

The Inner Circle Rum Story

Malcolm Campbell

In 1855, the Colonial Sugar Refinery Company Limited (now CSR Ltd) was founded with its core business, naturally enough, sugar production. The South Pacific's climate and soil types were ideal for the sugar industry and CSR's business soon boomed and became very profitable with sugar mills in Queensland, New South Wales & Fiji. These sugar mills were complimented with sugar refineries in all capital cities in Australia & in Chelsie, New Zealand.

In 1873, CSR set up a distillery at Harwood on the Clarence River in New South Wales. The distillery was attached to the Harwood Sugar Mill and produced industrial alcohol and a small quantity of rum. This distillery produced ethanol and rum until 1896 when it was closed.

Prior to the closure of the Harwood Distillery, another distillery operated in Nausori, Fiji for a short time. In 1901 CSR opened a new distillery in Pymont, an inner city suburb on the foreshores of Sydney Harbour. This distillery used molasses from Queensland and Fiji sugar mills to manufacture ethanol, carbon dioxide and rum. Rum was always a very small part of distillery operations & as such rum was not part of CSR's core business. Rum was always treated as a "bit of hobby" but was the subject of much discussion at "staff get togethers".

Pymont Distillery was the largest distillery in Australia when it commenced operations & remained so for many decades. It had a large fermentation & distillation capacity producing most of Australia's need for industrial ethanol (methylated spirits), carbon dioxide for soft drinks & dry ice etc. Small quantities of rum were also made by the use of two pot stills. These pot stills were used to make rum until the Distillery closed.

The Standard Traditional Rum, as it became known, evolved from 1901. Every "Head Chemist" (later known as "Production Superintendent") who managed the process contributed their part to making a better rum - rum quality was always the subject of much discussion.

The names of some of the Head Chemists who are known to have contributed to the development of CSR Traditional Rum during Pymont Distillery's history are as follows:-

Dr Harman, Messrs Bass (30's), Rutledge (40's), Thane(40/50's), Wilkinson (50's), Tickner (50's), Greenwood (60's), Wilmot(60/70's) & Campbell (70/90's)

In the 1930's Dr Harman was credited with returning from the Americas with a special yeast culture which was introduced in about 1934. This yeast became the main culture for rum manufacture & rum quality improved significantly from that time.

CSR quietly went about making rum for market. They were not particularly interested in retail marketing, preferring to make a good product & then leaving it up to individual companies to sell the product to the public. CSR rums made their way into "Old Kedge", "Red Mill", "Frigate" & many others.

CSR knew for a long time that their rum was always of good quality & as result they jealously guarded the process. The process was never discussed with outsiders. The quality of the

Traditional Rum varied from time to time with changes in the raw material, variations in the process such as fermentation, distillation & maturation etc.

The best matured rums were set aside & kept for special needs. The best of the best rums were of premium quality & were used for the "Directors' Special", "General Manager's Reserve" to be handed out to highly regarded clients.

In the early years of Pymont Distillery's history, temperance was a significant factor in society & CSR management did not want to be too closely associated with potable spirits. Things began to change in the 1950s & by the mid 60s there was a significant push from the staff to get some of the GM's rum. If one was lucky enough to get a bottle of "General Manager's Reserve", or even a taste, one was considered fortunate, hence it was only "spoken of in whispers".

So in 1968 the name "Inner Circle Rum" was born. It was always the best rum CSR had to offer & a small bottling operation was set up at Pymont.

All other rums which were not considered best quality were sold to other market outlets.

CSR exhibited rum in local & some of the international competitions & were fairly successful in winning many awards. Some of these awards are listed below:-

Monde Selection Geneva 1978	Gold Medal
Monde Selection Amsterdam 1981	Gold Medal
Monde Selection London 1982	Gold Medal
Monde Selection Rome 1983	Gold Medal & Trophy
Monde Selection Lisbon 1985	Gold Medal
Monde Selection Geneva 1986	Gold Medal(2)

In 1986, CSR sold their distillery rum interests to The Bundaberg Distilling Company and as a result INNER CIRCLE RUM disappeared from the market.

In 2000 Stuart Gilbert, who was a former Australian Olympian sailor, & some close friends with a passion for Inner Circle Rum, saw a need to fill a void when this rum vanished from the market. They searched the world for a similar type rum without success.

