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Whisky Galore! - once more!



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From the homely to the grand – above: Vernacular ticket office at Dufftown, and below, Keith Town station

Whisky's very own railway

ORIGINALLY BUILT to serve the needs of the many whisky distilleries in the area, the Keith and Dufftown Railway was saved from extinction by enthusiasts who could see a future for it carrying visitors to the area on a journey down memory lane.

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Full details from www.keith-dufftown-railway.co.uk.



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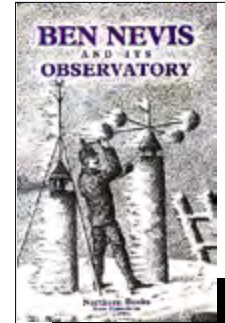


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Captain Izzard in action on the beach

More whisky galore

THE LEGACY of the Highland classic *Whisky Galore* is soon to be revived as a remake of the 1949 original hits the cinema screens this summer.

In the original film, based upon the real-life sinking of the *SS Politician* off the Isle of Eriskay during the Second World War, the dour and staid Captain Waggett is outwitted at every stage by the smart islanders of Todday, who try everything to get their hands on the precious cargo of usige-beatha... 'the water of life'... as rare as gold-dust during wartime rationing.

A Scottish classic, the original had epic performances from Basil Rathbone and Gordon Jackson and even boats some Gaelic language, making it a firm favourite with both Gael and non-Gael alike.

Iain McLean, producer of the new film, a crofter's son from Lewis, spent more than ten years completing his dream project, which did have its quota of 'nightmare moments.'

The new cut has an all star cast of Eddie Izzard and Gregor Fisher amongst others, and enjoys the added bonus of the skills of writer Peter McDougall and director Gillies MacKinnon.

A fluent Gaelic speaker himself, McLean, now based in Glasgow, said one of the hardest things was raising the finance: they got no grants or government subsidies to make the film, all the finance had to be raised privately.

The team will be taking the film to many festivals over the circuit, with the first stop Cannes in May then Edinburgh in June, after which the film is scheduled for release.

The new *Whisky Galore* was filmed at many places around Scotland from Portsoy, Loch Long and even The Renton, near Dumbarton.

And did they actually use the hard stuff in the movie itself?
"Ah no," joked McLean, "It's a top secret concoction by the props department - I'm only allowed to tell you that it is some caramel in it," he said.

McLean believes the film will be a huge boost for the whisky industry around the world. In France when the original film came out it was called *Whisky A Go Go* which gave it a whole new meaning for drinking.

So is the future for McLean in film making?

"Well, I do have another idea for a film, but I may take a wee holiday before that starts," he said.

<http://www.whiskygaloremovie.com>

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New boy on the block...



RECENT YEARS have seen boom conditions in the whisky trade and as a reflection of this there has been a move to re-open some distilleries that had been closed and more ambitiously to build brand new purpose built distilleries.

Shown above, the new Dalmonach distillery built on the Speyside site of the old Imperial distillery.

The elegant design of the new complex has

been recognised in a number of architectural awards for the French owners, the Pernod-Ricard drinks giant which, through the long established Chivas Brothers, owns many distilleries in the area.

Many local companies were involved in the £25m contract for the plant which has a capacity of some 10 million litres of spirit a year.

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EDINBURGH'S International Festival of music and drama may be preparing to celebrate its seventieth birthday this year, but whisky too is being celebrated in festive fashion on an ever increasing scale throughout Scotland – and indeed the world.

Without doubt the biggest event – and the one which gets the season off to a flying start – is the Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival, held this year from April 28 to May 2.

This year there is a huge range of events and while many of these are booked long in advance, there is still plenty going on in whisky country.

Events range from guided tours (you can be chauffeur driven in a Range Rover), advanced tastings, study sessions, whisky awards, music, even a pop-up shop. Two of the area's castles – Gordon Castle in Fochabers and Drummuir Castle are getting in on the act, with Gordon Castle offering afternoon tea in the walled garden, accompanied by 'whisky cask cider.' There is even the opportunity to paddle your own canoe on the Spey!

Many of the planned events have proved so popular that they have long been sold out, but a visit to the festival website – www.spiritofspeyside.com will reveal others that

still have space and the festive atmosphere on the streets of Dufftown has to be experienced.

It is worth looking out for an autumn whisky festival, planned for later in the year.

Other whisky related celebrations follow thick and fast across Scotland throughout the season.

Also at the start of May, (on May 7), the Albert Hall in Stirling is the setting for the The Spirit of Stirling Whisky Festival. Amongst the attractions promised are a couple of master classes. Details from www.spiritofstirlingwhiskyfestival.co.uk.

At the end of May – from May 20 to the 28th – the action switches to the Island of Islay. Started in 1986, the Islay Malt and Music festival has gone from strength to strength. The festival takes in the distilleries – Lagavulin, Bruichladdich, Caol Ila, Laphroaig, Bowmore, Jura Distillery Open Day, Kilchoman Distillery, Bunnahabhain, Ardbeg - to name but a lot. Details from: www.islayfestival.com.

June promises a celebration of the national drink in Ayr, with an event with the title of Whisky An' A' That, scheduled to take place on June 4 in the Town

Whisky Trail...

Hall. Details from www.robbedrams.com, though there is likely to be a waiting list for this event.

Not content with its music and drama, Edinburgh gets in on the whisky act with the Whisky Fringe, promised for August 12, 13 and 14 at the Mansfield Traquair, Edinburgh EH3. Tickets are scheduled for release from 12 noon on May 5 (booking essential). Details: www.royalmilewhiskies.com.

