

Highland Island

Battered smoked haddock**Cask No. 4.148****£51.70**

Peppery nosefeel – “chip-shop **brown sauce**” – and a **maritime** nose, with very light **creosote** or **Dentyne** chewing gum, with a shake of **cinnamon**. The chip-shop theme continued in the taste: **battered haddock** or **smoked haddock**, after a **sweet** start. Some noted mixed **dried berries**, even **Starburst** sweets. With water it becomes more **fruity** and **fragrant** – a sweetie shop, **boiled travel sweets** with **icing sugar**. The taste now is very sweet, like **tablet**, to start with, then “**gunpowder green tea**”, with **heathery smoke** in the finish. An excellent example of Orkney’s finest.

Drinking tip: With good friends, when your flight has been cancelled

Colour: **Deep gold**Date distilled: **October 1999**Cask: **First-fill ex-bourbon barrel**Alcohol: **59.9%**Age: **10 years**Outturn: **206 bottles**

Islay

Smoky pavlova**Cask No. 23.68****£41.10**

The intriguing nose had **smoked cheese**, **evostick** and **peppermint**, **tarragon**, butterscotch and **vanilla** cream. Burnt **ham**, hints of struck match and **balsam** are intermingled with **sea salt**, **mussels** and **earthy** dunnage storage. The neat palate was a “jalapeno **chilli explosion**”, tamed by butterscotch, **roast chestnuts** and **chocolate**. Chopped **bananas** and **Demerara sugar** brought sweetness to the savoury. The reduced nose had **fermented apples**, **salted honeycomb** and **grappa** – more fruit and sweetness. The reduced palate was sweet and **chalky** with **honey** and **eggs beaten with white sugar** (pavlova and salted meringues). Grainy **pear** and white **peach** lingered. The distillery is run by ‘natural born distillers’.

Drinking tip: Coming indoors after outdoor pursuits

Colour: **Tawny gold**Date distilled: **July 2002**Cask: **Refill ex-sherry butt**Alcohol: **66.0%**Age: **8 years**Outturn: **589 bottles****Elastoplast and lavender****Cask No. 33.100****£50.70****100th Cask!**

A surprisingly **mild** nose, with traces of very **fresh tuna** and faint **carbolic** – “an indoor fish-market” was suggested. A **herbal** and **lightly meaty** note (chicken **gravy**, **deep-fried dulse**) becomes fresher and more **mentholated** until it resolves into **Elastoplast**. The taste is **sweeter** than expected, with **salt** and a distinct **lavender** taste and **smoke** in the aftertaste. Mild **Victory Vs** and **ash**. Water does not help – making the aroma more **tarry**, with **Germolene**. The taste now is **lightly oily**, **sweet** and **peppery**, with **Parma violets**, **mineral salts**, **deep-fried rosemary**, a trace of **Imps** liquorice and **Imps** in the aftertaste. A gentle and pleasant expression of Kildalton’s finest.

Drinking tip: One for the hip-flask

Colour: **Pale gold**Date distilled: **July 2003**Cask: **First-fill ex-bourbon barrel**Alcohol: **60.7%**Age: **7 years**Outturn: **254 bottles**

Lowland

Coconut and vanilla**Cask No. 5.27****£43.20**

The nose **prickly** with nail varnish, **pear drops**, and metallic like a **cold furnace** soon developed into wonderful **sweetness** – maple syrup on toast, fruit salad chews, **cherry lips**, honey and syrupy vanilla. To taste, it was **very hot**, with red cherry Tunes, **vanilla** and fresh oak staves. Dilution brought out more of the cask influence – vanilla sugar, **coconut husk ice cream**, fudge, with **creamy dark treacle toffee**. To taste, the heat had gone and was instead **velvety**, **gentle** and **fresh** with more vanilla, **cardamom**, creamy coconut curry, and **woody** like new furniture or sheds. From the distillery by Dalmiur.

