

Food & Wine



December 2012

The Journal of The International Wine & Food Society Europe & Africa Committee

Free to European & African Region Members - one per address - Issue 113



Vancouver International Festival
Sherry - a renaissance
Beach Life to Mud Life
'A Ladylike Luxury'



CHAIRMAN'S

MESSAGE

Dear Members

I had not expected to write another Chairman's column but the EAC (European & African Committee) meeting that is due to elect my successor does not take place until November 29th and that is far too late to get copy to the Magazine Editor. A message will be placed on the website announcing the name of the incoming Chairman early in December. It has always been EAC policy that its Chairman should also be one of the two EAC appointed members of the International Council. It seems unlikely that this will be achieved this year but we must hope that, in the near future, the two posts will again be combined into one person.

I have been a member of the EAC for ten years now. I was quite happy just attending branch events when the then EAC Chairman, Ian Rushton, visited Blackpool, recognised me from a previous existence (we once worked for the same company), and recruited me to edit the new Food & Wine Magazine. At that stage I did know something about wine (I had even considered joining the wine trade and had sat the Wine & Spirit Educational Trust exams) but my experience of fine dining was somewhat limited, it was nearly an hour's drive from my home to a restaurant in the Good Food Guide. In these ten years I have learned a lot (and put on some weight!) but most of it has been enjoyable. I have, in my turn, talked some members into joining the EAC but we are always looking for new blood and new ideas. If you think you could contribute get in touch.

When, three years ago, I agreed to let my name go forward as Chairman I had correctly calculated the amount of time and money involved. It did mean that my wife chose to delay her retirement to finance some of the overseas trips and as a result of her working I had to travel to about half of my duties alone. I had also not realised the extra time involved in assisting in the organisation of the Merseyside Regional Festival.

My final act as your Chairman will be to attend the Diamond Anniversary of our West Yorkshire Branch on December 8th. Quite a few branches (including my own) were formed by Andre in the 1950s when he was in his 70s. We need to respect that history but there is a constant danger that we spend too much time looking backwards and not enough looking for the new generation who will take the Society forward.

I have always considered that an advantage of the Society is that branches are allowed a lot of freedom on how they organise themselves; and on the type of events that their members wish to attend. Some branches concentrate on Michelin starred restaurants with fine wines whilst others look to their members to do most of the cooking. Some are predominantly food branches (we even have some, admittedly not many, members who are teetotal), whilst some, including my own, run far more wine tastings than we organise meals. Whatever the structure of a normal branch event, it should always be fun; it should always be welcoming to new members and whenever possible it should always include an educational element. I do not mean that we should be setting tests based on the Wine & Spirit Educational Trust lectures and Jancis Robinson's superb new giant book on the parentage of grapes, but we should always be willing to try new foods and new wines. When Blackpool Branch was formed in 1952, the inaugural dinner contained food not normally available in Lancashire at that time, we drank only European wines and it took the likes of John Avery MW to introduce us the pleasures of the Southern Hemisphere.

Our newest branch, Liverpool, has already tried matching wines in three different ethnic restaurants (Chinese, Indian and Thai) and they must be doing something right because they have already recruited over 40 new members. I would also urge Branches to make contact with local catering colleges. Organising meals in these places gives the students an opportunity of practising on real customers and they often allow the Society to bring in our own wines (which usually means better wines) and the whole experience can be both enjoyable, educational and less expensive to normal restaurant meals.

People keep asking me what I will do when I hand over the Chair and the seat on Council. It will be a relief to open my email inbox and not find it full of IW&FS messages. My wife, Val, finally retires early next year and I look forward to fighting her for possession of the home office and the kitchen. We will be able to spend more time with my 97 year old mother, travelling at home and abroad and being grandparents. I still have some public duties and am a trustee of a local charity. I have developed a taste for well organised events and would hope to continue to attend IW&FS Festivals, Weekends and Awaydays but without the constant danger of being asked to say a few words. I may even find time to annoy my dietician and reduce, by consumption, the size of my cellar.

I have enjoyed the last three years but it is time to hand over the baton.

Ron Barker



Food & Wine

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the Editor



Our Chefs of the Future

Editorial

The nights are drawing in and the days getting colder. There is only one saving grace, in my opinion, to this time of year, the extension to our cooking repertoire. Game is on the menu. I came home from our farmers market last week with five pheasants, six partridge, a saddle of venison and a wild duck. I don't often try wild duck as I find they can be one of the most variable of our game birds but this one was plump, with a good covering of fat and, after thirty minutes in a very hot oven, proved to be as good as it looked. Served with crunchy red cabbage and a smooth celeriac puree and accompanied by a Château La Tonnelle 1981, it was a great combination. Talking of old wines, our latest monograph by our new Honorary President Sid Cross is, "An Appreciation of the Age of Wine". So often these days wine is drunk much too young. I advised a young trainee sommelier recently that every time she buys a bottle of wine, buy two and put one away for a while, even after a year or two often the difference will be remarkable and it provides an invaluable learning curve.

Tomorrow, Sunday roast will be pink and juicy saddle of venison. I have eaten venison recently in one and two star Michelin restaurants and on each occasions the venison had not been properly hung. As a friend remarked at the time, 'it is alright but it is not unctuous'. What a lovely description of a piece meat that has been hung until it is slightly liverish and melts in the mouth. Marco Pierre White's head chef once showed me his game hanging and explained how wonderful it is to be able to show his young chefs how to age their game to the peak of perfection. He commented how sad it is today that few chefs have the opportunity to experience fur or feather from kill to table. Frequently they know how to cook game but little else.

In the interests of 'science' I have just become the proud owner of a sou vide machine. The chef at a very good local restaurant was telling me that he uses a water bath for most of his meats and the results are amazing. A steak cooked at 56° for ten hours can then be seared on the outside and comes to the table pink and juicy. I have eaten sou vide pheasant breasts that were particularly moist and succulent so I will be experimenting. Obviously the method is a godsend to a busy restaurant as all their prep can be done ahead of time and just reheated when ordered. On the subject of busy restaurants, have you noticed how often these days you can order identical dishes at different establishments? The Food Service industry is booming. It is not easy to find a restaurant that does not use precooked partially prepared dishes on part of its menu. Ready made desserts are particularly popular with small establishments that cannot afford to employ a pastry chef. You only have to look at some photos in this magazine to see dishes that you can find in a Food Service Company catalogue. Millions of pounds are being invested in research and development by highly trained chefs and some of the dishes produced in their 'top quality' range are very good indeed, to which your chairman will testify.

We feature, on the back cover, some of the aspiring young chefs at Herefordshire College of Technology creating a dish for Alan Harrison's 'Swansong'. Getting our young students involved with the Society should be an intrinsic part of our remit, they are the chefs of the future and should be encouraged whenever possible. If you have a catering college, with a restaurant, near you, try it out, get them involved. They are our seed corn.

With the festive season in mind our very own Julian Jeffs gives some recommendations on buying sherry. We also feature an enterprising young man who is rearing wild boar in the heart of Wiltshire and producing some prize winning salamis' and we look at that traditional Christmas favourite, mince pies. Our new contributor 'Grumpy Old Gourmet' I feel will probably set some hackles rising, he might even stimulate some 'letters to the editor'!

There are reports from the magnificent Vancouver festival and the EAC visit to a rather soggy New Forest. We have, once again some fascinating branch reports with lots of descriptions of the food and wines tasted. I still get a few reports with 'we drank this and we ate that'. Please remember it's the descriptions of the fare and some comments thereon, accompanied by plenty of colourful, action photos that make your Food & Wine magazine interesting and vibrant.

Seasons greetings to you all
Pam Brunning

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CONTRIBUTORS



Julian Jeffs has had a long and distinguished association with the Society. His father was chairman of the Birmingham branch. Julian was a member and deputy chairman of the Society's management committee from 1965-67 and again from 1971-82. He is a past chairman of the Berkshire branch and is now its president. He edited the society's magazine Wine & Food from 1965-67.

Most of his life has been taken up as a practising barrister. Q.C 1975, bencher of Gray's Inn 1981, a Recorder of the Crown Court 1975-96, Deputy High Court Judge (Chancery Division) 1981-96. He retired from practice 1991. He was General Editor Faber's Wine Series 1985-2002. He is a member of the Gran Orden de Caballeros del Vino. Lauréat de l'Office International de la Vigne et du Vin, 1962 and 2001. Appointed Encomienda, Orden de Isabel la Católica 2004. His wine books are: Sherry 1961 (5th edition 2004), The Wines of Europe 1971, Little Dictionary of Drink 1973, The Wines of Spain 1999 (2nd edition 2006).



Simon Gaskell lived on a farm as a child and pigs were his favourite animals. He studied agriculture at Royal Agricultural College Cirencester but later moved to Western Australia with his wife Louisa. The pull of the UK, family and friends brought them back to England and Simon decided to set up an innovative venture and challenge the Continentals, wild boar farming. Their venture was not without setbacks but today six years on their charcuterie products are exported worldwide and are winning many prizes.



David Chapman joined the International Wine & Food Society (Manchester Branch) in late 1986 when he found that I had time to spare for evenings out. He has been a member of the Branch Committee for more years than I can recall and has twice served as Chairman of that Committee. He recently served a second two years vacating the chair in January 2012.

He has also been a member of the Manchester Wine Society, a wine tasting group, since it was founded in the 1970s. In 1993 he became a member of the Commanderie de Bordeaux à Manchester and is also a member of L'Ordre des Coteaux de Champagne. David has joined the EAC this year.



Ian Nicol developed an interest in wine and regional food whilst travelling on business to many corners of the world. Together with his wife Chris he joined a number of wine clubs and undertook several wine tours before joining the IWFS Blackpool and Fylde branch in 2009. Having family in Australia has enabled him to attend regional festivals and branch events en route, as well as making many friends in various countries. He attended the Vancouver Festival this September and considered it a great success. Having a keen interest in the objectives of the Society Ian was also welcomed on to the EAC this year.

A Message from our New Society Chair, Yvonne Wallis



Dear Members

Prior to the start of the Vancouver festival, the IWFS Council of Management held its last meeting for 2012. The date was 9th September – **my father's 80th birthday**. He understood why I could not be with him in Australia; we would celebrate his birthday on my return. It was an honour and a privilege to be appointed Chair of the International Council of Management that very day in Vancouver.

What a tremendous festival - can the bar be set any higher? Congratulations to Co-Chairs Dave Felton and Jim Robertson, and *to all who helped to organise the Vancouver event*. *The next international festival is scheduled for my own home town, Melbourne, Australia, November 10-14 2015*. It has much to live up to but we will be putting in a big effort to make sure you are not disappointed.

Vancouver provided the opportunity to spend some time with the newly announced BGA Council members Dave Felton, Bob Gutenstein and Andrew Jones. Together with EAC Council members Ron Barker and Shirley Kilian, we have a great team.

As your incoming Council Chair I'd like to tell you a little more about myself. Born in Perth, Australia, I undertook my post graduate studies at the University of Western Australia, completing my Master of Commerce in Marketing. I lectured in Marketing at UWA for six years before heading to Melbourne and becoming a marketing practitioner, working predominantly with large corporates and federal government, and ultimately setting up my own marketing business. I later took on the role of National President of my industry in Australia.

My passion for wine and food developed over this time and has resulted in a rather large (probably too large) home cellar, showing my love of Burgundy and

grower-producer Champagne, but there are few wine areas not represented in my cellar. I have led a Burgundy Tasting group for many years and seem to have passed my love of wine and food on to my staff who invariably now consider themselves as 'wine experts' and 'serious foodies'.

I am the immediate Past President of the Victoria (Australia) branch which celebrated its 75th anniversary last year – a large and growing branch, now with some 80 members. I am also the current Chair of the Asia-Pacific Zone. This has been fun with lots of travelling and the opportunity to oversee the formation of five new branches (in China, Western Australia and South Korea) in the last two years. APZ is the smallest zone but is growing fast. I have also been a regular attendee at IWFS festivals worldwide giving me the opportunity to meet many of you (last year in Zurich, the Mediterranean and Singapore, the previous year in Liverpool, the Caribbean and Sydney). I am delighted that IWFS is now offering more festivals to members worldwide and hope to encourage this further.

Our new Council of Management team has decided to meet more often and this will be a good thing, with three formal meetings scheduled for 2013, one in each zone (**New York in February prior to the BGA's Miami adventure, Kuala Lumpur in June prior to APZ's KL Festival and London in November coinciding with the Society's AGM and its 80th Birthday celebration** to be hosted by EAC). It looks like being a busy year and I look forward to the opportunity of meeting more of our members at these festivals.

Council's agenda for 2013 is rather large. We must address issues including the Intellectual Property Protection of our name and logo. The Vintage Card, which is one of our most significant assets, will be upgraded to include more areas within North America, Australia and New Zealand. We are planning an addition to our fabulous website to include Travel Tips by area (restaurant recommendations and places to visit). The option of freshening up the public pages of our website will also be investigated along with the possible use of social media. We will continue to look at ways of growing our membership and branches and to encourage more youth to join the Society. We have also decided it is time to create a short quarterly (electronic) newsletter for all members worldwide to keep you up to date with what is happening across the entire Society. We have recently released an excellent new Monograph – *An Appreciation of the Age of Wine* – by our own incoming President Sid Cross. We will need to focus on marketing this and identifying the potential for future monographs. Happily, our financial position is in good shape and we must keep it that way. Of course to help us keep our agenda on track, we have our previously established Strategic Plan for reference.

In closing, I would like to offer a warm welcome to our incoming Honorary President, Sid Cross. From Vancouver, Sid is extremely well equipped to represent the Society and I am confident that he will be a great champion for us. Sid replaces John Avery who sadly passed away in March 2012. I am pleased they were friends.

I look forward to the challenges of the next two years and to meeting more of you in my travels.

Warmest wishes to you all.

Yvonne Wallis

Chair – IWFS Council of Management

Dear Members

Autumn at the IS is a busy time focussing on the Council meeting and AGM. Both were held in September just before the opening of the IWFS International Festival in Vancouver. There were some changes to Council members and new appointments. Yvonne Wallis (APZ) was appointed as the new IWFS Chairman, (see page 5) taking over from Alec Murray (BGA). Dave Felton and Andrew Jones took seats on the International Council replacing their BGA counterparts Alec Murray and Jim Paras. In addition Council appointed Sid Cross as the new Honorary President. Sid's appointment as our Honorary President is most appropriate as he has been so very generous of his time and wine knowledge to the Society since he first became a member over 40 years ago.

Sid Cross also kindly agreed to be the leading author of our latest monograph "An Appreciation of the Age of Wine" which was published in September. The fascinating topic of this monograph, combined with Sid's impeccable recording of the many, many tastings he has attended worldwide, during the 70s and 80s, provides a most interesting read particularly for IWFS members. A number of the tastings he recalls were IWFS events which you may well have been at too. If so, be prepared to be transported back to the event and to the wines you tasted. If not, you could know some of the wines and people mentioned within his diary of some most amazing tastings and which gives an insight, least we forget, that appreciating wines as they age is one of life's finest pleasures.

For this issue I am also continuing to feature some of our wine consultants who provide us with invaluable assessments for our Vintage Card each year along with a tasting note from a recent gem they have tasted. Interestingly cheese features as a food of choice to match to the wines – a white wine and a vintage port. Read on to find out more....

Alex Sokol Blosser - Oregon

Alex Sokol Blosser, son of Sokol Blosser's founders, Susan Sokol Blosser and Bill Blosser, grew up working in the family vineyards and winery. After starting college in Texas, he realized his heart lay back on the family farm, so he returned to Oregon to finish his college degree and acquire more wine industry experience.

Now a Co-President with his sister Alison, Alex actively participates in the Oregon wine industry, including spearheading the project to develop six new American Viticultural Areas in the northern Willamette Valley in 2002. Alex currently serves on the board of the Willamette Valley Wineries Association.

Recently I opened a bottle of 2011 White Riesling from Trefethen Winery in Napa Valley, Oak Knoll District. It was given to me by a friend who works at the winery there and I was waiting for a warmer night to pop the cork and try a cool climate varietal made in a hot climate. Wow! It was quite nice and I think the 2011 vintage really helped them make a Riesling that kept the acidity as it was so cool. I had a cheese plate with some local Tillamook Pepper Jack cheese and some Briar Rose Creamery Goat Cheese. It paired quite well. What would be ideal would be to have an order of the amazing spicy chicken hot wings from Pok Pok in Portland, OR.



Richard Mayson – Port and Portugal

Richard is one of the most respected authorities on Port, Sherry and Madeira and the wines of Spain and Portugal.

He specialises in the wines of Iberia (especially fortified wines) and has written four books on wine including The Wines and Vineyards of Portugal (winner of the André Simon Award 2003) and Port and the Douro, both published by Mitchell Beazley. He writes regularly for The World of Fine Wine and Decanter magazine, chairing the Port and Madeira panels in the Decanter World Wine Awards. Richard is currently writing a guide to the wines of Madeira to be published in Portugal by Chaves Ferreira and preparing a third edition of Port and the Douro.

Richard owns a vineyard near Portalegre in the Alto Alentejo region of Portugal where he is producing three red wines named Pedra Basta, Duas Pedras and Pedra e Alma. He is a Cavaleiro of the Confraria do Vinho do Porto.

Recently tasted - Dow 1970 - Very deep in colour; restrained, demure on the nose with underlying intensity; lovely firm tight knit fruit with a drier edge in the Dow style, bitter-sweet, dark chocolate character, very Dow and very good. Still with amazing vitality for a wine in its 42nd year. Drink and enjoy now by all means but this will open up with age and will last a lifetime. The wine needs nothing to accompany it. It stands up on its own but at a push I would have a slice of Hawe's Wensleydale cheese.



