Momentous Minutes

Issue 2

October 2001

Ardbeg have put their foot in it...

There's an ancient inauguration ceremony on Islay: you place your naked foot upon a carved imprint in a sacred stone. But, you could only do it if you donned a white robe, recited a Gaelic poem and were being appointed as the new Lord of the Isles one thousand years ago on Islay.

For the first time this millennium, a new Lord of the Isles will be inaugurated on Islay. This time, instead of Loch Finlaggan, it's at Ardbeg. And instead of a noble ruler, it's a phenomenal 25 Year Old single malt whisky...

THE Ardbeg Committee

1,000 years later...

We hope you concur with the naming of our new expression as the 'Lord of the Isles'.

Quite apart from its distinguished characteristics, at 25 Years Old it's probably much the same age as the Lords of the past. The name also reflects the origins of the Committee – the Lords at court forming the first committee on Islay. And, through our Committee, this Lord's influence will extend beyond the Hebridean seas to distant shores around the world (i.e. it'll be drunk from Argentina to Ukraine!)

This new Lord is deep gold in colour.

Its aroma is deep, rich and sweet... evocative of chocolate, marzipan, cherries, cocoa, mandarin fruit, heather and lavender, and balanced by peat, woodsmoke and salt.

The taste is powerfully peaty and chewing, with a luscious silky and oily mouthfeel. It's initially sweet with vanilla and chocolate, followed by a crescendo of peat and cocoa.

There's a long, dry finish, with chocolate malt and crushed peat resting satisfyingly on the palate.

Committee members are among the very first to be notified of this launch of the oldest expression since Ardbeg re-opened. It will be on general release on the 1st November.

To purchase a bottle from the Distillery (£100 plus P&P, complete with a presentation box), please phone us on the brand new Committee Hotline on +44 (0) 1496 300 303. You'll also receive a free Ardbeg jumper, with our compliments!

ORDERS MUST BE PLACED BEFORE 23RD NOVEMBER TO ENSURE DELIVERY BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

Welcome...

to every Committee member in every country of the world! And an especially warm welcome to those of you whom I've had the pleasure of meeting in person. In fact, this year we've greeted over 6,000 visitors here at the Distillery. The Old Kiln Cafe has been working overtime, producing as many Clootie Dumplings as Ardbeg jumpers...well almost!

It's been an exciting and eventful year. You may have read at www.ardbeg.com about the adventures of our new spirit still as she crossed the seas and was lowered through the roof of the still house. The quality of our beautifully balanced spirit has been exceptional ever since! This year has also seen the release of our 1977 Vintage, and the next Committee bottling of 12 casks of 21 Years Old (there are a few bottles left, if you're interested!). And, of course, this week we're launching the Lord of the Isles.

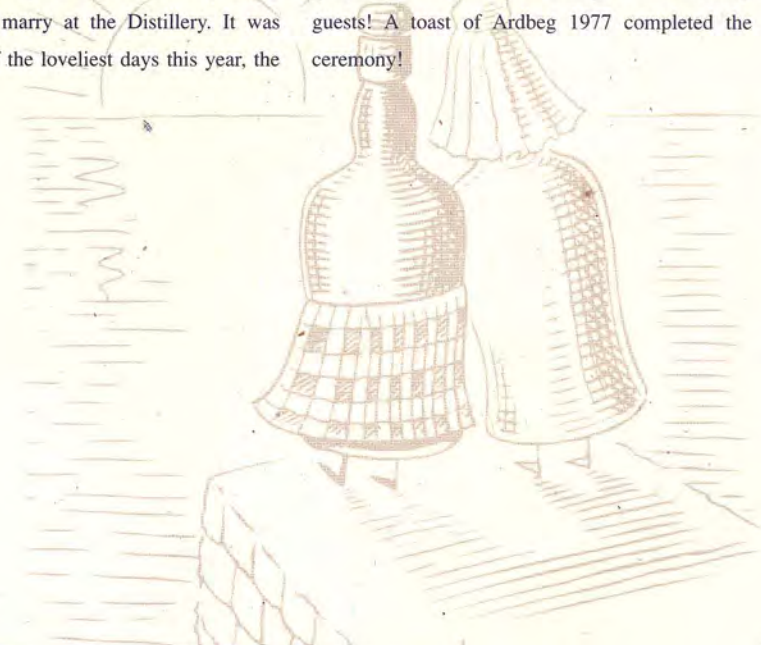
I hope you enjoy reading these latest Minutes. We're delighted with the way the Committee is growing and the support you're giving to us!

