

## Glen Mhor Distillery, Inverness: Research in Progress

Jason Julier, Independent Historian

### Editors' Introduction

*Jason Julier's piece is on Glen Mhor distillery and his website [www.glenmhorwhisky.com](http://www.glenmhorwhisky.com) where he has worked to collect and collate materials relating to the distillery into an online repository. Jason started this archive as a passion project in 2021 relying on being able to source materials from a variety of different places, meaning it is not a typical business archive created by professional archivists. Nevertheless, Jason's piece provides us with another aspect on the relationship between businesses and archives which resides in the informal space where collectors and amateur archivists come together (facilitated in no small part by modern technology such as blogging platforms) to create something accessible which would otherwise be lost to time. Collecting and collating materials from disparate sources, Jason has worked for several years to develop the website into a repository of digitised archival materials including photographs, records, letters, and short biographies relating to the inverness-based distillery that operated from 1892 until it closed in 1983. In his article he provides a reflection on how the archive came into being, the processes by which he was able to develop it, and some of his reasoning for undertaking the work. What is interesting about Jason's story and approach is his refusal to turn the work into a book, but instead to have it as a living and evolving archive which can be added to, repositioned, and reconfigured in different ways as and when new materials become available.*

*The whisky industry has numerous different projects and books written by amateur archivists and historians, driven by their interest in the industry and particular distilleries and brands. Their invaluable work in creating archives through cataloguing materials that are otherwise often either lost or locked away allows for wider and deeper interrogation of one of Scotland's most iconic and important industries which has been historically difficult to access. Technology plays a critical role in this with the internet offering both a place for hosting and accessing materials through formal and informal networks. Jason Julier's article details how his work on Glen Mhor has benefitted both technology and the goodwill of people in supporting the creation of this fascinating and easily accessed archive.*

Sometime in the early 1890s, a meeting of the Leith Mackinlay's blending family and the former Glen Albyn manager, John Birnie, led to the establishment of a new distillery in Muirtown, Inverness, in 1892. Glen Mhor (pronounced *Glen Vawr*, or *Glen Vhore*) was situated on the same road as Glen Albyn and sprung into life officially on 8 December 1894.

On 8 March 1983, the stills ceased operation for the final time, marking the end of an era for the distillery, which had endured numerous challenges throughout its history. Like several other distilleries across Scotland during this period, the distillery closed its doors for good, just 12 weeks later. Over the course of almost a century, Glen Mhor had experienced a multitude of challenges and triumphs, reflecting the 'boom and bust' cycle of Scotch whisky. The innovations introduced during this period, the restrictions imposed by wartime, the transition from private to corporate ownership, and the evolution of the industry. Nevertheless, Glen Mhor had not been extensively discussed in the various textbooks on Scottish distilleries. The available information was limited, and the distillery was often erroneously identified as a sister distillery to Glen Albyn, which Mackinlay & Birnie acquired in 1920.

Today, Glen Mhor is not a distillery that immediately captures the imagination, or is seen as sexy by enthusiasts. Many of its whiskies are somewhat challenging to understand and of a style that is no longer produced. In essence, it is a classic and difficult Highland whisky in liquid form. It has been praised by several, including Neil M. Gunn, who was the resident Customs and Excise officer at the distillery during the 1920s and 1930s. Its style is rugged and difficult to appreciate. The whisky is often not immediately accessible and represents a challenge to appreciate. In some ways, I see much of myself in its whisky and felt it was more deserving of being re-evaluated in general.

As is the case with all good tales, they must be discovered and told. I had written extensively online about whiskies previously over several years and had developed an affection for Glen Mhor. My wife is also from the north, and I was finding myself spending more time in and out of Inverness and the surrounding area, visiting family. Despite the city's longstanding distilling heritage, it had been largely ignored or

downplayed. The trio of former distilleries are Glen Albyn, Glen Mhor and Millburn, and the only remaining vestige is the Millburn, which has been repurposed as a Premier Inn. This stark reminder of the city's former glory is a poignant sight you approach Inverness from the A9.