**Kind regards to all
Andrea Warren**

EAC Events - 2013

Events organised by the EAC are a great way of meeting people from other branches and are proving to be increasingly successful and well attended. We look forward to seeing you at some of the events we are organising in 2013.

5th June 2013 - A Wine Tasting and River Cruise at Bath.

Building upon the success of previous river boat day time wine tastings we have provisionally arranged for a boat trip on the River Avon in Bath with a specialist boat company called Penny Lane. They will provide the boat and a buffet lunch, and Avery's will host a tutored tasting of New World wines. We hope to keep the cost to about £55 per head, but this is very dependent upon final numbers. It will be a great help if those who are interested could email me by the 31 December 2012. If there is sufficient support we will formulate detailed plans and make suggestions for overnight accommodation for those who might wish to stay in Bath for one or two nights. Bath is easily accessible by train from many parts of the UK and the event will be timed to make a day trip possible

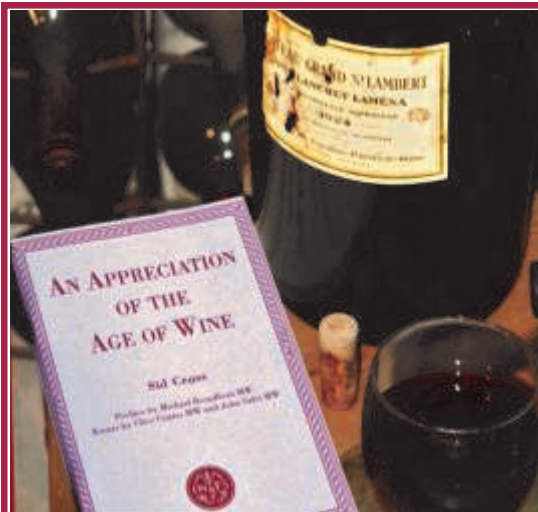
8 – 11 October 2013 - A Midweek "Great Weekend" in North Norfolk.

The New Forest visit in October 2012 proved to be very popular and next year we propose a similar visit to North Norfolk, based in the Blakeney Hotel. On the first night there will be a tutored wine tasting followed by dinner in the hotel. On Wednesday morning we will enjoy a tour of Sandringham before the house is open to the public. We will then lunch at the Titchwell Manor Hotel, which has been highly praised in the National Press of late. In the evening there will be a Gala Dinner at Morston Hall, Galton & Tracy Blackiston's highly acclaimed Michelin star restaurant. For those who wish to stay for a third night, there will be an opportunity on Thursday to undertake a tour taking in a variety of venues in North Norfolk, including a cheese producer, cider producer and the Norfolk Food and Drink Festival which will be running at the time. Costing the whole trip with precision at this stage is very difficult, but my best estimate for a three night stay is £550 p/p inclusive of service and VAT, all main meals, wines and coach transport, and around £440 for a two night stay. Once again it will be helpful to have an indication of the level of support. Please email me if you would be interested in participating in this North Norfolk adventure.

12 November 2013 - Dinner at Vintners Hall, the City of London

The dinner arranged at Waterman's Hall in November 2011 was fully subscribed and we propose holding another very special dinner in the City, this time in the splendid surroundings of the Vintners' Hall. The International Council of the IW&FS meet that day and will be attending the dinner. It coincides with the 80th anniversary year of the Society and in honour of our late President we will be inviting members of the Avery Family. Full details and an invitation to apply for tickets will be dealt with in the next edition of Food and Wine.

Michael Messent, Events Co-ordinator e mail: Michael.Messent@btinternet.com.



"An Appreciation of the Age of Wine" by Sid Cross

This fascinating Monograph also contains essays by Michael Broadbent MW, John Salvi MW who takes you through a technical journey of - "Making Red Wine to Age" and Clive Coates MW who gives a personal viewpoint on "How Fine Wine has Changed since 1980"

Members may view the monograph by logging on to the members only pages of the IWFS website following tabs:

[www.iwfs.org/secretariat/for members/monographs for members](http://www.iwfs.org/secretariat/for%20members/monographs%20for%20members).

If you prefer to read it at you leisure, copies can be purchased from the EAC Membership Secretary at a cost of £5 per copy inc postage and packing.

To order contact Katie Wilkins on Tel +44 (0) 191 239 9630

email: eacmembership@talktalk.net

There are discounts available on orders over 5 copies

John Speller - 1932 - 2013

John Speller, who died recently, was a long standing member of the Society, and of the London Branch.

He left Selhurst Grammar School in 1950 and, after National Service, joined a Lloyd's insurance broker. In 1967 he moved to another Lloyd's broker with whom he stayed until retiring to set-up his own consultancy early in 1990. This early retirement followed shortly after his appointment as Chairman of the 1993 Diamond Jubilee Festival in London - reflecting, as ever, John's drive to excel in his commitments. Following a most successful Festival, John continued to act as the Society's insurance broker, outside of North America, until the early 2000's.

John used to say that he had no hobbies – but many passions. One was his love of Classical music, while another was of travel, no doubt resulting from his wide experience whilst working. He became fascinated by photography, and was also extremely knowledgeable about wine having set up his own wine business in 1994, specialising in wines from Austria.

John ran many fascinating events for the London Branch. I remember one event in particular in which he showed some of his favourite Austrian wines, and this introduced me to the blaufrankisch grape, a lovely peppery grape. In my ignorance I had never tasted, or even heard of, it before but it's been a firm favourite every since. I now buy it regularly and always toast John when the bottles are opened.

I last met him at the Watermen's Hall dinner last year. Though I knew he had been unwell some years before, he looked well and was as friendly and charming as ever. So I was shocked to hear of his death - he was a lovely man who will be sadly missed by his family and by all of us who knew him.

Without doubt John was a real gentleman, a courteous and knowledgeable person in a wide variety of subjects including that of good wine.

Katie Wilkins (with thanks to John Valentine)



Annual Branch Representatives Meeting 2012

On 17th October 2012 thirty nine members of the European and African Region of the Society met in Beaulieu for their annual meeting. Thirteen branches had sent representatives and a further four sent apologies. In this democratic organisation over half the branches were not represented. Ron Barker, retiring EAC Chairman and Member of the Society's Council of Management reported that the Society had its first ever female Chair of Council, Yvonne Wallis from Australia. As a result of the sad death of our Honorary President John Avery MW, earlier in the year Council had invited Sid Cross, a Canadian and previous Chair of the Wines Committee, to become the Honorary President and he had graciously accepted. Council expect that he will contribute articles on wine to the Society Website and to the three Zone Magazines as well as making appearances at Society meetings around the world.

Although there had been successful Festivals and Great Weekends within the Region and the majority of Branches were still operating well, the total number of members within the zone were gradually declining mainly because the membership is ageing and insufficient work was going into recruiting new and younger members. One great success was the new Branch in Liverpool which was granted a charter in July and already had recruited 38 new members who wish for mainly evening events in central Liverpool. This had not had an adverse effect on the Merseyside branch which is still recruiting new members.

It was disappointing that not more progress had been made with implementing the Strategic Plan. Certain parts like the new Website were now in place and this will be further developed by bringing the renewal of membership details onto the system. There will also be a travel planner to help members travelling away from their home base with advice on restaurants and other facilities. This move towards greater technology is necessary to keep up to date with the aspirations of younger potential members. However the EAC recognise that some branches do not wish to move into this new world, so the EAC will provide whatever help is required to ensure that these branches can cope and that their membership renewals are processed.

As a direct result of economies at the International Secretariat a greater proportion of membership subscriptions will be available to the Zone Committees to assist in technology and aid recruitment. This year £19,000 had been allocated by Council to return to the EAC. There will be additional but smaller refunds in future years.

Treasurer Jim Muir presented the accounts for the year 2011 which included the surplus resulting from the Merseyside Festival. At the beginning of 2012 the bank balance was £55,360

Event Co-ordinator Michael Messent gave a resume of future events (see page 7) and announced that the next EAC Regional Festival will be in 2014 possibly in Greece. He thanked his wife, Marilyn for her positive encouragement and assistance.

Chairman Ron Barker announced that he, together with Chris Bonsall and John Valentine (Both previous Chairmen of the EAC) would not be putting their names forward for re-election to the EAC but all three would be available to their successors for help and advice. Michael Messent (Wessex); Jim Muir (Herefordshire & Monmouthshire); Christine Redman (Manchester) and Katie Wilkins (Northern Dales), had all come to the end of their elected membership period but were offering themselves for re-election. David Chapman (Manchester); Ian Nicol (Blackpool & Fylde Coast) and Stephanie Shepherd (London) had all been duly nominated and seconded and were available for election. There being the same number of candidates as there were vacancies they were all elected.

The new Chairman of the EAC will be elected by the EAC at their meeting on 29th November.

The Chairman stated that the EAC were still seeking new talent and had the facility to co-opt prospective candidates onto the EAC as a mutual trial period. If anyone was interested they should contact him - ronbarker@hotmail.co.uk

The Chairman announced that a new monograph titled "An Appreciation of the Age of Wine" written by the new Honorary President with supporting articles by Michael Broadbent MW, Clive Coates MW and John Salvi MW had been placed on the "Members Only" section of the website together with the text of the 2013 Andre Simon lecture and a reprint of Andre's booklet "Partners; a guide to the game of Wine & Food Match-Making". Members can download and print copies free of charge. Two printed copies of the new monograph will be sent to each EAC branch and members can purchase printed copies at £5 including postage and packing from Katie Wilkins, the membership secretary.

At the end of the meeting John Valentine gave a 'live' demonstration of the new renewals procedures, showing members how easy it is for them, through the website, to log into the Society database and update their own records.

Editor



An Extended EAC Awayday in the New Forest

By Ron Barker

In the middle of October 60 members representing 10 different branches met for what was advertised as an Extended Awayday. EAC Event Co-ordinator, Michael Messent together with Treasurer Jim Muir put together a series of events that allowed members to either join individual meals or participate in the whole experience. The objective was to use as many local ingredients as possible and, in view of the season, to enjoy English game.

Our base was the Montague Arms Hotel in Beaulieu, an ancient but comfortable hotel with an alarming lack of lifts. You could get fit walking to the restaurant! Many members had problems reaching the hotel because the road leading over the tidal Beaulieu River was flooded to a depth of 2 feet giving a choice between an 8 mile detour or risking the distinct possibility of breaking down in the middle, a blessing for 4 wheel drives and high wheelbases.

The main black-tie dinner started with a reception in the lounge where a Sparkling Onbrino Pinot Grigio was served. In the main dining room we were treated to a Michelin starred meal starting with a superb Pithivier of Guinea Fowl and mushrooms. This was served with a Mandarossa Pinot Grigio. The main course of Saddle of Hampshire Venison received mixed reviews; mine was excellent. It was served with a Monroc; a blend of Carignan and Merlot. The dessert was Passion fruit Cheesecake although some opted for a fresh fruit salad.

The wines did not match up to the quality of the cooking. Glasses were topped up frequently and even though I know events have to work to a budget, I wonder whether we should have sacrificed some quantity for an increase in quality.

The next morning, after a late breakfast 33 souls climbed onto a coach for a commentated trip through the Forest towards a local cider maker. We were able to observe the ponies, cattle and donkeys that in New Forest Law have precedent on the roads over cars and coaches. Michael was able to advise us on the ancient laws and special courts that grant foresters rights but then control their actions with threats of dire consequences.

The owner of New Forest Cider, Barry Topp, has an extremely successful stall in London's Borough Market. He wanted us to see the local cider making process although some of his cider apples came from Wiltshire and Somerset. There was a long wait while a tractor moved apples up the hill and during which I assume the owner hoped that we would drift into the farm shop and buy his produce but most members chose to admire the farm's ducks, geese and guinea fowl. We were then marched to the top of the hill and through a field in which a large black bull protected his herd of cows. We eventually reached the cider press and over the noise of the machinery had the various processors explained. The initial storage and cleaning appeared to have some hygiene issues but the subsequent fermentation, which changes the sugars into alcohol, also eliminates any problems. He produces still draft cider, some bottled under pressure and some high end "champagne" style where there is a secondary fermentation in the bottle. ➡





The Jetty



After the questions ran out we retreated past the bull, down the hill, via the shop and café, onto the coach to head to the coast where we were to have a light lunch at The Jetty in Christchurch, a splendid glass sided building with views over the sea. Because there was to be another dinner that evening members could choose to have a starter and main course or a main course and desert. In the interests of providing a full report I opted to try three courses. But before the first course we were treated to an amuse bouch of honey and parsnip soup. For each proper course there was a choice of two items. Normally when my wife and I eat out and there are choices we deliberately choose separate things so that we can sample each other's plate (and yes it can make choosing wine difficult) but on this occasion we had heard so many good reports about the twice baked cheese soufflé that we both ignored the crab dish. The reports underestimated the quality of the soufflé, it was superb. Between us we then enjoyed both the plaice fillets and the bream and I then let her sample my chocolate desert. In my opinion it was simpler and more enjoyable than the

Michelin starred meal the previous evening. Only one wine was served a Chilean Sauvignon Blanc that not only went well with both soufflé and fish, but was also better quality than those served at the Montague Arms.

We were then transported back to Beaulieu by a different route allowing us to see more of the Coast and Forest. We had time for a rest, some retail therapy before 36 of us boarded a different coach to travel to dinner at Terra Vina. The owner, Gerard Basset O.B.E. had once been a sommelier and had been a partner in the successful Hotel de Vin group so I had high hopes that the wines served would exceed those previously sampled. I was not disappointed, but I was surprised that the meal itself surpassed both lunch and the previous evening.

The reception aperitif was a Gros Manseng from the Côtes de Gascogne. I was extremely impressed by the quality of the bread; one of my benchmarks in judging a good restaurant. The first course was of Rosary Goats cheese, salt baked beetroot, blackberriesomegranate and crumbled biscotti was served on a black slate; it looked and tasted magnificent. It was accompanied by a Uruguayan Viognier, made by Bodegones del sur with fruit from their Juanico vineyard. The main course was a very tender fillet of local pork wrapped in pancetta, served with pak choi, smoked bacon and mashed potato. It was paired with an unusual grape variety, Lagrein, which was made by Cantina Tramin in the Sudtirol-Alto Adige area of Northern Italy. The pudding was made from local autumn berries and served with Chantilly cream. At last we got a dessert wine, a 2006 late harvest Zinfandel from the Perli Vineyard of California.

The meal and wine were enhanced by a young sommelier Laura Rhys (who has previously won Sommelier of the Year) commenting on each wine as it was served. In this way we can honestly add the educational element to our events. The wines were unusual but of a high standard. There was little doubt that the first three were perfectly chosen to accompany the food. The dessert wine caused more debate but this is to be encouraged, and Laura was happy to wander around the members discussing the provenance and compatibility of the wines.

The concept of Awaydays was introduced to provide an opportunity for members from different branches to meet together without the expense involved in International and Regional Festivals. This one in the new Forest was a great success. Each year they sell out quicker. Do not miss out next year.

Terra Vina



Laura Rhys



VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 2012 - a résumé by David Chapman Manchester Branch Member

TUESDAY

Arrival in Vancouver on the afternoon of registration was a joy. Blue skies overhead, a superb hotel and great views over the harbour and the mountains. Registration itself was very efficiently achieved and was accompanied by a light buffet ensemble of delicious nibbles with some wine and/or soft drinks. At the evening reception before dinner we were challenged (as were all the members) by 2 persons dressed as RCMP officers (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) who investigated who we were and where we were from before posing for a picture alongside each new arrival. After a welcoming address by the chairman of the organising committee, we were treated to a choral rendition of a series of traditional folk songs each from a different province of Canada by a group of members from Canadian branches. With a sparkling wine from the Okanagan Valley (2005 Sumac Ridge Pinnacle) there were lovely canapés e.g. house-cured wild salmon crostini with divine caviar and preserved lemon mascarpone, Vancouver Island oysters and chicken, chorizo and sweet potato croquette with a smoked paprika rouille.

Dinner was akin to a tapas evening. There were four cooking stations located evenly round the edge of the banqueting suite. Each one managed by an Executive Chef from the four Fairmont 5 star hotels located in Vancouver and each serving three or four different dishes in tapas sized portions. Alongside were sommeliers serving modest amounts of complimentary wines from South Africa, France, Australia and the USA. The 210 diners were encouraged to take from all stations and (as they did) to return for "seconds" or even "thirds" of their favourites. One particularly memorable dish was a milk poached smoked sablefish (with mustard and lardon sautéed savoy cabbage and apples) served with a 2010 Guigal Condrieu "La Doriane" - a very happy marriage. For meat lovers the liquorice glazed pork belly (right) with 2007 Domaine Serene Pinot Noir from the Willamette Valley, Oregon was a delightful combination. There was temptation itself in the form of a range of desserts washed down with 2007 Ch. Guiraud, Sauternes A.C. There were 9 dinner wines in all including examples (other than those mentioned) of Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay (2), Bordeaux blend (Graves), Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon.

WEDNESDAY

Mid- morning shuttle buses took us down the harbour to a quay to board the M.V Britannia (no, not the one tied up at Leith) where we were greeted with a glass of wine (well it was 11.00 a.m.) and took our seats for a cruise out of the harbour and upstream into the Indian Arm extending northeast off the fiord-like harbour. Lunch was served during the cruise. There was a buffet of various salads

accompanied by either a fish dish or roast sirloin of beef with a choice of several wines. Desserts and/or a selection of cheeses followed.

The cloudless blue sky took members on deck to enjoy the weather and the beautiful scenery. After our three hour cruise many chose to walk back to the hotel along the pedestrian walkway following the edge of the harbour admiring not only the views but also some splendid vessels in the marina.

