

# Arthur Cunynghame talks of 'The Cheesemonger's Tales'



*I*t wasn't so much that I wanted to be a wine merchant as that I couldn't be a film producer. Having left school with three 'A' levels and the usual batch of 'O' levels and deciding I didn't want to go to university, I sat down, like a great many 17 year olds, to try and decide what I did want to do. Film producing and directing was one thing I definitely did fancy, due partly, I suppose, to my father's involvement with Alexander Korda, the great Hungarian producer, and my mother's acting career playing a number of roles, chief of which, as far as I could see, was Queen Victoria. It soon became apparent that I was not going to be the new David Lean, as I so fervently hoped, so I needed to find something else as a career; that 'career' was to become, so far, a life in cheese and wine and publishing.

The wine came first and I spent eighteen happy years running a wine business with my brother. When the hotel giant Trusthouse Forte came along and offered to buy the business in 1986, I had mixed feelings. But our acceptance of their generous offer was to lead to a new career as a cheesemonger which proved, if anything, to be even more enjoyable.

Initially I acquired a small, wholesale business selling a small range of exclusively British cheeses, but this led to my buying the famous old lady of cheese, Paxton & Whitfield. Paxton's was established in 1797 and had long traded in St James's, London, but had fallen on hard times and the quality of their cheese had taken a tumble.

My first priority, therefore, was to improve the standard of the cheeses they were selling. To do this

I visited all the artisan cheesemakers I could, both in England and France, and made my selection of the cheeses we would sell. This was the fun bit of the business.







One of my regular visits was to Jamie Montgomery's farm near Yeovil in Somerset where I would taste the cheeses from many different days' production before choosing which days we would buy. It always amazed me that they should vary so much. Part of the variation is due to the starter culture they use but the diet of the cows is also critical. On one of my visits I tasted three days' production, which had some distinctly odd flavours which I didn't like. "This is unlike your usual cheese" I said to Jamie. "Mmm" he said, "Those three days the spring ran dry and we had to ration the cows drinking. We thought we'd compensated for this in making the cheese, but obviously we didn't!" There are three great Cheddars: Keen's, Westcombe and Montgomery's and of these Montgomery's is consistently my favourite. With it I enjoy either a pint of bitter such as Wadworth's 6X or a glass of claret, but a fairly earthy one such as a Graves or Pessac Leognan.

The troubles faced by cheesemakers were perhaps most poignantly exposed to me in a conversation with Jean Berthaut. As a boy, just after the Second World War, he watched his father struggle to establish his cheesemaking business. The war had decimated production of Epoisses. At the turn of the century there were 300 farms producing the cheese, by 1945 there were just two. Jean's father, Robert, had a dream; to recreate the cheese he remembered enjoying, that his grandmother made. Robert laboured hard, ridiculed by his neighbours for his old fashioned ways. They all had big new tractors; what was Robert doing, messing around with a few smelly cheeses? Who would buy them? Alfred Le Blanc of the local restaurant, La Pomme d'Or, was his first customer. There is a photograph of him still, in the restaurant sitting in the chair by the fire. At first Robert's cheeses were poor and often there were tears in his eyes as he buried his failures in a field at night so the neighbours would not see. But Robert was a Berthaut and determination is in their blood. He went to talk to other grandmothers who knew how to make the cheese; and little by little his cheeses improved. Now the business exports all over the world and produces perhaps the best example of its type. To choose a wine to go with Epoisses is no easy task, as the cheese is quite salty and full-flavoured. Jean Berthaut recommends a good Chablis and another possibility is a red Burgundy, but I prefer a late harvest wine from Alsace: a Riesling or a Pinot Gris.

I have come to enjoy hugely finding exquisite cheese and wine combinations; it remains a treat for me to sit down to nibble a piece of cheese and sip a glass of wine. But now I have a new interest as well. As a result of writing and publishing my book titled 'The Cheesemonger's Tales', which is based on a personal selection of twelve of the finest cheeses matched with twelve memorable wines, I have become a publisher. Loose Chippings, as my publishing business is called, has eight titles to its name ranging from a very funny book about cricket, titled Not Dark Yet, to a book which everyone should read before reaching a cross roads in their life (Walk With The Wise), to a children's picture book called Roy The Eagle.