On each occasion that I passed this distillery relic, I considered why more was not being done to research, document and reintroduce these distilleries to a new generation? My own initial digging indicated that Glen Mhor had a fascinating history to uncover. At that time, I was not fully aware of the extent to which this would prove both rich, enjoyable and time consuming. Occasionally I am queried as to the rationale behind my choice of Glen Mhor as a subject for a detailed study. My immediate response is that there is no reason not to do so. In fact, there is a whole community of distilleries that deserve equal attention, it's just I always had an attachment for the youngest fallen producer on Telford Street, Muirtown.

When I was presented with a break in between whisky projects, I decided it was a convenient opportunity to finally start a website devoted to the research of Glen Mhor,<sup>1</sup> which I try to update on a weekly basis currently, with updates looking like slowing down later this year as the materials start to dry up, for now at least.

The website launch occurred in March 2021, and the information I had previously compiled provided a robust foundation for publishing online. Using my social media experience, I established a dedicated Facebook page for Glen Mhor, along with additional Instagram and Twitter (or whatever it's called nowadays) channels to disseminate content further.

These channels are situated around the website, with the sole purpose of directing traffic. In essence, they would serve as virtual breadcrumbs, leading back to the main information hub. They can and do, exist independently and have dedicated followers. In addition to broadcasting the arrival of new information weekly, they also act as an

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<sup>1</sup> Glen Mhor Whisky: The Resource for All Things Related to Glen Mhor Distillery, <[www.glenmhorwhisky.com](http://www.glenmhorwhisky.com)> accessed 3 December 2024.

opener for new enquiries and finds, as the community becomes involved and provides new information. Facebook in particular has been very useful for unearthing memories of the older generation and those with a keen interest in distilling or local history. Joining dedicated Facebook groups on lost distilleries and Inverness history has been very fruitful and the older age demographic love to revisit bygone times and revive previously forgotten stories and characters.

Previously, the traditional format for publishing research on a specific distillery was a dedicated book, or as part of a more general guide to distilleries. Over time, these have taken two forms: an officially sanctioned publication, exemplified by Ian Buxton's *Glenfarclas: An Independent Distillery*<sup>2</sup>, and a more enthusiast-oriented, but rich in detail, such as Dr Patrick Brossard's works on *Brora: A Legendary Distillery* and *Glen Garioch: The Manson Distillery*<sup>3</sup>, which are often self-published and come with their own limitations such as availability, short print runs (Garioch was only an outturn of 250, Brora just 500 copies) with books being snapped up for the secondary auction market.

### Tips on How to Research a Distillery

My work on Glen Mhor has prompted me to consider some general rules, which will hopefully help the would-be historian. Prior to initiating any research on a distillery, it's advisable to review existing literature related to the subject. A number of foundational texts are available, although most, with the exception of Brian Townsend's *Scotch Missed*<sup>4</sup> publication, originate from the 1970s and 1980s, a period characterised by limited information. Constructing a timeline and gathering data on significant dates, key individuals, and notable changes will establish a solid groundwork for your research. Additionally, it is beneficial to document the sources of

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<sup>2</sup> Ian Buxton, *Glenfarclas: An Independent Distillery* (Glasgow: The Angels' Share, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Brossard, *Brora: A Legendary Distillery (1819-1983) and Whisky* (Self-published, 2016); Patrick Brossard, *Glen Garioch: The Manson Distillery. A Hidden Gem in Aberdeenshire* (Self-published, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Brian Townsend, *Scotch Missed: The Lost Distilleries of Scotland* (Glasgow: Neil Wilson Publishing, 1993).

this information, as some dates and facts may be inaccurate, allowing for verification if necessary.

It's essential to consistently scrutinise the information and insights you encounter. Throughout the years, I have observed numerous unfounded assumptions being drawn. It is fun and emotive to engage in speculation and investigative reasoning as you go along, only to let the subsequent discovered facts to guide your final assessment.

It's worthwhile to acknowledge the identities of individuals beyond just the proprietors. My research has revealed previously overlooked figures, including distillery employees, management personnel, and their most reliable assistants and the role of the exciseman should not be underestimated, particularly regarding their diligent record-keeping practices. For example, I successfully traced the life of Robert Robertson, who worked at Mortlach distillery in the early 1890s before joining John Birnie at Glen Mhor as his number two, where he concluded both his career and life. This research also led me to his final resting place in a nearby graveyard in Inverness. There's a wonderful website called *Find a Grave*<sup>5</sup>, where volunteers can help you locate a final resting place, and in some cases, offer to take photographs, if you are unable to visit.

