

Momentous Minutes



Issue 6

October 2004



right, that's your lot!

Lots of lots, but what exactly are these odd objects? Go to the Committee Room at ardbeg.com for the answers.

LOT 25: *i) a long weight?
ii) a nescient tube?
iii) a dooker?*

LOT 33: *i) a head retainer?
ii) an anti-collapse valve?
iii) a stumble gauge?*

LOT 32: *i) a malt head?
ii) a gravity feed?
iii) a loud pump?*

As visitors to the annual Islay Malt & Music Festival know, Ardbeg Day is considered by many (at Ardbeg) to be the highlight of the festival. Last year, Clann an Drumma raised the roof with their drums and pipes. So how could we possibly top such a spectacle? Committee Members were expecting something special and as we've always been happy to do their bidding, a grand Auction seemed the perfect choice.

Having set up our Mart on the lawn, complete with livestock, our auctioneer for the day – local teacher, Callum Murray – girded his gavel (well, two cask bungs) and set about finding new homes for all manner of Ardbeggian artefacts.

Yogi, Aza, Dugga and Drew looked resplendent in their white porters' coats and did a grand job of parading the lots



THE Ardbeg
Committee

continued...



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around the ring. Those of note included an old cast iron bath. Was this the legendary bath where Jim 'Spike' McGilvray kept his secret supply of new make spirit? (See Momentous Minutes Issue 3 for details.) Difficult to get on the plane and nigh on impossible to get past the airport metal detector, the bath did not sell on the day and remains at Ardbeg where offers are still welcome. However, there were plenty of happy and satisfied bidders. Committee Member Klaus Pinkernell, who runs Cadenhead's Whisky Market in Berlin, bid for and bought an array of items with which to adorn his shop including the extremely heavy and unwieldy anti-collapse valve – a snip at £5. He was also the successful recipient of the 'Mystery Box' which he declared to be a tremendous bargain at £130, for it contained commemorative staves, an Ian Gray painting, an Ardbeg Shop sign, a 30 year old Ardbeg and something 'unmentionable', among other wonderful things. The day was a great success and in total, the Auction raised over £1,000 of which 40% was donated to local Islay charities. Auctions apart, there's always lots of fun to be had at Ardbeg.



Still available for sale, or even for setting sail. As demonstrated beautifully by Yogi and Drew.

Rory's Rein of Terror

The entrance to the Ardbeg Distillery is presently guarded by a local pony called Rory. We would like to warn visitors that they should not be taken in by the apparently mild-mannered equine who greets them on arrival. Oxymoronic as it may sound, Rory is in fact a ferocious pony. This was drawn to our attention during our recent shop refurbishment, when three strapping lads from the joinery firm were

sent into Rory's field to erect our new welcome sign. Welcome they were not, however: Islay's resident bronco (also widely known as a 'bad tempered sod') proceeded to nudge, nuzzle and make such a nuisance of himself that the team were unable to leave the field for at least 35 minutes. Their terrifying ordeal was finally brought to an end when the farmer's wife was called in and the boys were released, thankfully unharmed.

The Ultimate Expression?



Any Committee Member worth his malt will know how important it is to demonstrate loyalty to Ardbeg, and in true Ardbegian spirit, Members across the world have been doing just that in highly commendable ways.

We have heard about the Ardbeg Guesthouse near Edinburgh and the two Committee Members who gave Ardbeg to their baby as a middle name.

Yet surely the ultimate expression of anyone's passion for Ardbeg is to tattoo oneself, as Henrik Dahlberg did (pictured right).



This serious act of dedication prompted us to consider how many other Committee Members would be prepared to follow suit, albeit in a less permanent fashion. To this end, we have supplied all Committee Members with a tattoo transfer which can be easily applied to (and removed from) any part of the anatomy. Thus your challenge is to send us a photograph of you displaying your tattoo in an unusual place†.

Please send the photograph to 'The Ultimate Expression', Ardbeg Distillery, Port Ellen, Isle of Islay, Argyll, PA42 7EA Scotland, or email it to us at oldkiln@ardbeg.com. The best entry will be rewarded with an expression of the Ultimate Single Islay Malt Scotch Whisky*.

