

GLENMORANGIE

SINGLE MALT SCOTCH WHISKY



by Colin Matheson

This distillery is located just outside the township of Tain in Easter Ross, northern Scotland, just south of the Dornoch Firth which, in turn, is just south of Dornoch. This last town is (in)famous for being the location of one of pop-star Madonna's weddings. Tain is smaller than Dornoch but in olden times used to be the market town for the whole region and so had great importance for commerce and agricultural life.



[Parklet and cenotaph at Tain in 2014]

I have an interest in Tain because an ancestor of mine was born there in about 1767. A witness of a Matheson birth (possibly my ancestor's brother) there in 1769 is described as a maltman and the mother of the newborn child was called Lilius whose maiden name was MacKenzie. There is a birth record for a Lilius MacKenzie in 1723 at Tarlogie, a small village a little to the north of Tain. It turned out that the Tarlogie stream was used in a brewery on Morangie Farm from the early 1700s and it seems likely that the maltman birth witness worked at the brewery.

In 1843 a former distillery manager called William Matheson bought the brewery at Morangie and began distilling whisky at the site using some second-hand gin stills. Although he doesn't appear to be a relative of mine, he is a Matheson and therefore one of us!



Here is a picture from the Glenmorangie Whisky website of some men in front of the main door of the building there. Don't they look glum! Perhaps they haven't had their daily quota of whisky yet!

Modern-day still at the Glenmorangie distillery.

William Matheson renamed the distillery Glenmorangie and after his death about 10 years later the firm remained with the family until 1887. It then passed to two brothers called Maitland and another man called Cameron. After 1918, the firm was sold and later came under the control of a blending firm called Macdonald & Muir who used the product in blends such as Highland Queen.



Glenmorangie was revived in 1959 as a single malt that soon became Scotland's top selling. Nowadays there are several varieties of Glenmorangie single malt whisky, the characters of each depending on the previous uses of the casks in which they mature, e.g. port, sherry or white wine.

You will read in this Newsletter that Carol Abuid raffled a presentation set of Glenmorangie whisky at the Bundanoon Highland Gathering last month, with great success.