

Momentous Minutes



Issue 5

December 2003

**rolls over gently
then gives a
sudden kick**



Very Young Ardbeg – a distinctive character in the making

Many a whisky enthusiast will, at some time or another, find him or herself musing upon the mysterious process of maturation. Slowly, silently and inconspicuously, clear new-make spirit develops into a coloured, balanced and wonderful malt whisky, and here lies the intrigue: what is this “work in

progress” like, and what can it tell us about the future of the Ultimate Single Malt?

Having tested the water of life ourselves in its formative years, we too are intrigued. This autumn we are releasing a limited quantity of 6 year old Ardbeg exclusively for

continued...



THE **Ardbeg**
Committee

continued...

Committee Members. It is drawn entirely from the first casks to be filled when the distillery re-opened in 1997 and bottled at cask strength. This expression we have called Very Young Ardbeg (because it is). Now we want to know what you think of it...

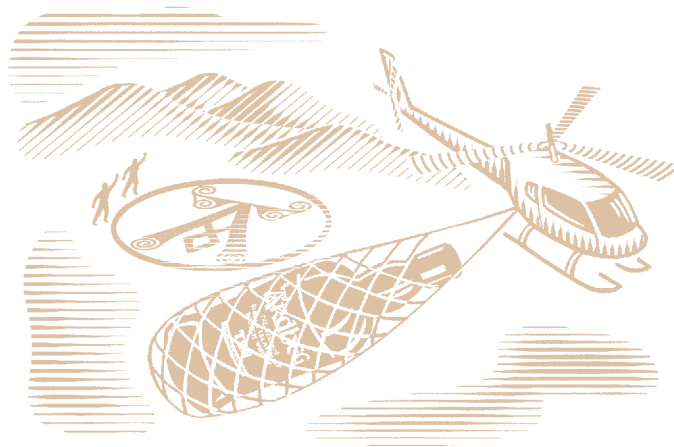
Tongue scrapers at the ready

Rachel Barrie, Chief Noser, has already identified blackcurrant, toasted oats, vanilla and seaspray. What flavours and aromas can you detect in this fledgling expression? We would be grateful for your responses, from which we will compile the Committee's Own Tasting Wheel, incorporating the names of contributing Committee Members. It will serve as a useful aid at tasting sessions, a souvenir of your participation in this important discussion and should also make a rather attractive wall hanging.

Before that of course you will need to sample Very Young Ardbeg, which brings us to the pertinent issue of purchase. There are only 4002 bottles available, which means you will have to act with some urgency. As we hope you will appreciate, there will be a need to ration bottles, which cost a mere £25 plus p&p, limited to two per member*.

To request your bottle, write to Very Young Ardbeg, Ardbeg Distillery, Port Ellen, Isle of Islay, Argyll, Scotland PA42 7EA, enclosing a cheque or credit card details. You can also phone us on +44 (0) 1496 300 303.

When the time comes, you can register your response to Very Young Ardbeg by visiting the Committee Room on our website.



Mayday Mayday. Whisky Out. Bravo Mike.

It could be argued (and often is) that managing the greatest distillery on earth and chairing one of the world's finest Committees is the best job to be had anywhere. That being the case, a close second must surely be that of Contract Helicopter Pilot.

This assertion comes after a recent correspondence from one such pilot, Mike Hall (Committee Member 19399). He reveals that his career not only provides ample opportunity for travelling the world, but also allows him to choose where he flies according to where he can procure plentiful supplies of Ardbeg! Some may not consider this work at all.

However, even one so ostensibly fortunate can run into trouble on occasion, as his communication ventured to explain. As an honourable member of the Ardbeg

Committee Mike chose to share his Ardbeg with prospective initiates in the vying for membership. Unfortunately, this generous and dutiful act brought about an under-supply of Ardbeg, for which he could find no immediate solution. He stresses that this desperate situation arose only because his expected supply from the Middle East (via a colleague and fellow Ardbeg lover en route back from Iran) suffered a 3 week delay, leaving Mike "bone dry as of 8.30pm" that evening and quite unable to fulfil his duties of membership.

This narrative deserves to be told as an example of ambassadorial excellence in its own right, but it also allows us to respond to Mike's appeal for emergency measures to be incorporated into the Rules and Regulations, to prevent any such crisis reoccurring in the future. The addendum is made as follows.

