



Marketing Star Award 2015  
Strategic Category  
2.3 International Marketing

**Ardbeg Day 2014 – The Peat Football World Cup**

**‘story’**  
the best selling agency

# Match Report: Islay, Scotland.

In the midst of all the celebrations it's time to get the typewriter out and share the highlights from the Peat Football World Cup 2014 in Islay.

But before I skip to the matches, let me give you a bit of background to this illustrious event that brought together teams from all over the world and a limited edition bottling that was more anticipated than a winning penalty after extra time.

I report to you from Ardbeg Distillery on Islay, a small Scottish island, where we produce the Ultimate Islay Single Malt Whisky. For whisky aficionados, coming to Islay and our Distillery is like a pilgrimage, like a football fan visiting Estadio Do Maracana. Every year in June our population swells from 3,000 to over 6,000 for the Islay Whisky Festival where all the distilleries on the island throw open their doors day by day and welcome people from around the world. The festival finishes on the Saturday with Ardbeg Day and I don't mind saying... it's the week's cup final. We realise however, that we are somewhat off the beaten track and it's hard for our dedicated following, in particular, the Ardbeg Committee (who form our international CRM programme in over 150 countries) to come and see us. So in 2012 we took Ardbeg Day to the world inviting our 100,000 international Committee members to enjoy a little Islay Time at an event near them, no matter where they were in the world. Ardbeg Day 2012 and 2013 delivered strong attendance, sell out bottlings and so much event coverage online that there was an internet outage in Port Ellen.

The pressure was on in 2014 so we gathered the distillery team for a pep talk. Learning from previous years we set our sights on the end goal - produce an event template that could be replicated worldwide, have a strong theme that everyone would understand and work in any event space (from the smallest bar to an international arena), attract not only our loyal Committee but their friends too and make sure that Ardbeg Day was what the young ones call 'trending' online. And what better way to bring the world together, than with a dram. So it was decided that a limited edition bottle would be released to celebrate the occasion.

# One World in Unison

When thinking of the theme for Ardbeg Day 2014 we needed a platform that would be understood from Taipei to Texas, be rooted in Islay and have enough breadth that we could deliver a full day of activities to ensure a memorable experience.



We sat... and we pondered... and then Dugga got up abruptly to leave with a call of 'Got to go, kick off's at 7pm'. I shouldn't have been surprised. Islay is small but somehow we've managed to cram in 8 distilleries and over 20 football teams. If you come to watch a game don't be expecting lush green pitches, we have tougher conditions out here and not a groundsman in sight. So after years of heavy boots on peat bogs we've ended up with peat football. Over here football is played by real men that can dribble a ball through a quagmire, it's a game that unites players that are usually locked in battle to sell the best whisky

Don't they say that football is the world's language?

There was something in this. And what good timing that they were having a game or two over in Brazil at around the same time. What a coincidence.

That was decided, we would host the Peat Football World Cup, now time to name our bottling. From the first taste it was clear to see that the Ardbeg Distillery team were on top of their game this season - bursts of hot chocolate leading the attack with smoked apricot and distinct herbal notes bossing the midfield. Liquorice, coffee and a memory of bonfire embers creating a long and lingering finish that leaves your mouth dancing. We were close to breaking into samba when we cracked it, Ardbeg Auriverdes - golden whisky (auri) in our unmistakable green bottle (verde).



## Let's talk tactics.

Like Jose Mourinho we were fastidious in our approach and played to our strengths with the game plan.

First to be clear on the fans, the wider whisky fraternity and the reporters:

- Our Ardbeg Committee and their smoky malt whisky drinking friends.
- Our International Embassies (there are over 100 throughout the world where Ardbeggians can seek Islay sanctuary, usually located in specialist whisky shops and bars that have been approved by the Desk of the Drambassador).
- The Press and Bloggers: to make sure they were at the sidelines commentating on the day.

Learning from past events we had tried and tested channels to reach our audiences —————→

In spite of dropping one player, the digital game, we were confident that our team formation would deliver a winning performance.



# Ensuring we filled the grandstands



42.02%

The tournament date was set - 31<sup>st</sup> May 2014 - now it was time to release the details of the event to our season ticket holders to ensure full capacity crowds.

We thought carefully about the key information that people would want to know: save the date, event theme (we didn't want Bob from down the road turning up in his cycling lycras), where to attend an event near you, all about the bottling and where to purchase.