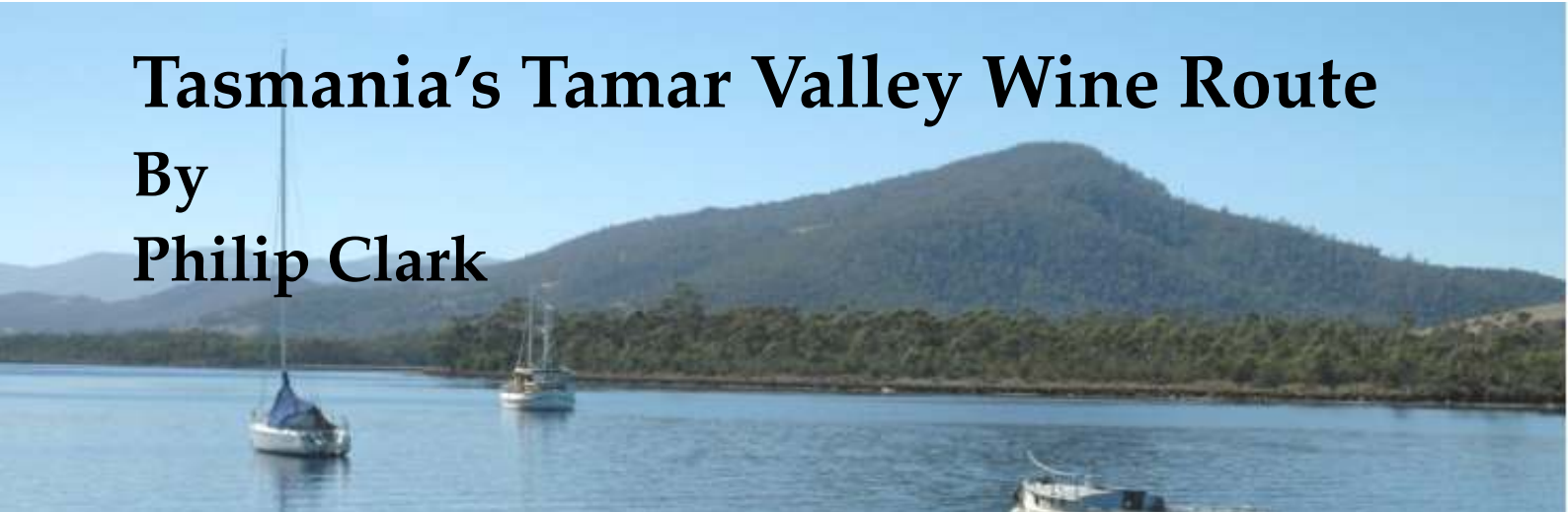
Please don't ask me which I enjoy the most: cheese, wine or publishing. I count myself thoroughly lucky to enjoy them all.



**The Cheesemonger's Tale is available from bookshops, Amazon or direct from the publishers: Loose Chippings Books, The Paddocks, Back Ends, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire, GL55 6AU [www.loosechippings.org](http://www.loosechippings.org)**

# Tasmania's Tamar Valley Wine Route

By  
Philip Clark



**T**he Tasmanian Tamar is a wide tidal estuary of stunning beauty, especially in the bright sunlight of the Australian summer. A side road follows the west bank and every now and then you're confronted with a fabulous view across a wide expanse of blue water that often looks more like a lake than a river.

There were several reasons for our choice of Tasmania as a holiday destination. My wife Christine and I were visiting Melbourne and Sydney anyway, and travelling via Tassie seemed an entertaining, if indirect, way of getting from one to the other. We'd also been nervous of the reported temperatures of 40° C plus in Melbourne, and Tasmania promised to be a bit cooler. In addition, I'd developed a distinct affection for Tamar Ridge's pudding wine, a Botrytis Riesling, and thought it would be fun to visit the winery.

Our short budget flight from Melbourne in mid February took us to the northern Tasmanian town of Launceston (you pronounce all three syllables – Lon-ces-ton). It's neat, clean and rather charming, and there are some fine public buildings, which were paid for by the discovery of gold in Victorian times. Launceston's main tourist attraction is the impressively craggy Cataract Gorge, formed from a tributary of the Tamar river, and only a short walk from the town centre.