Section (8) Paragraph 21

Emergency procedure in the unlikely event of a sudden drop in Ardbeg provisions.

a) Using whatever means you judge necessary, seek out others who may have a secret stash (cf Rules and Regulations Section 6 Paragraph 18 for possible hiding places). If the spirit cannot easily be procured from the possessor with considerable sums of money, begging, "borrowing" and bare-fist fighting are all considered legitimate tactics. Repeat until stocks are replenished to satisfactory levels.

b) A longer-term alternative is to distil your own supplies. However, this pre-supposes that where you lack a bottle of the Ultimate Single Malt, you do have in your possession substantial quantities of fresh water from Loch Uigeadail, peat and barley from Islay and the exact measurements and specifications of Ardbeg's distilling equipment and processes.

c) Failure to execute either of the above may necessitate the more drastic measure of relocating yourself permanently wherever the Uisge Beatha never fails to flow (e.g. Islay).

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could bring Ardbeg to you when you're running low? Visit the next best thing, the new website at ardbeg.com

**Unfortunately, we cannot dispatch Ardbeg to North America.*





Someone's using his loaf... and some fungus... not to mention his cat...

Some places do indeed possess an uncanny resemblance to Ardbeg and Islay. There is Wellington New Zealand, on a “rugged island, green, natural and cursed (blessed?) with a maritime climate that always makes the city and country change in beauty and grandeur”. Or Ahrensburg, which not only shares 5 letters of its name with Ardbeg, but offers a dancing partner for Auld Cloutie in one of its trees!

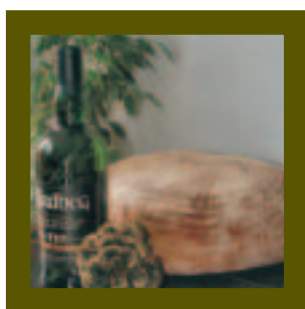
Others could scarcely have less in common with Ardbeg: Buckingham England for instance, where there is “no ‘Devil’s Tree’, no Soggy Peat Bogs, no rugged wilderness and worst of all no distillery or brewery”. Yet the determination to find a link where surely there is none shows an impressive sense of civic pride and a laudable desire to forge an ever closer association with Ardbeg. Just consider

poor Cheltenham, without a coast, castle or Celtic cross in sight, but they “do love Ardbeg’s water of life” and they also have “the odd Jack Russell terrier!”.

So congratulations all – and now with a roll of the proverbial drum, we are delighted to announce that Ardbeg’s twin in 2004 will be Kielce, Poland.

On three counts we were persuaded of an undeniable connection worthy of celebration – a plant in Ardbeg colours (black, green and white); Polish bread with its “great natural taste – exactly as Ardbeg”; and a feline fancy for Ardbeg.

As promised, the twinning plaque will be placed on the Distillery wall in due course and any citizens of Kielce who pass this way should feel more than welcome to drop in for their free dram!



Peculiar to Ardbeg and Kielce: colour and good taste.



The clincher: Tadeusz’s (always distrustful) cat likes Ardbeg.

Special delivery

Could anyone have made more effort to attend the Frankfurt Whisky Festival than Robert Wolf (Committee Member 521)? His wife on the verge of giving birth, the bag was packed and by the front door. However, the bag was Robert’s. Stopping just long enough to witness the birth of daughter Lara, Robert hot-footed it along to the gathering where the new arrival was toasted with large amounts of Ardbeg and bonhomie! We are assured that Robert’s very understanding wife was happy to let him attend.

The glass is always greener in Stockholm

Next time you find yourself in Stockholm’s Old Town, be sure to call in at The Ardbeg Room – a drinking establishment dedicated entirely to Ardbeg. Taking his cue from the Distillery here on Islay, the proprietor, Andrea Cagliesi, (Committee Member 21818) requested colour swatches and

stencils so he could furnish his watering hole in all the right colours and patterns. His staff wear Ardbeg polo shirts and drams are even served on Ardbeg drip mats. Our Chairman recently made a trip to see this veritable whisky paradise and gives it an unequivocal thumbs up.

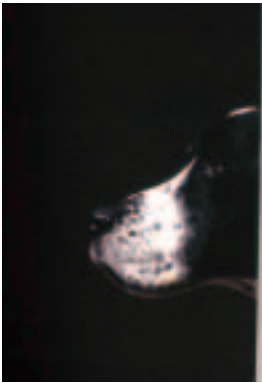
Bedding plants

The Committee was pleased to note recently that the Islay Hotel in Port Ellen is to be rescued from dereliction and brought back to life – not unlike the Ardbeg Distillery. Locals Roland Worthington-Eyre and Kathleen Cunningham are to set about renovating the forlorn-looking Islay Hotel and an opening is planned in 2005. A recent inspection revealed the enormity of the task ahead of them – the hotel has been closed for years and there were plants growing through the beds! We understand a restaurant and self-catering flats are planned. The Committee wishes the new owners well and are sure that all visitors disembarking from the ferry, not to mention the locals, will appreciate the new-look Islay Hotel.