To keep people in anticipation and not overload them with information we sent the emails across 6 months, a nice steady pace that resulted in premier league open rates as you can see.

Wait, there's more...





Dear Committee Member

We're already limbering up for Ardbeg Day on 31st May by not only whetting our whistle, but blowing our whistle, in readiness for the Ardbeg take on the World Cup!

Football fans and whisky fans alike are encouraged to take part in matches and partake of drams. Football has a rich and noble history in mainland Scotland where lords and kings would take to the pitch and teams were made up of gentlemen. Here on Islay, however mainland teams would often leave defeated, unused as they were to playing knee deep in peat.

We'll be hosting peat footballing events around the globe in the run up to the big day itself – so grab your shorts and raise your glass!

## ARDBEG. THERE'S NO SUBSTITUTE.

It's only fitting that the beautiful whisky is playing the beautiful game this year. It's all kicking off, so find your nearest [Ardbeg Embassy](#) and keep an eye on [ardbeg.com](#) for news of what's happening at a venue near you.

As ever, thanks for your support. It'll be a smashing day.

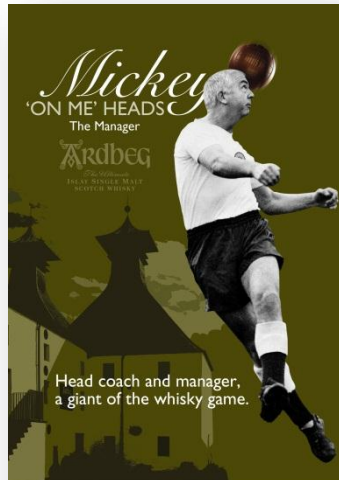
Slainte!

Mickey 'On me' Heads  
The Manager

*P.S. Remember, as ever, the most important fixture of the season is 31 May on Islay. We'll be having a ball, join us if you can.*



41.38%



Head coach and manager,  
a giant of the whisky game.

## ARDBEG AURIVERDES – IT'S A DRAM OF TWO HALVES

Dear Committee Member

The Ardbeg Distillery is on top form this season with the debut of Ardbeg Auriverdes. The newest bottling in the line up – launching on 31st May – displays great promise and is a product of the skill and passion the team here at Ardbeg is famous for.

Distilled with equal measures of both, Ardbeg Auriverdes – golden whisky (auri), unmistakable green bottle (verde) – is destined to be the star of Ardbeg Day 2014.

The talented newcomer is rumoured to be a bit of hot head, on account of its toasted cask lids. However, I am confident that its creamy vanilla sweetness will tame its darker mocha coffee side.



## HE SHOOTS. HE POURS!

Making the ultimate whisky is a beautiful game. And so is peat football. As the Islay community knows, peat football is much more demanding than regular soccer, on account of the tendency to get bogged down in the tricky playing surface.

In the run up to Ardbeg Day, we'll be hosting 'Peat Football' events around the globe – so check our fixture list in the coming weeks at [ardbeg.com](#) to find out what's happening at an Ardbeg Embassy near you.

I know I can rely on you, the fans, to get behind Ardbeg Auriverdes. And with support as loyal as the Ardbeg Committee, this one's bound to become a firm fixture in your drinks cabinets this season.

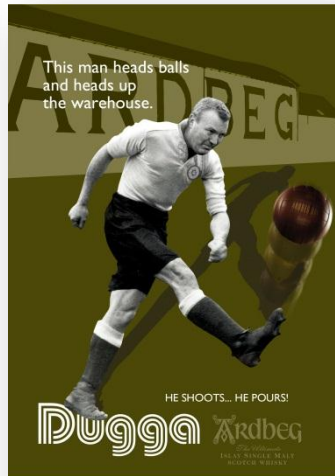
Slainte!

Mickey 'On me' Heads  
The Manager

*P.S. Join us at the Distillery on Ardbeg Day if you can – 31st May.*



44.51%



This man heads balls  
and heads up  
the warehouse.

## Dugga Ardbeg

## PRE-ARDBEG DAY WARM UP – ONE MONTH TO GO

Dear Committee Member

Everyone's gone football daft at the Distillery. 'Warm-ups' now consist of mild exercise rather than the usual dram. And with the lads donning their shorts and boots in readiness for the big day, visitors have noted an increased presence of studs around the place.

Yes, it can only mean... there's just one month to go until Ardbeg Day and the debut of Ardbeg Auriverdes!

