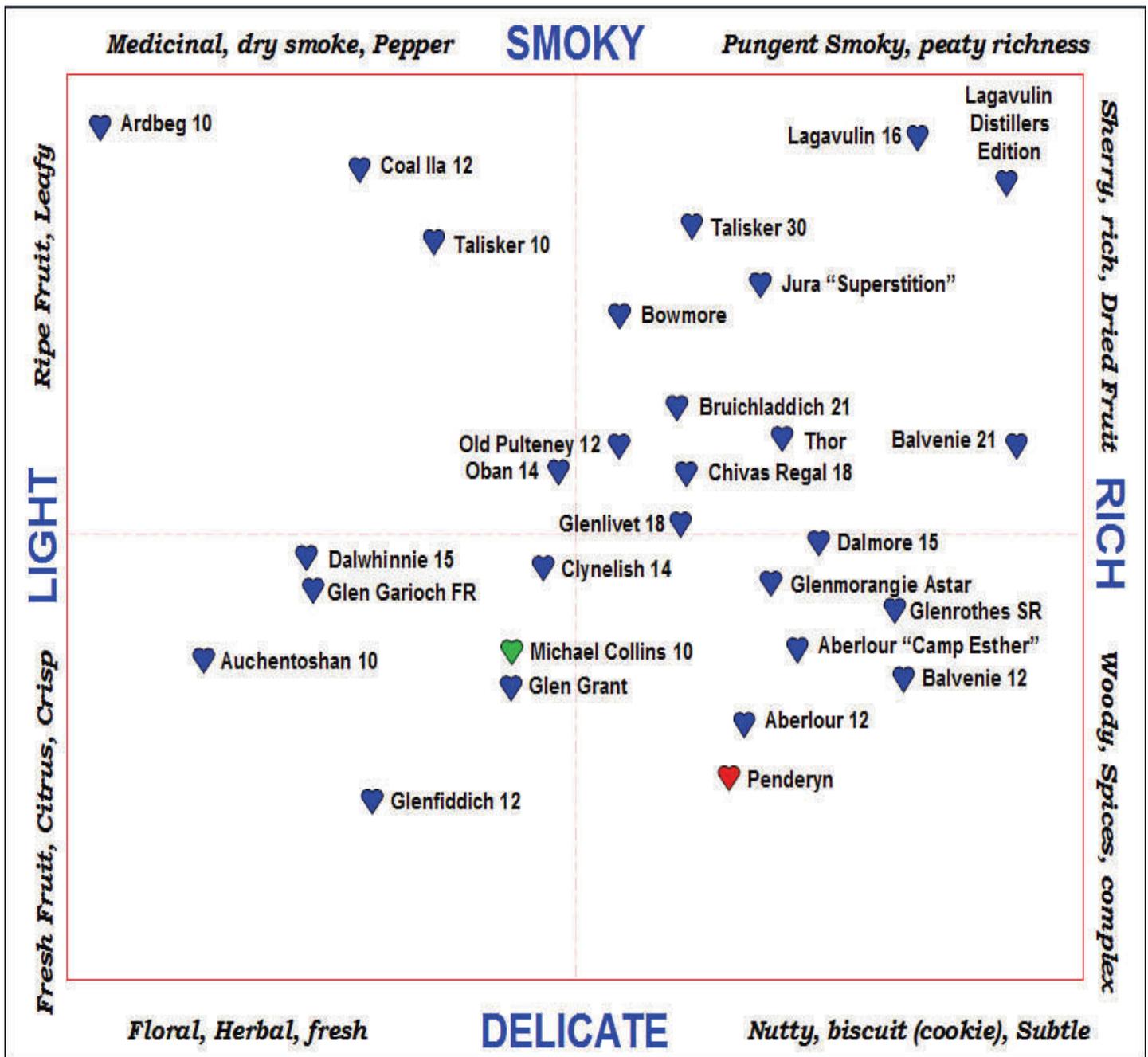
As can be seen by the name of the founder of Highland Park distillery (founded 1798), Magnus Eunson the Viking heritage was/is still there.



Viking Longship with Dragon head prow



Below is a simple guide to help you choose your single malt Whisky, and the flavor notes you should expect from it. Being Scottish I recommend you find a likely candidate and try it in a bar before buying the whole bottle. With each issue of the newsletter I will add in another Whisky to the flavor map. This Issue; **“Thor” from Highland Park** For more information go to <http://www.highlandpark.co.uk/lda>





## The Orkney Islands <http://www.visitororkney.com>

Are a group of about 70 islands and skerries (small rocky island) situated 10km (6.2 miles) from the north-east tip of the Scottish Mainland. The largest island, known as 'the mainland', is home to most of the total 20,000 population.

The main town and Capital of the islands is Kirkwall (photo below) and with its narrow main street with many craft and gift shops, cafes, hotel restaurants and bars is a great central location from which to explore the islands. Kirkwall is dominated by the magnificent St Magnus Cathedral, founded by Earl Rognvald Kolson in 1137, with its red sandstone walls and large columns, ramparts and vaulted ceiling is a 'must see' if visiting the capital.

Stromness is the second biggest town in Orkney and undoubtedly the most picturesque. The town grew up around the sheltered harbor of Hamnavoe as the fishing industry grew and trade routes opened with Canada. The narrow winding street follows the shoreline with many lanes and alleyways leading off. Houses along the waterfront have private piers and slipways and the dramatic backdrop of Brinkies Brae and the hills of Hoy make this another 'must see' for any visitor.

There is a wide variety of festivals and events throughout the year with the summer months being particularly busy. The Folk Festival takes place in May with an impressive line-up of visiting artistes and local musicians performing at concerts, ceilidhs, dances, pub sessions etc over four days. The St Magnus Festival is a mid-summer celebration of the arts with world-class performances from orchestras, ensembles, choirs, dance groups etc. Taking place in June each year it attracts visitors from all over the world.



**"Any man who eats dessert is not drinking enough."**

**Ernest Hemingway**