This physical exercise was certainly useful in preparing an appetite for a gourmet dinner. The party was divided, more or less, into quarters and each quarter went to a different restaurant all of which were among the top culinary establishments in Vancouver. Your correspondent was privileged to join those assigned to "West". Executive Chef, Quang Dang, and his brigade prepared a splendid dinner. We were greeted with canapés of compressed cucumbers infused with elderflower, chicken liver parfait with poached Okanagan cherries and Cape Scott halibut ceviche to enjoy with a glass of N.V. Henriot, Blanc de Blancs Brut, Champagne.

Dinner started with a Nova Scotia lobster salad with summer squash, parsley crumb and chive crème fraîche. The dish was delicious as was the 2007 Tablas Creek "Esprit de Beaucastel" Blanc, Paso Robles (made from Grenache Blanc, Roussanne and Picpoul). This wine comes from the California sibling of the Perrin family of Ch. De Beaucastel in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The next course was Northern ling cod wrapped with local prosciutto served with an onion fondue, poached sungold tomatoes and a thyme broth. The intense flavour of the tomato rather over-shadowed the delicacy of the fish but the dish was nonetheless most enjoyable accompanied, as it was 2009 Meyer Family Vineyards Chardonnay, Okanagan Valley. Following came a Yarrow Meadows Duck Confit, Ravioli with charred peaches, Farmhouse Castle blue cheese and brown butter gastrique. Another delicious dish (but some people's pasta was a little too *al dente*) partnered with a delicious wine, 1998 Charmes-Chambertin, Côte de Nuits, Drouhin. Our main course was gremolata crusted lamb loin with a summer bean ragout, carrots, chanterelles and a black pepper jus. The 2004 Côte-Rôtie A.C., Guigal was a disappointment. Northern Rhône syrah wines are delicious when very young but then go into a closed phase for a number of years before becoming re-born in later life. This vintage was still very closed which accounted for the lack of pleasure it gave. The dessert, a frozen honey custard, apricot-glazed white chocolate cake and almond croquant fought a little on the palate with the 1999 Ch. Suduiraut, Sauternes A.C. and the latter was best enjoyed either before or after the dish.





THURSDAY

After breakfast coaches took us on a City Tour passing through the grid system of streets which is the foundation of the city and crossing bridges over parts of the sea inlets which pass into the city. Bill, our guide, pointed out buildings and areas of particular interest and told us something of the history of Vancouver. We were heading to Richmond, one of the municipalities forming part of greater Vancouver, which has the largest population of Asians after China and Hong Kong. In due course we reached The Jade Seafood Restaurant for a "Dim Sum" lunch. Although the portions were small, it was a quite a challenge to eat all the nine savoury courses before the dessert arrived. Some dishes were delicious such as the three dim sum and the Peking duck but others were a disappointment. In the latter category came the steamed New Zealand Abalone with ginger and green onion. The Abalone was tough and hard to chew. One of the writer's neighbours at table who had Abalone experience opined that they were canned and not up to scratch. One of the other courses included some jellyfish which was tasteless. There was a challenge to decide which, if any, of three wines was best suited to the Chinese cuisine. Some lunchers preferred the straight Poet's Leap Riesling whilst others thought the Joiefarm Noble Blend (a blend of five grapes - riesling, gewurztraminer, pinot blanc, pinot auxerrois and schoenberger) which mimics the Alsace Edelzwicker.

It was "on parade" again at 4.00pm at the splendid Vancouver Convention Centre nearby to the hotel for a Burgundy Tasting. There were ten wines to taste: four whites supplied by Bouchard Père et Fils and six reds by Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé. Each taster was provided in advance with a paper tasting mat with ten circles one for each fine glass to be positioned on. Each circle had the details of the wine printed below it. Each glass had a tasting measure of each wine ready poured. Both whites and reds were at good temperatures. Sid Cross of Vancouver, who had earlier been installed as John Avery's successor as Hon. President and who has an encyclopaedic knowledge of wines the world over, along with Alex Murray (the Immediate Past Chairman of the Society) introduced the Bouchard wines and then Jean-Luc Pépin from the de Vogüé Domaine introduced his wines. Your correspondent particularly enjoyed the 2009 Meursault 1^{er} Cru, Les Genevrières (in magnum) but the 2009 Corton Charlemagne Grand cru and the 2008 Chevalier-Montrachet were not far behind. In truth, because of their youth, it was hard to appraise the latter two because they were so



Jean-Luc Pépin

Sid Cross

closed, it was just that the Meursault was more outgoing. Now turning to the reds, we started with a 2008 Chambolle-Musigny 1^{er} Cru, Les Amoureuses and tasted against it a Bonnes-Mares Grand Cru and a Musigny Grand Cru all of the same vintage - a mini horizontal tasting. Then, starting with the last 2008, we tasted the same wine in the 2006, 2002 and 1999 vintages - a mini vertical tasting. This was a very interesting and successful formula. Again the 2008s were very young and had a long way to go to full maturity but the 2002 and the 1999 were starting to show all their nuances of flavour. I was surprised by and particularly enjoyed the 2002 Musigny - a show of hands at the end demonstrated it was the favourite of most.

Sid Cross then gave the André Simon lecture. His subject was the marriage of wine with food. Starting with notes produced in the early years by our joint founder himself, Sid moved through the years to the present time relating interesting combinations suggested to him by top chefs. He finished by issuing a challenge to members to share their experiences in future about dishes and wines that really do go together.

The programme then called us to eat (again). But wait, this was not a full meal that we were expected to demolish; it was entitled "Hors d'oeuvre". It was a number of tapas-sized portions of different dishes - some hot, some cold - served at various stations in the large assembly area outside the conference hall and overlooking the harbour. Remnants of the tasting wines, as well as other wines, were available to try with the foods. One could eat as much, or as little, as one wanted or, indeed, there was no obligation to eat at all. An early night was an extra blessing!

FRIDAY

This was to be the day of pre-chosen activities of which there were three. A drive by coach up the "Sea to Sky" highway to Whistler, scene of the 2010 Winter Olympics; Grouse Mountain "Adventure" (of which, more later); and "The Best of Downtown Vancouver". I can only speak of the middle one. Leaving the hotel by coach we reached the base station of the cable car after about 30 minutes travelling through Stanley Park and across the historic Lions Gate Bridge and through the Northern Suburbs. Then up-and-away on the cable car to near the top. Exceeding 1,200 m (4,000 feet) in altitude at its peak, it is the site of an alpine ski area in the winter season overlooking Greater Vancouver with four chairlifts facilitating 26 runs. After a walk to the summit I joined the group for the Eco tour and then watched the lumber-jack show.





Lunch was then upon us. Canadian members were pessimistic about the capacity of the restaurant to do much more than a burger and French fries. It was thought there would be a "brought-in" chef but not so. A top meal was served. Starter was Rillettes of Confit of Suckling Pig which was beautifully accompanied by a peach relish. This was followed by a Salmon Tartare with a "micro" green salad and salmon caviar. Then a triumphant Roasted Black Peppercorn Crusted Venison Strip-loin with a fondant potato and some lovely carrots - the accompanying "braised faggot" confused our non-UK friends and was the subject of much discussion at table but was enjoyed. The dessert of caramelised pears was rather over-whelmed by the blue cheese ice-cream but, as a whole, the meal was amongst the best we were served during the Festival. Chef, who was a "proper chef",

had really enjoyed the opportunity to serve a fine-dining experience and wholly succeeded in the performance of his brigade. The wines to accompany our lunch were all much enjoyed. Starting with a CedarCreek Ehrenfelser and then a Lake Breeze Pinot Blanc both from the Okanagan Valley led into a Pepper Bridge Cabernet Sauvignon from Washington State and Osoyoos Larose "Le Grand Vin" also from Okanagan. Finally to France with a 2007 Ch. Guiraud, Sauternes. The other trips enjoyed different menus but the same wines.

Back to the hotel to prepare for our evening event - "A Night at the Aquarium". Coaches took us to the Aquarium in Stanley Park. Our apéritif of NV Blue Mountain Brut Label from the Okanagan Valley was sipped as we wandered through the aquarium's displays of live fish from the world over. Served with it were some lovely canapés such as Seared Albacore Tuna on a Red Pepper Citrus Slaw. We were addressed by the Aquarium Director who explained its commitment to preserving what wildlife the sea holds and asking us to only eat sustainable fish. Then it was outdoors to the large pool to watch a stunning display from two dolphins rescued after injury from the Pacific. Having been called to table we found a salad starter - Heirloom Tomato with locally produced Buffalo Mozzarella and Basil Pesto. The 2010 Ch. Smith-Haut-Lafitte (blanc) struggled to keep up with the intensity of the tomato but was delicious by itself. The Artic Char with a sauce meunière and wild mushrooms was a triumph and went remarkably well with a 2008 Drouhin Chassagne-Montrachet 1^{er} Cru. For main course we were served with a braised rib of local beef with vegetables. Two red wines were served with it - a 2005 Ch. De Beaucastel, Châteauneuf-du-Pape and, as a comparator, 2007 Tablas Creek, Esprit de Beaucastel also made by the Perrin family but this time in Paso Robles in California. Apart from a corked bottle of the former (which was replaced) both were excellent. To finish there was Grilled Okanagan Peach Panna Cotta with a wine for which Canada is famed, an icewine. In particular a 2008 Inniskillin Riesling Icewine from the same valley as the dessert and which had an incredible depth of sweet flavour followed by a dry finish.

SATURDAY

At 10.30 a.m. we assembled in the Vancouver Convention Centre to do battle with an array of some of the very best wines from the Okanagan Valley - nine in all. Each wine was introduced by a representative of the estate and, if one had not been impressed by every local wine served at table, these had some stand-outs. Your correspondent particularly enjoyed the 2009 Township 7 Chardonnay and the 2008 Fox Trot Vineyards Pinot Noir from the Naramata Bench area. This is not to forget the 2006 Burrowing Owl Vineyards Meritage wine - a Bordeaux blend of 50% Merlot, 35% Cabernet Franc and 15 % Cabernet Sauvignon. It is sealed with a new, state of the art closure: the Procork membrane barrier cork, which consists of a natural cork with the ends protected by a sophisticated, multilayer membrane. The purpose of the membrane is to dramatically reduce the incidence of **TCA (aka 'cork taint') in the wine and to add longevity.** Burrowing Owl is the first winery in North America to adopt this new type of closure. The tasting arrangements were identical to those employed for the Burgundy tasting earlier in the week. Lunch was served in the assembly area outside the conference room with great views over the harbour below us. Bearing in mind the risk of food over-load, the organisers had laid on another tapas style buffet with several different cooking stations with hot and cold dishes and complementary wines. Personal highlights included Local Tuna Tataki Cubes with a Wasabi Lime Mayo, Smoked Sablefish, Seared Sturgeon Sliders and Merlot Braised Bison Short Rib Cubes. The desserts all looked great but I confined myself to the Raspberry Hazelnut Financier with a wild-flower honey gelato. Not only were there remnants of the tasting wines offered but also merlot from Washington State, a Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa, a red Graves, a Shiraz and a Viognier both from the Okanagan Valley and which hadn't made it into the tasting.

The Chapmans decided to explore Downtown Vancouver on foot during the afternoon partly to enjoy it and partly to take some exercise before the promised delights of the Gala Dinner at the Fairmont Pacific Rim to close the Festival.

The reception outside the banqueting suite was graced with champagne 2005 Philipponnat Grand Blanc (this was rather too yeasty for my taste - it was not the easiest of vintages) and some more inventive canapés such as a maple mustard and pineapple glazed sliver of pork belly with a piece of fried sage. Dinner started with sautéed Foie Gras served with a miniature Apple Tarte Tatin, some "aged farmhouse cheddar" and a hazelnut tuile. Apart from the very appley element, the dish was happily accompanied by 1999 Ch. Suduiraut, Sauternes. Next came Scallop with Dungeness Crab set on a cauliflower purée with a smoked corn and crab salad. The 2007 Dom. William Fèvre Chablis Grand Cru Bougros was served too cold but, with patience, it gave its best when it warmed up a little. A fish course was composed of Sablefish with a salt cod brandade and a mignonette of melted leek, fennel and chorizo. Magnums of the 2009 Bouchard Meursault 1^{er} Cru served at the Burgundy tasting came up to scratch when, again, the wine had warmed in the glass. The next course was a triumph - quail breast and quail confit ravioli with a saffron purée and some beluga lentils. The 2002 Chambolle-Musigny 1^{er} Cru was, again, a star. For the main course we were served with a tenderloin of Albertan Bison with vegetables and a peppercorn sauce. For some the bison was a little dry but not to the extent of spoiling the dish. The 1999 Tenuta San Guido Sassicaia in magnum from Bolgheri (Tuscany) was very closed and hard to draw out even with some patience and swirling in the glass - probably needed about another ten years. Other tables reported bottle variations. The bison was followed by a selection of local cheeses before a Maple Pear Madeleine Tart (the pastry on this was way too thick) brought the food to a close. We were privileged with the dessert to enjoy another icewine - 2011 Mission Hill Riesling Icewine Grand Reserve - but this seemed to be a little on the dry side lacking somewhat in richness.

The organising committee was justifiably praised to the ceiling for their hard work in achieving such a wonderful festival and awards were well deserved.

More photos can be found at <http://www.iwfs.org/americas/festivals/2012-vancouver>

Post Festival - Okanagan Wine Tour

By Ian Nicol

Blackpool & Fylde Coast Member



Early morning Sunday, after the Final Saturday Gala Dinner, 10 Festival goers from Ontario, USA, UK, and Philipines set off east out of Vancouver along the Fraser River on a 250 mile coach trip to the Okanagan Valley. Led by guides Manfred and Maria the party stopped for coffee at the Blue Moose Café in Hope, featured in the first Rambo Movie, before crossing high mountains and arriving in the Okanagan Valley at West Kelowna. Lunch with wine at Quail's Gate Winery, followed by a wine tasting, kept up the pattern of the previous days in Vancouver. Quail's Gate Reserve Chardonnay proved a hit at the Festival but alas stocks at the winery were sold out. Then on to the second tasting at Mission Hill Winery and a trip through the cellars.

The Okanagan Valley is bounded on both sides by steep mountains, Cascade Mountains to the west and Monashee Mountains to the east which keep out the coastal rains and hence a semi desert climate exists. The large lake which runs for 84 miles along the length of the valley is essential for irrigation in the farmland and vineyards. Although vines have been cultivated in the area for over 100 years more recently its potential has been recognized with presently over 100 wineries in operation growing mainly vinifera wine grape varieties but cloned to meet the dry and often sandy conditions of the south, or the cooler topsoil and clay conditions of the north. A good range of white and red wine is produced the west side being cooler than the east and a number of elevated benches provide cooler microclimates and give protection from the autumn frosts which roll down the mountains. The cold weather is utilized for a significant production of icewine, Inniskillin being a dominant and renowned producer featured at the Festival.

Onwards following the lake toward Oliver and the south with splendid views the party finally reached Osoyoos (named after the indigenous Indian tribe). Time for a quick change at the Spirit Ridge Resort and out to Dinner at Burrowing Owl Winery. Well sated with both food and wine the party slept well before returning the following morning to Burrowing Owl for a full Winery tour by the founder and owner Jim Wyse and more tasting, pinot noir and meritage (Bordeaux blend) being a clear favorite here. Jim is a keen believer in hand picking and sorting of the bunches at harvest which shows in the quality.

Jim is also a keen supporter of the project to reintroduce the burrowing owl to the grasslands beside the vineyards making considerable donations from public tastings at the winery. Loss of badgers and large rodents mean loss of burrows for the owls, so artificial (cattle safe) burrows are being formed by volunteers and a captive breeding programme has increased numbers significantly. Interestingly rattlesnakes and the odd hungry bear are other creature hazards in the vineyard.

On to lunch at Miradoro a partnership between Tinhorn Creek and Manuel Ferreira owner of Le Gavroche in Vancouver. Control of yield was often mentioned as the way of getting good quality wines, typically at Tinhorn Creek and especially at La Stella where yields as low as 1 ton per acre were practiced., these being our next 2 tastings, then on to Moon Curser for some excellent reds and blends. 'Dead of Night' being syrah 53%, tannat 47%. This Winery was named after gold smugglers who used trails through the site and cursed the moon for illuminating their presence to the customs men.

We then returned to Spirit Ridge for an NK'Mip wine tasting and dinner where we were entertained with song and dance by an Indian Warrior and the role of the 'so called First Nation people' was explained.

Next day was the return to Vancouver but as we were going through the Similkameen Valley, another excellent wine producing area, there was time for 2 tastings on the way. At Orofino we tasted a Moscato Frizzante, a Pinot Gris, a Riesling, and then a Gamay, a Merlot, and a Syrah followed by a Bordeaux blend which had won Gold at 'The All Canadian Wine Championships', all produced by an ex-teacher turned winemaker. At Clos du Soleil we heard of the quest to become organic, helped by the persistent wind which blows through the valley keeping the vines relatively free of pests and diseases. Here a Pinot Blanc 2011 was impressive and their Bordeaux blends have been winning many accolades. Finally Saturn (a play on Sauterne) was an exceptionally good Sauvignon Blanc dessert wine, late harvested with a touch of botrytis, and although pale, was the equal of many sauternes. A pleasant way to finish off a very enjoyable wine tour.

The BC wine producers have many fine wines, few if any find their way to the UK, and most are sold out by the end of the season anyway, but for visitors to British Columbia a sampling of their wines is a must.

Grumpy Old Gourmet!

My earliest recollection of drinking alcohol was at the age of eleven. When at boarding school my father and uncle came to visit me and it being a sunny day took me to a nearby pub for a lemonade while they ordered pints of bitter. I scrounged a taste of dad's, "why on earth do you drink that ghastly stuff?"

They said your tastes change as you mature, I was not convinced. But as my palate matured I found brown ale was sweeter and more acceptable. I then progressed to a mild and bitter, eventually I could even drink bitter but was never very keen. A lemonade shandy was more acceptable to me on a hot day.

