



## Object of the Newsletter

*To promote the appreciation of fine Scotch Whisky, the area from which it comes, the people that inhabit the land and it's history. By the way, I am merely expressing my opinion on the whiskies I am tasting, as you know, everybody has one.*

I now take a look at the Inchgower 14-year-old, this is a very rare whisky nowadays and it was purely by chance that I stumbled upon it, in a hotel bar on our last visit to Scotland.

This bottling was a part of Inchgower's Flora and Fauna series, which is unfortunately discontinued, each whisky had a different illustration on the bottle. In the case of this 14-year-old it has an Oyster catcher on the label.

The Inchgower distillery is situated in the Speyside region, but this whisky tastes more like a lowlander to me.

Do I like it and would I buy it? If I could find a bottle and could afford it, then yes I would. And there is hope for you whisky lovers out there, a number of independent bottlings are available in particular by Hunter Laing, Gordon & MacPhail, and Douglas Laing.

[You can buy Inchgower 14-year-old for around \\$53.00 a bottle. I just saw that Masters of Malt has one bottle of this available.](#)

### Tasting Notes

**Nose** - Citrus & hay

**Palate** - Ginger, cereal & a hint of Licorice

**Finish** - Cereal & spicy citrus



*"Slainte Mhath"*

*Paul Bissett*



## A Guide to Whisky Antiquing

by Adam Polonski

From the outside, whisky collecting seems like an exclusive sport, a world of international auction houses, unattainable Japanese whisky, and pre-Prohibition bottles of bourbon. But not everyone who appreciates art has to own a Basquiat. Beyond the most rarefied whiskies and record-breaking bottles is a much larger, much more accessible realm of collectible whiskies. Collecting doesn't have to be expensive or time consuming—and above all else, it should be fun.

### COLLECTING TYPES

There are a few kinds of whisky collectors. Trophy hunters might buy for personal satisfaction or investment, but they tend to target rare current releases—think Pappy Van Winkle or Buffalo Trace Antique Collection—and cult distilleries like Ardbeg and Karuizawa (see our story on the most collectible distilleries, page 76). These are superb whiskies, but they're beyond the reach of most people, even most collectors. The second type, dusty hunters, chase the best vestiges of whisky history, lost treasures like pre-1970s Wild Turkey, Stitzel-Weller, or Prohibition-era scotch. Successful dusty hunters are true experts. They're able to decipher tax stamps that prove when a bottle was filled and distillery DSP numbers, which reveal where it was made. They badger private collectors, frequent liquor stores in forgotten neighborhoods, browse estate sales, and—like Scythian horsemen riding across the steppes—will travel hundreds of miles in search of treasure. For them, the thrill of the hunt is everything. I'm in a third category. "Whisky antiquing" embraces an open-ended search, and revels in the experience as much as the outcome. When I go whisky antiquing, I'm not searching for specific bottles. I'm simply foraging for interesting whisky, whatever it may be. I'm not a dusty hunter—I'm a dusty hunter-gatherer.

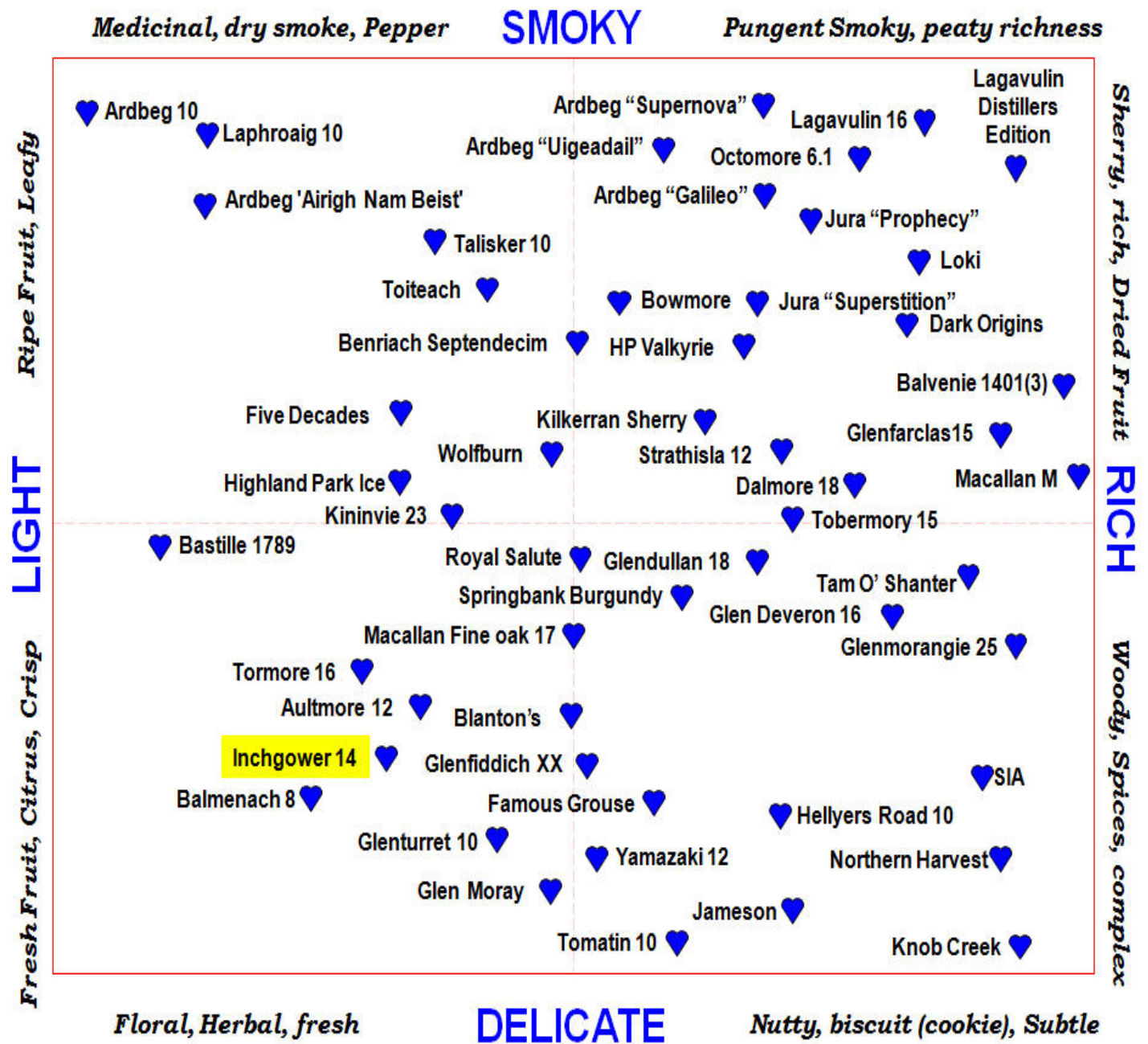
### *How to Track Down—And Get—Rare Whisky*

