

Bookkeeper to whisky tycoon

William Grant

1839-1923

Grant's, a world-famous name among drinkers of blended and single malt whiskies, emerged from humble beginnings.

William was the son of a tailor and herded cattle as a boy before using his village school education to gain employment as a bookkeeper at the Mortlach distillery near Dufftown.

For 30 years he saved up money for a distillery of his own, which he finally built at Glenfiddich in 1886.

Old equipment was bought and William's wife and eight children provided most of the labour.

Luck and judgment served them well.

Grant built a second distillery at Balvenie when one at nearby Glenlivet burned down and he moved into Glasgow when the wholesaling business run by the Pattisons went bankrupt.

A severe stroke in 1900, the later onset of blindness and even losses suffered by the Glasgow business failed to halt William's progress.

With his daughter Meta acting as his PA, and his son John dispatched to launch a Canadian company, his enterprises spread across the planet.

By 1914 Grant's was trading in most countries of the British Empire, plus Japan, the Philippines, and the USA, with over 60 agencies in 30 countries.

- Read the Oxford DNB biography here: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/dnb/39002.html>.