When I married my first wife she was not very interested in the quality of the wine she drank. Usually at functions it was Blue Nun or Black Tower, sufficient to dull the mind to accept the boring conversation. I can remember once her rebelling at a dinner when one of the gentlemen decided. "Lets order a Sauterne, the ladies like it".

When we were entertaining it was our practise to offer our guests a choice of aperitifs. People would often choose a sweet drink such as a sweet sherry or gin and orange. I overheard a guest one day talking of the wine we had served, "oh they like an acid wine". Nothing could be further from the truth. After that we made sure only dry aperitifs were offered and our reputation as wine buffs improved enormously. This is why Champagne is often offered. The French soon learnt that they couldn't sell their highly acidic wines unless they put a bubble in it. At least ninety percent of Champagne is undrinkable when still, if you don't believe me just let a glass go flat and try it. The English wine producer is also learning this lesson, for this reason the number of sparkling English wines is proliferating. The producers in the Loire use a different method to render their often acid wines palatable, they recommend serving them with their local dishes, such as rillettes which coat the palate with grease. This is why cheap acidic wines are so much more acceptable at a barbeques. I had an excellent example recently of the 'bubble syndrome' with two Pinot Grigios, a grape that can produce some lovely wines. Unfortunately these were thin and acidic, the first had been made a little more palatable by the addition of a bubble the second was a two sip wine. The first to taste it, the second to confirm that it really is as bad as it first seemed!



The Evils of Alcohol!



This actually happened.

They dressed the truck up with the guy tied down on the roof.

The driver and passengers put on moose heads.

Then they went down the toll road Interstate, causing 16 accidents.

Yes, they went to jail... Yes, alcohol was involved... Boys will be boys!!



Beach Life to Mud Life

- the joys of wild boar farming
by Simon Gaskell

We were enjoying life living near the beach in Western Australia and then the urge to farm wild boar kicked in. As a child I lived on a farm and pigs were my animal of choice. I went on to study agriculture at Royal Agricultural College Cirencester and so one might think that I was reasonably well qualified to start learning about and farming wild boar. Little did I know....!

In 2005 my wife and I moved back to the UK and encircled 20 acres of woodland with a six foot fence and a very powerful electric fencer. We brought in the water, put up a barn and eventually obtained a dangerous wild animal licence from the council which of course requires no end of protocol. Rather amusingly initially the terms of the licence included requiring two handlers and a collar and leash per dangerous animal if taken from the enclosure. This would have involved a bus load of people accompanying me with the boars to the abattoir! That requirement was amended when it was realised that it had been specifically drafted for the local owner of a different wild animal - a tiger. So after a lot of sweat, blood and paperwork, we took possession of our new charges.

You might well say they are not wild as they are behind a fence but farmed wild boar will always remain unpredictable and unruly as my scars and broken bones over the past seven years lay testament. The first morning I went looking for my sixty odd boar and couldn't find one! An ominous start, they were all sound asleep in the brambles having been up routing around all night.

Our boar, which are of Polish and German origin, live in the woodland foraging for their wares and love fungi, grubs, seeds, apples and acorns, earth worms and beetles. Actually they will eat most things and when my chickens disappear they do tend to look rather guilty. I feed them every day with some locally produced pig nuts of wheat, barley and oats. This helps me lure them into new paddocks and try to keep them friendly which is a never ending job. They regularly attack me or ignore me completely and I am sure it's not the aftershave. Our stud boar Julian (see cover photo) is the worst offender, despite having the top job on the farm he is relentlessly hostile and never misses the opportunity to have a go at me. I am well known down at the local A&E!



Female & young



Kune Kune



Julian

The wild boar live in sounders (family groups) with one boar and around ten sows all year round. The sows tend to farrow once a year (whereas a pig will farrow five times in two years). The boarlets are gorgeous small stripy creatures which emerge after a week or so from their mothers nest. They are very protective mothers and we keep well away and so it is impossible to know how many boarlets there are for some time. If disturbed some sows have been known to eat theirs or other boarlets. The young are weaned at five or six months when they lose their stripes which is when the sows milk will have naturally dried up. In the wild this is also the time that the young would naturally disperse. We keep the young in the barn for a little while enjoying Radio 4 to try to get them used to the human voice before they go back into the woods. When they are mature, at eighteen months old, I have to resort to the pig nuts to lure them into the lorry to get them to the abattoir. It took five days to get my first batch away!

We also have had some traditional Oxford and Sandy Black pigs, and as if 200 odd porcine assortments were not enough, my dear wife gave me a Kune Kune (a placid, friendly natured domestic pig from New Zealand) for my birthday!

We hang the boars for at least ten days before processing to produce a number of different game salamis as well as some free range pork ones. The flavours are immense. The boar take up to three times the length of time pigs do to grow and are very low in saturated fats and cholesterol as well as high in protein, mix this with venison and pheasant and you have a

lean healthier salami, you do not need to eat much of it either as it is so filling. Our wild boar chorizo has an edge with paprika and a hint of chilli - we believe too much hides the quality and taste of the boar meat.

We make the salami here in the West Country the old fashioned way and they air dry for up to six weeks. We also produce a Wild Boar air dried ham which has a cult following. We always have wild boar haunch and loin available. This is very popular at festive occasions as wild boar was the dish of preference before turkey came along. It makes a real change as a Christmas treat. If you are feeling adventurous yet daunted don't worry we do provide recipes.

In the UK, there has been a huge surge of interest in charcuterie with a number of artisan companies producing some serious contenders for pride of place amongst our European competitors. We had a rather lovely anecdote regaled back to us from the chef at The Cinq at the George V in Paris. He reputedly said he could not believe our salami was made by an Engleeshman!

All our charcuterie has been highly awarded and we sell to a mix of trade from local farm shops to exclusive hotels including The Hinds Head, Lucknam Park and Jamie's' Italian. Our highest award was a gold three star in the Great Taste Awards for our Wild Boar with Red Wine, this has proved our best seller but I believe the Game (with boar, venison and pheasant and a dash of port) is up there too, such a complex full rich flavour - (that was my favourite, Ed.) it has even won over my wife who pilfers my stock and stuffs it into a ciabatta roll when no one is looking!

Our charcuterie makes a fantastic gift, packaged in attractive cylinders they can be purchased direct from our website. This allows people to get hold of our latest (and some say best yet...) Wild Boar with Sloe Gin Salami, it proved so popular last year we sold out of this one which as yet has not been available at the shops. This year we have launched our "Boar Bites" a small snack size salami and chorizo which has created a great deal of interest and is selling well as a stocking filler.

The business continues to grow even through these troubled times and although this is in part because we are some of the only people farming these extraordinarily fine, but undoubtedly difficult and sometimes dangerous animals. It is also because their flavour is one from the old days when time, guile and tears went into hunting these beasts for the table. The proof, as they say, is in the eating.

Simon Gaskell - The Real Boar Company

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Sherry - a renaissance

by Julian Jeffs

If anyone had asked a few years ago “Is sherry fashionable?” the answer would have been a resounding ‘No’. Perhaps “My mother keeps some for the vicar”. Nowadays the answer would have to be ‘Yes, it is’. The young lap it down in tapas bars and the cognoscenti at last realise it is a **great wine**. What has happened?

History has a fascinating way of repeating itself, but always with variations. In the 19th century sales peaked in the 1870s and then declined. There were two reasons: competition from bogus sherries and a collapse in quality. Dickens wrote of “Cloudy fluid, served by shabby waiters in vinegar cruets to disconsolate bachelors in second-rate restaurants and miscalled sherry”.

Things started to look up again in the 1920s. Cocktail parties were in vogue and Karl Williams, of Williams & Humbert, invented the sherry party, which caught on. Although interrupted by the Second World War and its aftermath, sales went steadily up and peaked in 1979, then they went into a decline again. No doubt this was partly fashion but it was also history repeating itself. Some of the wines were very poor. Happily things are now very different: sherry is better than it has ever been.

It is grown in Andalusia from Palomino vines in snow-white soil known as *albariza* on downland chalk hills. Elsewhere in Spain the Palomino vine is known as Listan and gives flabby, unattractive white wines, but in Andalusia it reaches an apotheosis thanks to the unique way in which the wine is made. The vineyards are roughly in a triangle with three towns at the corners: Jerez de la Frontera inland and the others on the coast, Sanlúcar de Barrameda at the mouth of the Guadalquivir and El Puerto de Santa María at the mouth of the Guadalete. The name is geographic. In the time when Andalusia was a Roman province one of its principal towns was called Scheres or Seritium, which became Jerez in Spanish and sherry in English. The climates of the three towns are slightly different. Sanlúcar is the coolest and provides the lightest wines: manzanillas. Jerez is hottest and gives sherries of more body. El Puerto comes in between.

Sherry is a remarkably capricious wine. When fermented in cask no two casks are quite the same. Some grow *flor*. Flor means flower but the sherry flor is in no way herbaceous. It is a thin film of endemic yeast that grows on the surface of the wine which is then matured in American oak casks that are not filled up, to leave a volume of air over the wine. The flor completely protects it from oxidation so that vinegar cannot form and subtle changes take place, notably an increase in aldehydes which help to give fino sherries their unique nose. Some grow very little flor. These oxidise and develop in quite a different way, becoming *palo cortados*. This means ‘cut stick’ and was the identification mark used when classifying the wine. These wines used to be very rare but have now become more readily available thanks to control of the fermentation. Finally there are the casks which grow little or no flor and develop as *olorosos*.

The capriciousness of sherry, with no two casks being quite the same, caused headaches for the growers and the *solera system* for maturing the wines was invented. If you have a cask and leave it to mature, then draw some off and replace it with wine of the same class but younger, the young wine takes on the style of the older and you are back where you started. This is done not with a single cask but with many of similar wine. The oldest wine is called the solera (the same word but in a different context) and when wine is drawn off it is replaced by wine drawn from casks of similar wine a bit younger from a stock of wine known as a *criadera* or nursery. Again there are a number of casks which are fed from another criadera of younger wines. These are the scales of the solera and moving the wine from one level of age to another is known as ‘running the scales’. The youngest is topped up with newly fermented wine. A very small amount of sherry is matured as vintage, or *añada*, wine and sold when mature but such wines are rare and expensive.



Pedro Ximénez

As finos mature they grow stronger and the flor dies away. Then there is an oxidative stage of development in which they grow stronger and develop a special aroma, becoming *amontillado*, hence a genuine amontillado cannot be cheap as it is the product of slow, lengthy maturation. The other kinds grow darker and stronger. None has any residual sugar but a trace of glycerine is formed in olorosos which give softness, almost a sensation of sweetness on the palate.

Medium and sweet sherries are made by blending with sweet wines. The finest of these is *Pedro Ximénez*, much of which is grown

in the hills around Montilla and is the only wine that can be brought into the sherry area. It is made from vines of that name, the grapes concentrated by sunlight and made much like port, a little alcohol being added before fermentation so that there is sugar remaining after it is finished. Another is *Moscatel* again made from grapes of the same name and in the same way. Both of these are now available as varietal wines and with age can gain great distinction, particularly Pedro Ximénez which becomes extremely dark and, when very old, has a rather dry aftertaste. If sweetening is required without darkening the wine, as for the lighter cream sherries, *mosto concentrado rectificado* is used: concentrated grape must, much like German *süss reserve*.

At last it is possible to find the approximate age of a sherry from its label. Finos are necessarily young but for the other kinds some are marked with their age: 12 to 15 years old, VOS – *vinum optimum signatum*, or very old sherry – with a minimum age of 20 years, and VORS – *vinum optimum rare signatum*, or very rare old sherry – with a minimum age of 30 years.

One of the great things about sherry is its great variety of styles and flavours, another is its versatility and the third is its remarkable value. Most people think of it as an aperitif and there is none better. It has the sunshine of Andalusia in every glass. Finos are usually served, but complex amontillados, palo cortados and dry olorosos provide superbly orchestrated overtures and in winter they drive the cold out. Sherry is good with food, too, as the tapas bars show. A fino will stand up to vinegary hors d'oeuvres and is brilliant with shellfish. George Saintsbury in his immortal *Notes on a Cellar Book* describes a meal with a different sherry for each course. They will even partner a curry and an old, sweet oloroso is the perfect wine to drink with Stilton cheese. As to value, what other great wine 15 or 20 years old can be bought for £20 a bottle or even less?

To be really enjoyed sherry has to be properly served. Those horrible little thimbles that caterers call sherry glasses are useless. There must be room in the glass for the unique aromas to develop. Sherry copitas are fine and so are ISO glasses while small wine glasses are perfectly good, but all should be filled only about a third of the way up to give a good air space. Finos do not like bottles and are best bought from suppliers with a quick turnover. The supermarkets do well at this. The other varieties last well in bottle and fine sweet wines, if laid down for ten or more years eat up their sugar and develop to produce that delectable drink, old bottled sherry. They should be cellared standing upright as sherry attacks corks. Finos are best served cold – but not frozen stiff – while the others are best at cellar temperature, but never warm.

Finally, although sherry is the best value for money of all the great wines, you still get what you pay for. A little extra money will buy a far finer wine and, for my part, I would far rather have one glass of a fine wine than three glasses of the cheapest. ★

Sherry barrel with transparent front showing the natural development of flor



©El Pantera

A Craving for White Gold.

By Pam Brunning



SUGAR, did you know there are approximately 9.3 teaspoons of it in a 375 ml can of Cola?

No please don't stop reading; I am not going to give you a nutty lecture on the evils of 'white gold', just a few statistics of which you are probably unaware. In a recent issue of Nature the UN Secretary General recorded that there are now, "... 30% more obese people in the world than undernourished people". In 2011 there were 366 million known diabetics in the world - more than double than in 1980, that is 5% of the population.

The first sugar was recorded in England in 1100 and its price in London in 1300 was equal to £75 per kilo at today's price. The extraction of juice from the sugar cane plant and the subsequent domestication of the plant in tropical Southeast Asia occurred many thousands of years ago. A firm date is not known but the manufacture of cane sugar granules from the sugar cane juice in India is recorded a little over two thousand years ago.

All of the peoples of ancient times made sweetmeats of honey before they had sugar **but** it was not until the Middle Ages that sweetmeats made with sugar appeared on the tables of the rich. These forerunners of our petit fours were often a mixture of spices and sugar and were taken as a digestive after a meal as an aid to tummy troubles often caused by over eating and frequently bad food.

In *"A History of Food"* by Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat published in 1992, it is explained that, "...guests were in the habit of carrying these sweetmeats to their rooms to be taken at night. They were contained in little comfit-boxes or drageoirs...."

The cultivation and manufacture of cane sugar spread to the medieval Islamic world and by the beginning of the 16th century cane sugar was being grown in the West Indies and tropical parts of the Americas. This was followed by more intensive upscaling of production from the 17th century onward. In the 1700's, the average person consumed about 1.82kgs (4 lbs) of sugar per year. By the 1800's this had increased to about 8.8kgs (18lbs) per year. Annual sugar consumption has increased, in developed countries, from 1.8kgs (3.96lbs) to 54.5 kg (119.9lbs) per head over the past 200 years, it now provides up to one sixth of our daily caloric intake and two thirds of this consumption is via a wide range of factory prepared foods.

Sugar, I can hear you say, I don't consume much sugar. You may not think you do but about 35 years ago the developed world made a radical change in your diet. Due to a massive anti fat campaign in the 1970's the food industry cut back on the amount of fat added to products. We now have 'low-fat' yoghurt, 'low-fat' sauces, 'low-fat' ready meals, low-fat' everything. Doctor Robert Lustig, a pediatric endocrinologist at the University of California explains, "When you take the fat out (of food) it tastes like cardboard. They had to do something. What did they do? They added carbohydrates. Which carbohydrates? High-fructose corn syrup and sucrose." A large proportion of fat was removed from our diet and it was replaced by sugar. Since 1990 the consumption of sugar in the UK has increased by 31%, we now eat 75kg (1.25lbs) per week.

As of 2010, in the United States high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is used nearly exclusively as a sweetener because of its lower cost, while in Europe, sucrose dominates, because EU agricultural policies favor production of sugar beets in Europe proper and sugarcane in the former colonies over the production of corn. HFCS is a refined simple sugar that has been criticized as having a number of detrimental effects on human health, such as promoting diabetes, hyperactivity, hypertension, and a host of other problems. Evidence has been presented to support such claims and it is well known that the human body breaks sucrose down into glucose and fructose before it is absorbed by the intestines. The metabolism of simple sugars is extremely rapid. When you eat or drink a simple carbohydrate or a simple sugar – whether it is a can of cola, a scoop of fat-free ice cream, or even a glass of orange juice – all of the ingested sugar quickly rushes into your bloodstream. You feel a quick rush of energy, your body then promptly reacts to this sudden spike in blood sugar by calling on the pancreas to produce additional insulin to remove the excess sugar from your blood. And for the moment, you have significantly lower blood sugar as a result of the insulin doing its job, resulting in a sense or feeling of needing more fuel, more energy and more calories. As you hit that residual low blood sugar, you begin to crave more of the quick-release, simple sugars, and hence you have just initiated the sugar craving cycle.

There has been a campaign to reduce our sugar intake and year on year we are buying fewer bags of sugar - 'visible sugar' but there is a big increase in 'invisible sugar'. Look at the ingredients in some of your

supermarket purchases. Organic yogurts often contain glucose-fructose syrup, a lot of breads contain sugar and the high sugar content of some breakfast cereals is well known. Nearly all manufactured foods contain a percentage of sugar. Our consumption of higher levels of sugar is a vicious circle as Doctor Robert Lustig explains. A complex chain of events occurs when you **eat fructose but the result is that you develop 'leptine resistance'. Leptine is the hormone produced to tell us when we are full, it is the 'satiety hormone'.** Fructose can turn off this hormone resulting in cravings for more and more food. There is a theory that, in ancient times, when we were hunter gathers **we developed 'leptin resistance' during harvest time so that we gorged as much of the harvest bounty as we could before the lean winter months.**



Today even our fruits are getting sweeter. Food writer Felicity Lawrence recently conducted a survey of new strains of fruit. She found horticulturists are breeding fruits such as strawberries, apples and even grapes with a higher sugar content because this is what the public demands. Many of our foods are getting steadily sweeter.