If you can, examine all available resources, including council records, burial data, census information, and take note of possible keywords for online searches. Think outside the box. It is essential to delve deeper into each finding, contemplating not only the discovery itself, but also the individuals or entities responsible for its creation, the methods employed in its construction, and its intended function. Endeavor to trace the history as far back as possible, which may involve investigating records from engineering or architect firms and other associated companies. Follow the paper trail for as long as you are able and don't give up, as dead ends are part of the fun.

The texts in general for Glen Mhor have been brief and sporadic. Often regurgitating existing information from a couple of influential publications (often long out of print)

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<sup>5</sup> Find a Grave <<https://www.findagrave.com/>> accessed 3 December 2024.

that have not been updated, or the distillery in question, revisited. We've come a long way since these books debuted, that mainly were produced in the 1970s and 1980s. Whisky and its appreciation is no longer as niche. Stories, images and information are more valued, sought after and archived. In turn, these archives are more aware of such whisky content and the importance socially of a distillery to the local community. And with many archives now digitalised and available online to researchers who are unable to visit, it is a fruitful time to revisit a distillery of choice. Also, I wanted to show the wider community what was possible utilising new and old resources, armed with a relentless tenacity, and pay homage to those that worked at Glen Mhor.

I have learned not to underestimate the significance of engaging in conversations with archivists, local historians, and individuals involved in the Scotch whisky industry. Knocking on doors, asking questions and social media appeals can be worthwhile. Such interactions can facilitate new opportunities and access to valuable resources. Many seasoned professionals and whisky aficionados possess extensive networks that can be beneficial. Maintaining an approachable and open-minded demeanour is crucial. My approach has consistently been to make available my finds for the benefit of the broader community. Assisting others frequently yields advantageous outcomes, including new leads and insights.

### **Traditional and New Media Platforms**

A book in my mind is final, and for some reason, I felt that Glen Mhor had much to say and that spending several years researching, only then to reveal a book, was perhaps missing some of the joy and opportunities that a work in progress could offer. We're all aware of the programmes on the History Channel that seem to run for countless seasons with very little actually happening. By making my research available online, I was able to dabble in this contemporary context. Observers are able to experience the thrill of new discoveries, the formation and dissolution of theories, and a virtual reconstruction of a distillery through information. Concurrently, individuals who were experiencing a dram of Glen Mhor whisky anywhere in the world, have the opportunity to access an online resource as they consumed the dwindling remnants of a once-thriving distillery via their phone, rather than seeking out an obscure book.

There's a much more instant and accessible aspect that suits modern day life, with your geographical location no longer being a barrier. You can access all the detail on Glen Mhor within seconds, whether you are in Inverness, or in a Tokyo bar.

Of course, I shouldn't assume that a book will never be published. It would be a welcome addition to have a tangible and physical representation of my work in printed form. There is a clear preference among whisky enthusiasts for books, and there is always the possibility that any online work could be lost at any time due to the actions of a teenage hacker in a distant country. With all the twists and turns that the project has offered, and keeps giving, I sincerely doubt I'll reach that place where I feel content to 'think that's it, time for the book'.

Despite the risks, I utilised the Blogger platform that Google offers (a reliable and securely supported host) while purchasing a Glen Mhor-related URL address. Diageo retains the naming rights of Glen Mhor, as they do for any closed distillery. This is a logical decision on their part, given that they are the final custodians, official bottler and likely still have casks maturing. Without this practice, Diageo may have encountered unforeseen obstacles in recently reviving the Brora and Port Ellen distilleries. They have been invaluable in facilitating research, as have numerous other companies and individuals since 2021.

Another factor that has always been a consideration is that this research is conducted for the sole purpose of knowledge, rather than for financial gain. My time is valuable, but the satisfaction derived from this research is very unexpected. It has been a privilege to prompt encounters between descendants of workers and their former family members, witnessing the joy and sense of pride that my research has brought to them.

As is often the case with initial plans, these evolve over time. The website was launched with several specific categories, including documents, maps, newspapers, photographs and quotes. In addition, a synopsis in the form of a distillery information page was included, providing a brief overview for those seeking a general understanding.

