

For sale: Your own taste of Whisky Galore!

By **Mike Merritt**

MALT lovers are being given the chance to own part of a new distillery on an island which was once home to the author of Whisky Galore!

Shares in the Isle of Barra Distillery have gone on sale online, with backers of the project hoping to raise £1.5million towards its £2.5million cost.

Compton MacKenzie, who published Whisky Galore! in 1947, built a home on Barra in the 1930s.

And although the classic tale was set on nearby Eriskay, the community benefit society behind the new Barra distillery hope it will help them draw attention to their plans. Director Peter Brown said: "You cannot buy the publicity that the mere hint of Whisky Galore! gives."

Planning permission has been granted for the distillery to be built in the hills near Borve, and its backers say it will be the most environmentally friendly in the UK.

Four wind turbines have been installed, and two hydro turbines as well as solar panels will be added to provide all the energy the project needs.

The peaty water from the reservoir at Loch Uisge will be used to make the whisky, and the directors hope to use barley grown on Barra and Uist.

Mr Brown said: "We will be producing a malt for a niche market, mainly the UK. Malt is where it is happening.

"We have all the right elements – the water, local Hebridean barley and the site to bring the sea, the air and true island flavour to the finished product."

The project is being run by Uisge Beatha nan Eilean (Isle of Barra Distillery). Mr Brown said the plan was for the distillery to turn a profit within six years.

Once funding is secured, building could begin this summer.

It is hoped to produce 30,000 bottles a year, with the profits ploughed back into the community.

The share offer is open until March 31. For more information, go to www.crowdfunder.co.uk/barra-distillery-share-offer.

Whisky Galore! is based on a true story – the aftermath of the wreck of the SS Politician, carrying a cargo of 28,000 bottles of Ballantine's blended whisky, in a gale near Eriskay in 1941.

Sir Compton's book inspired a 1949 Ealing comedy of the same name, featuring Basil Radford, Joan Greenwood, James Robertson Justice and James Anderson, and with many islanders appearing as extras.

A 2016 remake, starring Gregor Fisher, James Cosmo and Eddie Izzard, proved that the story has lasting appeal, and a half-bottle of whisky from the Politician sold at auction in Edinburgh last year for £2,250.



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James Anderson and James Robertson
Justice in 1949 film. Right, Borve on Barra