Dr. David Reuben, author of Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Nutrition says, "... white refined sugar is not a food. It is a pure chemical extracted from plant sources, purer in fact than cocaine, which it resembles in many ways. Its true name is sucrose and its chemical formula is $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$. It has 12 carbon atoms, 22 hydrogen atoms, 11 oxygen atoms, and absolutely nothing else to offer." The chemical formula for cocaine is $C_{17}H_{21}NO_4$. The main difference is that sugar is missing the "N", or nitrogen atom. The word refining means to make "pure" and this is done by a process of extraction or separation. Sugars are refined by taking a natural food, which contains a high percentage of sugar, be it cane or beet, and then removing all elements of that food until only the sugar remains. During the heating, mechanical and chemical processing, all vitamins, minerals, proteins, fats, enzymes and indeed every nutrient is removed until only the sugar remains. During the refining process, 64 food elements are destroyed. All refined sweeteners such as corn syrup, maple syrup, etc., undergo similar destructive processes.

Sugar manufacturers are aggressive in defending their product and have a strong political lobby which allows them to continue selling, what more and more people are now coming to believe is a deadly food item that should be strictly controlled.

Not only are we poisoning our bodies with sugar we are paralyzing our brains. One of the keys to orderly brain function is glutamic acid, and this compound is found in many vegetables. When sugar is consumed, the bacteria in the intestines, which manufacture B vitamin complexes, begin to die. When the B vitamin complex level declines, the glutamic acid which is normally transformed into neural enzymes by the B vitamins is not processed and sleepiness occurs and a decreased ability for short-term memory **function and numerical calculative abilities. Also the removal of B vitamins when foods are "processed"** makes the situation even more tenuous.

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a campaigner for the introduction of a smoking ban, now intends to restrict sales of sugary soft drinks in no larger than 16 ounce cups in city restaurants, movie theatres, stadiums and arenas, administration officials have said. Is this the first steps towards a ban on a drug that is as addictive as cocaine. I doubt it, a small detail in the *Star Report*, the investigation into Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky, describes how Clinton, while with Monica, was interrupted by a phone call from Alfonso Fanjul, a Florida sugar baron complaining about a proposed sugar tax. After Clinton took the call the tax was immediately dropped. So it looks as though white gold is going to be around for a while yet. ★



'A Ladylike Luxury'

The Mince Pie

A look at one of the traditions of Christmas

"Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine, yet let's be merry; we'll have tea and toast; custards for supper, and an endless host of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies, and other such ladylike luxuries"

Percy Bysshe Shelley, English Romantic Poet 1792-1822

According to records the earliest mention of such "ladylike luxuries" was in the 13th century. The mince pie or mincemeat pie was known by several names, including mutton pie, shrid pie and Christmas pie. Cooking and mincing meat was developed as a way of preserving meat without salting or smoking over 500 years ago in England. The pies evolved when, returning from the Middle East, the crusaders brought spices and recipes containing meats with fruits. These newly acquired spices were added, with a spirit, to the chopped (minced) cooked meats which prolonged their life still further. This meat mixture was used to make savoury pies until the dried fruits and sugar were added to the blend and this became the forerunner of the pie fillings we know today. The meat content has declined over the years until only animal fat is included today in the form of suet.

King Henry V of England served a mincemeat pie at his coronation in 1413 and he liked his Christmas fare to include a main-dish pie filled with mincemeat.

A cookbook from the mid 16th century Tudor England, called 'A Proper New Booke of Cokerie', has a recipe for a mincemeat pie that was served as a savoury.

"To make Pyes - Pyes of mutton or beif must be fyne mynced and seasoned with pepper and salte, and a lyttle saffron to colour it, suet or marrow a good quantite, a lyttle vyneger, prunes, greate raysins and dates, take the fattest of the broth of powdered beife, and if you will have past royall, take butter and yolkes of egges and so tempre the flowre to make the paste."

In 1649 Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658), became the self-proclaimed Lord Protector of England. He detested Christmas, a pagan holiday not sanctioned by the Bible, and pronounced it promoted gluttony and drunkenness. His Puritan Council abolished Christmas on December 22, 1657. In London, soldiers were ordered to go round the streets and take, by force if necessary, food being cooked for a Christmas celebration. The smell of a goose being cooked could bring trouble. Cromwell considered pies a guilty, forbidden pleasure and the traditional mincemeat pie was banned.

In the 1646 ballad, 'The World Turned Upside Down,' by Thomason Tracts, one verse of the song refers to "shred pie." The song was written bewailing Parliament's ban on Christmas:

To conclude, I'll tell you news that's right,

Christmas was kil'd at Naseby fight:

Charity was slain at that same time,

Jack Tell troth too, a friend of mine,

Likewise then did die,

Rost beef and shred pie,

Pig, Goose and Capon no quarter found.

Final Chorus:

Yet let's be content and the times lament,

You see the world is quite turned round.



Christmas Pie Fine Art Print
by William Henry Hunt

At this time pies, sometimes known as shred or secret pies, were made in eccentric shapes to hide the fact that these were actually the banned mince pies. The tradition continued for many years after King Charles II (1630-1685) restored Christmas when he ascended the throne in 1660.

Oliver Cromwell's Puritan influence spread across the Atlantic to American British Colonies, and many towns of New England went so far as to actually ban mincemeat pies at Christmas time. Christmas was actually banned in Boston from 1659 to 1681, and those celebrating it were fined.

In 1853 the Quaker Elizabeth Ellicott Lea explained in her book 'Domestic Cookery', that was published in 1853, that, "Where persons have a large family, and workmen on a farm, these pies are very useful." She was referring to the fact that the pies could be baked in large numbers, and during cold weather, they could be kept for as long as two months after cooking and the mince-meat filling could be made ahead and kept even longer.

How do you fancy whale mincemeat? In the book, 'Swan among the Indians - the life of James G. Swan', the author Lucile Saunders McDonald, tells of Swan's Christmas dinner with a mincemeat pie using whale meat.

"On December 25, 1861, three "Boston men" sat down to Christmas dinner in the trading post established four years earlier at the edge of the Makah Indian reservation, Washington Territory, USA.

The traditional holiday was a welcome break from the unloading and distribution of a shipment of goods promised to the Makah by the treaty they had signed in 1855. James Swan, a periodic resident in Neah Bay, had, in the absence of the trader, prepared a feast of roast goose and duck stew, presenting for dessert a mince pie made from whale meat. The Indians, he wrote later, had brought him a fresh piece of whale meat months earlier that looked every bit as good as red beef. He had boiled it and cut it finely, adding chopped apples and wild cranberries, raisins, currants, salt, nutmeg, cloves, allspice, cinnamon, and brown sugar. After packing it into a ten-gallon stone jar, he had added a quart of New England rum and sealed it for future use.

Would the traditional mince pie, he worried, be welcomed if the diners learned it was made from whale? Yankee mincemeat was made from domestic animals or venison. His fears were soon dispelled. The small portions he had cautiously served were quickly downed and second helpings demanded by all."

You could still find recipes for mince pies containing meat right up to the **Victorian era. A recipe for a 'plain mince pie' by Mrs. A. L. Webster, in 'The Improved Housewife' from 1844 declares 'Neat's (sheep's) tongue and feet make the best mince pies.'** Today the only remaining trace of the meat element is of course suet. Alas the modern recipes no longer have the original list of 13 ingredients which, according to some once was representative of Christ and his 12 Apostles, so they lack the religious meaning contained therein

In 2009 chef Marcus Wareing recreated a recipe from 1624, and was rather impressed with the results. Maybe it will appear on the menu at The Berkley one Christmas. If not I expect Heston will come up with an interesting early version of these ladylike luxuries.

Superstitions Abound - Did you know -

It is said you should eat a mince pie on every day of the 12 days of Christmas, and to refuse one is supposed to be unlucky.

Your first mince pie of the season should always be accompanied by a wish. Traditionally they are left out as a thank you for Santa Claus along with a nip of brandy and a carrot. Some say you should only stir the mince mixture clockwise and should not cut a pie with a knife.

A more fun tradition was the annual Big Eat mince pie eating competition held in Wookey Hole, Somerset. The record currently stands at 46 pies in 10 minutes, which is more than most of us eat in the whole month.

around the branches - Blackpool & Fylde Coast



From left - The Hon. Mr Justice Henriques, Brian Sager-Lord of Leigh (Branch Chairman), Lady Henriques, Ron Barker (EAC Chairman), Sarah Avery.

Blackpool's Diamond Anniversary

On Monday 1st October the Blackpool and Fylde Coast Branch dined at the stylish sixteenth century Lytham Hall to celebrate its 60th birthday.

In 1952 André Simon, at the age of 75, travelled to the Savoy Hotel in Blackpool for the inaugural Banquet which consisted of seven courses and five wines. The meal included ingredients such as, Dublin Bay Prawns, avocado and aubergine, which at the time were unknown in Lancashire and had to be brought up from London. The banquet celebrated the International dimension of the Society with food and wine representation from eight European Countries.

The Diamond Anniversary celebration was held in one of the finest homes on the Fylde coast which was built 1757–1764 to the design of John Carr. The reception, with canapés, was followed by a banquet in the splendour of the Gold Room.

Members who attended were given a copy of the twenty page 1952 Menu booklet containing nuggets of information about the food and wines. As well as Local members there was representation from Liverpool, Manchester and West Yorkshire Branches. John Avery MW, the Society's President had accepted an invitation to attend and speak. Following his sad death earlier in the year he was represented by his widow Sarah and by his best friend Richard Henriques, whose father, Cecil, was a founder member of the branch and a long term Branch Chairman.

The Anniversary Banquet did not attempt to copy the original but had some common features, beetroot soup, fish risotto, beef for mains and a savoury game course. The meal was accompanied by a Mosel wine and an aged sherry, as well as more traditional wines.

Branch Chairman, Brian Sager, Lord of Leigh welcomed members and guests. Ron Barker, EAC Chairman spoke about the Branch and the Society and The Hon Mr Justice Henriques responded for the guests.

Ron Barker

Menu
Canapés
Aperitif: *Schloß Lieser Riesling Kabinett, 2009*
Thomas Haag, Mosel
First Course

Soup trio: Blackpool Moss Tomato; Tasty Lancashire Cheese; Beetroot, Parsnip and Chive
Wine: *Palo Cortado Sherry, Garveys (bottled in 1981 and bottle-matured)*
Fish Course

Pan Fried Seabass with Lytham Shrimp Risotto and Samphire
Wine: *Puligny Montrachet, 2005, Domaine Leflaive*
Main Course

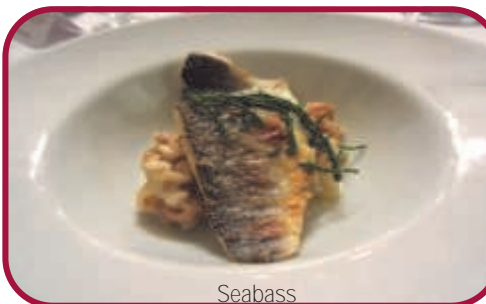
Fillet of Beef with Green Herb Crumb,
Celeriac Puree with Toasted Pine Kernels, Wild Mushrooms,
Potato Ravioli and Red Wine Jus
Wine: *Chateau Vieux Telegraphe, 1998, Chateauneuf-du-Pape (en magnum)*
Game Savoury Course

Venison Carpaccio, Mushroom Pate, Pickled Damsons, Hazlenuts, Rocket,
Pesto with Creme Fraiche and Horseradish Cream
Wine: *Chateau Grand-Puy-Lacoste, 1990, Pauillac*
Dessert

Expresso Brûlée, Passion Fruit Delice,
Mango Foam, Crushed Honeycomb, Shortbread Cubes
Wine: *Chateau Coutet, 1996/98, Barsac*
To Finish
Cafetieres of Coffee



Soup trio



Seabass



Dessert



Fillet of Beef



Venison Carpaccio

around the branches - Berkshire



Past & Present secretaries from left: Paddi Lilley Dorothea Fisher Aileen Edwards, Roger Davies, Hugh Edwards, Pat & Tony Curtis, Julie & Chris Graham



Pat Curtis's Celebration Cake



Julian Jeffs proposing the toast.

Members in Sparkling Form Forty Years On

Thirty seven members of the Berkshire Branch celebrated 40 years since being granted our Charter with a Summer Picnic at which we sampled the Austrian sparkling wines of Szigeti and Charlotte Turner's delicious food.

Our Special Guests included past Secretaries Dorothea Fisher, Roger Davies and Paddi Lilley and the EAC was represented by Andrew Brodie and Janet Davies. The group also included seven founder members of the Branch. Pat Curtis, our Chairman, warmly welcomed guests and members, setting out the arrangements for the day. We started with a tasting of four wines eloquently described by Charles Sebesta of Bubbles and More, UK distributor of Szigeti wines.

Szigeti make 18 wines using single grape varieties not often vinified using Méthode Champenoise. The first, a Grüner Veltliner, had a good nose and was nicely dry with some fruit – a very good start. Next up was a Weissburgunder (Pinot Blanc) with less “body” but the Blanc de Blanc (Chardonnay) which followed kept up the standard. The Rosé made from Pinot Noir was delightful and a good comparison with many pink champagnes.

Cocktail sausages with honey & sesame seeds and homemade cheese straws helped us through the tasting but having whet our appetites, guests were pleased that the buffet was opened and an array of delicious dishes unveiled by Charlotte. Absolutely every dish was distinctly and superbly flavoured. Our President Julian Jeffs had very kindly provided us with Vina Alarde Rioja Reserva 2007 from Berberana which was a good match for the picnic fare. Charles had also brought along 3 bottles of a sparkling red made from Zweigelt for us to sample. This grape is a crossing of St. Laurent and Blaufränkisch and is now the most widely-grown red grape variety in Austria. It seems that sparkling red wine is always palate dependent! With the dessert we had a glass of Muscat Ottonel, sparkling of course, which had a fabulous nose and light sweetness in the mouth.

Later on in the afternoon Julian Jeffs proposed, in his own inimitable style, a toast to the Branch which we did with an excellent glass of Szigeti Tokai, again sparkling. This wine perfectly complemented the rich fruit celebration cake with the IWFS logo baked by Pat Curtis with which we rounded off the day.

At the close we all felt that we had caught up with old friends, made some new ones and re-established the Raison d’Etre for the Branch – interesting and excellent, wine and food, taken in good company. Many thanks to Charlotte and Jay for allowing us the run of their house and lovely garden – and it only drizzled for about 10 minutes all afternoon!

Chris Graham

40th Anniversary Sparkling Picnic Menu

Coronation chicken, mango & grapes
Rare roast rib of beef with horseradish
Hot minted buttered new potatoes
Green salad
Celeriac remoulade
Cous cous salad
Roast beetroot, carrot & parsley with walnut dressing
Roasted vegetable salad
Tomato, mozzarella & basil salad
White chocolate cheesecake with fresh berries
Tropical fruit salad & pouring cream
Cheeseboard with nuts & grapes



around the branches - Leicester

Gourmet Trip to Lyon

Nine members and two guests left on Monday 24th September for a trip to Lyon organized by Keith Wood our Chairman. Keith had asked Arblaster and Clarke, Wine Tours Worldwide, to arrange this special event for us. Leaving Leicester at 5.26am we reach Lyon by 2pm giving us time to find our hotel, the Mercure Beaux Arts, and unpack before changing to go out to supper.

Roger Austin who booked our meals, found, for the first evening, the very busy Café des Fédérations, where we sat at long tables. There was no menu but delicious food was quickly served. We started with a wine soup enhanced by a floating poached egg, followed by a well dressed salad with charcuterie. The chef came to the end of the table and called out the main courses – **pig's cheek casserole, quenelles of pike with a fish sauce, calf's head terrine and chicken**, these were all well received. A cheese board followed with six local cheeses and

Tasting at Maison Chapoutier

then we had a choice of puddings, the praline chocolate tart was voted best. We drank copious quantities of the house red and white wine. The proprietress refilled the bottles from a cask – all for 36€ per person.

Next morning we met our Wine Guide, Nicola Arcedeckne-Butler MW, in the foyer and taxied to the station. We had an hour's journey south to Tain l'Hermitage where we first visited Maison Chapoutier an elegant shop with a warehouse and tasting rooms. We strolled to the nearest of their vineyards and learnt about the different grape varieties, diverse soils and their quest to make biodynamic wines. We then returned to taste three whites and five reds made from different grapes from vineyards in their large empire including a Shiraz from Australia. There was a good Vigonier from the Ardeche, a mainly Marsanne from Saint Péray and a Grenache Blanc from Chateauneuf du Pape. A Bila Haut, Cotes-du-Roussillon, made from Syrah, Grenache and Carignan was easy drinking. The Gigondas made from 4 grape varieties was less successful. We ended the tasting with two superb reds, Les Becasses, Cote-Rotie at 43€ and Sizeranne Hermitage made from Syrah at 50€ a bottle. I felt privileged to taste such an excellent variety of wines from so many different areas owned by Chapoutier.

Nicola arranged a leisurely lunch at Hotel de Terminus where we enjoyed a Boeuf en Daube with salad and dauphinoise potatoes and an assiette of puddings including tiramasu, rum baba and raspberries. With coffee and modest amounts of wine the bill came to just 23€. We trudged through the rain to the Valrhona chocolate factory where we were able to taste as many delicious samples as we liked before moving on to Ferraton F Père & Fils. We tasted five good wines, one white made from Marsanne and two red 100% Syrah from the Ermitage vineyards and then one white Marsanne from St Joseph La Source, and an excellent red Syrah from the same vineyard for only 13€.