Whisky antiquing is much more relaxed than other types of collecting. It's low-stress collecting that's perfect for the occasional weekend afternoon. While it may not offer the competitive rush of bidding at auction, it's a way to ease into collecting without a huge commitment of time or money.

My number-one rule of successful whisky antiquing: don't worry about hunting for valuable bottles. I realize that sounds like heresy; however, I don't measure my collection in terms of its rarity, dollar value, or prestige. Instead, I buy whisky that is interesting to me. Last year, I snatched up an early release of Bruichladdich Rocks. It was a common enough bottle ten years ago, but back then I was still drinking Utica Club (the beer that didn't make Utica famous!) and knew little about scotch. For me, that now-vanished bottle from one of my favorite distilleries is a window to another era.



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. This Issue; [Inchgower 14-year-old](http://www.maltmadness.com/whisky/inchgower.html). For more information go to; [www.maltmadness.com/whisky/inchgower.html](http://www.maltmadness.com/whisky/inchgower.html)





## A Guide to Whisky Antiquing

### LET'S GET STARTED

Whether you're just delving into whisky or a longtime enthusiast dabbling in collecting for the first time, everyone has to start somewhere. Auctions might be the big leagues of collecting, but most collectors will find it easier to start in their comfort zone, prowling the liquor store. Go to any whisky store that you wouldn't normally visit and look for the unusual. You'll probably be surprised by what you find.

Better still, make a list of around a half-dozen stores that you've never been to before. If you can, bring along a whisky-loving friend and plan to get a nice lunch and grab a few drams or beers afterward. Whisky antiquing isn't just about whisky—it's about taking in the pleasures of wherever you happen to be, whether you're exploring your own city or discovering a new one.

Have a loose idea of what you hope to find—discontinued limited-edition scotch, old anniversary editions, or maybe single cask bourbon. Keep an open mind and cast a wide net. The most successful antique collectors have a good eye. It's something that develops naturally over years of early morning flea markets, antique shops, and auction browsing. As you build your collection, you'll learn to spot the unusual (even beyond whisky—who knows when you'll find a rum from a distillery that closed 20 years ago?). It's okay to study up on tax stamps, but many a treasure has been purchased by an antique hunter who just had a gut feeling.

A little expertise goes a long way, and you'll naturally be drawn to collecting the types of whisky you know the best. I happen to be a fan of Compass Box's blended Scotch whiskies, so I'm familiar with everything they've released over the last few years. When I spied a bottle of Compass Box Eleuthera in a nondescript liquor store, I knew it must have been off the market for at least five years, since I had never heard of it before. Through some frantic in-store Googling I learned that Eleuthera is a vatted malt discontinued in 2005 ("vatted malt" was the first clue—blends of malt whiskies have been called blended malts instead of vatted malts since 2009). Over a decade later, that store's last bottle finally found a loving owner—and he was delighted to pay only the original \$65 retail.

The most prominent and high-profile whisky retailers are not the best bet for whisky antiquing. We're looking for the corner shop, the small-town stores that buy good whisky when they can get it, but lack eager buyers. In many smaller stores, the owner makes the inventory decisions, and sometimes that owner is a whisky lover who can't pass up buying a few cases of rarities—even if most of their business comes from Irish cream and ten-dollar pinot grigio. Trust me, there are more stores like this than you think.