†A few suggestions: *Shoulderblade (Kentucky), Long Nose (Wales), Left Hand (West Virginia) or Tongue (Scotland)*





There's something in the water

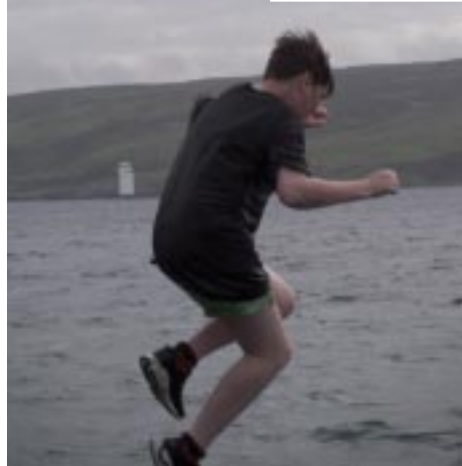
The next time you're wandering through Port Ellen, don't be surprised if you find yourself seeing double. We can assure you that the whisky, in this instance, is unlikely to be the cause.

Any symptoms of diplopia are more likely to be due to the rather surprising fact that Port Ellen, with a population of just 900, has more than six sets of twins. In fact, it has seven. Indeed, our own Dugga and Yogi both have twin sons.

However, if twins are doubly likely on Islay, they are also doubly hardy, as demonstrated recently by (twins) Kevin and David, along with several young friends. In a howling gale, with a teeth-chattering wind chill factor of minus six, our intrepid twosome were spotted merrily jumping off the Port Ellen dockside into the freezing sea, doubtless risking a couple of doses of

double pneumonia. When asked to confirm whether this was a regular form of recreation, Kevin (or was it David?) retorted, "Only when the weather's good."

Make mine a double



Twice the Fun

All this twin talk leads us nicely onto the subject of this year's nominations for Ardbeg's twin town 2005. As Members know, the first Ardbeg twin town to be named was Kielce in Poland, as put forward by Tadeusz Zolnierczyk. Subsequently, a rather fetching plaque was unveiled at the Islay Festival of Malt & Music in May and now hangs proudly in the Old Kiln Café. Many thanks to those of you who nominated your home town last year and please feel free to enter again this time. All that is required is a letter giving us reasons, tenuous or otherwise, why you believe your town or city should be twinned with Ardbeg. Photographic evidence will be gratefully received, closely scrutinized and may appear in future editions of Momentous Minutes. Please write to us here at Ardbeg Distillery, Port Ellen, Islay, Argyll PA42 7EA Scotland. (To see previous entries visit ardbeg.com, go to the Committee Room and download the PDF of Momentous Minutes Issue 5.)

A Homing Instinct

The outbuildings at Ardbeg are treasure troves stuffed to the gunnels with ancient photographs, copious copies of old letters and various other dusty documents. Much information on what life was like in the old days of Ardbeg can be gleaned from these long abandoned annals.

A recent rummage uncovered a truly wonderful find, pictured right. If the face looks familiar, you'll have no doubt visited the distillery and met the man himself, Duigan Campbell, albeit, an older version. Duigan also makes a vocal appearance on our website in our Gigs and Yarns section. Far be it from us to suggest that Duigan has an eye for the birds, but the evidence would suggest more than a passing ornithological interest...

The story goes that Duigan started working at Ardbeg at the age of 16 but in 1953 found himself called up to the RAF. Based in Pitreavie Castle in Fife, he was accorded the role of senior aircraftman. Alas, he was

never given a chance to fly himself on account of the fact that the job of a senior aircraftman was based firmly on the ground.

Once discharged from the RAF, Duigan's homing instinct took him straight back to Ardbeg. Upon arrival, the 'birdman of Ardbeg' painted the barrel himself to record his time away and his return, having a love of painting and drawing, as well as a love of pigeons. (Duigan raised several pouters and fantails from squabs.)

The head cooper at the time, John Ferguson, was so impressed with Duigan's handiwork that he proclaimed the barrel should be kept in the workshop, where it remains to this day... somewhere. As we've stated, our troves are somewhat knee-deep in treasures. We can only surmise that our penchant for hoarding must be inextricably linked with our fondness for whisky making – once we've stored something, whether it be whisky or ephemera, it generally stays put for a very long time.

So if you ever have the same instinct to visit every Committee Member's 'spiritual' home (the Ardbeg Distillery), ask to take a look at Duigan's barrel and you can help us take a look for it. Now where did we put the key to the workshop...



The Birdman of Ardbeg





The Brightest Boat Afloat

It's no secret that the lads at the distillery like a spot of fishing, especially off the old stone pier round the back. After weeks of preparation Dugga launched his new fishing boat at Swan's Pool – a beautiful spot and one of Islay's closely guarded secrets, just 3 miles along the coast from the distillery.

If you're ever on the island and wondering how to spot Dugga's boat, don't worry. You can't miss it – seriously. It's the yellow one. The extremely bright yellow one. In fact, if anyone at the distillery needs to find Dugga all they have to do is look out to sea and he is often visible, even without the aid of a telescope.