Returning to Lyon we walked to Le Nord, Paul Bocuse's first brasserie where we had a table to ourselves in a pleasant upstairs room. There was a set menu for 27€ but we mostly chose dishes from the à la carte menu. I had snails, saucisson en brioche was popular also veal escalopes with pasta and a kidney and scallops risotto. Puddings were substantial, an excellent crème brûlée being the best. A white Macon Villages 2010 and a red Côte de Lyonnais St Agathe Gyt complimented the food. Some of us shared a bottle of Sauterne, Château Villefranche 2009 from Barsac with the puddings.

On Wednesday Nicola took us North by coach to Château Thivin at Odenas in Beaujolais which has been in the Geoffroy family since the 19th century. They were just at the end of the harvest and doing triage to select the best Gamay grapes from which the red wines for an appellation Beaujolais must be made. Claude, the son of the present owner, took time off to talk to us and describe the wines we tasted whilst sitting in a family room with some of the children's toys. We first tasted a Beaujolais – Villages Blanc 2011 made from Chardonnay, possibly the best Chardonnay I've ever tasted. I loved the Brouilly 2011 with a beautiful cherry red colour and fruity nose. Next a Côte de Brouilly 2011 and lastly a prize winning Côte de Brouilly 2008 cuvee Zaccharie, named after the first Geoffroy.

We went on to Domaine Monrozier near Fleurie and met Anne-Victoire Monrozier and her brother who own the property. In their

cellar we tasted a wine pipetted direct from a barrel and any leftover wine was poured back into the barrel from our glasses! It all seemed rather primitive, but they had modern machinery in the winery. We then went into the salon of the rather dilapidated château and sat at a long table by a roaring log fire in an immense fireplace and enjoyed an excellent lunch produced by Anne-Victoire with tasting quantities of their Fleurie and Moulin a Vent. We started with a very good salad of red and yellow homegrown tomatoes, next a specialty of the region, an immense sausage which had first been boiled, then roasted and sliced served with crisp roast potato slices. A cheese platter followed and then two puddings, homegrown raspberries and ice cream and finally a large open tart with raspberries and pomegranates. It was like attending a French family luncheon party.

Domaine Monrozier

When we returned to Lyon we said goodbye to Nicola. It was raining so we taxied to our evening venue the Leon de Lyon which used to have two Michelin stars. Roger told us that the chef, Jean Paul La Combe, had relinquished his stars voluntarily in 2008 to become a brasserie to cater for 150 covers instead of just 40. The restaurant was divided into several paneled rooms hung with interesting paintings and every table was occupied. We enjoyed Cremant Framboise then a white Pouilly Fuisse and a red Fleurie. Starters included terrines, soup and paté. Mains included quenelle of pike, raie with a delicious sauce cleverly completely boned and reassembled, duck breast and quails. Puddings included rice, chocolate mousse, vacherin with pistachios, café liegeois and charlotte pears. Two members enjoyed a sweet wine, Bandol, our bill came to only 57€ each – wonderful value.

On Thursday, a free day, taxis took us to Christian Tetedoie, a magnificent new Michelin starred restaurant on the hill with wonderful views of Lyon. We shared a magnum of champagne, Duval le Roi NV and chose the Discovery and Gourmet menu. After an amuse bouche we started with Foie Gras and tuna, a goose duck liver terrine and marinated fresh tuna with a Japanese lemon cream sauce.

The fish course was steamed fillet of stone basse wrapped in a zucchini flower. We drank a premiere crus Chablis from Maison La Roche.

Roasted duck with pine nuts, raisins and parmesan shortbread for main course went well with the Chateaux Thivin wine Cotes de Brouilly 2010. A pre desert refreshed our palates before the Green Apple pudding, an elaborate concoction with a green apple sorbet balanced on an almond praline and marshmallow tart. We scarcely had room for the petit fours with our coffee. It was a very memorable experience for our last evening and probably worth every cent of the 107€.

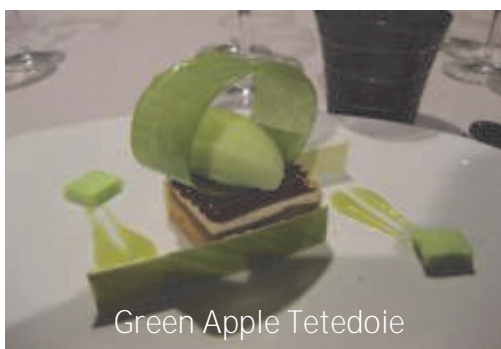
Five of our party left after breakfast but six of us stayed on for another tremendous gastronomic experience, this time at the Michelin starred Les Trois Domes restaurant at the top of the Sofitel Hotel. We decided to have a main course and a pudding and when we had chosen we were delighted by two pre courses, a small pot of chicken liver terrine and then a little soup in an elegant dish. We drank glasses of wine chosen by the sommelier to go with our dishes. Three of us enjoyed roasted veal with kidneys on tiny pancakes, two had an elaborate beef dish with slices of fillet steak interspersed with foie gras and one wanted to taste at last the specialty of the region - quenelles of pike with an excellent fish sauce. After a tiny pre desert three of us had a hot chocolate soufflé with a chocolate - coated truffle and ice cream to offset the richness and all of us enjoyed the elaborate performance at the table to produce the orange and Grand Marnier sauce for the precooked crepe suzettes for the other three. A plentiful supply of coffee completed the meal and we **were offered four delicious petit fours each. We couldn't eat them and jokingly suggested we take them in a plastic bag.** To our surprise we were given them artfully arranged in a plastic tray covered with cling film. We very much enjoyed them in the train some hours later.

We had had a superb time and were amazed at the unfailing kindness and helpfulness of all the people we met and decided that eating out in Lyon is generally not as expensive as our local gastro pubs in Leicestershire.

Mary Jewell



Stone basse in Zucchini flower



Green Apple Tetedoie



Beef dish Trois Domes

around the branches - Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire



Catalonian Dinner & Wine Tasting By Kevin Sambrook

Members gathered at the Cock O'barton Restaurant, Malpas, Cheshire for a Catalonian Dinner accompanied by wines which were presented by Kevin Sambrook, formerly of Gerard Seel of Cheshire, one of our excellent local wine merchants.

Kevin carefully matched the wines with a meal which was originally created from a menu served in a prestigious hotel in Sitges.

The whole experience was Catalonian, the wines being organic and carefully made with **excellent varietal characteristics. The red wine will keep for many years and Kevin's selection**, accompanied by the creations of the chefs, provided a thoroughly enjoyable evening of unusual flavours with an educational content.

Val Brookfield

Val's Tours

As most of you know, I endeavor to take members to visit other branches throughout the world. Next Spring we are looking forward to a very interesting experience visiting South Africa, with 33 members from our own Branch, Manchester and Blackpool. I have been asked to organise a tour to Zurich and will research this idea as soon as possible. We are visiting Prague at the end of November and taking over 20 members.

As a result of communications from members who attended the Merseyside Festival, I have been contacted to consider visits to Niagara, Nappa Valley, Miami etc so, as they say - **"Watch this Space"**.

I have noticed that traveling with a group of like minded people, has improved inter branch relations both in the UK and overseas and I thank those of you who join us, for your support and interest.



Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire Christmas Party 13th December 2012

CHESTER GROSVENOR HOTEL, CHESTER, CHESHIRE

Champagne Reception, 4 Course meal with half bottle of Sommelier's choice of wine per person.

Private Function room so all guests welcome at

£71.00 per person

Soft romantic music of Sinatra, Nat King Cole etc. and dancing till late.

Local hotels available ring/email Val Tel - 01745860136

karnak.fvb@btinternet.com



around the branches - Estonia



A Study Tour to Georgia 10th to 15th October 2012

Sixteen Society members and friends headed to Georgia for four days of discovering Georgian wines and food. Georgia had for many years under Soviet mass production created sweet wines of low quality, but with over 500 wine varieties and the worlds oldest wine culture, we were unsure of what we would find.

After a night flight and a few hours sleep, we were reassured at airport passport control when we each received a gift of a half bottle of Georgian wine with the message, "Welcome to the land of 8000 vintages", with details of archaeologists' having discovered evidence of early Georgian wine making as far back as VIth century BC.

Our first visit was to the "Sarajishvili" brandy factory, where we were given a tour of the factory and an impassioned presentation on the history of the company and how the founder Davit Sarajishvili learned his trade in France, before developing his own unique production in Tbilisi, after an extensive search for the right Georgian regions and varieties of grapes that duplicated the style he had learned in the production of Cognac.

In the afternoon we visited Chateau Mukhrani who, with the help of an Australian and French trained winemaker, is setting a trend for quality wines. This Swedish financed winery is making red and white wines to the highest international standards using different varieties of Georgian grapes. We also discovered that Georgians have always preferred dry wines and not the sweeter wines they are often known to produce. Following the war with Russia and the freezing of trade, they have now used the opportunity to produce wines more suitable for Western markets.

Tasting several wines, we learned that Saperavi, Georgia's endemic variety, had all the noble characteristics to compete with the world's most outstanding reds. Rkatsiteli, which is Georgia's endemic and unique white variety, has proven itself through the centuries to make refreshing and memorable wines. Mtsvane was also an interesting variety and can produce a white wine with hints of peach and of fruit trees in bloom as well as mineral overtones.

After a fine lunch with the wine maker and our bags already packed with bottles to take home, we visited a hill top monastery, before heading back for a traditional dinner in Tbilisi. Georgian cuisine uses bread instead of potato, rice and pasta, with an interesting bread specialty called Khachapuri which is cheese filled. Tables are set with a variety of local appetizers and then many hot dishes are continually brought to the table. It is the custom to put a smaller plate on top of a larger and the top one is constantly replaced with cries of "Change change" so that you always have a clean plate to continue tasting the variety of foods always being placed in front of you.

On day two, we drove to the Kakheti region where 65% of Georgian vineyards are located and visited the town of Signaghi. Here we found the Pheasants Tears winery run by artist and passionate winemaker, John Wurdeman. This American Georgian joint venture has specialized in producing wines using traditional Georgian qvevri clay pot methods and from many of the more unusual grape

varieties that were in danger of being lost. It was interesting to taste alternative white wines such as Chinuri, Khikhvi and Kisi, as well as another red Tavkveri, however they did not present the qualities of the wineries un-oaked and unfiltered 2009 Saperavi and 2010 Rkatsitel. The latter which was fermented in a qvevri for 6 months resulted in an amber coloured wine with aromas of vegetation and walnuts, and was pleasantly acidic and strong in tannins. The traditional Georgian qvevri method of producing wine



Chateau Mukhrani wine maker



Pheasants Tears winery



Traditional wine making



Traditional wine making

around the branches - Estonia



Georgian bread baking

characteristics of the wines so that a grape such as Khivki produced in a qvevri results in tones of ripe fruit or yellow dried fruit whereas when made in the European style it gives an aroma of exotic plants.

We then drove to the small town of Gurjaani where we were taught the traditions of Georgian bread baking, preparing of traditional dishes and churchkhela (nuts in reduced grape juice syrup) and the distilling of Chacha (Georgian grappa), before sitting down to a Supra, a Georgian feast complete with Georgian singers and jugs of their home made qvevri wine.



Georgian bread & tomatoes



Alaverdi monastery

Day three, found us staying in guest houses in the town of Telavi. This gave us the chance to meet the friendliest local people as well as to wake up each morning to the smell of fermenting grapes from the wine making in their household cellars. Our first visit was to the Telavi Wine Cellar, an excellent winery and involved a tour of the premises and tasting, while we listened to an impassioned talk from one of the owners about how they have turned the factory from a bulk producer of sweet wine to a select producer of wine suitable for western markets. Our members highly rated their Marani 2009 Saperavi as well as their 2010 Satrepezo Mtsvane which was first fermented in a qvevri before being left to age in oak for 10 months, resulting in a wine with a bouquet of citrus peel, quince, walnut and dried yellow fruit, and gave a slightly oaky feel with full flavour and a long finish.

Following an excellent lunch at our guest house, we travelled to the Alaverdi monastery, where following the debacle of the Soviet Union, the monastery had returned both to its religious roots and to the tradition of wine making, which was first made at the monastery in the 6th century. With the support of the Bagadoni wine company, one resident monk had become the wine maker, using the skills passed down to him from 3 generations of family wine makers and in the Georgian qvevri style.

He provided us with a tour of his small winery and then a tasting of two white wines which were not so much to our liking and then one magnificent red wine. One of the white wines was made from Krakhuna, resulting in one of the strongest and most full bodied Georgian white wines, reaching 17.5% in alcohol content and a colour of straw with hints of golden sunlight. The monks 2009 Saperavi was however the most superb wine, made with the devotion that only a monk focused on prayer and wine making could accomplish. With no bottles available for sale, the monk's gift of two bottles to accompany our dinner was greeted with a large round of appreciation and applause.

Day four, found us visiting the Kindzmarauli Marani winery in Kvareli. The main interest was a vineyard planted with 200 different grape varieties, which we wandered through plucking, tasting and comparing the different grapes. The winery itself, however, was a disappointment, as it still produced low quality wines for East European markets. We then returned to Tbilisi for an afternoon of sight seeing and a tasting of a few wines we had not found on our tour including the excellent red Allerverdi Traditional Badagoni 2007 which won the regional award from Decanter. We also found some white sparkling wines including Bragationi Brut 2007, made from Chinuri grapes in Kartli, that produced a wine with aromas of lemon waffle and cooked cream, accompanied with a joyful character and stinging acidity.

For our last evening we visited a very popular local restaurant called "Sololakis kari", complete with traditional Georgian dancing, before heading to the airport for another night flight and the end of our tour. So with bags loaded to the maximum with bottles of wine, we headed home with happy hearts and a whole new appreciation of Georgia and its potential as one of the world's oldest wine cultures.

Martin Dungay
Chairman

Georgian hors d'oeuvre



around the branches - Sussex



A Red Lion in the Forest

The Red Lion is situated in the heart of the Ashdown Forest and was the venue chosen by the Sussex branch for our dinner in May. The proprietor, Mark Raffan, has worked in many prestigious restaurants and was, in the past, appointed Executive Chef to King Hussein of Jordan. Most recently he was the head chef and co-proprietor of the Gravetye Manor Hotel, where he earned a Michelin star which he retained for more than ten years. Although a complete contrast to his former establishment, Mark's standards of cooking and presentation remain very high, with locally sourced ingredients a priority.

Our aperitif, a glass of Ca Marlin Prosecco Frizzante, was followed by a choice of three first courses. Flavoursome Portland Bay potted crab was served with a rosette of smoked salmon and dill crème fraîche, whilst smoked apple puree, summer leaves and warm toast were the garnishes for the chicken liver and foie gras parfait. The vegetarian option was a baked Portobello mushroom with tomato confit and smoked Goodwood cheese, rocket and pine nut salad. All of these were attractively presented and got the meal off to a good start.

Spiced couscous, Provencal vegetables and tomato and piquillo salsa complemented my choice of pan-fried sea bream extremely well whilst Dave enjoyed the tender and succulent roast saddle of lamb which was served with gratin potatoes, asparagus and minted hollandaise. With two such tempting dishes on offer, no-one took up the alternative main course of butternut squash, leek and parmesan risotto accompanied by crisp sugar snaps, truffle oil and pea sprouts. Those members with a sweet tooth faced a difficult decision, as both desserts featured English soft fruits in season. The Feuillette of Strawberries with clotted cream and mint and the rich dark chocolate and raspberry delicie, served with grue de cacao tuille and raspberry sorbet, both looked lovely and were reported to be delicious. As usual, I opted for the trio of cheeses, all of which were

local and good, and accompanied by a very pleasant apple chutney.

The wines served during the meal were a Chilean white, Anuela Sauvignon Blanc 2011, and a French red, Patriarche Pinot Noir 2010 and the evening came to an end with tea or coffee. Our first visit to the Red Lion was a great success and enjoyed by all - I'm sure it won't be the last!



.....and a White Horse in Storrington.

In September, the Sussex branch made their first visit to the White Horse in Storrington. Unusually the venue was chosen on the strength of an article in the national press listing it as one of the best 20 restaurants with rooms in the UK rather than on a personal recommendation. Immediately prior to the event we learned that the restaurant manager had been replaced, a new one was on holiday for a month and arrangements for our dinner were shambolic – our fears of disaster rose sharply! However these were rapidly allayed on arrival and the evening, which began with a Kir Royale, progressed without a hitch.

The lightly smoked quenelles of fish were well-flavoured and accompanied by horseradish cream whilst the very popular and delicious duck liver parfait was

served with cranberry and dressed leaves. Only two people chose the roasted red pepper and sweet potato soup garnished with garlic croutons but both reported it to be very good. For the main course I chose the whole grilled plaice in citrus butter with spinach and frites. It was simple but beautifully cooked – who needs anything else when the fish is this fresh and delicate? The roast rib of beef was tender and pink with nicely prepared vegetables and roast potatoes, the only downside being a rather stodgy Yorkshire pudding. The third option was an unusual and tasty butternut squash, spinach and pinenut pastry parcel presented with new potatoes and dressed leaves, which would have been less daunting at half the size!

For dessert Dave chose the vanilla panna cotta with raspberry coulis which was light and creamy and the chocoholics amongst the membership were very happy with their triple chocolate brownie, white chocolate sauce and vanilla ice cream. A selection of ice creams or an extensive array of English cheeses served with biscuits, chutney and warm ciabatta were also on offer for those who preferred something a little less sweet.