Furthermore, a timeline page was created to assist with the complex web of information that was about to be presented, acting as a comprehensive overview of the distillery's history.

The website format allows for the continuous updating of information, which is a significant advantage. As the Glen Mhor journey progresses, the theories and findings presented can be revised, re-examined, and subjected to further debate. The timeline has been very useful as it captures all manner of events and acts as an index. I can see what was happening around the time of a new entry and just afterwards, which often assists in my research.

Early on, it became evident that there was no such prior comprehensive analysis conducted for a distillery using this medium. Consequently, I was learning as I went along and still retain that mindset. Starting with the documents category, I had already gained access to a number of documents relating to Glen Mhor from whisky history collectors. I was able to utilise these resources and, in October 2023, was offered the opportunity to purchase a stash of such documents by a collector. He expressed a desire for the documents to be incorporated into the research and made available to a broader audience. A fair price was negotiated for the collection, taking into account the potential value of the documents individually at auction. In light of previous offers of assistance, an online crowdfunding campaign was initiated via GoFundMe with a target of £600.

I must admit that I was initially uncertain about the potential outcomes of the online fundraising efforts. Asking for donations was a new experience for me, and I was unsure about my ability to do it effectively. However, I was amazed to find that the target was met within a couple of days. The response was remarkable and overwhelming, with familiar names and total strangers making donations to reach the target and then a little more.

The deal was finalised a few weeks later in person at a branch of Gregg's, where tea and sausage rolls were consumed, documents inspected and monies sent by phone. We had



an informative discussion about the history of whisky and the enjoyment from the ongoing research project. Interestingly, when I announced the fundraising initiative, some members of the Twitter community expressed concern about the potential financial gain of an individual from such material. This almost dissuaded the seller from concluding the deal. Fortunately, the acquisition was completed. Based on the prices paid for similar items on eBay or at whisky auctioneers, the total cost of over 20 items was a reasonable price for all parties involved.

The map section was compiled using online archives and illustrates the evolution of the Muirtown area. While the maps themselves may not appear to be of significant importance, they provide insight into the site's development and have proven to be a valuable reference tool when attempting to ascertain the timing of changes, particularly those related to new production facilities or warehouse expansions. A relative recently gifted me a Scotland book from 1905 that includes various maps and walks. From the outset, it was evident that the Inverness map had not been updated since the early 1890s, as it depicted the original rope factory on the site of the distillery.

The section on photographs is self-explanatory, and it was somewhat surprising that there were so few published images of Glen Mhor. These like the distillery information, came from the same handful of sources and the majority of these images were taken from the bank of the Caledonian Canal, which effectively looked across the backside of the distillery, which is not a particularly attractive sight. As the ground level of the distillery was several feet lower than the quayside, valuable details were also obscured.

When contemplating a new distillery, I believe it is important to examine the historical landscape. Consider whether there are any notable unrelated features or structures in the vicinity. Assess the transportation infrastructure present in the area and evaluate the likelihood of the distillery being inadvertently associated with other local attractions or developments? Accidents often prompt the best discoveries.

I am slightly astonished to have amassed approximately one hundred photographs of Glen Mhor since 2021. These have originated from a multitude of sources, and I was

optimistic that there would be some out there, with more to be discovered. The distillery is distinctive in the Scotch whisky industry, as it was situated in close proximity to landmarks that were frequently photographed. In doing so, by chance, Glen Mhor was also captured.

The eastern boundary of the distillery, which was home to warehouses, was situated adjacent to the former Caledonian Football Club ground and predated the football stadium. This area was colloquially known as the 'distillery end' due to its proximity to Glen Mhor. The western edge of the distillery was bordered by the Caledonian Canal, with the Muirtown Basin and Muirtown Locks being prominent focal points. Additionally, the bridge over the canal and the busy Telford Street route out of the city towards Dingwall and the north, featured in many images.

The earliest external photograph that has been identified thus far was discovered amongst a set of donated lantern slides at the Grantown Museum. One of the slides depicts a proud gentleman gazing out towards a vessel in the Muirtown Basin, with a relatively new-looking Glen Mhor distillery visible in the background. Based on the available evidence, I believe that this photograph was taken between 1896 and 1899. The identity of the photographer is unknown. However, the clarity of the image is remarkable and a valuable contribution to the site.