Stuart Gilbert set about tracking down the last person responsible for CSR's rum production & quality - Malcolm Campbell who had retired several years ago. Stuart & Campbell met in December 2000 to discuss the implications of entering the rum retail market.

Due to Government legislation & the two year maturation period required for rum, Gilbert & Campbell went South Pacific Distillery, Fiji in January 2001, & were able to satisfactorily blend available matured rums to create a rum which resembled the Traditional Rum previously made at CSR's Pymont Distillery.

Gilbert acquired the trademark for Inner Circle Rum from Bundaberg and the brand was re-launched in 2002. The rum, blended in Fiji, was then offered to the market in Australia under the Inner Circle Rum label. It proved popular with judges at the international level was a consistent winner at the International Wine and Spirit competition in London in 2002, 2003,

2004, 2006 & 2007. Inner Circle Rum won numerous other awards in America, Canada & Europe & was referred to as “The Judges Choice” – see below.

In 2004 Stuart Gilbert purchased Beenleigh Distillery. This distillery was not suitable when purchased for the manufacture of Inner Circle type rum & needed major workover. Campbell played a major part in the distillery upgrade & the first batch of rum was made in November 2005.

Stuart Gilbert was fortunate that Campbell retained the technology & the original yeast culture use for rum manufacture. The culture was kept for many years in Campbell’s “fridge”, which seemed to be sensible thing to do at the time. (This yeast is now in use at Beenleigh Distillery.)

In April 2006, Stuart Gilbert sold the Inner Circle Rum business to Lion Nathan.



*Inner Circle Rum’s Awards History
A Testament to Quality*

2005 San Francisco World Spirits Competition awards Inner Circle Rum Blue 90 Proof (45%) a **Gold Medal**, **2 Silver Medals** for Green 57.2% and Red 40% and a **Bronze Medal** for the Black

2005 World Spirits Awards held in Austria awarded Inner Circle Rums **2 Gold Medals** for the Inner Circle Green 57.2% and Black 75.9%.

2004 In the **November issue of Wine Enthusiast** in the USA, Paul Pacult, who is widely viewed as the pre-eminent commentator of spirits in North America, rated Inner Circle Green 57.2% **Classic - 96/100 – Highest Recommendation.**

2004 International Spirits Award held in Frankfurt has judged Inner Circle Green 57.2% as a **Gold Medal** winner.

2004 The International Wine and Spirit Competition held in London has awarded Inner Circle Green 57.2% the **“Jim Murray” Trophy for the Best Rum** as well as **2 Gold, 3 Silver and 2 Bronze Medals.** In fact, at this annual event which is often described as the Olympics of the Beverage Industry, Inner Circle Rums took 2 of only 3 Gold Medals awarded in the entire Rum category.

2004 Paul Pacult, in the May, 2004 edition of **Wine Enthusiast**, rated Inner Circle Rum within the top 25 Spirit Brands in the USA.

2003 International Wines and Spirits Competition held in London judged Inner Circle Rum as the best ranked Rum Company globally and was Runner Up for the prestigious “**International Distiller of the Year**” award. In addition, Inner Circle Rums won **2 Gold Medals, 3 Silver Medals and 2 Bronze Medals** (7 entries, 7 awards!).

2003 Wine Enthusiast – December gives Inner Circle Rum 96/100 – the highest for any Rum!

2003 Spirit Journal of America gives Inner Circle Rum a 5 Star rating

2003 Beverage Tasting Institute in Chicago awarded Inner Circle Rums **1 Gold Medal and 2 Silver Medals** at their annual Rum tasting. Inner Circle Green was awarded 94/100 and was the **highest ranked Dark Rum** at the tasting. BTI is an American Institute based in Chicago whose aim is to deliver fair and impartial reviews on wines and spirits for consumers. Visit www.tastings.com for more information.

2003 Monde Selection has awarded Inner Circle Rum **2 Gold Medals** at this year’s tastings. Monde Selection is an independent, Belgian based Institute that judges food and beverage on only one criteria – taste. Only the very best products are awarded the Gold Medal. Visit www.monde-selection.com for more information.

2003 The San Francisco World Spirits Competition has awarded Inner Circle the **Trophy and Double Gold Medal** at this year’s event as well as a **Silver Medal**. The Double Gold Medal is reserved for spirits that receive a unanimous vote for a Gold Medal by the panel of judges and is indeed a rare event for any product to receive such recognition. Visit www.sfspiritscomp.com for more information.