The Tamar Valley is the largest of Tasmania's wine-producing regions, and has a well-signposted Wine Route, which represents a very pleasant day's drive. The route passes more than 20 wineries, far too many to visit in a single session, so you do need to make a selection before you start! Most of the producers are quite small, and their wine is only distributed locally. Tamar Ridge, where we'd booked our appointment, is one of the handful whose wine is available in the UK.

At Tamar Ridge we were welcomed by Anthea, a cheerful blonde lady, who explained that my contact had been delayed at a meeting but that she'd been told of our arrival and we could have a tasting while we waited. One characteristic of Tamar Ridge is the wide range of varieties they grow in the same area. They specialize in cool climate grapes: Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. They don't try to compete with the more powerful Cabernets and Shirazes of the mainland. The best wines come from their Kayena Vineyard.

With some reluctance, I spat out the tasting samples until I reached the pudding wine at the end. Then I cleared my palate with a glass of their sparkler (68% Chardonnay and 32% Pinot Noir). The 2006 Botrytis Riesling, with its near perfect balance of sweetness and acidity, was simply too good to spit.

Will Adkins, Tamar Ridge's General Manager, turned out to be a stocky, youngish man, with a face burned by sun and wind. As is my invariable experience with people who work for wineries, he was generous with his time, despite the imminence of the harvest. He showed us the almost ripe grapes that were netted against birds. One or two of these didn't do much damage, he told us, but a flock of a thousand starlings could strip the vines bare.

Will drove his long-suffering car between the rows of vines and we sampled the Pinot Noir grapes, which would be ready for harvesting at the end of March. The Riesling grapes, which would take longer to ripen, were still acid and almost inedible. There was some irrigation, but not much. Will's philosophy was that his grapes had to work for their living. Picking was done by hand and most of the pickers were locals: they also harvested other fruit, such as apples, which had been the crop of choice here until they were replaced by vines 40 years ago. The winery did get the occasional backpackers, Will said, but these tended to vanish at the first smoko.



Tamar Ridge 2006 Pinot Noir



The red wines were matured in French oak. The barrels had a life of only about five years. We asked if they were then sold on, but no, most of them ended up cut in half in garden centres. He then showed us round the two-million dollar bottling plant, which could only handle screwtops. They did, however, have a small machine that used real corks for the sparkling wines. They also had the capacity to bottle wines for other producers.

We learned all this and much more and it was a couple of hours before we said our goodbyes. Anthea had suggested the nearby Pipers Brook winery as a good place for a light lunch. In its Winery Café, we found ourselves in a shady courtyard (it was pretty hot outside) and a plate of dips plus another of local cheese and fruit did us very well. Then in the tasting room we worked our way through their Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Riesling, Gewürtztraminer and Pinot Noir.

The final tasting of the day was Jansz. This was conveniently situated right next door to Pipers Brook. Christine was wined out by this time and so stayed in the car with the air conditioning on. The cellar door and tasting room were beautifully designed and you looked out on to the vines and a small lake (the wineries tend to have these for irrigation purposes). Jansz only make sparkling wines so I asked which was their best one. This turned out to be their Tasmania Vintage Cuvée and very good and cool it tasted after the heat outside.

A few days after leaving Launceston, our route took us along Tasmania's attractive and unspoilt east coast. We'd been recommended by Tamar Ridge to stop off at Coombend winery, part of the same group. In a modest Cellar Door building we introduced ourselves to James, the youthful manager. He took us through the now familiar range of varieties. The final one, a Pinot Noir, was still pretty closed and I guessed the bottle had only just been opened. He then poured a tasting measure of their flagship Bordeaux blend called Mail Run, which he said had been opened two days ago. It actually tasted better than the previous wine. The name derives from the fact that the building we were in was once a post office, and indeed the winery itself had once been a sheep station. The significance of the Bordeaux blend (Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot) is that most of Tasmania has too cool a climate for these grapes, but Coombend has a parcel of land that is an effective suntrap, and this, combined with dry soils, makes the growing of these varieties possible. Coombend's production is on a modest scale, and so the wines are hard to find outside the island.

Tamar Ridge and Coombend, as well as another winery called Rosevears that we didn't visit, are owned by Gunns Ltd, Tasmania's largest private landowner, whose main activity is logging. The company already exports wood chips to Asian factories for papermaking, and wants to build a two billion dollar pulp mill on the Tamar. Local opinion is strongly divided on the project – the issues are of course job creation versus possible environmental damage.

