



Whisky Pudding

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Nestle – verb: *to lie or be located in a sheltered spot; be naturally or pleasantly situated.*

That's what Bakewell does. It is the cat asleep on the crumpled duvet that is the Derbyshire Dales. Within Bakewell the Wee Dram nestles very comfortably in Portland Square, which is a bit like The Trafford Centre, Bluewater or Westfield, but much, much smaller. Size is very much a theme here.

But back to basics, In the 90's Adrian Murray was an accountant from the West Midlands, so how did he get from the depths of the Black Country to running one of the Country's smallest Whisky shops?

Adrian and Alison (Mrs. Murray) first opened The Wee Dram's doors on 14th March 1998, although it all started a year or so earlier. Gordon Jackson's (in TV's The Professionals) insistence on single malts had raised Adrian's interest and while working in Edinburgh he wandered into the Whisky Shop; as one does. Other than feeling at home, the thing that really stood out for him was the display of Gordon & MacPhail's Connoisseurs Choice Bottlings – stretching down the one side of the shop. At the time there was nowhere in England outside London with such a large range of whiskies. He started to think – dangerous that, an accountant, thinking - why is there nowhere in England with such a great range of whiskies?

After much research Adrian and Alison decided that there was no reason why England shouldn't have a decent Whisky shop too. So with evangelical zeal the crusade to bring Whisky to the spiritually barren lands between Watford and Carlisle had begun. They felt that it was their duty to bring the Good News of Whisky to the English provinces.

So Alison was working as a Personal Assistant in Birmingham and Adrian was number crunching in Wolverhampton. If they were going to make the big move, the big decision to make was where? It had to be near enough to some major centres of population, with plenty of passing trade and ideally be a pleasant enough place to live. Bakewell was chosen. It's about thirteen miles southwest of Sheffield, 31 miles southeast of Manchester,

and 30 miles north of Derby; with Chesterfield and Buxton nearby. They rightly figured that if they got the offering right then Whisky nuts would get in a car, just like IKEA on a Sunday. The Derbyshire Dales, part of the Peak District make Bakewell a Mecca for walkers and when walking on an English summer's day, one really does need a hip flask with suitable contents. And yes Bakewell is a really nice slice of picture post card England. When entering the Wee Dram for the first time, two things strike you. The first is how apt the shop's name is. Wee, tiny, little, bleedin' small, all of these adjectives apply equally. This is followed almost immediately by the realisation that it is full. Now I know that full is an absolute, so you can't have degrees of fullness, but somehow Adrian and Alison have managed it. They've taken a full shop and somehow managed to shoehorn a whole load more Whisky inside. The space, such as it is, is neatly divided in two by the counter, with stock everywhere behind on top and in front of the counter. How big? Well think of Bowmore's stand at Whisky Live, it's much smaller than that. Somehow they cram around 650 whiskies, into the space and pride themselves in selling nothing but Whisky and Whisky related products (they consider Cigars as Whisky related products). The shop has built up a large following of both local and national customers, who regularly visit the shop.

Things no longer stop at just the shop. Wings have been spread. The Wee Dram now organises tasting events most months, some Adrian hosts, others hosted by the great and the good of the industry. They have welcomed such luminaries as Jim McEwan, , Dr Bill Lumsden, Richard Paterson, Willie Tait, and Ronnie Cox to name a few.

Over the past few years there has been a spate of smaller local festivals springing up, which now include Dram Fest, Bakewell's very own. Organised by Alison and Adrian since 2009 they are now busy organising this year's event which will take place Saturday, 22nd October 2011. Nothing as big or as grand as Whisky Live, just a few hundred people shooting the breeze sampling Whisky, perfect.

Like any good Whisky shop these days, on-line sales are an important part of the business and www.thedram.co.uk is a nice spot to click away spare moments and spare money. The other part of the business for which Adrian has great hopes is their range of own label bottlings, currently they consist of a Lowland, a Speyside and an Islay. Adrian feels that there is nothing better than being able to offer Whisky that he, a newly made Keeper of the Quaich, has chosen.

It looks like Bakewell has truly got the Good News and the cat purrs as it sleeps. By the way they insist that it's a pudding rather than a tart.