There are a number of excellent online resources devoted to the history of Scotland and photographic material. *Am Baile*<sup>6</sup> is one such destination, as is *Canmore*<sup>7</sup>. The latter hosts the collection of images taken by economic and industrial historian Professor John R. Hume, who photographed Glen Mhor on several occasions. These images are presented in high quality and the website allows the user to zoom in for remarkable detail. It is these images that help to visualise and confirm changes at the distillery site that are being noted through written records.

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<sup>6</sup> Am Baile: Highland History and Culture <<https://www.ambaile.org.uk/>> accessed 3 December 2024.

<sup>7</sup> Canmore <<https://canmore.org.uk/>> accessed 3 December 2024.

Given that Glen Mhor was effectively encircled on three sides, the majority of the available images from the latter years of its existence were captured from the quayside, as distillery tours were very much in their infancy. It is often overlooked that the quayside was constructed at a higher level than the street level, which is much lower. Any photograph of the quayside of Glen Mhor will be lacking in the ground and first floor levels. This has resulted in a certain degree of ambiguity regarding the purpose of the buildings and the perception that the distillery is unattractive. Viewers are unaware that they are missing the majority of the details and are effectively looking at the back end of the site.

The advent and potential of artificial intelligence is a topic of considerable debate. However, it has proven to be a valuable tool in my research, particularly in the context of images. There are a number of sophisticated online tools that can be employed to effectively enhance the quality of images. Furthermore, when zooming into photographs to consider features, some details are lost. However, through the use of artificial intelligence, these can be restored, while maintaining the resolution and creating larger images. It is, perhaps, a fine distinction between restoration and a new vision, and this is a theme with which those engaged in the field of preservation are already familiar. It is exciting to consider what tools might be made available in the coming years. Additionally, the capacity to colourise images is available, which does entail some degree of artistic licence. However, in the case of the 1939 image of the Glen Mhor distillery workers, this approach did result in a greater sense of realism.

Perhaps the most peculiar account of the search for images and documents involves an estate agent. I had been given access to a 2011 covering letter from a Rodney Burt, an Englishman who in the late 1960s, had been engaged in the study of whisky. It is possible that he could be mistaken for a courageous individual, as he ventured north to learn the trade at Glen Albyn and Glen Mhor and is referenced in Gavin D. Smith's *Stillhouse Stories – Tunroom Tales*, published in 2013.<sup>8</sup> At the time, I was under the

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<sup>8</sup> Gavin D. Smith, *Stillhouse Stories – Tunroom Tales* (Glasgow: The Angels' Share, 2013).

impression that he had passed away shortly after the publication of the book, and sadly this proved to be the case.

The letter to the editor of The Institute of Brewing and Distilling is intriguing, as Rodney enclosed a copy of his whisky manuscript, originally entitled *Highland Gold*, before the distilleries were closed and prompting its renaming as *Spirits Within*. He was essentially seeking a publisher or archivist who would be sympathetic to the work and willing to assist in its preservation for future generations. Additionally, he provided a number of images and the kilobyte size (160 kB) of the text, which was held on a disk, presumably a floppy.

It's unnecessary to explain of the significance of an unofficial account by an ex-employee of his time at two distilleries in the Highlands. Consequently, I contacted the Institute, which had no records on file, but was able to put me in touch with the former editor. Unfortunately, he was unable to assist. Undeterred, I proceeded with a different approach. The letter included a home address for Rodney, and a subsequent online search revealed that the property was currently on the market.

I recall contacting the estate agent with an opening line, noting that this was likely the most unconventional request they had received in sometime. Fortunately, they were very helpful and conveyed the message to the seller, who turned out to be a relative of Rodney's. She recalled his enthusiasm for his tenure at both distilleries and the work he had done to collate material. The property had recently been vacated and the seller inquired as to whether I would be willing to accept Rodney's materials?

These items were kindly donated to my ongoing research as a gesture of gratitude for my shared interest and as a tribute to Rodney's enthusiasm for his Highland whisky experiences. The material comprises a trove of images, including some that I believe originally hung on the walls of the distillery office. There is a tale of such items being saved around the time of the demolition and/or selling of the distillery. However, regrettably, no manuscript is included. The search for the lost story to accompany the photographs remains ongoing.