Here’s a site for sore eyes

For those who frequent our website on a regular basis you will observe that, while much remains intact, we have taken care to improve your online experience of Ardbeg. There are gigs and games to be played and much begging and borrowing to be done; you can explore some of Islay’s lesser known nooks and crannies, meeting some of the locals along the way. Of course, you’ll still be able to find out what fellow enthusiasts all over the world are up to – and don’t forget to visit the Old Kiln Shop in time for a very merry Christmas.



Sharing Ardbeg with the angels

It is with great sadness that we bid a fond farewell to Ziggy the Collie, loyal friend and familiar face at the Ardbeg distillery for many years.

DOB 9 February 1991

RIP 2 September 2003



Some ribs going spare off the coast of Ardbeg

Due to ominous weather forecasts it was touch and go whether the annual visit of the Redbay Boats of Cushendall would take place. Happily, the skies cleared and with precision timing, if not a sense of direction, the fleet from Northern Ireland was joined on the high seas by craft from Colonsay and Jura for the voyage. Thus, a glorious day ensued for the 189 men, women and children who arrived at Ardbeg in their RIBs (Rigid Inflatable Boats).

Duncan was on hand to pipe the visitors to shore, where they enjoyed tours of the distillery, Gaelic songs and a grand buffet in the Filling Store. And as tradition dictates, everyone from the Distillery – along with many visitors and locals – climbed the hill overlooking the sea to wave and pipe them off, at the end of a truly wonderful day.

With thanks to Sven Eriksson for the photograph.

visit the new site: www.ardbeg.com



I verify that the minutes recorded here are correct and complete, and I am pleased to endorse their publication and circulation to Members of the Ardbeg Committee.

Stuart Thomson, Chairman.

Ardbeg: can anywhere possibly compare? It would appear so...

The nominations are in, the arguments pored over and, after much deliberation and pouring of drinks, we have reached a result. Ardbeg's twin town for this year has been found and will be announced on the ensuing page.

However, it would be ungracious to proceed without first acknowledging the outstanding quality of applications received by the judging panel. We were profoundly touched by the enthusiasm and spirit with which the idea was taken up. Suffice to say, choosing one winner has been difficult.

Full marks for presentation: Laurie Cremore must have had a steady hand – presumably this was inscribed before imbibing too much Ardbeg?

*My Twin Town for Ardbeg 2003
Would be my home town of Falmouth,
in Cornwall, with its Beautiful rough
craggy Landscapes divided by dry
stone walling with the Sea and the
Beautiful Art of Celtic Connections
to Blend in with the Smooth release
of Aramas, and assess the Colour
and Taste to Compliment the year
by being Twinned with Ardbeg.*

*This my Nomination with feeling for a Fine Whisky.
From Mr Laurie Cremore, Chairman of 2003*

Some of the Nominations (in no particular order):

AHRENSBURG – Germany

NESHAMN – Norway

HAVHUSE – Denmark

KILMARNOCK – Scotland

BILZEN – Belgium

CAPE TOWN – South Africa

WELLINGTON – New Zealand

TURANGI – New Zealand

KIELCE – Poland

BEGRAD – Yasil (The Baltic)

MAYARO – Trinidad

ADELAIDE – Australia

KAMBAH – Australia

SYDNEY – Australia

CHELTENHAM – England

CATHERSTON LEWESTON – England

BUCKINGHAM – England

BISHOP'S CASTLE – England

FALMOUTH – England

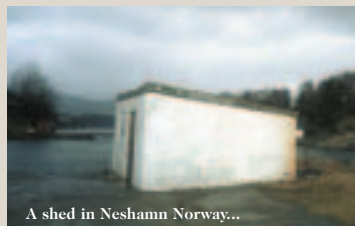
GOSPORT – England

BERLOU – France

EVERYWHERE – Everywhere

CARDIFF – Wales

the list goes on...



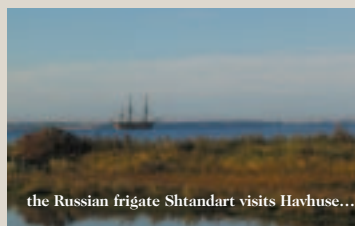
A shed in Neshamn Norway...



...a shed on Islay, spooky...

“the whitewashed building above was used for storing goods that were delivered to the quay. We can't say for sure what was stored there but we can't rule out single malt...”