And the name of this conspicuous vessel? Er, well it doesn't have one at the moment. But there's no mistaking which boat it is and to whom it belongs. We say God bless 'er and all that swig whisky in 'er!



Still(man) clocking on

In 1964, 19 year old Alex "Wardie" Woodrow, raised in the little village of Ardbeg since the age of two, followed in his father's footsteps and began working for his local distillery.

40 years and 15 million litres of malt whisky spirit later (not all consumed by Wardie, the Chairman hastens to point out), our longest serving member is still going strong. This year we proudly celebrate Wardie's extraordinary career at



Big hand, little hand, old hand

Ardbeg, which was only briefly interrupted when the distillery was mothballed and he experienced a temporary stint as a gardener. Fortunately, Wardie returned to his spiritual – and spirit-producing – home in 1989.

"I was very happy to return as Stillman... It's a great place to work and I am looking forward to toasting the past 40 years with a dram or two!" said Wardie.

If Members wish to celebrate with us, we suggest they do so by raising a glass, sinking a dram and drinking to Wardie's next 40 years. Well, it is the water of life after all...

www.ardbeg.com



You're first in the queue

The good news is, we are pleased to formally announce that the next batch of Committee Reserve rolled into Warehouse 3 in May. The bad news is it won't be rolling out again until 2014 (you'll recall the last bottling was a sell out within days). But fear not. In order that Committee Members enjoy the privileges their status deserves, we're giving you advance warning. 10 years' notice to be precise!

*Q. Why did the Wallaby cross the road?
A. To cross over to the other side*

Past issues of Momentous Minutes have often made reference to Islay's various indigenous species – mainly sheep, deer and puppies. However, earlier this year a mysterious foreigner was found on the island: a wallaby (or technically, an ex-wallaby) which turned up on the low road, not far from the airport.

Theories have been abounding as to the circumstances of our Australian visitor's appearance on Islay. The odd wallaby has been spotted near Loch Lomond in the past, where a small colony was introduced some years ago. But short of hopping on a ferry or a plane (which seems unlikely if not impossible), we have been at a loss to find an explanation for how this small marsupial came to be on the island. An airport spokesman pointed out: "We get 20,000 passengers a year but we have never had any wallabies. It's a bit of a mystery really."

Indeed.

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.

*Unfortunately, we cannot dispatch Ardbeg to North America. In the event that the winner resides there a voucher or other Ardbeg merchandise will be offered.

never to be re(pea)ted



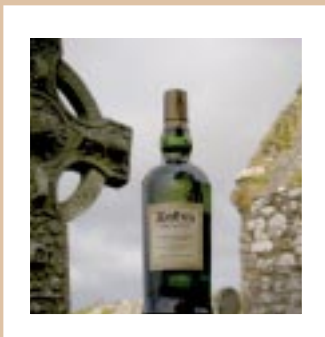
For peat's sake, how on earth did that happen?

“What would Ardbeg taste like without the peat?” is a question that may or may not have crossed all Members’ minds at some point. It’s a question that was destined to be left unanswered – until now. For, although we can safely say that Ardbeg is the peatiest malt on Islay, for a few brief weeks back in 1980, this wasn’t the case at all.

This very question must have plagued distillery manager Hamish Scott, and to satisfy his curiosity, small batches of un-peated and lightly peated malt were produced at the distillery’s maltings. The product of his inquisitiveness, 24 years on, is very limited quantities of a rather special whisky, christened Kildalton.

So at last, the question can be answered. By removing the peat, according to our

Chief Noser, Rachel Barrie, the fruity flavours of the purifier on the still are brought to the fore along with the waxiness of the wooden washbacks and more of the grainy flavours of the barley itself. This produces an immensely sweet, fruity and floral expression of Ardbeg which we know many Members will be keen to compare to traditional Ardbeg for themselves.



You can get your hands on Kildalton by writing to ‘Kildalton’, Ardbeg Distillery, Port Ellen, Islay, Argyll, PA42 7EA Scotland enclosing a cheque for £95 + p&p (£8 UK, £12

Europe, £20 International) or your credit card details. You can also phone us on +44 (0) 1496 300 303. And remember, only 1300 bottles of this unrepeatable experience exist. So for peat’s sake, make sure you don’t miss out.

Kildalton is an old gaelic word circa 9th Century meaning ‘step child’ or ‘foster child’. Will you adopt this expression as your own?

Wheely tasty



Thanks to your prolific feedback, Very Young Ardbeg is no longer ‘For Discussion’, but ‘Committee Approved’ and a legitimate and permanent member of the Ardbeg family.

