

2011 - SCOTLAND

4 May 2011

Distilling Islay



PORTNAHAVEN

We witnessed a sombre moment
We both had tears in our eyes
Two people involved in a ritual
We were distant they not seeing our cries.

Two urns were opened separately
Grey ashes blown out into the blue.
They both blew kisses for remembrance
For us as strangers we didn't have a clue.

We wondered if it was close friends
Or maybe siblings or relatives they knew
Possibly it may have been both parents
It could so easily be both of us too.

Whoever they were we were privileged
To witness the event from afar
Portnahaven will remain with us always
A place in distant Scotland, so far.

We will never know the answer
Of what happened and exactly when
All we know is that it happened
In cold Portnahaven exactly at 10.

All day we continued to ponder
All sorts of reasons we did but dig
Until some-one told us the obvious
Its probably their dog or pet guinea pig.

There are times when we follow a road
and wonder if the trip will be worth it. The
road to Portnahaven was long and
tortuous. And narrow. But it was worth it.



A lovely place by the sea. Reminds us of fishing towns in Cornwall



A moving seal



White cottages aplenty





Bliss



Woolly mammoth



What an amazing place. We learned that this little gem developed after the potato blight in the 1840's when the laird (the same one that built the round church in Bowmore) invited fishermen from Cornwall over to teach locals how to fish. Their influence is evident in Portnahaven in both the houses and the well developed fishing industry today. This place is a mini Port Isaac (Cornwall). We spent a good hour fully rugged up against the biting breezes walking around and enjoying the place (and accidentally being part of the ash casting ceremony). The narrow streets were lined wall to wall with quaint old cottages painted all bright white but each house with different colored doors and window sills. On the rocks in the little inlet Heather spied many basking seals but after watching them for a while decided that seal watching is not her favorite sport - "its like watching lumps of lard". All in all places like Portnahaven which were "the place at the end of the map" made our trip to Islay an experience to remember.





Bird watching



Distilling peat water?

GAELIC

The further we get out in the western isles the more we encounter Gaelic. Its a very lyrical language but very difficult to understand. A lot of signs were shown in two languages - one in Gaelic and the other in English. There was no way we could put our tongue around the Gaelic version. Evidently it gets worse on the Outer Hebridean islands.

BIRD WATCHING

We were advised that Islay is a great place to see bird life. There was little to see yesterday but we continued to be positive today. We detoured and visited a bird nature reserve. We counted 10 different bird species from the bird hide. Heather now can record that she has seen red deer, seals, soaring and wading birds but not any otters.

GETTING INTO THE SPIRITS

Our final destination, before we left the island, was to tour a whisky distillery. The Bunnahabhain distillery, one of 8 distilleries on Islay, makes over 45,000 litres of prime Scottish whisky each year. Why Islay? Islay is covered with peat and evidently peat makes the spring water excellent for whisky

making. We were shown the whole complex process and at the end it was time to taste a drop of 12 year old single malt. For those of you that are whisky drinkers you may know the brand "Black Bottle" and Bunnahabhain. For us non connoisseurs, the stuff tasted just like peat moss. It burned the back of our throats. A 35 year old Bunna is 425 pounds

Stirling
- can't
imagine
h o w
p e a t y
t h a t
w o u l d
taste!!