Jeremy Cook No. 14430 Norway



the Russian frigate Shtandart visits Havhuse...



...just as the Ark Royal leaves Ardbeg
(spookier)

“we hope to be your twinned city because both places share the same magic...when I first set my foot in Havhuse I knew that it was a magic place, and when I first set my foot on Ardbeg, I had the same feeling...”

Per Linnet No. 13219 Denmark



Talking of spooky, the resemblance here is...



...not much actually

“the main reason for the partnership is the fact that we have the dancing partner for Auld Clootie in one of our trees. Two down-bowing horns on a round head, slim body, spreading her legs... the long tail cannot be misinterpreted.”

Martin Falke No. 10765 Germany

Knights in shining wetsuits

If proof were ever needed that an Ardbeg fan can crop up anywhere, the Sad Bastards (the origin of that name is a long story and not for telling here) are it.

Some years ago, a damsel found herself in some distress when her car got stuck in the mud at the side of an Islay road. For a while she tried, without much success, to support the sinking car with a couple of holdalls, until eventually she gave up and trudged to a nearby guesthouse in search of help.

It transpired that the brave men who came to her rescue were a group of divers from Aberdeenshire (one of whom wears a sporran made from a weasel he found on the road, but that's another story too) and great fans of Ardbeg. As they helped her out, they discovered that their damsel was none other than Jackie Thomson.

It's hard to tell who enjoyed the greater fortune. Jackie, who was winched successfully out of the bog, or a group of whisky aficionados who had managed to befriend a lady who might prove extremely useful to know...

Indeed, on a subsequent visit, Jackie's friendly frogmen turned up again, this time in her garden as she turned a burger on her barbecue. To the surprise (and delight) of the invited guests, the divers emerged from the sea and came to join the party, where they happily partook of one or two Ardbegs. Jackie, of course, was thrilled to see them and they were welcomed with a warmth that anybody who has visited the Distillery will well know. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they now come and enjoy a sumptuous meal at Ardbeg every year.



46% Volume (and increasing) in the Old Kiln Café

Thursday lunchtimes at the Old Kiln Café have been developing into something of an event for Islay's society women. Coming from remote parts of the island, one or two glasses of Ardbeg provide proud mums, aunts and grandparents with a good excuse for a gossip and a peek at family photographs. Unsurprisingly the noise in the café can reach record levels when the girls are in town. Plans to make earplugs available have been mooted and are under discussion.

Are you feeling sleepy?

A recent noteworthy event was the visit of hypnotist Big Alex (who appears to perform under the rather surprising stage name of 'Richard Roberts' but we may be mistaken) at the White Hart Hotel in Port Ellen.

With only the smallest inducement of an alcohol-related nature, local figures volunteered to play along and were seen to indulge in a variety of devilish and naughty goings-on. It should be emphasised that no associate of Ardbeg Distillery was present for such unbecoming antics. This is mostly because we believe much the same can be achieved by tipping a few Ardbegs – and by our reckoning, with far greater pleasure.

Please take our litter away with you

Less than a year after siring his single Islay malt pup, Shortie the Jack Russell is once again a proud father, but this time of sextuplets! With quite such a large brood, new homes will have to be found for some of the puppies, so if you think you could assist, please let us know*. It is understood that the only criteria for selection will be that the owners are ardent fans of Ardbeg and of Jack Russells (in that order of priority).

**Unfortunately we cannot dispatch puppies overseas, except at a push a neighbouring isle: after all, how could anyone resist the notion of the Pups of Jura?*

Expressions of delight

Well done to Stuart and the team, great restoration, good luck for the future I'll do my best to contribute! Hic!

Mike, (Karen and Kirsten)
O'Connor

This is what a single malt is all about. Especially the lingering aftertaste was superb.

J Samuels

You have a unique and wonderful place to live and produce a spectacular product. It is an honor to be a member of the "committee".

John Weston USA

Excellent tour! Mrs Thomson is a babe!

Anonymous Committee Member
(come on – own up!)

So good I almost felt sick

Nicklas Eriksson

La mecca del bevitore di whisky

Daniela Sciutto
Genova, Italy

I hereby promise to procure and enjoy, each in turn, the range of single malts distilled by Ardbeg, taking each dram in the manner prescribed by you. Lang may yer lum reek.

John K Rogers
(Committee Member 16980)

...a very informative sales assistant in the Gatwick duty free shop [explained] that if I enjoyed peaty malts I really should try Ardbeg... And by cracky was the man right! He should be knighted. It's just plain heavenly, and so, so smooth.

June Hyland USA