Drinking tip: This definitely needs water and is all the better for it

Colour: **Sauternes**Date distilled: **March 1999**Cask: **Second-fill ex-bourbon hogshead**Alcohol: **58.3%**Age: **11 years**Outturn: **262 bottles****Tasting Panel’s choice**

Campbeltown

Greek lamb with a leather handbag**Cask No. 27.89****£52.80**

The nose had cured meats, **ginger** and maple syrup, along with the contents of a black **leather** handbag – cigarettes, mints and powder puff – to complete the sartorial metaphor, one panellist got a whiff of **Afghan** coat. The palate had **toffee**, caramel and golden syrup, **dates** and raisins and **smoke** – like lamb cooked with smoked **paprika**. The reduced nose suggested **vanilla**, liquorice, Lovehearts, perfumed smoke and lamb served with mint. The reduced palate continued the **raisins** and lamb picture – perhaps a Greek lamb, fed on rosemary, **lavender** and thyme? Most of the Panel loved this quintessential Campbeltown dram, but not all.

Drinking tip: A good dram for a barbecue

Colour: **Molten gold**Date distilled: **March 2000**Cask: **Refill ex-bourbon barrel**Alcohol: **56.0%**Age: **10 years**Outturn: **263 bottles****Two-faced duality****Cask No. 93.43****£43.20**

We found a **two-faced** duality typical of samples from ‘Scotland’s Glen’ distillery – the nose somehow balanced **grapefruit**, juniper, **sandalwood**, sweet tobacco, syrupy **cherries** and plum against oily, metallic **machine shop** smells, leather sandals and old **lobster** pots. The pungent palate was face-bitingly hot, with **salty fish** and bagna cauda sauce, red grape skins, dessert wine, **Dr Peppers** and Kirsch. The reduced nose had Danish Oil, **creosote**, prune liqueur, mackerel cooking on beach **bonfires** and lots of **tobacco** (the Whisky-scientist remembered trips with his dad to Geneva’s Davidoff shop). The reduced palate (much more drinkable) developed salty **prunes**, like cockaleekie garnish.

Drinking tip: A hip flask at the stock car racing, perhaps?

Colour: **Bright gingery gold**Date distilled: **June 1999**Cask: **Refill ex-bourbon hogshead**Alcohol: **58.4%**Age: **11 years**Outturn: **297 bottles**

Outturn

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Speyside Spey

Sherry fusion

Cask No. 76.79 **£49.60**

The full inviting and **juicy** nose oozed **fruitcake** and **leather**; a **fusion of venison** and deep **currant** jus, gutsy **steak, walnut** and **prunes**. Leather and **rolling tobacco** brought thoughts of a grandfather's smoking jacket. The taste was **gigantic** – big **leather** punch, **venison** and **chocolate** sauce and chewy tobacco (with hints of a Montecristo No. 4 **cigar**). The reduced nose became more savoury-smoke with **tobacco** papers, **tobacco leaves** and **liquorice**, with dried fruit (**prunes** and **dates**). The reduced palate was deep and satisfying, revealing more **dark melted fruits** (blackcurrant wine gums), **leather** and **walnuts**. This distillery is renowned for its complex distillation process using wash and spirit stills all of different sizes.

Drinking tip: For deep contemplation

Colour: **Burnt orange marmalade** Date distilled: **November 1995**
 Cask: **First-fill sherry butt** Alcohol: **56.3%**
 Age: **14 years** Outturn: **551 bottles**

A taste of the past

Cask No. 41.48 **£79.30**

To nose this is to open a drawer in an ancient, **well-polished dark oak dresser**, with some **Harrogate toffees** lurking in a corner. **Lively** for its age, but the nose prickle soon wears off, revealing both **meaty (honey-glazed pork, leather satchel)** and **floral** notes (faint **attar of roses**). The latter become dried **rose petals**, or **pot-pourri** in a brass bowl, when water is added; the former a **roasting tin**, glazed with **treacle**. At natural strength, the taste is **peppery**, with **Hessian** and **polished leather**; with water the texture is **waxy** and tooth-coating; the taste **sweet** with a shake of **salt**, and a whiff of **fireworks** in the finish. Old fashioned.