As promised, here is the Very Young Ardbeg Tasting Wheel (of sorts) for your perusal, complete with Members’ comments below:

Smoky

- burnt wood smoke – Chris (from Nuneaton)
- peat – most of you

Spicy

- eucalyptus – Norbert Mils & Sven Wedig

Sweet

- cocoa – Gordon Homer
- molasses – John Jones
- marshmallows – Norbert Mils & Sven Wedig
- sweet tar – Patrick Johansson

Salty

- seasalt – P R Hammarland (amongst others)
- seaweed – Alan Messini
- iodine – Gordon Homer
- antiseptic ointment – John Wright



It's a lock-in

The experience of being locked in a pitch black room might be considered a nightmare by some. Not by a wandering Japanese whiskyphile however, who got more than he bargained for when on a recent group visit to the distillery. The party was assembled outside the Old Kiln Café and, along with the distinctive peaty aroma, a buzz of excitement filled the air as Stuart Thomson readied himself to strike out on his famously entertaining tour of the distillery.

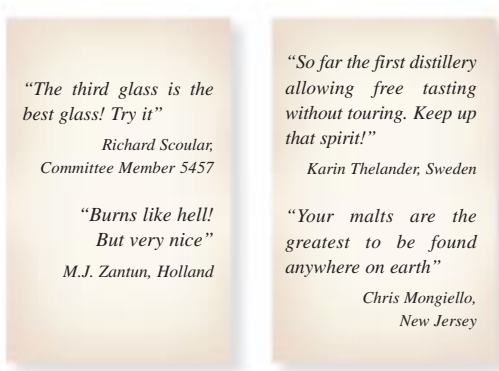


All seemed to be going well. The visitors wended their way by the washbacks. They were stirred by the stills. They then proceeded to Warehouse No. 3 where things did not go according to plan.

After marvelling at the abundant hogsheads, barrels and casks, carefully racked and stowed, the party duly made their way to the exit and Stuart locked the door behind them. It was only upon the party's return to the Old Kiln Café that it was noticed the group was short by one. The alarm was raised and a search party hastily formed.

A short while later, the door to the warehouse was unlocked and flung open. Our absentee emerged grinning from ear to ear, telling us that to be trapped in the dark with around half a million gallons of Ardbeg was a veritable dream come true. Apologies all the same.

Expressions of Delight...



Stumbling on Ardbeg

There is a question that has been occupying our thoughts at the distillery for some time: where, when and why did you first encounter Ardbeg? Did you stumble upon this magnificent malt by chance, or did you discover it under the influence of some munificent guiding figure?

Alwyn Pritchard of Harrogate has already told us of his epiphany: "I first met Ardbeg at a shop on the front at Brodick (Arran) and have preferred it to all others ever since." If like him you are at ardbeg.com in the near future, please call into the Committee Room and recount your memories in Expressions of Delight. We'd love to hear your story.

...Disappearing Expressions

This letter from 1922 records "a choke in the beaters" affecting the distillery machinery. Just goes to show that amazing expressions have always been evident at Ardbeg.

Being Chief Article takes a lot of bottle

In which case, Thomas Beckmann is well qualified for the post, for he has 47 different Ardbeg bottlings and over 80 bottles in all.

He made his first purchase in 1996 and hasn't looked back since. The oldest Ardbeg in his collection is a 32 year old Douglas Laing bottling (distilled in 1967) and his youngest is, of course, Very Young Ardbeg at just six years old.

On a recent visit to the distillery, an enthusiastic Thomas told us, "My favourite Ardbegs at the moment are: Ardbeg Uigeadail, Ardbeg 1977 and a 28 year old 1972/2000 Douglas Laing bottling."

It is such an impressive collection that we would like to inaugurate Thomas as the next Chief Article. Therefore, if any of you know of any reason why this fan and his anorak

may not be brought together (i.e. you have more bottles in your own collection) please speak now.



Then again, for sheer canniness, another strong contender is Mr. Mark Hallberg, the American Vice President of a medical instruments company based in Tokyo. Long an Ardbeg fan and Committee Member, he travelled thousands of miles to Ardbeg in June, blissfully unaware that, as the annual Islay Malt & Music Festival was in full swing, he was highly unlikely to find a bed for the night.

Upon arriving at the distillery his predicament soon came to light and his plight explained to him. Taking pity on their visitor, the girls rang around and managed to secure him the very last bed on the island.

If you feel your own endeavours beat those of Thomas and Mark, please feel free to put your case forward at The Chief Article page at ardbeg.com.