## ARDBEG DAY KIT – ON SALE IN THE SHOP NOW!

With Ardbeg Day fast approaching you'll want to get kitted out – so I'm pleased to announce that this year's official Ardbeg Day supporters' shirt is now on sale in the [shops](#).

This smart short-sleeved T-shirt in the Ardbeg team colour of deep peaty brown features a V-neck with the Ardbeg Day 2014 motif on the front and knit work detail along the shoulders and sleeves. The back carries the number 10 and 'Ardbeg Day 2014'. Priced at £80, it's essential kit for any fan's wardrobe – have a look [here](#).



## HOME AND AWAY

Here at the Distillery we have an exciting programme of events lined up for the week running up to 31st May. Meanwhile, around the world, Ardbeg Embassies too are limbering up for the main event.

We know we can rely on your support wherever you are in the world, so if you can't make it over to the Distillery, why not make it along to an Ardbeg Day event near you – check the fixture list [here](#).

Your first taste of Ardbeg Auriverdes will be waiting for you! Don't forget to [log in](#) to check your details so that you're ready for kick off on 31st May.

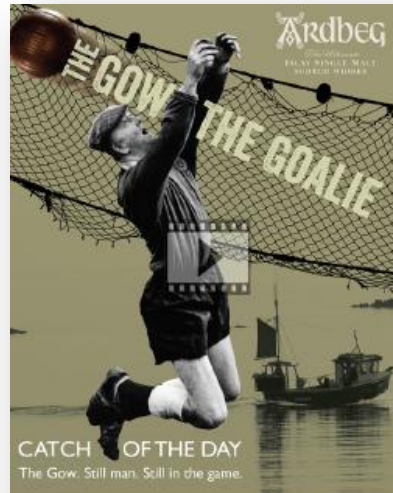
Slainte!

Mickey 'On me' Heads  
The Manager

*P.S. If you're planning to join us at the Distillery, work out your tactics – Islay ferries and accommodation are filling up fast!*



30.85%



CATCH OF THE DAY  
The Gow. Still man. Still in the game.

## TIME TO WHET YOUR WHISTLE WITH OUR EXCLUSIVE ISLAY FOOTBALL FOOTAGE...

Dear Committee Member

You don't need a satellite dish or a costly subscription to catch all the action this summer – just tune into the Ardbegian football footage below.



The Distillery lads are already famous for their distilling skills. Now watch the stars of the Ardbeg team as they display their ball skills and some remarkably fancy footwork on the peaty fields of Islay.

## GEAR UP FOR ARDBEG DAY

The whistle has blown – 31st May and the launch of our new limited edition bottling, [Ardbeg Auriverdes](#) is just over 2 weeks away. So get into the spirit of Ardbeg Day and kick off the celebrations by watching our latest film and passing it on to your fellow whisky fans.

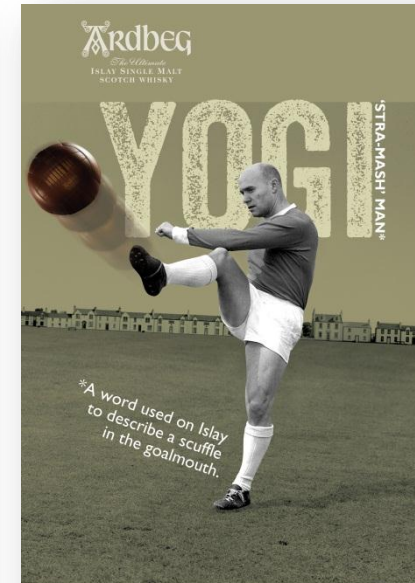
Whether you're home or away, there's bound to be an Ardbeg Day event happening near you, so check out our fixture list [here](#). Thanks for your support.

Slainte!

Mickey 'On me' Heads  
The Manager



36.95%



\*A word used on Islay  
to describe a scuffle  
in the goalmouth.

## ARDBEG DAY – ONE DAY BEFORE IT ALL KICKS OFF!

Dear Committee Member

Tomorrow is on the horizon, when Ardbeg fans the world over will be grabbing their [shirts](#) and getting behind the Ardbeg Team for Ardbeg Day.



At the Distillery, the lads have certainly put in hours of training, honing their skills by passing drams to each other. I'm pleased to report they are fully warmed up, ready to ensure a knockout day is had by all.

