

## ■ SHACKLETON'S SCOTCH

# Exploring secrets of a cool dram

It may be one of the oldest, but is definitely the world's coolest wee dram.

A crate of whisky which lay frozen and undiscovered for more than 100 years beneath the hut of one of the world's most famous Antarctic explorers is being thawed to reveal its secrets.

The crate was found this year after Sir Ernest Shackleton left it and four other crates of spirits beneath the floor of his hut during his 1908 British Antarctic Nimrod Expedition.

The crate was brought back to the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch where museum officials said it would be thawed in a controlled environment so the whisky could be analysed but not drunk.

Nigel Watson, executive director of the Antarctic Heritage Trust, said the Nimrod expedition made Shackleton a hero and a knight and cemented his reputation as one of the greatest explorers.

The trust found the five crates, containing whisky and brandy, in January during a project to conserve Shackleton's hut, the base for his Nimrod Expedition.

Four of the frozen crates were left in place but one, labelled Mackinlay's whisky, was taken to Christchurch.

Watson said the find had generated huge interest around the world and the whisky might still be liquid.

"When the guys were lifting it they reported the sound of sloshing and there was a smell of whisky in the freezer, so it is all boding pretty well," Watson said.

The whisky may or may not be drinkable but it was highly unlikely it would be tasted. If possible it would be analysed and maybe replicated by the Scottish distillery which now owned the brand.

"The original brand is now owned by Whyte & Mackay in Scotland. They have lost the recipe. It no longer exists.



**Mysterious brew:** The crate of whisky on display in the freezer at Canterbury Museum. Photo: CANTERBURY MUSEUM

"This was a blend so they are hopeful if there is enough alcohol left and it is in good condition they may be able to analyse and hopefully replicate the liquid so in fact everyone could partake in this."

Canterbury Museum artefacts spokeswoman Lizzie Meek said although the crate and bottles may have frozen, the whisky may have remained as a liquid.

She said whisky probably froze at about minus 50deg Celsius and it might be drinkable, but it would not be handed out for tasting and the mystery might remain.

Once the crate and its contents were conserved and possibly analysed, it would be returned to Shackleton's hut in Antarctica.

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