The weather in Tasmania can vary. It apparently gets windy in September and January and the winters can be cold and wet. However, we were particularly fortunate, as the weather in February was nigh on perfect. Certainly, on the basis of our limited experience the island is a great place for a relaxing break. There are also some good restaurants. On the advice of Yvonne Wallis of the Victoria Branch, we ate (very well) at Stillwater in Launceston. More remote, but worth the trip, was an informal but nevertheless excellent establishment called Angasi overlooking the magnificent crescent of Binalong Bay in the north-east corner of the island.



Tamar Ridge Winery

## Pipers Brook Vineyard



# Your Editor's Tale

**I** suppose it is not surprising that I have spent a life involved with food and wine. Well food particularly. Don't get me wrong I love wine but it must go with food.

"Food without wine is a corpse; wine without food is a ghost; united and well matched they are as body and soul, living partners." to quote Andre.

One of my earliest memories is of rushing out to the chicken run, carefully lifting up the lid of the nesting box to see if there was an egg for my breakfast. My father would cut thick rashers that were fifty percent fat off the side of bacon hanging in the scullery. While bacon was sizzling in the pan Mum would be slicing juicy, ripe tomatoes from the garden and often, in the autumn, large creamy white mushrooms with pink gills, fresh picked at the crack of dawn.

My father built aircraft as a day job during World War II, often through the night as well, when the Hun were shooting them out of the sky faster than they could build them. But every spare moment would be spent working around our 13 acre smallholding producing enough food to make a family of four virtually self-sufficient.

Even after all the bottling, preserving, jam making and curing was done, as anyone who grows produce knows, there was always enough surplus to supply the neighbourhood. I was often dispatched across the field with armfuls of fruit and vegetables for Grandma, to be rewarded with a sweet from her jar on the mantelpiece.

After school, I would often help in the kitchen while my brother would lend father a hand outside in the garden or carrying water up the steep path from the spring. Some evenings they would go for a walk with the gun. Rabbit was a regular on the menu as there was a large warren at the back of our land. Pheasant was a less frequent treat, they were reared on the adjoining estate and the game keepers were very vigilant. My brother would come limping in from their forages and surreptitiously tip the empty cartridge cases out of his wellingtons, disposing of the evidence.

My Domestic Science mistress was a large dragon that, before the war, would have ruled a household of at least half a dozen servants, with a rod of iron. It was obvious from her demeanour that she felt she had been cheated in life having to lower herself to teach forty pubescent girls. We learnt the basics of food technology but little else. When she heard one day that the new syllabus required her to teach us the rudiments of makeup she was mortified. The whiskery warts on the end of her chin positively quivered with disapproval as she read from the notes she had been given.

Some years later, when trying to impress a boyfriend, I decided to make moussaka - a potato moussaka - as he didn't like aubergines a lot - I don't really know why I chose the dish, I probably thought it would be easier than meat and two veg, silly me! I made it in a large, thick earthenware casserole adding plenty of creamy sauce made with milk and cream that I had boiled up with onions and carrots and herbs to give it lots of flavour and with plenty of cheese on top, it was going to be delicious. I proudly took my masterpiece from the oven and with a flourish plunged the serving spoon into my creation. Well that is a bit of an exaggeration, the spoon went through the sauce and stopped - the thick layer of potato underneath was still rock hard. Back in the oven, "another glass of wine darling?" At ten o'clock, rather drunk, we ate some half cooked moussaka - the bottom layer of potato was still hard.

With marriage to a farmer looming I was looking forward to a life back on the land but my cookery flair had obviously died to a flicker under Miss Cox and desperately needed reigniting, so I enrolled for a Cordon Bleu course.

When we built our farm house we dug down first - the cellar was the most important part I was told. After five years of stop start building, due to variable farming profit margins, we eventually moved in and decided to start a family. It was post natal depression that drove me into the IW&FS. After the birth of our first daughter I decided there had to be more to life than endless feeding and mucking out - and that was just the pigs. One of the books in my ever increasing mountain of cookery tomes was published by the 'International Wine & Food Society' - "I wonder who they are?" I wrote to their address in Edgware Road and received a letter back inviting us to join and informing us that our local branch was Berkshire.

