

Head to Dornoch – B&B for £20.20 in 2020

DORNOCH CASTLE OWNERS REFLECT ON 20 YEARS OF OWNERSHIP AS THEY ANNOUNCE B&B FOR £20.20 & A WINTER WEDDING FOR £2020!

One of Dornoch's best known hotels is to celebrate a special anniversary next year.

The Thompson family will have owned Dornoch Castle Hotel, which became the first hotel in the UK its launch its own Gin & Whisky Distillery, for twenty years in July 2020.



They're kicking off a year of special celebrations now, which will steadily build momentum until the actual anniversary in July 2020. During this time they will share their business story, telling how they have diversified from hoteliers to successful distillery owners, alongside hosting a number of whisky and gourmet events at the Castle throughout late 2019, such as a Scotch Malt Whisky Society Dinner, and a special dinner with Highland game butchers and restaurateurs, Mac & Wild.

The forthcoming anniversary has also been chosen as the optimum time to reveal the family's latest plans to relocate

the Distillery, currently in the grounds of their hotel, in what was the town's old fire station, to new, larger premises. Another exciting new development is the launch of the Castle's very own Whisky Club.



And to ensure customers old and new are well catered for in this special year, Dornoch Castle Hotel is offering a series of specially priced deals, including a winter wedding for £2020, and even B&B for just £20.20!

Commenting on the forthcoming 20th Anniversary, Managing Director Colin Thompson, who owns the Castle with wife Ros, said: "It's been a very eventful two decades for sure. We're very grateful to still be here, running this historic building as a profitable hotel, and now with the distillery adding a new dimension altogether."

"We wanted to come together as a family business at this time, and acknowledge the huge role that our two sons, Philip and Simon, have played in leading the business on in the past twenty years. Not just through encouraging us to diversify into the distillery, using all their hard won contacts in the industry, but their day to day practical help too, behind the bar, in the restaurant, and so on, right through their University years and beyond, until they became fulltime in the business."

“We couldn’t have done it without them, and they are certainly due a massive thank you,” said Colin. “The distillery continues to do well, exporting our unique Thompson Bros Organic Gin all over the world, where it has an especially large following in the Far East.”

“The time is now right to move the distillery to a larger unit.”

“We also want to say thank you to our customers over the past twenty years, and have come up with some keenly priced deals for them to take advantage of in the coming months,” said Colin.



Colin explained that his tenure of the Hotel had started well, when in 1999 global superstar Madonna came to Dornoch Castle to christen her infant son Rocco, and then married Guy Ritchie up the road at Skibo.

“It was a huge boost for the whole area, and it certainly helped our wedding trade in the subsequent months, and increased the number of US visitors we welcomed,” said Colin.

“We also had our Burn Farm self catering venue to develop and run, so we were kept very busy,” said Colin.

Other years were more difficult for the Castle, and the hotel sector generally, with recession and then austerity measures, leaving their mark. The foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 was keenly felt in the area, and personally for Colin, with his family having a farm in Cumbria.

However, the family fought back, launching the Dornoch Castle Distillery in 2016.

“Phil and Simon had already built up a very lucrative rare Malt Whisky sideline,” said Colin.

“They had excellent contacts, and relationships, with all the main distilleries in the area. They were also going abroad to host prestigious pop up Whisky bar events, and so it was a very natural next step to launch our own distillery.”

Dornoch Castle was honoured to win a number of prestigious whisky bar accolades, such as Whiskybase.com's Number One International Whisky Hotel, along with Scottish Licence Trade News Whisky Bar of the Year, in 2014 and 2016.

“Now we have Brexit to deal with,” said Colin. “At times like these, marketing and promoting your product in the correct way is even more important, as is making sure you are not just keeping up with, but beating your competitors. We've certainly not stood still, either with the distillery diversification, or in looking at ways we can boost our food offering.”

Last year the Castle welcomed back a familiar face, former Head Chef Grant Macnicol, who has returned to the business to lend his name to the newly revamped restaurant, and private dining area, The Vault, completed just last month.

“It's fantastic to have Grant back,” said Colin, “He's been around Scotland on a culinary journey, honing his skills, and is bringing all his experience to bear in the new restaurant, pairing our gin with different dishes, and offering superb private dining and corporate options, coupled with our popular

Whisky Dinners. It's been really beneficial to the local dining market from Sutherland and Caithness. We're delighted to say that we have made Grant a partner in the business, along with our General Manager, Matthew Logie, who joined us in 2017. This is our exciting new team as we go forward in the business."

Colin and Ros are not quite ready to hang up their hoteliers' aprons just yet though.

"There would certainly have to be a huge party at the Castle before we do that!" said Colin.

For further details on all offers at Dornoch Castle Hotel call 01862 810216, email enquiries@dornochcastlehotel.com or check out the web at www.dornochcastlehotel.com