Unfortunately we discovered too late that the Sicilian wines chosen to accompany the dinner had been discontinued but the two French wines, Reserve St Marc Merlot and Grenache blanc, were pleasant substitutes and were served throughout the meal.

In spite of our initial forebodings, the standard of cooking was high and the 29 members and guests shared a very enjoyable evening at this 17th century restored coaching inn. The service was excellent and Natascha and her team certainly came up with the goods under somewhat fraught circumstances. The only real criticism was that the portion size in all cases was somewhat over-generous. The event certainly exceeded the expectations of four days previously!

Lesley Berry

around the branches - Manchester

A Jubilee Garden Party

It is our wont that the meal for the Garden Party is prepared and served by the Committee. This year, however, there was not the full complement of Committee, so it was decided to emulate the Diamond Jubilee Picnic, inspired by Heston Blumenthal, which was held in the grounds of Buckingham Palace. Our party was held in the lovely garden of Tropez and David Martin, in Heaton Moor, fortunately with a marquee.

The sun was shining so we were able to enjoy our aperitif outside. A glass of Ap-Kaapse Vonkel Brut, Simonsig SA, which sounds a bit of a mouthful, but a very nice mouthful it was, too.

We went into the marquee, decorated with bunting and with union flags on the table, to open the boxes, which contained Summer Soup and a smoked salmon tartlet. With these was served Maçon Péronne Burgundy, which went well with both dishes. Following the Jubilee theme, there was Jubilee Chicken on a bed of basmati rice, accompanied by a green salad. A cheese slate had Cheshire Burt's Blue, Cheshire Brie and Tasty Lancashire, with fruit cake and various thin crisp toasts. Generous amounts of a robust red, Aldeya Grenache Esp, was served, it was especially suitable for the spicy chicken and very much enjoyed.

The dessert was a delicious Royal Trifle. Whilst we were eating, it rained heavily, so we were grateful for the marquee. As always, it was a lovely, informal social occasion, and by the time we finished, the sun was shining again!

Valerie Hall

July Summer Lunch at Heathcotes Brasserie, Preston

Traditionally our members like to venture into the country for their Summer Lunch. Manchester is ideally situated to give us a choice of The Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales, the Peak District, the rolling Cheshire plains and the Mountains of North Wales.

Bearing this in mind, and our EAC Chairman's recent report in Food & Wine, we chose pastoral mid Lancashire, Paul Heathcotes' Restaurant at Longridge, in the lee of the Lancashire Fells so imagine our consternation when shortly before our event Paul had to re-profile his restaurants and the Longridge Restaurant was closed down. Gabi Heathcote rang us with the news and offered to honour our booking at their Heathcotes Brasserie in Preston. The chef and staff were being transferred there, so a similar standard of menu and meal could be expected.

The Town of Preston on the River Ribble, noted as it is for its Preston Guild celebrations every 25 years, is not countryside. Victorian edifices and elegant Edwardian Squares are side by side with modern concrete commercial and retail outlets, connected by a busy tortuous one way system.

We considered Paul's lunches, the IW&FS write up and the help he gave our Branch when we hosted the Great Weekend in 2006. We chose to accept the offer of holding our Summer Lunch in Preston.

Heathcotes Brasserie is situated in the elegant Winckley Square. The members who attended found the Motorway systems from Manchester gave fast and easy access to Preston town centre with its good parking facilities. Those members who came by train were pleased with the efficient and rapid (and cost effective) transit system.

The welcome, service and meal did not disappoint – it was excellent.

The kitchen produced 24 perfect and delicious Soufflés simultaneously, followed by tender fresh Sea Bass, accompanied by a creamy soft Polenta and tasty vegetables. The dessert was appreciated both by the dessert and non-dessert lovers with its innovative basil sugar. The wines complemented the dishes – especially the combination of the Montepulciano with the fish.

It was a good Lunch and we were very well looked after.

We wish Paul and Gabi Heathcote and their team every success with the reorganisation of their restaurant.

Tricia Fletcher



The Menu

Apéritif

False Bay Chenin Blanc, South Africa

Lancashire Cheese Soufflé,
Asparagus, Oyster Mushroom
False Bay Chenin Blanc, South Africa

Grilled Sea Bass, Olive Oil Polenta,
Air Dried Tomatoes, Courgettes and Aubergine

Ancora Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Italy

White Chocolate and Passion Fruit,
Strawberry Basil Sugar

around the branches - Zürich

AGM Accompanied by South African Wines & Foods

The Zürich branch held their 2012 Annual General Meeting at the premises of KapWeine in Wädenswil, one of the largest, if not the largest, importer of South African wines into Switzerland (www.kapweine.ch). Members were greeted with a glass of Krone Methode Cap Classique as well as freshly barbecued Boerwurst.

The President, John Macdonald, opened the meeting with a review of the past year and the success of the Zurich Great Weekend. The branch has had many emails from attendees who praised our event. The Treasurer John Nicholas presented the financials and it would seem we still have some dosh in the bank. In fact we had **enough to reward all the members who attended the AGM a 'free' evening.**

A Braai accompanied by several South African wines, among them an Arabella Sauvignon Blanc and a Kleine Salze Chenin Blanc, the latter accompanying some barbecued King Prawns followed the meeting. The main course was barbecued filets of Springbok and Wildebeest accompanied by Merlot from Kleine Salze and a Pinotage from Painted Wolf vineyards, a real stunner. The members managed to find other bottles to try around the room and many made significant purchases to take home with them. Kap-Weine offered a considerable discount and, as usual, they had a wide range of end of bin wines on sale as well. It is safe to say that quite a few members will be drinking South African wines for quite some time to come.

With cases of wine in their arms, members trickled out into the evening darkness and home.

John Macdonald, President.



around the branches - Surrey Hills

Never Been Twenty-one Before....

Well we certainly did have the key of the door, actually that of Alan and Stephanie Shepherd's delightful home in Camberley where we held our annual Starters and Puds (and I am not going to explain the rationale of that again!) The four starters were Alsace Smoked Salmon and Onion Tart, Sliver of Chicken a Sweet-corn Fritter with Dijonnaise Sauce, Strawberry, Spinach and Pear Salad and Five Hour Beef with Wasabi Sorbet.

Puds were Iced Lemon Curd and Blueberry Pots, Autumn Berry Russe, Hazelnut Meringue and Tyrolean au Chocolat. The welcoming Champagne was Antoine de Clevecy Brut NV and to accompany the meal there was Tannat/Merlot 2010 and Gros Manseng/Sauvignon 2011 both Vin de Pays Cotes de Gascoigne, also a Chateau Haut Rian Rose, Michel Dietrich 2011. Our valiant and dedicated cooks were (alphabetically): Pam Brunning, Marjorie Cocksedge, Sheila Ellis, Bernard Lamb, Helen Mills, Susie Punch and Stephanie Shepherd and Keith Ellis organized the wines. We are indebted to all who took part, hosts, chefs and guests at our 21st foray into this slightly unusual but interesting way of enjoying food and wine

Helen Mills, Chairman



around the branches - Malmö



Heddi with Menu



A Family Affair at the Böckman's

We have visited our members Heddi and Bengt Böckman at their charming house in the countryside before. Last time was a memorable and well-attended BBQ but this time we were treated with a 4-course menu, a bit Swedish but with Mediterranean influences. As this an unusually early start of the autumn season we were a little worried if people would show up. However, as many as 28 members entered our couch to go and enjoyed the following dishes after not less than three amuse bouche! Gazpachos with shrimp, mini asparagus with Serrano ham as well as salmon rolls filled with fresh cheese and almond chips all accompanied by a Saint Veran 2010 from Dom. de la Batie:

Marinated fried tuna, turnip cabbage and parsnips chips

Weissburgunder Pinot Bianco Dellago 2010, Alto Adige, Cantina Kellerei St Magdalena

Marinated grilled chicken fillet, new potatoes, spring onions, squash compote and broad beans

Séguret, Côte du Rhône Village 2010, Dom. Plantevin

Vacqueyras Vieilles vignes 2005, Dom. de la Monardière

Mature Swedish hard cheese, Fourme d'ambert, Brebirsouse
with roasted walnuts and honey

Ripasso, Valpolicella Superiore 2009, Zenato

Frozen cranberries, warm tjinuskij and almond chips

Tawny 10 years, Krohn's

This was a most enjoyable evening with delicious dishes created by Heddi, some found in her two cooking books as well as in one not yet edited. It proved to be an entire family affair as Bengt, an artist, chose the matching wines, designed the menu card and the combined place card and napkin ring, daughter Filippa did the finalizing cooking, enabling Heddi to act as a charming hostess, and other members of the family did the serving. In all a very much appreciated dinner in a friendly familiar atmosphere.



If the foregoing event was very well attended, the one that followed was not. Only half as many showed up for which there were many explanations; other competing dinners, people travelling all over the place but mainly that the restaurant chosen **was not so familiar with everyone. Thott's Restaurant is part of a big modern hotel,** and that does not always guarantee quality, although nicely situated in an old house incorporated in the new building. However those who took part in the dinner were not in the least disappointed. Quite to the contrary, the merited head chef Johan Liljegren had composed a delicious special 5-course meal for us using vegetables and herbs cultivated in the garden situated on the roof of the five-star hotel. After canapés with lobster and long cooked pork meat accompanied with a clean and crispy 2009 Chablis, Jean Pierre Grossot we were served:

Calf rilette and fois gras de canard with "roof vegetables"

2008 Vacqueyras Blanc Galejade, Dom. La Monardière

Lobster ragout with turnip, apricots and green pepper

2009 Pinot Gris Letzenberg, Jean-Baptiste Adam

Saddle, steak and brisket of venison with meat juice, pumpkin and "roof herbs"

2009 Pinotage, Kanonkop

2007 Chassagne-Montrachet, 1er cru de la Boudriotte, Dom. Ramonet

Swedish local cheeses

2009 Lucente IGT, Marchesi de' Frescobaldi

Elder sorbet and rum drained chocolate cake with season's berries and almonds

2011 Beerenauslese Terrassen, Dom. Wachau

Coffee

After dinner we were invited to put questions to Johan Liljegren on his cooking and it proved that he was pleased with the result himself with the exception of the venison brisket, the recipe for which he intended to adjust next time. Many members shared his opinion and a discussion started on what should be done to improve it. I think the cheeses would not have suffered from a couple of months more on the shelf before being served. All wines were very well chosen to go with the dishes, my highlights were the lovely Chablis, the Pinot gris with just a little residual sugar and the mature but still rich Burgundy. In all an evening that put Thott's on the map!

Rolf Fransson, Secretary



around the branches - London



THE JUBILEE OLYMPICS IN STYLE

To mark The Queen's Golden Jubilee and London 2012, The London Branch created a special Programme of Wine and Food Olympic Events from the Opening Ceremony to The Closing Ceremony with all events reflecting an Olympic Games event in their titles and following the ethos of that particular event.

THE OPENING CEREMONY - DINNER AT THE LEANDER CLUB, HENLEY-ON-THAMES

We started our Programme with dinner at The Leander Club. Founded in 1818, Leander Club in Henley is the most historic successful rowing club in the world. Recognised globally for its achievements at the Henley Royal Regatta, it's home to heroes like Sir Steve Redgrave, Sir Matthew Pinsent and James Cracknell. Where better to hold our Opening Ceremony?

We occupied the members' balcony private dining room with a view overlooking the Thames and started with a sparkling wine reception with canapés. We then moved on to a three course dinner cooked by the Leander's excellent chef. The poached sole with crayfish mousse was beautifully presented and tasted just as good. This was followed by a stuffed saddle of lamb with herbed rösti, glazed root vegetables and rosemary reduction. The lamb was beautifully pink and done to perfection. I found the herbed rösti a little too strongly herbed for my taste but I was alone judging by the empty plates! This was followed by a delicious Tiramisu with berry compote, coffee and petit fours.

Our wines for the reception were Gratien & Meyer Saumur Brut and Undurraga Brut Rosé, Chile, with our dinner, 2009 Sauvignon Blanc La Paz, Chile and 2009 Merlot La Paz from The Leander Club and 1985 Château Larmande St Émilion Grand Cru Classé from the London Branch Reserves. Michael Broadbent MW was there with Daphne and gave his verdict on Château Larmande as "a classic 1985 St Émilion, absolutely delicious and perfectly decanted" A great compliment from a Grand Master.

The next morning after a sumptuous English breakfast, those who had stayed overnight met Sir Steve Redgrave and his wife who joined us at the end of breakfast. We were then treated to our very own private viewing of the arrival of The Olympic Flame that Sir Steve subsequently rowed to The Leander Club. This was a unique experience for which we owed a huge vote of thanks to our past Chairman Roger Ellis, a member of The Leander Club, who arranged the event.

100 METRES SPRINT

We then held the 100 Metres Sprint arranged and led by Keith Ellis. In keeping with the Olympic event our wines were racy, zippy whites with a great burst on the finish! These were definitely not long distance runners but were ideal for drinking now. Keith chose 9 wines of which two were French; the others were all from Chile, New Zealand and Australia.

The best value wine was Bouquet de Nos Vignes Blanc 2012 from France at well under £5 per bottle whilst the most interesting was 2010 St Hallett, Poachers Blend, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Riesling from Australia. Domaine La Bastide Viognier 2010 was agreed to be better than the Yaluma Viognier 2011 from South Australia.

SYNCHRONISED SWIMMING

After this, our programme featured Synchronised Swimming. Following the ethos of the

Olympics, the wines had all been described as wines of great elegance, style, balance and charm. The event was to have been led by John Avery who was very enthusiastic about the concept and felt it should apply to all wines, not just French and red. John was a keen supporter of New World wines and promoted these even when they weren't fashionable. I lead the event myself as a special tribute to him and selected wines that John would hopefully have approved of. Sarah Avery was able to come and interspersed the commentary on wines with lovely anecdotes of John and herself. The room was decorated with Jubilee bunting, flags and photos of John which Sarah had provided. I even managed to track down some that she hadn't seen before! ➡



around the branches - London

I had chosen 1996 Louis Roederer Champagne to start with as John loved Champagne. Although his favourite was Pol Roger, Sarah felt that John would *not* have turned his nose up at this most delicious mature Champagne. To do it justice we accompanied it with French toasts and Harrods Paté de Foie Gras! This was followed by 2009 Maycas del Limari Quebrada Seca Chardonnay reputedly one of Chile's best Chardonnays, **2008 Avery's Pioneer Range Chardonnay Yarra Valley**, I had to include an Avery's wine. At a mere £9.99 it was a snip. A lovely mouthful and so delicious. 1996 Chassagne Montrachet, Abbaye de Morgeot, Louis Jadot and 1983 Moulin Touchais.

Our reds were 2008 Cono Sur Ocio Pinot Noir, all agreed this was a super wine but not a typical Pinot Noir, too rich, too full and too thick; in fact the small amount left and re-corked lasted another 24 hours. 1998 Penfolds RWT Barossa Shiraz, huge, massive, black inky purple and not even ready yet. 1997 Château Pichon Lalande and 1991 Grato Grati Toscana IGT. I had previously included 2003 Boekenhoutskloof Syrah Coastal but it had sold out when I went to buy it. Stumped for a substitute, a series of wild coincidences led me to 2004 Glenelly Hills – **May de Lenquesaing's South African venture**. As Sarah recounted, May and John had a great friendship so it was an appropriate choice. This was another rich opulent wine with thick jammy fruit and very smooth on the palate. Delicious and well liked by everyone despite the high alcohol of 14.5%.

An unexpected rare find rounded off the evening, 1986 Delamain Early Landed Grande Champagne Cognac and enabled us to toast a great man who would have loved to have been with us. At the end of the event Sarah had said that it was uncanny – the comments I came out with for several wines were much like what John himself would have said. It was almost as if he was there with us in spirit. Knowing John, maybe he was.

PENTATHLON

This event was followed by our very own Pentathlon – An Olympian Five Course Saturday Lunch Chez Alan and Stephanie Shepherd. Alan and Stephanie were offered the Triathlon for 3 courses but bravely chose to go for the Pentathlon! Guests started with a glass of Crémant de Bourgogne AOC, Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin, and then sat down to a superb lunch of Warm Pea Soup with raspberries, followed by Gravallax cured with dill and vodka served with potato pancakes. Next was Shoulder of Venison in red wine with new potatoes carrots and green vegetables followed by Stilton Mousse with Melba Toast and for dessert Pavlova with summer berries and Greek yoghurt. The accompanying wines were Mercury Blanc 2009 and 2009 Beaune Premier Cru with Roussette de Savoie Les Rocailles 2006. A truly Olympian repast requiring a very healthy appetite!



SILVER MEDALLISTS

Sadly my own Silver Medallists event showing the Super Second Wines of 9 well-known Châteaux had to be postponed due to a horrendous succession of illness and accidents to members who had booked. This left us with a mere 9 people to drink 9 bottles of wine which included Pavillon Rouge du Château Margaux, Bahans Haut-Brion and 1976 Les Forts de Latour – an Olympian feat that none left were willing to attempt.

GOLD MEDAL WINNERS

The Gold Medal Winners that followed was led by Jeffrey Benson and featured 10 wines he had selected from countries figuring in the medals table. The wines came from England, Japan, France, Germany, India, Canada, Spain, USA, Greece and Australia. The two most interesting, had to be wines which no-one had come across before, 2010 Grace Koshu Hishijama Private Reserve 2012 from Japan and 2012 Sula Dindori Shiraz Reserve from India.

THE CLOSING CEREMONY

A Members' Social Reception at The Guildhall, London. The Guildhall has been the City of London Powerhouse since the 12th Century although the present building merely dates from 1411. It acts as a grand setting for glittering banquets in honour of visiting Heads of State, Royal occasions and major historical anniversaries. Thanks to London Branch Committee Member Deputy John Barker OBE we were able to offer our members a buffet reception with wine at this prestigious location. The evening was a great social success with an excellent hot and cold buffet and rounded off our special programme to perfection.