This competition is viewed as a major global competition and is therefore very highly regarded. A summary of the San Francisco judges and their credentials are listed below:

Anthony Dias Blue, the Wine and Spirits Editor of Bon Appetit magazine and Director of the San Francisco International Wine Competition. Blue is the author of *The Complete Book of Mixed Drinks* and contributes a regular wine and spirits column to *American Way*, the American Airlines in-flight magazine.

F. Paul Pacult, is the leading spirits authority in the United States, editor/publisher of the Spirit Journal, frequently contributing spirits editor to the New York Times magazine and columnist for *Wine Enthusiast* and *Sky*, the Delta Airlines in-flight magazine. Pacult is also author of *Kindred Spirits: The Spirit Journal Guide to the World Distilled Spirits and Fortified Wines*.

Other judges included:

Tony Abou-Ganim - Master Mixologist, Bellagio Resort, Las Vegas

Robert “Rusty” Albert - Retailer/Wine & Spirits Buyer, Wine Impressions, San Francisco

Stephen Beal - Educator & Consultant, Master of Scotch, San Francisco

Julio Borneo - Tequila Master, Tommy’s Mexican Restaurant, San Francisco

Dale De Groff - President - King Cocktail, New York

Janet Dyer - Sales Manager- Adventures in Wine, San Francisco

Michael Feil - GM/Bev. Buyer Lake Merced Golf and Country Club, California

Doug Frost - MS & MW Educator & Journalist, Kansas City Star Spirits Editor, Robb Report, Los Angeles

Mendel Kohn - Wine & Spirits Buyer, The Wine Vault, California
Ken McDonald - Retailer/Wine & Spirits Buyer, Friendly Spirits, San Francisco
Tim McDonald - Director of PR, E & J Gallo Winery, California
Steve Olson - Educator & Consultant, Wine Geek, New York
Kevin M. Vogt - MS Wine & Spirits Director, Delmonico Steakhouse, Las Vegas
Robert Whitley - Wine & Spirits Columnist, Copley News Service.

2002 International Wine and Spirit Competition, London awarded Inner Circle Rum the **Wray and Nephew Trophy for the Best Rum of the Show** and in addition Inner Circle Rums were also awarded **one Gold, two Silver and two Bronze Medals**. This competition is regarded by many as the most prestigious and definitive Wine and Spirit Competition in the World.

Judging Panel Comment: A truly classic rum, with wonderful balance, and a super, long, spicy and fruity finish. Visit www.iwsc.net for more information.

2002 International Rum Festival, Newfoundland, Canada awarded Inner Circle Rum **one Silver and two Bronze Medals**.

2002 Inner Circle is re-launched

1987 – 2001 Inner Circle Rum was removed from the market and therefore was not entered in any competition.

Under CSR Directorship

1984 Monde Selection, Madrid, Spain awarded Inner Circle Rum a **Silver Medal**.

1983 Monde Selection, Rome, Italy awarded Inner Circle Rum the **Trophy and Gold Medal**.

1982 Monde Selection, London, England awarded Inner Circle Rum a **Gold Medal**.

1981 Monde Selection, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, awarded Inner Circle Rum a **Gold Medal**.

1980 Monde Selection, Vienna, Austria, awarded Inner Circle Rum a **Silver Medal**.

1978 Monde Selection, Geneva, Switzerland, awarded Inner Circle Rum a **Gold Medal**.

1981 Royal Sydney Agricultural Show Sydney, Inner Circle Rum was awarded **Show Champion** and **three Gold Medals**. (5th consecutive year)

1980 Royal Sydney Agricultural Show, Sydney, Inner Circle Rum was awarded **Show Champion, four Gold Medals and four Silver Medals**.

1980 Royal Agricultural Show, Melbourne, Inner Circle Rum was awarded **two Gold, five Silver and two Bronze Medals**.

1979 Royal Sydney Agricultural Show, Sydney, Inner Circle Rum was awarded **Show Champion, six Gold Medals and three Silver Medals**.

1979 Royal Agricultural Show, Melbourne, Inner Circle Rum was awarded **three Gold, two Silver and two Bronze Medals.**

1950 – 1978 Royal Sydney Agricultural Show, Sydney, Inner Circle Rum was awarded ” **two hundred and forty eight Awards**”. Judges comments: “Distilled in pot stills, blended and matured in oaks vats to produce a full bodied, mellow tasting rum of great merit”.