

# 100-year-old Scotch pulled from frozen crate

August 13 2010

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In this Feb. 5, 2010 file photo released by Antarctic Heritage Trust on Feb. 8, 2010, one of crates of Scotch whisky and brandy is pictured after they have been recovered by a team restoring an Antarctic hut used more than 100 years ago by famed polar explorer Ernest Shackleton. One of the crates of the Scotch whisky that was trapped in Antarctic ice for a century was finally opened Friday, Aug. 13, 2010 but the heritage dram won't be tasted by whisky lovers because it's being preserved for its historic significance. (AP Photo/Antarctic Heritage Trust)

(AP) -- A crate of Scotch whisky that was trapped in Antarctic ice for a century was finally opened Friday - but the heritage dram won't be tasted by whisky lovers because it's being preserved for its historical significance.

The crate, recovered from the Antarctic hut of renowned explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton after it was found there in 2006, has been thawed very slowly in recent weeks at the Canterbury Museum in Christchurch on

New Zealand's South Island.

The crate was painstakingly opened to reveal 11 [bottles](#) of Mackinlay's Scotch whisky, wrapped in paper and straw to protect them from the rigors of a rough trip to Antarctica for Shackleton's 1907 Nimrod expedition.

Though the crate was frozen solid when it was retrieved earlier this year, the whisky inside could be heard sloshing around in the bottles.

Antarctica's minus 22 Fahrenheit (-30 Celsius) temperature was not enough to freeze the liquor, dating from 1896 or 1897 and described as being in remarkably good condition.

This Scotch is unlikely ever to be tasted, but master blenders will examine samples of it to see if they can replicate the brew. The original recipe for the [Scotch](#) no longer exists.

Once samples have been extracted and sent to Scottish distiller Whyte and Mackay, which took over Mackinlay's distillery many years ago, the 11 bottles will be returned to their home - under the floorboards of Shackleton's hut at Cape Royds on Ross Island, near Antarctica's McMurdo Sound.

Whisky lover Michael Milne, a Scot who runs the Whisky Galore liquor outlet in Christchurch, described the rare event as a great experience.

"I just looked at this (crate) and honestly, my heartbeat went up about three paces. It was amazing," he said. "The box was like a pioneer's box with the wood and nails coming out," he said.

Although Milne said he'd give anything to have a taste of the whisky. "It is not going to happen and I am not going to get excited about it," he said. "But if there was ever an opportunity, it could be a wonderful one

to have."

Nigel Watson, executive director of the Antarctic Heritage Trust, which is restoring the explorer's hut, said opening the crate was a delicate process.

The crate will remain in cold storage and each of the 11 bottles will be carefully assessed and conserved over the next few weeks. Some samples will be extracted, possibly using a syringe through the bottles' cork stoppers.

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