Two years later we were persuaded to put on a Pig Evening for the branch. On the hottest night of the century we fed 36 members a multicourse pig dinner. Pigs ears were scrubbed and braised, lights (lungs) were served in vol au-vont cases, home cured ham was thinly sliced, rillettes served on toast, boerewors deep fried. A fifteen course tasting menu before tasting menus were even thought of. Fresh, warm liver was rushed home from the abattoir, sliced thinly, lightly fried in butter and served meltingly tender. Every part of the pig including his animelles were served that night. That evening was a baptism of fire and since then we have organised every type of event imaginable.

With farming profits dropping and the influx of yuppies into the area who didn't like to actually smell the activities of the countryside, the farm had to diversify to survive. We drastically reduced the number of pigs and opened a farm shop to take our produce through to retail. With the opening of the shop and an off-licence catering for special occasions developed into another arm of the Brunning Partnership so catering for IWFS events became second nature.

Over the years of retailing and catering we have always advanced a policy of 'fresh is best'. We firmly believe in the 3F's. Freezers and food are two of the words and Gordon Ramsey will supply the middle one! This is why we mourn the growth of the gastropub and restaurants with long menus as invariably these establishments are serviced by the large chains of manufacturers of ready meals - freezer to microwave meals, Cling & Ping. Freezing was a great breakthrough in the preservation of foodstuffs and has benefited populations' world wide but for the perfectionist using frozen produce is always second best

With so much to learn in the world of food and wine, there should never be a problem seeking out new experiences. It was not until our branch recently organised a comparative tasting of home made and 'ready meals' that I had ever tasted a factory produced meal. I have never even purchased one of those plastic wrapped creations consisting of two slices of cotton wool with some unidentifiable filling that masquerades as a sandwich in the supermarket chiller cabinet. I tasted goat for the first time the other night, a strong, almost brackish flavour and not something I would wish to repeat, but in the interests of science, these things must be experienced!

*To be continued - 'Building up a cellar and drinking it with members!'*





# Collectanea - solina

## Are you a Drug Addict?

American food and drug supremo David Kessler claims that today's junk food is addictive. While Jamie Oliver is in the US trying to teach the kids to eat properly Kessler maintains that the adult diet both sides of the Pond is as addictive as any class one drug. Kessler, a former head of United States Food & Drug Administration, points to the ubiquitous, processed, ready made, fast food we eat. These foods are loaded with sugar, fat and salt which produce an increased level of the neurotransmitter dopamine which produces in us a sense of reward. The brain clocks the pleasure of eating a burger and this creates a powerful sense of anticipation leading you to seek more burgers even if your body does not need more food. "The basis of the modern food industry is to take fat, sugar and salt and put it on every corner of every street and make it into entertainment. It captures the neural circuits and hijacks the brain." We develop cravings for our favourite food and this develops a pattern of - activation - arousal - reward thus we consume much more than the body needs for sustenance. "We are eating not because we are hungry but because we are being stimulated," says Kessler. "Thirty years ago we ate at meal times now we eat all day." It looks as though Jamie will do no good until we get back to the principal of three meals a day and no snacking in between. Kessler points out, "We have to change the way we look at food in the same way that we, successfully, looked at tobacco." Eating he says has to return to the structural habits of the past as in France.

## Have the French lost it when it comes to Cheese?

The French are trying some raunchy promotion when it comes to their cheese market. Last year sales of cheese such as camembert and brie dropped by 2%. In comparison the fastest growing sector in the cheese market was Italian mozzarella and Greek feta which jumped by 10%. Some of this is explained by the rise in the popularity of the pizza which is now a staple in the French diet. Their latest advertisements feature 'Géraldine Gruyère, Marie Mozzarella and Fleur Fets all promoted by Lactalis a vast dairy group owned by? - the French!



## Credit Crunch Ice Cream

Bologna's Gelato University, which is dedicated to ice cream, has seen a 90% rise in enrolments this year. The reason? Redundant high flyers from all over the world are flocking to Bologna to learn how to make the world's best ice cream. They are then returning home to launch their own gelato franchises, "From Beirut to Brighton innovation is rife, in China they have experimented with fish flavoured gelato," says Patrick Hopkins, the university's American Director. Seb Cole has other ideas, "We're going to try gelato flavoured with beer."



**£90** - The price of the worlds most expensive omelette made with gulls eggs, sold at Boisdale Restaurant in London.

## Quotes

"Not until about halfway through your pint do you stop drinking for the government and start drinking for yourself," Comedian Al Murray quoted in The Times.

