



## 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 do not profess to be an expert, I am merely expressing an opinion on the whiskies I am tasting.*

I now have a look at the Strathisla 12-year-old single malt, produced at the oldest continuously operating distillery in Scotland (and in my opinion and the opinion of many others, the prettiest). You should go on the internet and look at some photos of the distillery if you haven't already.

As I write this, I have just convinced myself that on my next trip to Scotland I am going to visit the Strathisla distillery.

The distillery was founded as the Milltown Distillery by George Taylor and Alexander Milne in 1786, which makes it the oldest continuously operating distillery in Scotland.

The Strathisla distillery is considered the spiritual home of Chivas Regal who own the distillery, which they purchased in 1950 to guarantee this Speyside malt would always be available to them for their Chivas blends.

This is a nice fruity, sherried whisky at a very reasonable price, I can only think of a couple of others that are as good, at this Price point.

I will be buying this one again, and you should too.

[You can buy the Strathisla 12-year-old for about \\$40.00 a bottle.](#)

### Tasting Notes

**Nose** - Floral & fresh baked pastry

**Palate** - Apple pie & sultanas

**Finish** - Long & fruity



*"Slainte Mhath"*

*Paul Bissett*



## **4 Women Who Shaped The History Of Whisky**

by Felipe Schrieberg

To celebrate International Women's Day (March 8) it's appropriate to raise a healthy dram to the women that have made the industry what it is today. Women have always been instrumental to the development of alcohol, whether pioneering brewing for the first time in history in Mesopotamia or setting up some of the greatest whisky distilleries.

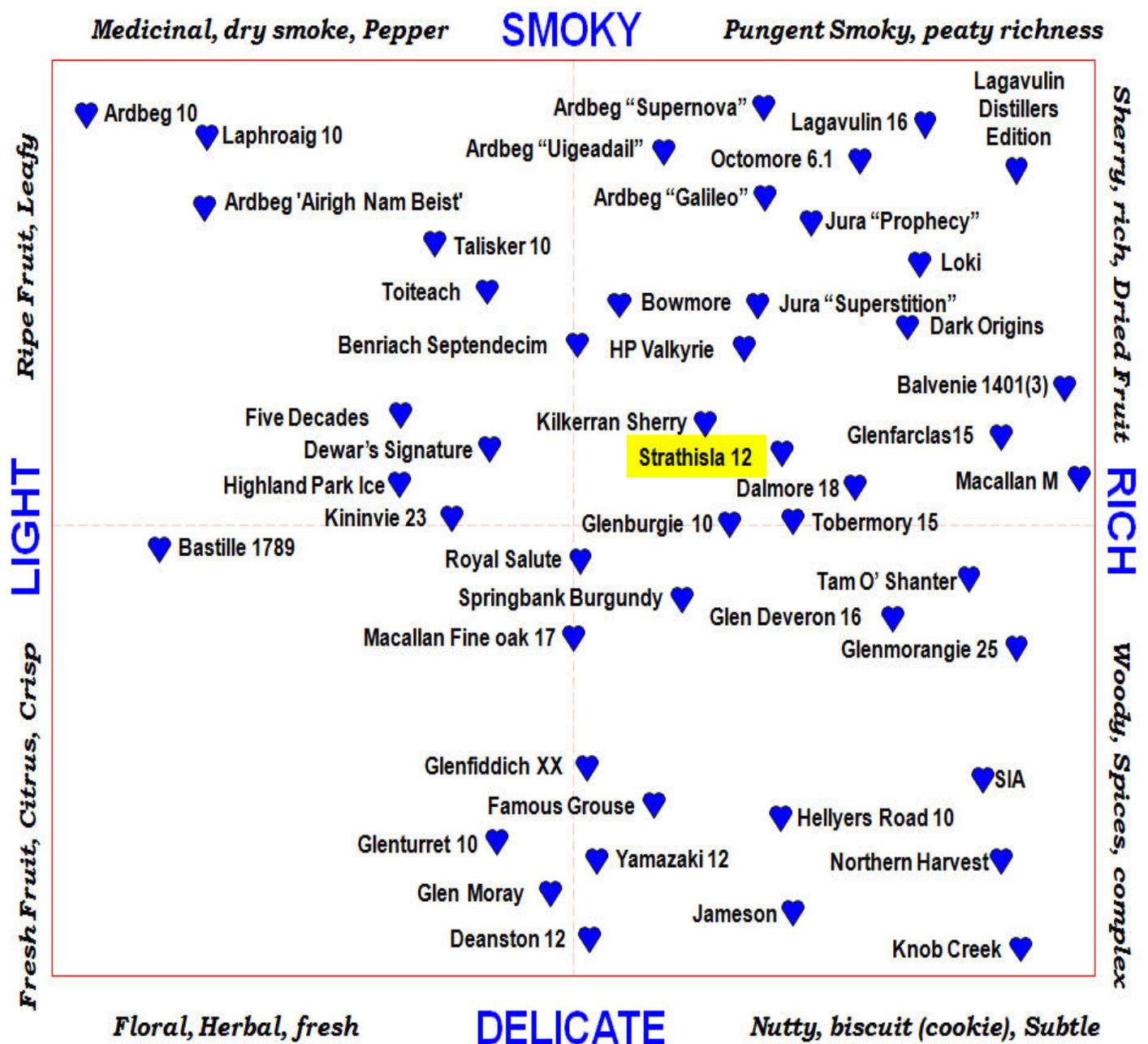


*Rita Taketsuru, the Kirkintilloch-born mother of Japanese whisky.*

The influence and legacy of women who managed to succeed in what has traditionally been a man's world has left a lasting impression in the whisky we get to drink. So here are some of their stories, showing why their legacy is so significant.