## THE WORLD COMES TOGETHER

In other parts of the globe, anticipation is building to fever pitch. Ardbeg fixtures have been organized at hundreds of venues, so check out the full list of home and away events [here](#).

## WHET YOUR WHISTLE

Last, but most certainly not least, the newest addition to our line up is making its debut tomorrow. The eagerly awaited Ardbeg Auriverdes is guaranteed to be a crowd pleaser and bottles go on sale at tomorrow at <at events, through Ardbeg Embassies, at your local retailer or at [ardbeg.com](#)

So, thrilling 24 hours to come. Yes, this year's global event is sure to have the fans roaring!

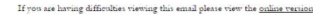
Slainte!

Mickey 'On me' Heads  
The Manager



37.99%

32 emails were sent directly from the markets using an email template we provided, ensuring consistent communications no matter where you were in the world.



You are receiving this email because you are a member of the Ardbeg Committee.  
[If you wish to unsubscribe click here.](#)

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# Match footage

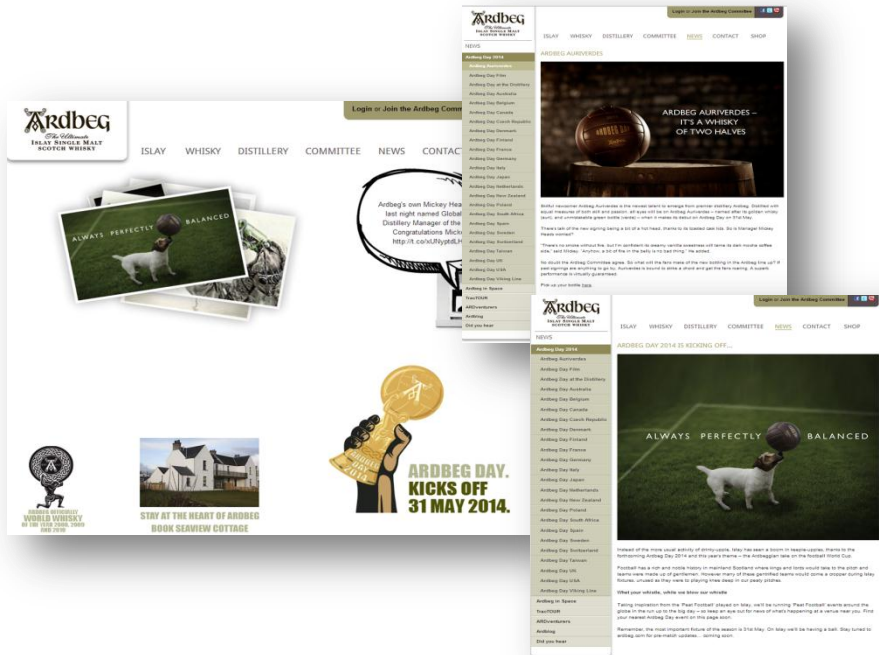
One of the emails shared training footage from Islay in the lead up to the big day. Not even Match of the Day could compete in delighting viewers with action bursting out of a picture frame, whales and seals doing keepie-uppies, peat cutters exhibiting freestyle football and a dog performing a goal scoring header.

Get in! Close to 10,000 views in just under 3 weeks!

## A World-Wide Fans' Forum...



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzDGvAVmuAk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tzDGvAVmuAk)



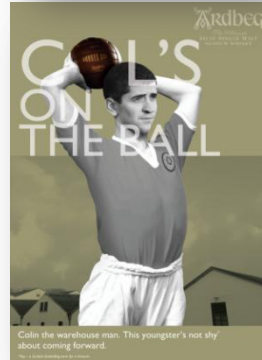
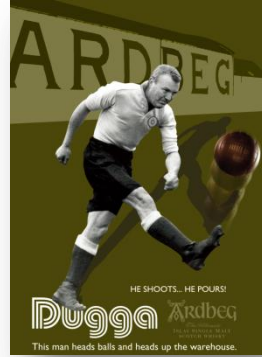
So the Committee were getting warmed up. They knew when the event was on, where to attend, what was happening and how bring home a bottle.

When you're organising an international event you're best to have a central place where everyone can find out what's going on. The Gow suggested the pin board by Warehouse 3 however that's not really all that accessible. So we set up a supporters' page on Ardbeg.com providing the event background, what to expect and locations of the events.