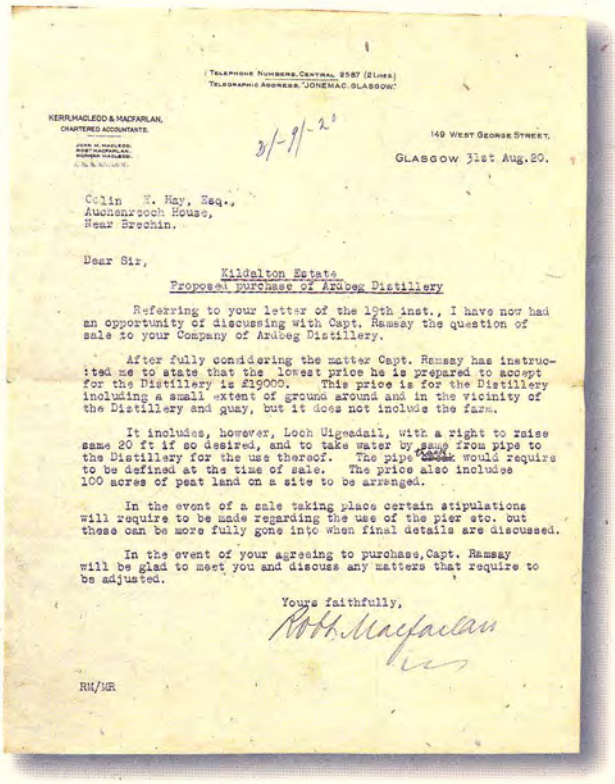
Finally, with the present climate of fear and uncertainty in the world, we would like to say that everyone in this little corner of Islay sends good wishes to all our Committee members, wherever they may be.

Enjoy!

Wed on the pier

Amidst the many lovely weddings we host here at Ardbeg was our first Committee wedding in July! Members Sandra Adamson and John Dickson came together partly through their passion for Islay malts and especially Ardbeg, and felt it was only fitting that they should marry at the Distillery. It was idyllic. On one of the loveliest days this year, the sun glistened on the water around the pier as they were pronounced man and wife. The service was carried out by local minister Reverend Morrison, and the Committee Chairman and his wife were delighted to to be their witnesses – and the only guests! A toast of Ardbeg 1977 completed the ceremony!





(Telephone Numbers, Central 2587 (2 Lines)
Telegraphic Address, "Jonemac, Glasgow")

KERR, MACLEOD & MACFARLAN,
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS.

JOHN M. MACLEOD.
ROBT. MACFARLAN.
NORMAN MACLEOD.

31/-9/-20

149 West George Street,
Glasgow 31st Aug. 20.

Colin E. Hay, Esq.,
Auchenrzoch House,
Near Brechin.

Dear Sir,

Kildalton Estate
Proposed purchase of Ardbeg Distillery

Referring to your letter of the 19th inst., I have now had an opportunity of discussing with Capt. Ramsay the question of sale to your Company of Ardbeg Distillery.

After fully considering the matter Capt. Ramsay has instructed me to state that the lowest price he is prepared to accept for the Distillery is £19000. This price is for the Distillery including a small extent of ground around and in the vicinity of the Distillery and quay, but it does not include the farm.

It includes, however, Loch Uigeadail, with a right to raise same 20 ft if so desired, and to take water by same from pipe to the Distillery for the use thereof. The pipe would require to be defined at the time of sale. The price also includes 100 acres of peat land on a site to be arranged.

In the event of a sale taking place certain stipulations will require to be made regarding the use of the pier etc. but these can be more fully gone into when final details are discussed.

In the event of your agreeing to purchase, Capt. Ramsay will be glad to meet you and discuss any matters that require to be adjusted.