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; Strathisla 12-year-old. For more information go to; [www.chivas.com/en/the-story/strathisla](http://www.chivas.com/en/the-story/strathisla)





## **4 Women Who Shaped The History Of Whisky cont.**

### **Bessie Williamson – Owner of Laphroaig**

The only woman in history to own and manage a distillery in the 20th century, there was no indication that Bessie Williamson would become such an important whisky figure. The daughter of a clerk who was killed fighting in World War 1, she was on holiday for the summer on Islay in 1934 with a friend and applied for a summer job working as a shorthand typist at the Laphroaig whisky distillery. She stuck around for a while.

She rapidly rose through the ranks, first by managing the office at Laphroaig, then taking on additional management responsibilities when owner Ian Hunter suffered a stroke in 1938. When he died in 1954, he left her £5,000, ownership of the distillery business, and the tiny islet of Texa to her. Under her watch, she increased production, and eventually sold the distillery to American company Long John Distillers in order to receive funding to modernise the facilities.

Beloved on the island, she provided plenty of work for the local men, kept Laphroaig's high reputation intact, and successfully guided the distillery through tricky economic periods.

### **Jessie Roberta Cowan (Rita Taketsuru) – The Mother of Japanese Whisky**

A young Japanese man, Masatake Taketsuru, came to Scotland to learn how to make whisky. He ended up falling in love and marrying the daughter of his landlords, Jessie 'Rita' Roberta Cowan, in 1920 (to the displeasure of both families). Taking her back to Japan, he began to work on his dream of building a whisky distillery.

Masatake would go on to build Kotobukiya's (later to become Suntory) first whisky plant (he eventually left the company, disgusted that they were not planning on producing 'real' whisky), and established his own distillery in the Japanese 'highlands' of Yoichi, setting up the Nikka distilling company.

During this time, Rita provided both moral and financial support, as she gave English classes to both children and housewives while learning Japanese herself. Eventually, the business began to find success during World War II as Japanese navy began drinking the whisky (though Rita was ostracized as a 'spy' by the local community), and it continued to prosper afterwards. She became known as 'The Mother of Japanese Whisky'.

Rita and Masatake eventually adopted their nephew Takeshi (after his father died in WWII), who went on to take over the company and rapidly expanded its operations around the world. Nowadays, she is celebrated figure in Japan, and a recent TV series based on her life and relationship with Masatake was an enormous success. There's also been a Manga comic drawn about her too.



## **4 Women Who Shaped The History Of Whisky cont.**

### **Helen Cumming – Founder and Owner of Cardhu**

Until recently, Helen Cumming was the only woman to ever be a founder of a Scotch whisky distillery. Though John Cumming, her husband, was the official founder, it's recognized now it was Helen's business acumen and creative ways of avoiding alcohol taxes that kept the distillery going. There's a story that says that she once managed to disguise the distillery as a bakery while serving tea to the auditors (while signalling other distilleries with a red flag that they were in town). Another recounts a time when she walked 20 miles loaded with bladders of whisky in her skirts, knowing that authorities wouldn't be so undignified as to search her. Though she passed Cardhu on to her son Lewis (and stayed involved in running the distillery into her mid-90s), it was his wife Elizabeth that took over after Lewis died unexpectedly. Under her watch, Cardhu greatly expanded production, and then she made a lot of money for the family by selling the distillery off to Johnnie Walker.

### **Ethel Greig 'Miss Babs' Robertson – Founder of Edrington**

Ethel Greig Robertson's grandfather, William Alexander Robertson, had founded the Robertson and Baxter firm of brokers and blenders, the Clyde Bonding Company, and Highland Distillers over the course of his career. Many hugely influential whisky figures, such as Sir Alexander Walker, and John Dewar Jr., were apprentices under him.

Her father James inherited the family business, which in turn was passed down to her and her sisters (who deputed Ethel to represent them in all whisky business matters) on his death in 1944. An avid stag hunter and race car driver, she promptly managed not only to soundly steer the company, but to also ward off continuous aggressive takeover attempts by the enormous American firm Seagram.

In order to protect their business interests, and to avoid the impact of extremely high inheritance taxes, she created a holding company and charitable trust.

The holding company was named after one of the Robertson family farms, Edrington, and the company shares were passed on to [the Robertson Trust](#). Today, Edrington owns the Highland Park and Macallan distilleries (amongst others), as well as the Famous Grouse blended whisky. The Robertson Trust is now the largest charitable trust in Scotland, distributing £20m to over 500 causes a year.