The markets all wanted their own pages to talk to their local fans, so we set up some CMS templates so no one got caught off-side.



# Team Merchandise



With events kicking off at different times across the globe it was still important for everyone to feel united so we produced kits that included pre-event posters, player posters, games that suited all venue sizes, event dressing, strips and whistles. The kit was accompanied with guidelines, a step by step manual to best practice in event planning. The document ensured those who were holding an event had every accounted for 6 months in advance. From venue and press coverage through to activities and catering.

## Keeping in with the pundits

Saturdays are a pretty busy day for reporters and bloggers so we ensured that the Peat Football World Cup was going to be the main headline by sending them a trophy to savour beyond the day - a gold bottle of Auriverdes featuring a link to the tournament website.



# Match(es) of the Day

Ardbeg Day finally arrived and the match reports came flooding in from across the world. Even Adrian Chiles couldn't have kept up with this amount of coverage, replays and highlights.

By 11am at the Distillery the fans piled through the turnstiles and straight to the Distillery Visitors Centre to get their hands on the sacred trophy of the day, a bottle of Auriverdes. By 4pm it was sold out. Oi ref! Thankfully there was still an allocation online.

We held our press conference with the 1,300 strong attendees and announced the results to beat from the matches that had already taken place in Australasia and Europe. Pitch conditions were also reported from table top and inflatable through to down right boggy.

There was no match fixing but I'm pleased to report that the Distillery boys took the trophy on the day.

As the sun went down on Islay  
I savoured a dram and the pictures coming through from the US and Canada who had close to 800 people attending and thankfully not one touch down.





# Record Attendance

The next morning I looked at the match statistics. Firstly online – the email open rates were impressive but how about the website? Did we make it clear to people where to access all the information they needed? Building off the success of last year, I was pleasantly surprised to see even better results.

**Page views 143,138 – up 26.3% from 2013**

**Pages / Visit 7.56 – up 42.6% from 2013**

**Avg. Visit Duration 11:10 up 129.5% from 2013**

**Bounce Rate 26.50 down 24.4% from 2013**

**%New Visits:46.59%**

**50% Returning Visitor**

**52.20% New Visitor**

**308 new committee registrations online**

And the actual events? **Over 11,500 people attended 120 Ardbeg Day events worldwide!** We'd played a blinder, with over 1,000 more people attending than last year. From market feedback and images it was clear that across the world Ardbeg fans were enjoying a consistent experience, a clear understanding of the brand and it's heritage. Those who didn't had definitely had one or two too many drams.



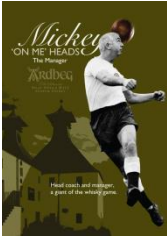


# Memorabilia

With all the media coverage in the lead up to the event it's no surprise that supporters were in high anticipation of the limited edition bottling. With varying distribution some markets had sold out within 48 hours! Keen for a keepsake there was a knock-on effect to overall sales on [www.ardbeg.com/shop](http://www.ardbeg.com/shop), result!

For me... I love reading the post match analysis all of which heaped praise on good turnouts, happy fans and an all round successful tournament. Could we repeat the performance in 4 years time?

Let's just see, for now we take our learnings into training for Ardbeg Day 2015. I do however need to get back to that Sepp Blatter chap who keeps phoning all the time asking for tips.



Sláinte,  
*Mickey Heads*

Mickey 'On Me' Heads  
Committee Chairman and Manager



Ardbeg whisky is enjoying its third year of having a day devoted entirely to itself - and this year it's going for a unique take on the World Cup. This lovely spot is part of a campaign suggesting that there will be peat football tournaments all over the planet on May 31st as an homage to the playing conditions on the boggy fields of Islay, where the whisky is made.

It's imbued with a 1940s sensibility: from the sidebar where our player comes out of his black and white photograph, to the clothes, the spotty dog... all of which contrasts nicely with the Brazilian music that kicks in. (Though we wish they'd been able to afford the music they so obviously wanted!)

The concept's very clever: the reverence in which Scottish single malts are held and the widespread appeal of football aren't often bound together but it works really well here. And why not? The warmth, dottiness and delicious sense of being let in on a secret - however tongue-in-cheek - is irresistible.



Just being 1110 cases (9000 bottles) from what I have gathered it will be released shortly in both Norway and Sweden, but with a Sweden on June 2, and the price is SEK 849 (item number is not known to us yet, but we assume it will be available)