"I don't like truffles, caviar or Champagne. I tend not to like things that cost money." Jeffrey Archer quoted in The Observer.

## Splendid Sales

Artificial sweeteners have been part of the American diet for years but now it seems everyone wants a fake sugar that is natural. Since saccharine made its début in 1957 the artificial sweetener market has rocketed to \$1.1 billion. Recently aspartame sales have fallen due to increased sales of 'Splenda', Tate & Lyle's natural low calorie sugar - as their slogan goes "made from sugar so it tastes like sugar". Sales of Splenda have now captured 61% of the sugar substitute market and it is being used in many confectionary goods.



## Monks Tipple!

North of the border they have always been known for their love of the hard stuff. It was always the locally produced brew that was considered to cause the hard drinking culture. A recent study showed that 25% more alcohol is drunk, per head, in Scotland than in England and the politicians have decided something must be done. Looking into alcohol consumption in Lanarkshire investigators found, rather upsettingly, that the brew of choice for local youngsters is not whisky but 'Buckie', a tonic brewed by the monks at Buckfast, Abbey in Devon. Retailing at around £6.50 a bottle with only 15% alcohol it seems a poor substitute for the hard stuff but evidently it also contains as much caffeine as eight cans of Coke, making it a lethal brew. Caffeine and alcohol combined make the imbiber particularly anxious and aggressive. The consumption of Buckfast was mentioned in 5,638 crime reports made by the Strathclyde police between 2006 and 2009 and in 114 of them the bottle was used as a weapon. Politicians have considered banning 'Buckie' but it is thought that it would only send the trade underground.



## Vegetarianism with a Vengeance

Researchers have worked out that for the UK to be self sufficient each person would be given an allowance of 3,000 calories a day. One kilo of wheat provides 3,500 calories, so each person would need one-third of a tonne a year. With a yield of eight tonnes to the hectare, each hectare would produce enough wheat to feed 24 people. For a population of 70 million that would mean a total of three million hectares devoted to wheat. In 2007 there was 2.78 million hectares growing wheat, so we are nearly there. What a boring existence, having to survive on a cereal based diet and what if there is a crop failure!

## Say NO to Bluefin Tuna

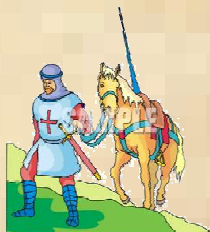
The recent failure to bring in a ban on the fishing of Bluefin tuna at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species is very depressing. Monaco proposed that fishing should be halved until stocks recover but they were stymied by a coalition including Canada, parts of the EU and - surprise, surprise - Japan! At least Britain supported the ban so check when you see tuna on a menu and if you do find it being served please e mail [jay.rayner@observer.co.uk](mailto:jay.rayner@observer.co.uk)



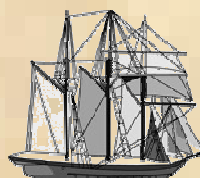
# Martial Milestones on the Menu

by Alan F Harrison

END OF  
CHIVALRY  
1346



LAST  
SAILING SHIP  
IN  
BATTLE  
1827



LAST  
MONARCH  
AS BATTLE  
COMMANDER  
1859



EMANUEL II

**T**

his series began with “Garnishes on Stage”. Moving forward with *Martial Mentions on the Menu*, that article said that we would progress to the time when use of the chivalric code of conduct in battle ended, when monarchs last engaged the enemy and when sailing ships were last used.



The Battle of **Solferino** was fought in 1859 and resulted in the victory of the allied French Army under Napoleon III and the Sardinian Army under **Emmanuel II** (together known as the Franco-Sardinian Alliance) against the Austrian Army under Emperor Franz Joseph I. It was the last major battle in world history where all the involved armies were under the personal command of their monarchs. Over 200,000 soldiers fought in this important battle. The battle is notable for the process that led to the Geneva Convention and the establishment of the International Red Cross. The soup *Crème Solferino* comprises potato soup and tomato soup combined at service to give a visual whirl. It would be harder to depict a red cross on a white background. That’s a good story for well-informed *chefs de rang* or station-waiters to relate. Perhaps only some go on to say that the tomato soup represents the blood in the nearby river and the “boules de carottes et pommes de terre” [Repertoire de la Cuisine] are the cannon balls!



