

On This Day – 22nd May 1672

Birth of Andrew Stein



An artist's impression of Kennetpans port

Andrew was the latest in a long line of Stein who there are records of in Clackmannanshire dating back to the 1200s. Details can often be sketchy, but it's believed the family owned large areas of land around the Forth, and learned the process of whiskey distillation from the friars at Kennetpans Abbey, which closed during the Reformation. Kennetpans, like many spots along the Inner Forth, was previously home to a small salt panning industry.

Stein went on to found Kennetpens Distillery, circa 1720 – it was one of the first distilleries in Scotland, and was soon to be one of the biggest, and, arguably, the most important. Andrew died in 1741, by which time the site was operated by his son John, who ordered Scotland's first Boulton & Watt steam engine, which enabled the mass-production and exporting of spirits for the first time. Later the first railway line in Scotland was built to connect Kennetpans to Kilbagie – a second nearby distillery opened in 1770s by the Steins, now totally demolished – allowing both to easily export their goods from a port on the Forth foreshore. They were also linked by one of the earliest canals in Scotland. These twin sites were the birth of the Scottish whisky trade, and descendants of the Steins later founded well known brands Haigs and Jamesons, after picking up the trade on the shores of the Forth.

As much as their success was extraordinary – at their peak the duty paid on the produce from these two sites outweighed the entirety of land tax paid across Scotland - it was also short-lived: an extra tariff on spirit exports to England was introduced in 1786, and Scottish distilleries were required to give one year's notice if they planned to import goods to England, with sales dropping to less than one tenth of the level of the previous year. Further restrictions caused debts to spiral out of control, and despite further attempts by the Steins to re-open their site at Kilbagie, distillation had ceased entirely by the mid 1800s.

Although Kilbagie has disappeared completely much of the external walls of the Kennetpans site remain standing, and consolidation work was undertaken by Historic Environment Scotland as part of the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative.

More information:

[The Kennetpans Trust](#)

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