

More letters

The perfect mixer has been discovered

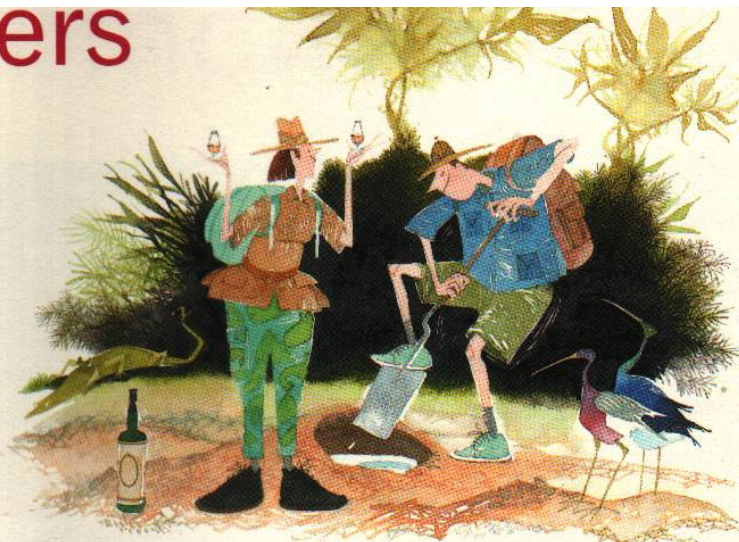
Over my twenty odd years of membership I have noted the efforts of various members in promoting their ideas of the perfect mixer and/or circumstance for indulging their favourite dram. Seek no more, I have found it!

My other passion is wildlife and wild places, and I have been fortunate in later years to have been able to visit various countries in Africa, perhaps treading paths by those other famous Scots, Livingstone and Mungo Park, an ancestor of my wife I believe. The African habit of a 'Sundowner' was not hard to acquire even if my favourite was not as readily available as at home.

Fear not. We, my wife Elizabeth and I, are quite resourceful. For seven years we have gazed out at sundown from the bar of Kafunta River Lodge, in Zambia's South Luangwa National Park, at the Machinga Escarpment vowing to organise a trek through the bush to get a closer look. The estimated duration; about a week's walking and around five nights camping. This formed part of my resolutions for 2005 at Hogmanay. We have just got home with a discovery to share!

Being in true wilderness, everything had to be carried on our porter's backs, so a cool box was out of the question. Water was obtained by the time honoured method of digging in a dry river bed, using the natural filtering of the sand to provide safe fresh cool water. It was delicious! Better still, once domestic chores were finished, the cool liquid made a perfect match with a smuggled bottle of a proprietary brand acquired 'afore we left'. It occurred to me that if the waters of the River Lubi could do this for the humble grain, what would it do for our beloved malts? Anyone interested in finding out? A return visit purely in the interest of research can, and probably will be arranged. Yes, we finished the trek and yes, I finished the bottle too!

Fred Hodgson, Member 7948



Edinburgh or Jamaica?

Are you ever envious of people who can eat and drink as much as they like and never put on weight? I am one of those people and now I know the secret of my 30 inch waist. It's Coeliac disease, in short an allergy to gluten which is present in wheat and most other cereals. So what does this have to do with the Society? Well, whisky is made from a cereal and I am told by some that if I continue to drink it, I will SUFFER very serious consequences. They suggest an alternative such as rum. Are you still envious?

Now I am no chemist, but the Society has educated me in the production of whisky and I would have thought that by the time the barley is mashed and diluted at least twice, all traces of gluten would have disappeared. If I am wrong I will have to give away my collection of Society bottlings. I will have to cancel my subscription and put it towards a trip to Jamaica in search of a decent rum.

There are an increasing number of people suffering from this condition and so a whisky prohibition is spreading across the population. Our only hope is that the Society can declare malt whisky as a gluten free product. If in fact malt whisky does contain the poisonous gluten, then can you recommend a good rum please?

John Kirk, Member 41981

Reply from the Society:

No need to give up the whisky according to this extract from the website of Coeliac UK (<http://www.coeliac.co.uk/>), the national charity supporting people with intolerance to gluten, state:

'Since barley and malted barley are the raw ingredients used in the production of whisky and malt whisky, it is not surprising that many Coeliacs query whether these products can be included in their diets. The distillation process makes all whiskies and it is almost inconceivable that any harmful substances would be present in the final product. So far, even the most sophisticated analytical techniques have not been able to show the presence of any harmful substance in whiskies or malt whiskies. They may therefore be included in the gluten free diet.'

However, if you are still looking for a good rum why not try the Appleton Estate Rums until the Society next bottles another rum.



The Scotch Malt Whisky Society, The Vaults, 87 Giles Street, Leith, Edinburgh EH6 6BZ.

