



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"

Welcome to what will be my Christmas newsletter. In this issue I review the Dalmore 15 years old, which the "Whiskymeister" (<http://whiskymeister.wordpress.com>) Ray Pearson passed my way.

I have to say that the simple design and packaging of the bottle with that Stag's head has always caught my eye, and I was looking forward to trying it.

After tasting it, I just had to make it my Christmas issue, not that you couldn't drink it anytime of the year. It's just that the Christmas spices, orange and nuts combine to make the perfect whisky for Christmas time (at least in my head). As a child I always received an orange and a bag of nuts in my stocking along with my toys.

Tasting Notes;

Color - Dark Orange

Nose - Sweet, Toffee, Vanilla, Orange

Palate - Sherry, marmalade, Christmas spices, nuts

Finish - Nuts & Vanilla

Gold Medal - San Francisco World Spirits Competition 2009

Rated 91 - Beverage Tasting Institute 2009

"Slainte Mhath"
Paul Bissett





A wee bit of History

In 1839 Alexander Matheson, having made his fortune in the illegal Opium trade in the far East decided to built a distillery in the village of Alness, (20 miles north of Inverness). Dalmore's location is as lovely as any distillery in Scotland. It looks out across the Cromarty Firth to the Black Isle, the depth of the waters of the firth obvious from the line of mothballed oil rigs moored along its length. The foreshore gives a particularly good view of the distillery itself, while nearby the "Yankee Pier" stretches out into the Cromarty Firth. This was built by the US Navy detachment stationed here in the First World War who used the distillery premises to prepare mines.

The stag's head which appears on every bottle is the Mackenzie family symbol, the Mackenzie's having acquired the operation in 1886. The symbol harks back to when a member of the Mackenzie family risked his own life to save Scotland's ruler, King Alexander III, from a charging stag, the grateful king offered a token of his appreciation by bequeathing the stag to the Mackenzie family as a symbol of valor and courage.

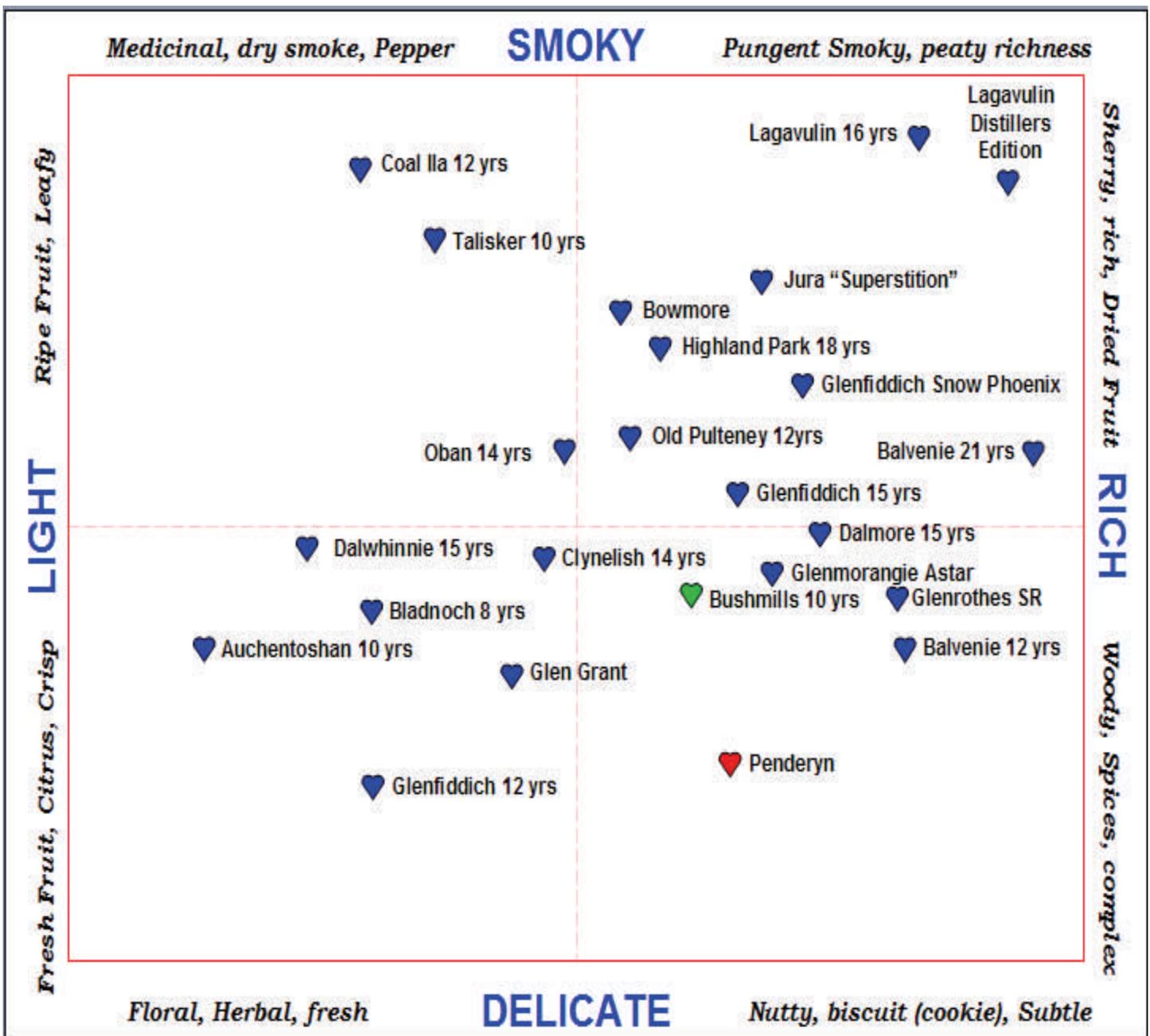
Dalmore is perhaps not as well known amongst aficionados of Scottish distilleries and the whiskies they produce. Their new visitor centre should help remedy that, as should the move to increase the proportion of the output that is kept to mature as single malt Dalmore rather than going into blends.



