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## **BARLEY'S DEATH BREAKS FELINE TRADITION AT ORKNEY DISTILLERY**

Two centuries of tradition at Highland Park on Orkney have been broken with the death of Barley, the distillery cat, as it has been decided by bosses not to find a replacement.

However, staff at the distillery, established in 1896, are already making arrangements so that the last moggie will be able to keep a watching eye over the Kirkwall site.

Barley, a 15-year-old ginger tom, was a fond favourite with locals and tourists and received a sack full of Christmas presents and cards. He passed away following a road accident this week.

Assistant brand heritage manager Patricia Retson said: "Barley was a real character and there are many tales surrounding his time at the distillery. He was very friendly to tourists, but this warmth did not extend to dogs – he was renowned for terrorising the former distillery manager's hound, which once had to be carried from the distillery as he was too frightened to move.

"His favourite spot was, unbelievably, on top of the money till in the Highland Park shop, and many tourists thought he was a toy, so they got quite a shock when they touched him on the back."

Always a great companion, in particular to the production operators on night shift, Barley was the last in a line of generations of distillery cats at Highland Park – his predecessor was Malt and before that the resident cat was the aptly-named Peat.

All of the cats were named by workers to reflect key ingredients that go into making "the best spirit in the world," as the single malt was described by an American magazine last year.

"As a mark of respect to three of the most recent cats at Highland Park, we have plans to commission a local artist to make a statue which will be displayed in the courtyard, as they will always be part of the distillery's heritage," added Patricia Retson. "But we have decided not to replace Barley due to health and safety regulations, though we are sure such a 'feline friend' will be sadly missed by visitors. The decision was not taken lightly as it is two hundred years of tradition that will be

broken.”

**-ENDS-**