Carole Goldberg, Events Organiser

around the branches - Helsinki



Susanna Heikkinen, Chairlady &
Jaakko Rahola, Founder

25th Anniversary Menu,

Cold-smoked whitefish by Piipanoja,
pickled chantarelles
Beef consommé with truffles
Traditional wild duck à la Savoy, creamy
game sauce
Cheeses (Camembert, Comté, Peltola
Blue)
Blackcurrant in two ways, milk ice
Wines
Champagne Deutz Brut Classic
Kloster Eberbach Riesling 2010 trocken
Blandy's 10 Years Old Sercial Madeira
Château Pradeaux 2006
Tedeschi Recioto della Valpolicella 2006

Helsinki Branch 25 Years On

When the our Branch was founded on June 6, 1987 in the restaurant of a yachting club, situated on a small island outside Helsinki, few of the thirteen founding members knew what the IWFS actually was. Most of them probably were looking forward to learning about wines – **a commodity that had, since our Prohibition (1919...1932) and the wartime crisis, again slowly begun to interest the normally beer-drinking general public in Finland.** At that time, the selection of wines obtainable in Finland was still rather limited. The 1987 Retail Catalogue of the Finnish alcohol monopoly **"Alko"** contained altogether only about 200 table wines. The cheapest of them was the Bulgarian white wine Misket Karlovo for about **€6 per bottle, and the most expensive wine on the list was 1982 Ch. Dauzac from Margaux, for about €58, prices converted to the currency of today.** In addition to the **"standard retail"** list, some exclusive vintage wines were obtainable in the so-called **"special selection"** of Alko, but the common wine buyer could only dream of them.

With such a small selection of obtainable wines, it is easy to imagine that the few real wine connoisseurs among us were highly esteemed and envied. The Finnish printed media had recently become interested in wine, and some large dailies had begun to publish regular wine columns. Several more or less serious wine clubs were founded around the country. The IWFS Helsinki Branch was among the few new clubs that also included food in their sphere of interest.

In the beginning, one often asked question, regarding membership requirements of the Society, used to be, whether the applicant should already know something about wine, or not. Our Board quickly decided that real interest is enough. To the disappointment of some wine snobs, it was not even necessary to be able to tell Burgundy from Claret, to become a member.

Today, after 25 years, the situation in the country has changed radically. The Alko retail monopoly still exists, but their selection has widened more than tenfold. Private import of wine has been allowed under certain conditions, and many high-class restaurants import their own wines. Most Finns already seem to know a little more about wine than **"red wine with meat, white with fish"**.

The main interest among the members of the Helsinki Branch seems to be food cooked by ourselves, although wines are not forgotten. From nearly the beginning, we have had the privilege of being able to cook our own meals in the training kitchen of a professional household school, where we have had three electric ranges, all standard kitchen equipment and plenty of working space for at least a dozen cooks. Regrettably, we have now lost these facilities, as the owner of the premises has recently sold the building.

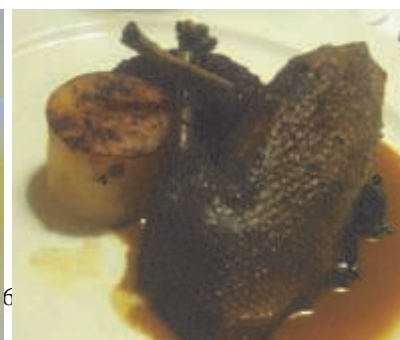
Regardless of venue, at our events, for every dish a suitable wine is always selected and the reasons discussed. More detailed wine knowledge within the Branch is, however, **concentrated in a smaller group called the "Wine Commando Group". They have their**

own monthly events for tasting and discussing more exotic, fine wines. This group celebrates its 20th Anniversary in November 2012 with a special, home-cooked dinner.

The 25th Anniversary of the Branch was celebrated in September 2012 by a dinner at the Savoy, the top-class Helsinki restaurant that was opened on the 3rd of June, 1937, exactly 50 years and three days before the Helsinki Branch was founded. The restaurant interior was designed by the famous Finnish architect Alvar Aalto and has not been changed since the beginning. The Savoy, being situated on top of the building next to the Esplanade Park, has a roof garden where herbs are grown for the kitchen. There is also a beehive that produces nearly all the honey used in the restaurant. The Savoy is also the proud owner of one of the **very few original French Duck Presses model "Tour d'Argent" that exist in Finland** – and it is still used, although very occasionally. Notes to the menu:

Piipanoja is a small fish processing company in the Finnish south-western archipelago, specializing in cold-smoked fish products. Peltola is a small Finnish cheesery famous for its Roquefort-type blue cheese.

Jaakko Rahola, Founder and Honorary Chairman



around the branches - Wessex



Annual Dinner & Presentation

Our Annual Dinner, always a black tie event, was held on 28th October at the Carlton Hotel in Bournemouth.

This year the event was rather more special than usual for a number of members. The Wessex Branch was formed in 1984 and as a number of the founder and very early members have been loyal supporters throughout the whole of the period they have qualified for **the Society's Long Service Award in recognition of 25 years' uninterrupted membership**. It was considered that the annual dinner would be the perfect occasion on which to present these Awards. Wessex Branch chairman David Packer first gave a short speech describing the formation and early days of the Branch and then read out the names of the Award winners as follows: Tsuki Caudle, Frank Myerscough, Meg Dodd MBE, David and Phyllis Packer, Gordon & Sheila Edwards, Rex & Sophie Thorne, Michael & Marilyn Messent and Audrey Williams.

Except for Rex and Sophie Thorne, who could not be with us, each was presented with their Award, in the form of a very handsome dress medallion. The exception being Michael Messent, who already holds the André Simon Bronze Medal for meritorious personal service to the Society and was therefore presented instead with a certificate to mark his long service. The medallions will no doubt be worn with pride at future meetings of the Wessex Branch.

After this happy interlude we returned to the other business of the evening, the enjoyment of the superb food and wines on offer. Having already had our aperitif, a light and refreshing crémant de Bourgogne rosé, we moved on to an amuse bouche comprising a beautifully cooked, succulent roasted scallop set on a pea and ham purée. This was accompanied by a Domaine Marc Morey et Fils Chassagne Montrachet Premier Cru 2007, a rich and fruity wine balanced by refreshing acidity and oak flavours.

This was followed by a duo of sautéed duck liver and duck liver pâté on toasted brioche, both full of flavour. The wine was a François Carillon Bourgogne 2010, a clean, rounded wine with good acidity to balance the richness of the food.

The main course was confit of duckling on a butterbean purée with cherry jus. The duckling was very tender and tasty and it was well matched with a Louis Jadot Nuits St Georges Les Boudots 1998. This was a lovely fruity wine with good body and tannins that again cut through the richness of the dish very well.

In true French tradition the cheese was served before the dessert. This was a delicious Brie de Meaux with truffle and chives, very soft and creamy without being over-ripe, and served with fresh toasted brioche. The Hospice de Beaune, Beaune Guigone de Salins 1997 that accompanied this was deep red and full bodied with good length.

The dessert was a very tempting tart tatin with figs and cinnamon ice cream and this was followed by coffee and chocolates. For those with exceptional stamina a glass of prunelle liqueur or Marc de Bourgogne was on offer to end the meal.

All agreed that the dinner had been superb, with each course beautifully cooked and presented and great attention to detail, right down to the freshly baked bread rolls and brioche. The excellent wines, which had been sourced by organisers Geoff and Clare James, were very well matched with the food. The service staff, who were very efficient and pleasant, also deserve honourable mention. Great credit must go to Geoff and Clare and their helpers Rob and May Haines as well as to the hotel and its team of chefs for a truly splendid evening.

Joan Cardy, Secretary

around the branches - Herefordshire & Monmouthshire

A Mediterranean Lunch

Late August and for a few hours members could ignore a grey and damp Saturday in the country and imagine the warm and gentle climate of the Mediterranean. Our theme for the day was inspired by the foods, wines and flavours of the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

Our hosts, Peter and Elizabeth Gibbons, welcomed us at midday with a flute of chilled Cava – Juve y Camps, Cinto Purpura Reserva 2007 whilst the finishing touches were being put to the lunch buffet.

We had selected typical dishes from several countries – some hot, some cold – and the menu included **Homemade Chicken Liver Paté, Pissaladière, Mediterranean Fish Stew, North African Lamb with Ginger & Chilli and an Italian Cold Collation**. Accompanied by a Mediterranean Chopped Salad and Lemon & Coriander Couscous.

For the cheeses we selected - Murcia al Vino – a Spanish mild goat cheese steeped in red wine. From France - Brie de Meaux and Comté, and finally - Picos de Europa Valdeon – Spanish, wrapped in maple leaves and matured in caves.

Our desserts took us deeper into the Mediterranean – with Italian Baked Peaches, Lebanese Rice Pudding, Greek Honey Cake and Turkish Delight.

Our chairman Michael Hoddinot introduced the wines.

White – Torres Fransola, Sauvignon Blanc. Penedes 2008 and Fina Viognier, Sicilia 2011.

Rosé – Minuty, Côte de Provence.

Reds – Massaya Classic, Lebanon, Bekaa Valley 2009, Feudi di San Marzano Negroamaro, Puglia IGP 2010.

Peter McGahey

around the branches - Restaurant Awards

Wessex Branch Present Award to Verveine, Milford on Sea



David Packer, Stacey Crouch & David Wykes

must also go to sommelier Jonathan Crouch, who achieved excellent matching between wine and food. The service, headed by front-of-house Stacey, was impeccable.

A party of 10 members returned to the restaurant for lunch in October to see Wessex Branch chairman David Packer present the Society's Award for excellence in recognition of the quality of that lunch. This will now join the many other tributes on the walls of this fine restaurant.

Joan Cardy, Secretary,

Wessex Branch became aware of the Verveine restaurant when the Capital Branch held a very successful event here last year, which was also attended by some of our local members. The reports were so good that we included it in our 2012 programme, and duly lunched there on 14th March 2012.

As the name suggests the restaurant is coupled with a fresh fish shop, the latter going back more than 50 years. Behind the shop is the small but light and airy restaurant, specialising in modern British cuisine. Established only in 2010 it has already received many accolades, including Hampshire's Best Restaurant in 2011. Chef David Wykes has an impressive background, having worked in some of the finest restaurants in Britain and France. He was awarded the title of Chef of the Year in the Hampshire Food & Drink Awards in both 2011 and 2012.

David and his business partner Stacey Crouch believe that food should be of the highest quality, but affordable and served in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. For our lunch in March David devised a superb menu, each course being a culinary delight. Credit

Sussex Branch Present Award to Sundial Restaurant, Herstmonceux



Mary Rongier, Dave Berry & Vincent Rongier

In August 38 members and guests of the Sussex branch gathered at the Sundial Restaurant in Herstmonceux for their Chairman, Dave Berry, to present an Award of Excellence to the proprietors, Vincent and Mary Rongier in recognition of the superb meal they had enjoyed in July 2011.

Vincent is an excellent chef, particularly when it comes to seafood, and on this occasion the menu choices included turbot with white truffle butter and an unusual oxtail terrine. 'Extras', such as a pre-dessert, were included between courses, all dishes were beautifully presented and the wines matched the food very well.

With Mary organising front of house, the service was impeccable, the surroundings tranquil and the ambience perfect. The Sussex branch has been visiting this lovely restaurant annually for ten years and the consistently high standards continue to rise.

Dave Berry, Chairman

The St James's Branch Present Award to Hedone Restaurant London



Aurelie Jean-Marie-Flore, Ari Sofianos & Mikael Jonsson

The St James's Branch held two dinners at the Private Dining Room of Hedone Restaurant on 11th and 17th July 2012 respectively. This is, in my view the most exciting new London restaurant opening of the last couple of years. Swedish Chef-Patron Mikael Jonsson is obsessed with ingredient quality and, before opening his own restaurant in Chiswick, had been advising Michelin-starred restaurants all over Europe on ingredient sourcing.

Our two Branch dinners last July showed beautifully presented, top class modern European cooking with delicate saucing, designed to bring out the excellent flavours of the fresh produce. Almost all of the members who attended agreed that the dinners deserved an Award for Excellence, which was duly presented to Mikael Jonsson and Aurelie Jean-Marie-Flore, the excellent Restaurant Manager, on Friday 26th October.

Ari Sofianos, Chairman



Tchaikovsky

Musicians on the Menu

Swan Lake and Swansong to the Series

by Prof Alan F Harrison



Cygne Tchaikovsky

As the series began with Verdi, this is where we came in. In “Garnishes on the Stage” in Food & Wine, December 2009 page 16, he was first on *the menu*. Verdi was followed by Rossini, Meyerbeer, and Smetana, Sullivan ended that story and began the subsequent one in March 2010. Updating 2009, our first musician Verdi, again is even more remembered on the menu with Tournedo Verdi. The beef fillet steak is dressed on foie gras, covered with *Soubise* (onion purée) and served with Duchesse potatoes (December 2010 page 23)



filled with small balls of carrot and accompanied with braised lettuce. Filets de sole Verdi are cooked on a bed of diced macaroni, lobster and truffle. They are served with Sauce Mornay. (Mandarins on the Menu, June 2011, page 23.)

Rossini deserves his own article beyond Tournedo Rossini (again with foie gras and referred to in December 2009, page 16). Boiling fowl are also adorned with the *pâte* and truffles before



being hermetically cooked in the oven. Salade Rossini comprises lettuce, celery, chicory leaf and root, cress, and escarole endive. If the humble sole were the theme, it has the most garnishes devoted to it. In Filets de sole Rossini, they are rolled and covered with a sole *farce* augmented with foie gras before poaching. Presented in a circle, its centre is filled with a truffle *ragoût*. White wine sauce goes over the fillets. Oeuf Rossini is a fried egg on a bed of foie gras and sliced truffle. Sauce Périgueux accompanies and it is made from *demiglace* or rich brown sauce with truffle essence and chopped truffles. Omelette Rossini is quite similar regarding the ingredients. The Purée Rossini soup is chicken based and, again, is similar.



Puccini

My first Food & Wine article was about “the three Ms” in June 2009 page 12. It covered three variations of the term “molecular” applied to food. In the present context, the three Ms are Mozart, Manon and Meyerbeer. Faisan Mozart is pheasant *en casserole* finished with cognac and served with French fried potato and artichoke-

bottoms filled with celery purée. Paupiette de sole Manon (remembering *Manon Lescaut*, the Puccini opera) is when the fillets are rolled and poached. A round dish or salver has been decorated with piped Duchesse potato mix and browned under the grill. The paupiettes are placed within the circle and covered with white wine sauce flavoured with *finest herbes* (the collective for chopped parsley, chives, tarragon and chervil). The centre of the circle is filled with asparagus tips and truffle strips. Oeuf sur le plat Meyerbeer is where the egg is in the dish previously buttered and seasoned. After baking, it is garnished with lambs-liver and served with Sauce Périgueux which is a savoury truffle-flavoured brown sauce finished with chopped truffle.

You will note in *Moscovites on the Menu* (March 2012, page 17), that Tchaikovsky has not been remembered within the *Répertoire de la Cuisine*. He sits on the same music shelf as Verdi and Rossini, at least. He composed a whole ballet revolving around dancing candy and a prince enchanted so as to crack nuts between his wooden teeth. Let us remember him more gastronomically with Cygnes Tchaikovsky. Find someone who can make and shape meringue or, preferably, choux pastry. Create **necks, wings and bodies. Cut the tops from the bodies and fill the bodies with raspberries and make a “red-crested” swan as in the picture above, or poached fruit flavoured with a Russian liqueur. You are not limited to the standard approach of using vodka which loses its flavour in food. Try Slavyanskaya, for example. If you indulge in irony as well as needing vodka, try the Red Army variety as it is quite unusual.**



Make wings from the body-tops cut in half. Attach the necks and float your swans on a lake of jelly surrounded by desiccated coconut coloured green for the grass. Follow other ideas on the next page. Full details are on the webpage given below. ➡

Go to www.cuisinestudy.org.uk for a full account.

Cont. - Moving on to the practical aspects of producing Cygnes Tchaikovsky, Herefordshire College of Technology (HCT) offers full-time courses in Hospitality and Catering. In making contact, the aim was to involve future chefs in the article and provide readers with further ideas as to how the swans can be made and filled. Les Brown is one of HCT's

course lecturers and he invited me to observe a practical class at the end of September. Here he is with Fern James-Bristow and Kelly Tipton. The swan bodies have just come out of the oven.

The Level 2 learners had recently returned to college in September after working in the industry during the summer vacation. They approached the task with enthusiastic competence and self-confidence. There were twelve learners working in pairs. On the left, we see what they are aiming to produce. An early stage is piping the necks before baking them. The heads are then dipped in melted chocolate. The bodies are sliced in half and the top split to give two wings. The lower half is filled with raspberries in coulis and whipped cream. Emma Bevan and Nicole Kinsey show us how. They have produced "target" swans. The "red-crested" swan which introduced the article is an example of the way learners at HCT are encouraged to give their own interpretation of what they are shown. The swan was made by Billy Baker and Peter Deakin shown dipping swan heads in dark chocolate. Lorna Cooke preferred white chocolate (shown under the red-crested swan). Ivan Mole and Ben Dean are literally "dotting the eyes" with white icing on their dark-chocolate swan heads.

My thanks go to the learners and their lecturer Les Brown and Amy Howard from the College Marketing Team who took the photos. The visit to HCT concluded with lunch in the Cider Orchard training restaurant which is highly recommended.

Lunch is available during term time - Tuesday to Friday and dinner on Wednesdays. To make a **reservation, call 01432 365331.**



A swan lake ballet and its choreographers who bring our history of garnishes swansong to a memorable close.