Such is popularity of craft brewing and distilling today that England is beginning to see an extraordinary growth of, yes, whisky distilleries.

In the Lake District there is the Lakes Distillery on the shores of Bassenthwaite, offering a shop and guided tours and in London the London Distillery Company is offering tours around its 'Cold Room' for £15 (pre-booking essential).

Meantime the Scotch Malt Whisky Society say their 'ambassadors' will bring their whole whisky 'kit and kaboodle' to any venue of your choosing. With a range of malts, crystal glasses, bespoke tasting guide and notes and whisky props – they say they "have whisky and will travel." Details from <http://www.smwsevents.co.uk>.

Finally, wherever in the world you find yourself on May 21, watch out for World Whisky Day – with events planned in cities throughout the world. You can find details at www.worldwhiskyday.com.

Or, of course, you could just name your own whisky day and take a journey round whisky country on your very own Whisky Trail, making sure, of course, that the driver partakes of nothing stronger than the pure spring water that is, anyway, the basis of so much good Scotch whisky.

Whatever you decide to do, do make the effort to plan ahead, as the detail of future events can always change.

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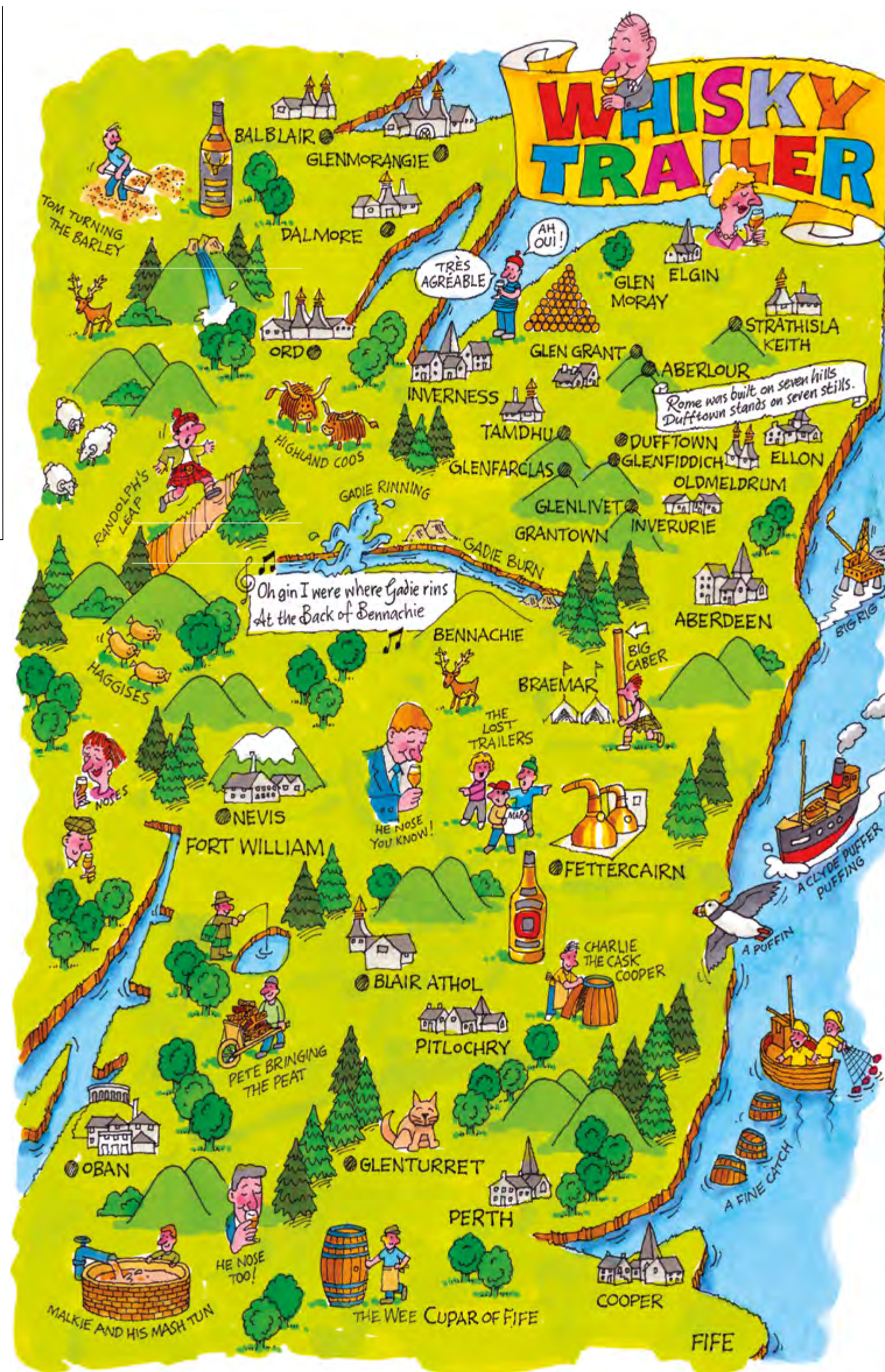
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THE PUBLISHERS of the Whisky Trailer are delighted to have persuaded the talented graphic artist David Gray to turn his hand to producing yet another of his charming feature maps. David, who worked for many years in advertising in Glasgow and Edinburgh, produced the highly successful companion maps for travellers on the Jacobite summer steam train from Fort William to Mallaig as well as one for the equally exciting line from Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh. Also in the series is a souvenir map of the West Highland Way. Plans are afoot to produce an enhanced, souvenir version of this Whisky Trailer map, will be for sale through local outlets.

Further details of all these maps: www.northernbooks.co.uk

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