Yours faithfully,
Robt. Macfarlan

RM/MR

Sold for the sum of £19,000

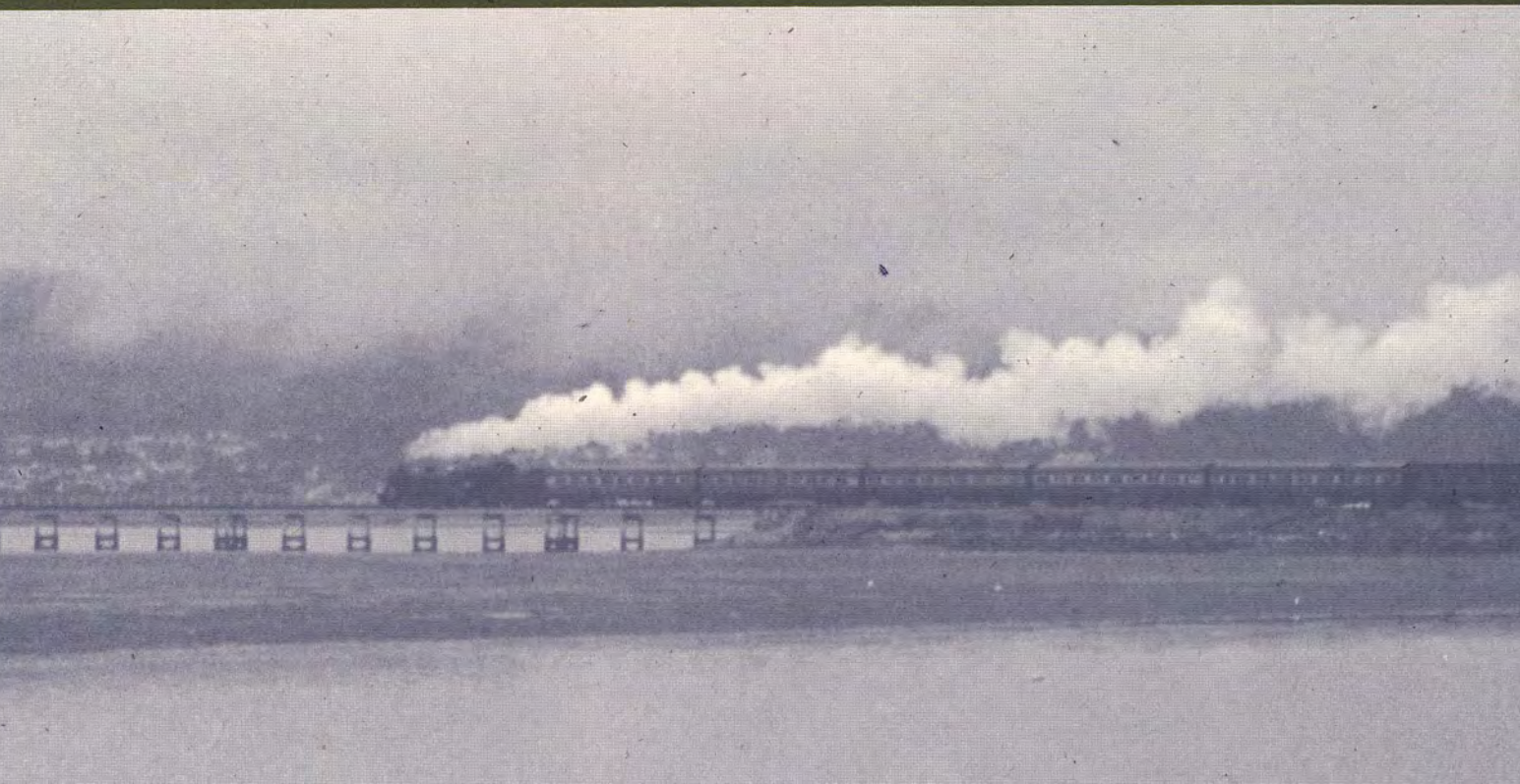
(we'll even throw you in the Loch)

It's incredible that, back in 1922, the entire Ardbeg Distillery, quay and Loch Uigeadail, were sold for a mere £19,000. Today, that would just cover the cost of whitewashing the buildings. It's a measure of inflation that, in 1997, Glenmorangie PLC paid £7 million for the same purchase!

This letter, found recently when some antiquarians paid us a visit, is one of the many letters of negotiation between Captain Ramsay and Colin E. Hay Esquire – some of the many different owners over the past 186 years.

Steaming in South Africa

Tip to Committee members either resident in South Africa or who are intending to travel in the vicinity: if you have difficulties in locating your favourite dram, book a steam train safari on the Rovos Rail. It serves Ardbeg on the way to Cape Town, Swaziland, Namibia, Victoria Falls and Dar-es-Salaam.



Address the Chair

Thank you for the many letters and e mails we have received. A few noteworthy ones are posted here on the noticeboard. For more, check out Address the Chair at www.ardbeg.com. Keep them coming!