Larousse tells us that **Crécy** is “A name given to various preparations, and notably to a soup called *Purée Crécy*. All the preparations named in this way include an obligatory garnish of carrots, and some are exclusively composed of carrots. Some authors believe the soup derives from a small town in the Somme near where the Battle of Crécy took place in 1346.” Larousse doesn’t say this, but the event was one of the most important battles of the Hundred Years’ War. The new weapons and tactics used have caused many historians to consider this battle the beginning of the end of classic chivalry. Many of the prisoners and wounded were killed. This was against the chivalric code of warfare, and knights on horseback were no longer undefeatable by infantry. Crécy may also have seen the first real use of cannon on the

European battlefield. Back to Larousse, which concludes the topic with “But with cut-and-thrust fighting, this cruel slashing, nothing remains but a famous soup.” It should have said, as our station-waiter who imagines the through-town River Maye during the battle might say, “A *bloody-famous* name given to *numerous* preparations.” There’s a consommé, an omelet and a sole dish, just to cite a few.

The last article mentioned future coverage of dish-processes. We can afford one here. The term **mirepoix** was coined to honour Charles-Pierre-Gaston-François de Lévis du Mirepoix. Charles du Mirepoix was a General from the town of Mirepoix, who was granted the title of Marshal of France for extraordinary military deeds. Beyond giving his name to an important ingredient in many dishes, he was also an ambassador of Louis XV. He inspired the creation of *Oeuf Poché Mirepoix*. Why is mirepoix important to French cooking? The diced vegetables used in mirepoix are mainly onion, carrot, celery and leek. They produce a good combined flavour and can stand up to long cooking times. The mirepoix, therefore, is the base of a wide variety of French soups and sauces and is an important part of the traditional flavour associated with French cooking.





The last battle in which sailing ships were used is said to have been in 1827 at the Battle of Navarino on the west coast of the Peloponnese peninsula, in the Ionian Sea. There are linguistically-less-likely claims that **Navarin** of Lamb derives from its use of turnip – *navet*. However, it's more descriptive to imagine hungry victorious sailors setting sail for home and the stew.



Now for victorious soldiers. The garnish **Hussarde** applies to large pieces of meat, paupiettes of meat, poached eggs, and trout. There is also a sauce. Hussarde is chosen to vary those who are commemorated on the menu. After all, it was the sabre-wielding men in the front line who fought. Hussars formed a unit in the Hungarian cavalry. Their uniform was impressive. No garnishes have been found to recognise French soldiers. France's sailors, however, fare better. The garnish **Matelote** is associated with pike and snails. In its fish stew format, it was worth a long voyage's waiting time.

Inevitably, it is the officers who receive most menu-credits, at first, generically. **Amiral** applies to canapés, turbot, and salmon dishes. **Commodore** also applies to turbot creations. **Amiral Courbet** (1827 – 1885) was a French Admiral who won a series of important land and naval victories. His menu presence is stuffed salmon braised in champagne. **Nelson**, however, takes the biscuit. Certain readers will remember 'squashed-fly' biscuits and we'll come to **Garibaldi** after.



In 1805, twenty-seven British ships of the line led by Admiral Lord **Nelson** defeated thirty-three French and Spanish ships of the line under French Admiral Pierre **Villeneuve** off the south-west coast of Spain at Trafalgar. The Franco-Spanish fleet lost twenty-two ships, without a single British vessel being lost. Nelson's death at Trafalgar secured his position as one of England's most heroic figures. Garnishes and dishes within *haute cuisine* have been created in Nelson's memory (Virtually none in his own country - we'll deal with that in a minute). They include consommé, quail, sole, turbot, and lamb cutlets. Villeneuve's *menu-medals* include consommé and venison.



Giuseppe **Garibaldi** (1807 – 1882) was an Italian military, naval, political and controversial figure. In 1854, he sailed into the mouth of the River Tyne in north eastern England, as Master of the sailing vessel *Commonwealth*. Garibaldi, already a popular figure on Tyneside, was welcomed enthusiastically by the local working class, although the local paper reported that he refused an invitation to dine with dignitaries in nearby Newcastle. There was no mention of biscuits but the diners may have enjoyed Consommé Garibaldi without him. He [and his biscuits] are still popular and the Internet gives numerous mentions.