Since the site's inception, further pages have been added on specific areas. These include the US Navy establishing their first base on UK soil at the distillery and Glen Albyn during the First World War. The Inverness Burgh archive, a series of podcasts and video have received their own pages. And when I have sufficient information to facilitate a specific page, a new possibility is launched. As with every area of the site, I view these as works in progress.

Another valuable resource is the *Internet Archive*, a free digital library of books, documents, and media.<sup>9</sup> Given the vast number of books on whisky and the numerous obscure titles that have fallen into obscurity, this resource can be a useful tool. By utilising the Internet Archive's search engine, you can swiftly scan available texts for any information on a distillery or individual. By employing this method, I was able to rapidly ascertain if there were any valuable insights in a forgotten publication from the UK or beyond.

At times, there is a plethora of potential avenues to navigate, and the system itself can be somewhat unwieldy. Nevertheless, it is a valuable resource that merits preservation. Some of the more valuable outcomes have led to the purchase of books and further investigation, or at the very least, entries on the website's quotation page.

From a personal perspective, I have always been intrigued by history. My interest was further developed through family tree research and investigating other distilleries for specific articles. This subsequently led to a resemblance of familiarity with a range of resources that can be used to obtain information. When searching for a distant family relative, I would often utilise my free trial periods by typing in random related keywords for Glen Mhor and sifting through the results. Noting that the name is often incorrectly catalogued as *Glenmore*, *Glenmhor*, *Glenvhor* and other variants. Genealogy websites can offer a wealth of information beyond mere births, marriages and arrivals, at a price. The resources at my disposal have enabled me to compile a comprehensive newspaper archive, which has revealed the significant influence John Birnie exerted in

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<sup>9</sup> Internet Archive <<https://archive.org/>> accessed 3 December 2024.

Inverness as a distillery owner and Lord Provost. With his son, William, later having a prominent position in the whisky industry.

With all this mention of novel technologies and unconventional methodologies, I still want to acknowledge the enduring significance of traditional approaches, such as archives and onsite visits. Engaging with archivists at the Highland Archive Centre in Inverness has proven to be a highly beneficial experience. I have consistently been impressed by the willingness of everyone I've contacted to assist me in my somewhat unconventional line of inquiry, even if they are politely saying 'no' to a request to use information. I haven't fully explored the conventional methodologies employed in assembling distillery information including visiting Glasgow University, which has the Mackinlay & Birnie company files. The reason for this, other than the presence of a young son, was the advent of the global pandemic, which was a significant concern for all researchers at the time.

The advent of the pandemic necessitated the transition of most archives to exclusively digital or limited access, and I devised the multitude of the inquiries discussed in this paper. These online methods were convenient at the time and also reflected the sheltered lifestyle. Upon reflection, these methods can be integrated into one's lifestyle more readily, particularly if one is awake at night caring for a sibling and managing daily life, or the pipe dream of spending a few hours visiting an archive.

Nevertheless, when you visit an archive and have the materials in front of you, the experience is indelible and cannot be replicated online. The ability to consider the various distillery plans associated with Glen Mhor from the early 1890s until 1950 not only yielded a plethora of material, but also afforded the opportunity to appreciate the condition of the drawings, scale and the craftsmanship that went into each of them.

I recall with fondness the occasion when I was able to sit down with a Glen Mhor distillery logbook, which was a relative unknown entry in the Highland Archive. The logbook, which was maintained by the Customs and Exciseman on site, recorded various events and requests from the distillery between June 1936 and November 1967.

This is a rare and unique find, offering unparalleled insight into the distillery's inner workings, often hidden from public view, over an extended period.

I have been extremely fortunate to be able to call upon the assistance of numerous individuals during my research. Of these, none has been more invaluable than Alan Winchester, former Glenlivet Master Distiller, who has a profound passion for whisky history and a family connection to Glen Mhor, as well as detailed knowledge of distilling. Upon examination of the logbook, it became evident that a transcription of each entry was necessary in order to extract as much information as possible and present it in a manageable form to the wider readership.