"The finest thing I ever tasted... was Ardbeg. I am happy to have the privilege to participate (in my own small way) in the renewal of life of Ardbeg and take very seriously my responsibility to initiate others into that company of that happy breed of men (and women) who have discovered this sublime spirit!" Dave Olsson, USA.

"I could eulogise pretentiously for hours but it's quite simply the finest, in my opinion". George Boyter, London.

"It is hARD BEGinning an evening without an ARDBEG. So why should we?" Andreas R

"Most honourable Chair... I live in a district of West Cork called Ardura Beg and have just named my new boat 'ÁrdBeg'" Gavin Couper, Ireland.

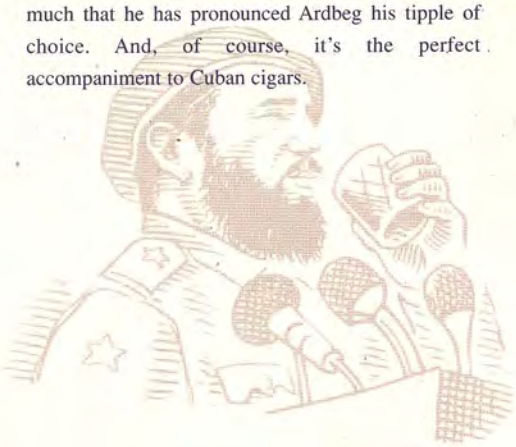
"Having studied the Committee Rules, I was reminded of a considerable similarity to those of our venerable Thirst Club, a small congregation of like-minded... a small band will stage a reunion in Vancouver in September." Bent Hvidt, Pfaffhausen.

The 21 Years Old queue

There are a few bottles left of our recent Committee members-only bottling of 12 casks of Ardbeg 21 Years Old. Many members are already lining up for a second bottle, but we're bound by Rules and Regulations Section 8 Paragraph 21. The best solution has been to impose a deadline of the end of January 2002 to purchase a first bottle of this 'perfect marriage of sweetness and depth'. After this time, members who have requested a second bottle may have their wishes granted! Bottles cost £100 plus P&P. Please call us on the Committee Hotline on +44 (0) 1496 300 303 to place your order.

Lord of the Isle of Cuba

News just in: another windswept (sometimes hurricane-swept) island officially shares a passion for Ardbeg. We have just received notification from the House of Commons Press Gallery that Fidel Castro was recently given a bottle of Ardbeg by the Trade Minister Brian Wilson. The Cuban leader loved it so much that he has pronounced Ardbeg his tipple of choice. And, of course, it's the perfect accompaniment to Cuban cigars.



Grave Rave

The little island of Islay doesn't just play host to many traditional ceilidhs. For the sixth Summer running, there was another Grave Rave on Kilnaughton beach (right beside the graveyard), with the aim of creating enough noise to raise the proverbial and raise money for Port Ellen Bowling Club. The night was a great success, dry (weather-wise), and packed with 500 islanders who ate, drank, danced and talked until the small hours, then finally stumbled home (some, who shall go unnamed, were pushed home in a wheelbarrow!).

Staggering Feast

Christmas is coming, and if you'd like a whisky-laced alternative to the traditional dinner, try one of the following ideas from Mary at the Distillery. (If there's enough demand, we could put recipes on the website.) Gravadlax with smoky Ardbeg bread... Chicken pate with an Ardbeg dressing... Prawns in an Ardbeg rose marie sauce... Seafood salad with the aforementioned prawns, plus smoked mackerel pâté and smoked salmon... Islay Beef simmered with mushrooms, shallots, red wine and Ardbeg 1975... Chocolate torte with Drambuie... Cranachan with raspberries, oatmeal, cream and a splash of Glenmorangie... Warm clootie dumpling laced with Ardbeg 17 Years Old. With these ideas, there's no excuse for serving up another flaming Christmas pudding...

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

Stuart Thomson, Chairman.

Ardbeg's Jumper Mountain

7,000 above sea level

100% Lambswool

Limestone

Quartzite and Conglomerates

Slates and Phylites

Intrusive Epidiorites and Hornblende Schist

Somebody ordered one too many after one too many

Well, whoever did it actually ordered more than one too many. In fact, so large was the enormous order for a pile of handsome Ardbegian woolly jumpers, that several flocks of lambs gallantly relinquished their fleeces - and now there's a whole mountain of jumpers. (Islay's equivalent to Europe's butter mountain). It seems only fitting that members of the Committee can be the first to benefit from this excess (not least because it will help you in your mission to convert others to the Ultimate Single Islay Malts Scotch Whisky - see Rules & Regs Section 2 Paragraph 6).

