



TASTING NOTES

ANCNOC 12 YEARS OLD

Nose: Tingling barley, some clean white pepper spiciness, and ripe grape

Palate: Clean, sharp and precise barley thrust with some gentle pineapple and sweet apple notes underneath. Quite spicy. A whisky sorbet palate cleanser

Finish: Clean, quite intense and spicy

Comment: anCnoc at this age has no peer. There is little of the rich fruitiness and sweetness associated with Speyside, but non of the earthy savoury depth of a Highland malt. In some company its complexity can be lost but taste it in isolation and it unfurls its flag and reveals itself as a wee gem

ANCNOC 1993

Nose: Fuller more honeyed and with intense barley

Palate: Wood, spice and fruit battle for attention with the barley eventually winning through. Fuller and more rounded than the 12 Years Old.

Finish: Long clean and oaky

ANCNOC 1975

Nose: Rich, sweet, soft candy, complex

Palate: Sugared almonds, honeyed barley and a decent but not dominant oak indent

Very stylish and impressive

Finish: long and oaky with a gentle and strange smoky undertow



But the distillery name has stayed on, and the label of the latest bottling refers to anCnoc being a Highland malt from the Knockdhu Distillery. So let's stick with that shall we?

The distillery itself is one of those timeless ones set among rolling grazing fields and in the shadow of the dark hill that gives the distillery its name. It is set on farm land and looks and feels like a farm.

It's a traditional, small and compact distillery with maturing warehouse stretching off through the fields on one side and gentle cow-grazing fields off to the other.

Perhaps part of the melancholia here is created by the grass-covered trackways that once bore train lines. It's easy to picture busy engines transporting materials in and taking spirit away.

The distillery itself is not large. Traditionally the maximum output here has been 900,000 litres a year and the distillery was designed to do a total of about 10 mashes a week.

There are five pine washbacks and a very old and traditional cast iron mashtun, though that has been upgraded.

Spirit is distilled on one pair of stills, with the wash still having a

capacity just slightly less than the spirit still, with 10,500 litres and 11,000 litres respectively. A nice small and traditional distillery then.

Actually, no. For Inver House has one of the most admirable approaches to whisky making in the industry – hence this year's Distiller of the Year award – and it has a knack of thinking outside the box at all its distilleries.

Knockdhu is no exception, and for a number of reasons.

Firstly, some rebuilding work has given the distillery the capability to be a one person operation, and Inver House has further saved costs while demonstrating green credentials with a number of energy-saving improvements that effectively mean that much of the heat produced here is recycled and reused.

And in keeping with the current worldwide demand for Scottish malt, the distillery has set about squeezing every last drop of spirit out of production.

"The plan is to produce 1.194 litres of spirit this year," says distillery manager Gordon Bruce. "In theory if we work seven days a week for 44 weeks and produce 405 litres per tonne then that will produce 1.194 million litres.

And that's assuming 19 mashes

a week – not bad for a plant that was designed to do ten flat out."

Inver House's commitment to energy efficiency doesn't stop at the distillery and the increase in output has gone hand in hand with a long term project to supply energy to the local community.

The combination of increased production, investment in the site and the progressive approach to efficiency all makes Knockdhu a power pack distillery.

It remains little known but its malts are starting to garner the respect they deserve and it's a distillery on the move.

Doubt it'll ever lose its atmosphere though.

Or recamp to Speyside. **W**



This page clockwise: The pagoda which tops the distillery; the still room; Quirky advertising campaigns