The Highland Archive was kind enough to permit the use of photographs that have been watermarked and for which full credit has been given. It may have been sufficient to simply publish these online, but this was a significant discovery that could provide further insight into the interactions between distillers and excisemen, with new understanding for the whisky industry as a whole. A new website section was created, and each page was transcribed in date order, discussed, and debated between Alan and me, with our thoughts noted. This voyage, which spanned just over two years, yielded a wealth of insights for both of us and some wonderful finds.

The initial logbook pages are from Neil M. Gunn, who was replaced by Gilbert W. Peterkin over a couple of decades later. The reality of distillery life and repairs is recorded, along with some unexpected incidents, the war years, accidents, and a break-in during the 1960s. As with much of my research, the process involved a combination of trial and error. However, an approach was soon formulated, that will prove beneficial as there are two other logbooks relating to the Glen Albyn distillery that I will consider later this year.

While I have had success in finding documents and photographs, other artifacts and memorabilia have proved elusive. There is a growing demand for these items amongst enthusiasts (also for documents), so I suspect some do exist within private collections, or are awaiting discovery by descendants for resale.

In addition to the physical original photographs that were previously located at the distillery office, the only tangible piece of memorabilia is an authentic printing stone from the early 1900s. This item was acquired through the mention of Mackinlay's, a company that had its own successful range of blends based in Leith. As the co-founders, it is not explicitly stated that the whisky is Glen Mhor, but there is a clear connection. As a tangible relic, it is particularly distinctive and impressively heavy. The advent of self-adhesive labels in the 1930s signalled the end of this technology, which must have been both time-consuming and labour-intensive.

The stone was discovered for sale in an antique shop in Newcastle. I was made aware of its existence by a whisky enthusiast. Contacting the seller prompted a weekend visit to the city and the acquisition of a unique item of interest to most whisky enthusiasts. The stone slab is inscribed with numerous labels on one side. I traced the origins of each of these whisky labels regardless of whether they were Mackinlay or Glen Mhor orientated or not, as it felt right to do so. It seemed an appropriate course of action, which also enhanced my appreciation of this technology.

The stone is currently situated beneath my bed, wrapped in a blanket, a location that is not ideal for its storage. I believe that any materials should be made accessible to others, whether in an online or in-person setting. Therefore, I made a commitment a few years ago, when friends who are constructing a new distillery in Dornoch will have completed their visitor centre, that the stone will be on show to any visitors.

This prompts the question of what other possibilities exist? It is possible to register with a number of auctioneers and to save keywords on eBay and other websites. Such services provide an advance warning in the event that an unexpected item becomes available.

I have built up a network of individuals to assist when they encounter items of interest, which proves particularly advantageous as some websites impose membership fees. This rationale extends to online family tree databases that require payment for access to census records and newspaper archives. It is beneficial to take advantage of free



seven-day memberships and similar offers by preparing in advance. By compiling a list of key individuals and searches, you can efficiently navigate the available resources. This approach allows for the swift saving and downloading of relevant information for future reference, enabling a focused search during the trial period, followed by a thorough review of potential leads once the membership has expired.

The Glen Mhor website enables users to contact me directly, and I have had conversions with distant relatives in a variety of locations, including Africa. These conversations have provided me with insights into their experiences in and around the distillery, as well as memories of John and William Birnie.

All relatives of former distillery workers, Birnie descendants and locals with a passion for the history of Inverness have been extremely welcoming and appreciative of my work. This has been an unanticipated and ultimately gratifying aspect of undertaking this project. It has been a privilege to be able to bring a little joy and to relive some old memories with them.

This website has proven to be a highly popular for what it is and has become well-established presence on search engines. Consequently, a search for the term *Glen Mhor* would likely yield two results: the hotel bearing that name in Inverness, or my ongoing work. Some whisky enthusiasts have blamed the work for increasing the cost of the whisky itself!

You could suggest that patience is the key to success with this project. Glen Mhor was previously a relatively obscure distillery, and my research has served to bring it to the attention of a wider audience. As the work I have conducted is available online, it'll be a case of waiting for further material by chance or a local or descendent reaching out. Each day brings the possibility of an email or text message from an unexpected source containing new information.

The reality is that the work will never be completed, and my virtual door will always be open. However, it is now approaching the time to move on to the Glen Albyn distillery

with a view to unearthing any details which might assist in our appreciation of both of these neighbouring Inverness distilleries, which no longer exist.

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