So firstly, if you buy a bottle of the new Lord of the Isles from the Distillery, you'll receive one jumper *free*.

Secondly, if you'd like to buy one as a Christmas gift, we'll reduce the price to *£21* plus P+P.

The jumpers are top quality 100% Scottish lambswool, knitted by Johnsons of Elgin. There's a choice of V or crew neck, in moss or racing green, in Small, Medium, Large or Extra Large. To place your order, please phone the Distillery on +44 (0) 1496 300 303.

Nosey about the Chief Noser

In the first of our series of interviews, Momentous Minutes interviews Rachel Barrie, Chief Noser (or more officially, Product Development Manager at Glenmorangie plc).

Ardbeg's Chief Noser actually has a remarkably petite nose. She is truly, madly and deeply passionate about whisky - and effusive and articulate to match. Move over Jilly Goolden.

Her raison d'etre is to "delight the Ardbeg drinker" - and thoroughly enjoy every moment of the process. "I've never found another malt that is more Islay. It's like standing on the pier and smelling the sea spray."

She started off her career training to be a doctor. But, unsurprisingly for someone who has one of the most sensitive noses in the world, the smell of formaldehyde when cutting up cadavers was just too much. So she switched degrees back to her first love, chemistry. One PHD and millions of interesting molecules later, she was hired by Scottish & Newcastle Breweries and recruited onto their sensory panel. Moving onto the Scotch Malt Whisky Institute, she set about exploring the enigma and understanding the chemistry of whisky...in other words, finding out where all the wonderful aromas came from. She moved to Glenmorangie plc 6 years ago and started a project to sample no less than 10,000 casks of malt whisky, assessing the flavour of each. This took over 3 years. So it's little wonder that she understands malt whisky in such depth. Even so, despite her extensive knowledge, she still feels that she doesn't know everything there is to know.

"You never stop learning about whisky. Even when I retire, I still won't know everything. When it comes to increasing your knowledge, first you understand the category, then regionality and the different styles, and only when you're a real anorak can you

identify the individual characters of every malt distillery in Scotland. There's also more to know about whisky than wine. For example, the influence of peat. You only get it in Scotch malt whisky, and it ranges from no parts per million to 50 parts per million, which of course is Ardbeg, the most heavily peated Islay malt whisky. Scotch malt whisky is a wonderful enigma... a unique combination of climate, geology and palaeontology. "

Although she is mostly based at Glenmorangie plc's HQ at Broxburn, she and Stuart (Distillery Manager and our Chairman) are in constant daily contact with each other. They know the emerging characters of each individual cask, as, obviously, the character is influenced as much by the wood of the cask as it is by the character of the new make spirit itself.

"The new make spirit can vary hugely in character because it's a natural process. That's what also makes it so endlessly fascinating. The nose and taste are affected by so many things - whether it's summer or winter barley, the speed of the distillation run, the level of humidity in the warehouse, which is also affected by the amount of sea spray at any time, and so on. That's what makes it so complex to manage. The key is developing the knowledge to best marry all the different forces together to keep producing superb individual products that all are faithful to the true Ardbeg taste. It's a process of trial and error, and it involves tasting hundreds of samples."

And what about her own personal favourites?

"It has to be the 21 Years Old. Nothing comes close to it. It's absolutely amazing. You just know it's worth the money. But I really enjoy all the Ardbeg expressions at different times.
The 10 Years Old is a great nightcap, like a dose of medicine.
The 17 Years Old is more of an after-dinner dram, great with espresso coffee or cappuccino.
The '75 Vintage is so deep and intense and richly sweet, I love to drink it beside the fire.
Apart from Ardbeg, on a sunny day in a beer garden I enjoy drinking Glenmorangie 10 Years Old. It's easy, smooth and mellow."

And which would she recommend is best for Committee members to introduce to their friends? "It's all very subjective. I would recommend the 10 Years Old as a wonderful introduction to the chewing, mouthwatering, gristy peat and beautiful balance and complexity which is totally unique to Ardbeg. It leaves you gagging for more!"