"Too much of anything is bad, but too much good whiskey is barely enough."(Mark Twain)



Below is a simple guide to help you choose your single malt Whisky, and where it fits in the flavor map. 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. For more information on **Dalmore 15 years old** go to <http://www.thedalmore.com>





Wassailing

As we are getting into the festive season I thought I'd look at wassailing. Few holiday traditions have endured as long or seen so many variations as that of wassailing. Its origins are unknown but it is mentioned in texts dating as far back as the 14th century. In one such text, the leader of a group took a bowl and, raising it to the crowd, shouted "Wassail!" an Old English term meaning "to your health".

There are three variations of the wassailing. One is the filling of a common bowl or cup often referred to by ancient clergy as the Loving Cup and passing it around a room to be shared. Another variation calls for taking the bowl around to each individual house so neighbors can partake as friends. And the third is a celebration of the apple harvest and the blessing of the fruit.

In the earliest known days of the practice, the wassail was poured on to the dormant crops and orchards after harvest to bless them for the coming spring and to ward off evil. Like many such practices devoted to the defense against evil, wassailing has always been a more festive activity associated with partying and making merry. In the last couple of hundred years the practice has been more about good cheer and well wishing than the blessing of the crops.

Wassailing is almost always accompanied by song. "Here we come a-wassailing..." is a Christmas classic beloved by many but understood by few. (It is so misunderstood that some sing "here we come a-caroling..." instead).

The actual ingredients in traditional wassail are widely disputed. This could be attributed to the fact that festive bands of people who traveled from home to home often replenished the bowl with whatever liquid refreshment was available. While one home might have apple cider another might have spirits of a stronger sort. Alcohol has no doubt played a storied part of wassail's history, but tradition does not dictate it to be necessary. In fact, the custom has little to do with the drink at all than it does the good will and society that wassailing generates.

Wassailing, while classically observed during the Christmas holiday season, is also practiced at weddings and other such events where community and family are celebrated.