Drinking tip: A little gold for a rainy day with toffees

Colour: **Dull gold, old gold** Date distilled: **December 1980**
 Cask: **Second fill ex-sherry butt** Alcohol: **52.5%**
 Age: **29 years** Outturn: **93 bottles**

Mom's apple pie

Cask No. 9.56 **£38.90**

A simple, **cheerful** malt, the first impression is of **sweet pastry** and **fresh apples** (perhaps with a trace of **mint**); a soft nose, with light **vanilla** and some **barley sugar**. Soon heads towards **apple pie**, with a sweet (even a **meringue**) crust. Very **sweet** and **clean** to taste at natural strength; hot, with **bitter lemon** in the aftertaste. Becomes less sweet with water: **Soor Plooms**, with new **pine-wood** furniture and **geraniums**. A **smooth** mouthfeel, slightly **spicy**; sweet overall, with **Flying Saucers** (sherbet-filled, rice-paper sweets) and a light **oakiness** in the aftertaste. Light and **summery**, from a distillery in Rothes with a lovely woodland garden behind it, created by the original owner and recently restored.

Drinking tip: In a light-hearted mood

Colour: **Mid gold** Date distilled: **June 2003**
 Cask: **First-fill ex-bourbon barrel** Alcohol: **62.7%**
 Age: **7 years** Outturn: **246 bottles**

Pair offer £97.30 save £16

Speyside Lossie

Mystery and allure

Cask No. 7.62 **£62.50**

The **seductive** nose suggested 'danger' as we were drawn into its power – thoughts of a Venus fly trap in a perfectly manicured **Japanese garden** sprang to mind, as well as kimonos and **Bonsai trees** – a definite **balsamic** aroma with **earth** and **caramelised sugar**. The neat palate was fragrant and balanced, continuing the Japanese theme with **incense, coconut** and **currants**. Water released an even more seductive and elusive scent, this time definitely masculine – **musk, forest leaves, juniper** and **Lynx** chocolate aftershave. The reduced taste was pure silk and elegance; **redcurrants, juniper berries** and gentle **leafiness**. This distillery is home to a disused water wheel and steam engine.

Drinking tip: During mysterious moments

Colour: **Sunflower oil** Date distilled: **April 1992**
 Cask: **Refill ex-bourbon hogshead** Alcohol: **51.2%**
 Age: **18 years** Outturn: **216 bottles**

Speyside Deveron

Understated elegance

Cask No. 73.39 **£79.30**

Typical cask characteristics with aromas of **walnut** oil, bread & butter pudding (sprinkled with **burnt nutmeg**), sliced **egg sandwiches** on malted brown bread and **raisins**; blood orange with **caramel sauce**, leather, tobacco, **warm honey** and **damp smoke** make for a **well-rounded dram**. Hot, tannic, smoky, **chewy and mouth-watering** to taste. Adding water released **sweetness**, a trace of smoke, and Christmas cake **richness**; to taste it was **oily**, thick, chewy, **silky** with damp smoke, sweet **tobacco**, orange oil and dark chocolate. A **classy** dram that takes a while to open up but well worth the wait. Means 'big burn' in Gaelic.

Drinking tip: Not to share; with a good book

Colour: **Golden syrup** Date distilled: **April 1982**
 Cask: **Second-fill sherry butt** Alcohol: **55.4%**
 Age: **28 years** Outturn: **214 bottles**

Highland Northern

The Great Outdoors

Cask No. 26.71 **£74.40**

The **fresh** nose brought us outdoors – wet **sand, chalky** cliffs and rock pools with fishing nets catching **shellfish** and crabs. We then enjoy **starfruit, bananas** and **nectarines**, interwoven with fresh **sea breeze** and cooling **mentholic** air. There's clean **linen** on the line with **seaspray**. The taste revealed saltiness, like eating **shellfish** on the beach or swimming with your mouth open! There was a waxiness too, like **citronella candles** and **seaweed**. **Bacon** and old reels of button thread also made an appearance. The reduced nose became soapier and savoury; linen and lux flakes, starch washing and woollen jumpers; pork and **baked ham** and brown **scallops**. The reduced palate was **soft, clean** and sappy – **marshmallows** on a stick, **lemongrass** and cumin, and spicy scallops. Spring water from the Clynemilton burn is used to produce this fruity, slightly smoky single malt Scotch whisky.

Drinking tip: Outdoors at the coast

Colour: **Honey blonde** Date distilled: **December 1984**
 Cask: **Refill ex-sherry butt** Alcohol: **57.3%**
 Age: **25 years** Outturn: **464 bottles**

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