

BRUICHLADDICH

PROGRESSIVE HEBRIDEAN DISTILLERS

The Bruichladdich Name

Bruichladdich is one of the fifty most unpronounceable names in Scotland according to the Scottish Miscellany.

The name is derived from two Gaelic words *brudhach* and *chladdich*. The full name being *Brudhach a Chladdaich*.

Brudhach is pronounced 'brew-ahhk' (with the 'hach' heavily aspirated); and *Chladdich*, which in the softer Islay Gaelic sounds like 'kiah-dee'. So put together we get 'brew-ahhk-ah-kiah-dee'. With the end of the first, and the beginning of the second word, eliding over time, it became 'brew-ah-kladdie'. This was ultimately Anglicised in the nineteenth century to 'brook-laddie'

What does it mean? Most Hebridean place names are derived from either the Gaelic or Norse denoting a precise geographical location. Bruichladdich is often poetically translated as 'brae by the shore', a rather vague concept in the context of Loch Indaal and its environs.

According to Dwelly's 1901 dictionary, *Brudhach* has a meaning that ranges in steepness from 'an ascent', hill-side, brae (derived from the Old Norse, *breiðr* (meaning 'a gentle slope to the sea'), to a steep acclivity, and precipice.

While not exactly a precipice, the bank of glacial drift deposits that separates the distillery from the warehouses above, it would classify as a steep bank. The strange feature runs for 8 miles along the north side of Loch Indaal, a 100 feet tall in places, at an angle of 80° for most of its length.

Since place names were given as specific location markers for navigation, an 8 mile area of unusual-looking bank is a bit like a grid reference of '1st Avenue with a junction of 1st to 80th street'; it needs a more precise cross-reference.

Chladach or *cladach* means generally a shore, beach, or coast, but more specifically, a stony beach. And more specific still, though obsolete by 1901, it also means a 'lee shore', a dangerous coast for sailing ships in a prevailing wind.

Loch Indaal is very shallow and sandy sea loch that since the Vikings was used as the main anchorage for Islay. However this specific part of the loch's shoreline is peppered with exposed and hidden rocks up to 50 metres offshore. With only a metre of tide to cover it, in a westerly gale this is a deceptively dangerous coast for sailing boats at anchor in the loch. For the unsuspecting skipper, such a lee shore would indeed be most worthy of identification.

If Brudhach refers to the unusual bank of glacial deposits, '*A Chladdaich*', specifically denotes the place of the dangerous, rocky, lee shore. Bruichladdich therefore probably means "The Steep Bank of the Lee Shore" which is perhaps a more geographically accurate, if not romantic, translation.