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At just such a store outside of Albany, New York, I found a bottle of Compass Box Great King Street New York Blend, a 2012 limited edition of just 1,840 bottles released only in the New York area. The owner knew exactly how rare it was, even though nobody else in Albany appeared to care. He bought a few cases when the whisky debuted and puts a few bottles on the shelf every year around the holidays. It's his gift to people who appreciate whisky.

Finding such stores is a matter of exploration. Focus on small, independently owned shops, not big chains or grocery stores. In urban areas, look for newly gentrifying neighborhoods, or—better yet—areas that started gentrifying, but then stopped, leaving behind whisky shops that are a little too ambitious for their market. Small suburban stores also hold promise. You can find stores filled with treasures in almost every market. You just have to look where you don't expect. Control states, where the selection is controlled by the state government, present their own challenges, but even there you can find opportunities if you focus on limited edition releases or brands that aren't well known. Try specialty stores or your state's special order system—you won't find Pappy, but there may be other rarities. As I write this, I can order Ardbeg Kelpie, Laphroaig Cairdeas 2016, or Nikka Taketsuru 17 year old from the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, or grab some Elijah Craig Barrel Proof for half the price it brings in New York City, thanks to the state's standardized pricing. If you're in a control state, you may not find dusty rarities, but you can still get great deals or pick up lesser-known whiskies that could be valuable in the future.

Don't make presumptions about where to look. On one warm summer day, I went whisky antiquing in downtown Brooklyn, one of the most well-trodden and picked-over places in the country. Every one of the eight stores I visited held surprises. One wine shop was bursting at the seams with Asian whisky and independent-bottler scotch, while another had hard-to-find craft whiskeys. Another store's whisky was wildly overpriced, but I picked up a 15 year old German Riesling for a song. Yet another was stocked with rarities like Parker's Heritage Collection, Elijah Craig 23 year old, Octomores of years past, and even an Old Forester Birthday Bourbon, which I've never seen in the wild before. They were all priced appropriately, but they were there.

I'm not trying to offer unrealistic expectations. Every antique hunter will tell you the key to success is putting in your time. If you look hard enough and long enough, a truly rare and valuable whisky will present itself. In that moment, you will marvel that an independently bottled Ardbeg distilled in 1991 (when the distillery was barely distilling at all) and bottled in 2002 could go unsold for fifteen years at \$65, or that a Littlemill languished on a shelf for \$40 for two decades after the distillery itself closed. You'll grab the bottle and wonder if the store owner will somehow stop you from buying it (they won't). Then you'll skip out the door and go 'wee-wee-wee' all the way home.



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A word about where you shop: many venerable dusty hunters have found the bulk of their collections at dilapidated stores with bulletproof glass in neighborhoods that can actually be a little dangerous. I won't advise you not to go to these stores; even now, after many dusty hunters have visited, they may still hold treasures. You need to know your own limits and your comfort zone. For me, going to stores in run-down neighborhoods where I don't feel comfortable walking around is the opposite of the fun time I want to have while whisky antiquing on a Sunday afternoon. By eliminating those stores, I may be cutting myself off from some great deals, but I still find plenty of interesting bottles, and with a lot less anxiety. There's no one right way to hunt for whisky. Collect the way that works for you.

**Every antique hunter will tell you the key to success is putting in your time. If you look hard enough and long enough, a truly rare and valuable whisky will present itself.**

Budget is another highly personal consideration. Unless your landlord accepts payment in whisky, you need to know when to walk away—even from a gasp-inducingly good deal. My own self-imposed limit is \$100 a bottle, \$200 total for the day, and I adhere to it strictly—even when I found a coveted bottle of Ardbeg Supernova for \$160, just a hair above the original retail price and well under its secondary market value. I gawked and stared and gently caressed the carton. I love Ardbeg. I also love paying my student loans. I walked away. I came back two months later. It was still there. I wailed, gnashed my teeth, then walked away again. Be ready to seize opportunities when you find them—but don't presume every opportunity is right for you. Regret is part and parcel of whisky hunting, and it's important that you learn not to fall instantly in love with every discovery.

### SIC TRANSIT GLORIA WHISKI

If there's one collecting mantra you'll hear often, it's to buy two bottles whenever you can—one to drink and one to keep. Defy this ancient law. If you plan to drink the whisky anyway, a second bottle is redundant. Sure, one day that bottle will be gone and you'll never get it again, but that's the nature of whisky. Even though it takes years or decades to mature, it is ultimately transitory and meant to be consumed. By dedicating that money and space on your shelf to a different bottle, you'll be able to buy twice as much variety—and get twice as much enjoyment out of it.

Embrace the ephemerality of whisky. Go out and search for whisky you love and take joy in the experience of finding it. Don't worry about value—remember, whiskies that are highly collectible today languished unwanted on store shelves 20 years ago, and we don't know what whisky fans will covet two decades hence. Accept the enjoyment in creating and drinking a living, changing collection. Finish one treasure and soon enough you'll discover another. Take pleasure in every dram, even if the moment will someday be just a fleeting memory.