Bushmills traces its heritage back four hundred years to 1608 when King James I granted the County Antrim town of Bushmills its first license to distill whiskey. It has been an officially registered company since 1784. Many Bushmills families have worked for the company for generations.

Whiskey making probably came to Ireland in the seventh century with missionary monks, who distilled fruit-based aquavitae (“water of life”) for medicinal purposes. Barley-based whiskey (from the Irish for “water of life,” *uisca beatha*) was first recorded in the mid-1500s.

To make its famous brew, Bushmills combines Irish malted barley with water from St. Columb’s Rill, a tributary of the nearby Bushmills River. It is triple distilled and aged in oak barrels for as long as twenty-one years.

During maturation, evaporation causes the cask contents to drop by 2 per cent each year. The evaporated whiskey is called “the angel’s share.”

All phases of production—malt distillations, blending, maturation, and bottling—are carried out at the Bushmills distillery.

*The Smithsonian Institution thanks Bushmills Irish Whiskey for assistance with this display.*