

Convalmore Distillery



Convalmore Distillery

Name:	Convalmore (Pronounced: CON-val-more)
Region:	Speyside (Dufftown)
Neighbors:	Balvenie, Dufftown, Glendullan, Glenfiddich, Mortlach
Founded:	1893
Status:	Closed (in 1985)
Water source:	Unknown
Equipment:	2 Wash, 2 Spirit (as well as a column still until 1916)
Production capacity:	None – Convalmore was closed in 1985
Ownership:	William Grant & Sons (although Diageo owns the 'brand'))

The Convalmore distillery was located in the heart of Speyside, between the Glenfiddich & Craigellachie distilleries. It was founded in 1893 or 1894 by the Convalmore-Glenlivet Distillery Co. Ltd. and was one of the few whisky distilleries in the area that was NOT designed by Charles Doig. Instead, local architect Donald Mackay drew up the plans for Convalmore. According to the records, whisky production at Convalmore started in February 1894. One decade later, in March 1904, the distillery was purchased by W. & P. Lowrie & Co. Ltd. for the measly sum of £6000. The new owners didn't get to enjoy their distillery for very long; they encountered financial problems one year later.

W. & P. Lowrie & Co. Ltd. was bought by James Buchanan. After the transfer of ownership, the Convalmore distillery was owned by James Buchanan & Co. Ltd. This company had to rebuild the distillery after a devastating fire in 1909. They must have felt adventurous, because they experimented with continuous distillation of malt spirit – also known as a 'silent malt' – for a while. This special column still was removed again in 1916.

One decade later, in 1925, Convalmore was sold by James Buchanan & Co. Ltd. to Distillers Company Limited (DCL); one of the predecessors of Diageo. The sale marked the beginning of four decades of relative peace and quiet for Convalmore. The first significant changes after WWII came in 1962 when the direct coal firing of the stills was replaced by (indirect) steam heating. I imagine this change in the whisky production meant that Convalmore became a tad greener.

In 1964 the number of pot stills was expanded from two to four, so that Convalmore continued with 2 wash stills and 2 spirit stills. By the time those new stills were getting old (pot stills have a life span of 20 to 30 years on average, they slowly dissolve in whisky) there was no point in replacing them; Convalmore was mothballed in 1985. This makes the investments of the 1970's look a little bit silly; the bonded warehouses were expanded and they even built a dark-grains plant and a new mash house. In a way this proves that the crisis that hit the whisky world in the early 1980's was not foreseen by large parts of the whisky industry.

The ownership of the old distillery buildings and the surrounding site transferred from United Distillers to William Grant & Sons in 1990. Apparently they had no intention of using the distillery for the production of malt whisky, because the distillation equipment has since been removed. The old buildings of the Convalmore distillery are now used for the storage and maturation of casks of Glenfiddich and Balvenie malt whisky.

Trivia about Convalmore

Convalmore was the 4th distillery to be established in Dufftown. It was part of the 'Seven Stills of Dufftown'. The malt whisky that was distilled at Convalmore was used mainly for blending purposes. In the past, the spirit from the pot stills at Convalmore were part of the "Black & White" and "Lowrie's" blends.