## In conclusion

Although sometimes referring to the *French* menu, it was and is international. When the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries overlapped by several decades, its evolution encompassed high society Britain, chiefly London. The *Repertoire de la Cuisine* was being written and London had its influence. {It was published in Paris [Guerny] and London [Jaeggi] with its compilers' Preface signed in London.} West End chefs, possibly *maîtres d'hôtel* and *sommeliers* were making their suggestions as to content. Escoffier, king of chefs and chef of kings, certainly created garnishes for early editions.

Our first mention of dishes and garnishes was Beef Wellington and French defeat. Perhaps it was not a matter of celebrating French *etc* defeat and more to do with including mention of famous British people and those of other nationalities on the French menu. However, this author has not heard of Churchill Pudding or Gladstone Pie on solely British menus which is a shame. It would be optimistically nice to think that Beef Wellington was created by a British-born chef in London's West End.

Go surfing-and-turfing for Nelson and you are hard put to find only a steak-mix and a burger bearing his name. Where? Not surprisingly at a Nelson Hotel - ultimately found in Littlehampton, West Sussex, UK. Wellington is doubly celebrated on the à la carte menu of Brown's Pie Shop in Lincoln with the beef dish and roast chicken. Find Trafalgar steak at ITV.com and a few other places but probably not at the hotel of that name near the Square of that name

Working together, we can put right the lack of UK celebrities being gastronomically remembered in their own country. Write to Pam Brunning [address on page 3] with your examples of any British celebrity in history or modernity who has been given a menu accolade. I will collate the results. The next article in the series includes those who sent the Generals etc off to battle. It can include an appendix with your contributions.

Help unravel the mystery as to why Britain left its celebrities and major events mainly uncelebrated on the menu over too many years. Our war heroes have been mentioned in dispatches for decades, probably centuries. The French, however, give them and even our other notables far more than a mention on their menus. The French learn history at the table. Are British menus to be limited to Blair Burgers, the Hash Brown and now, Cameron Korma? How many Brits can remember when King Alfred burnt the cakes? Vive la France et les pommes frites!



## A LITTLE PIECE OF HISTORY

Alnwick, a charming Northumbrian town about 30 miles north of Newcastle, boasts a wonderful castle frequently used as a film location, an unusual garden which includes an enormous tree-house with its very own restaurant, and Barter Books, one of the greatest second hand bookshops you'll find anywhere. It's housed in what used to be Alnwick Station and has a model railway running above the bookshelves.

I've found some fascinating books there over the years and, on a recent visit, I found a 1946 edition of 'A Wine Primer' by our founder André Simon. It has a tremendous amount of information in it for such a little book, and one of the many items which I liked was his straightforward description of 'The Wine Connoisseur' :-

"The Wine Connoisseur is one who knows good wine from bad and who appreciates the distinctive merits of different wines. The Wine Connoisseur drinks wine in moderation, but regularly and appreciatively. It is excess – not habit – which blunts appreciation."

He goes on to say that a little wine everyday costs very little money and is the safest, as well as the pleasantest, tonic for body and mind alike. A sentiment I wholeheartedly share!

An Appendix includes some interesting figures. It gives the customs and excise duties on wine before and during the war, and the consumption during the same period. This uses three categories of wines – Foreign, Empire and British (Sweets). Does anyone know what these categories would have included?

They say every picture tells a story – the figures below certainly tell their own story. Given the horror of any war, the effect on the wine industry I'm sure is a minor concern, but it is one of the consequences which I'd never thought of before and is graphically illustrated by these figures.

Duty on a gallon of wine	Foreign	Empire	British
1938-39	6/-	3/-	1/6
1943-44	20/6	17/6	14/6
Consumption of wine (gallons)	Foreign & Empire		British
1938-39	15,244,906		6,419,653
1943-44	1,687,171		2,898,138

*Katie Wilkins - EAC Membership Registrar*

## THE AMAZING CUCUMBER

This piece is from The New York Times "Spotlight on the Home" series that highlights creative and fanciful ways to solve common problems

1. Cucumbers contain most of the vitamins you need every day, just one cucumber contains Vitamin B1, Vitamin B2, Vitamin B3, Vitamin B5, Vitamin B6, Folic Acid, Vitamin C, Calcium, Iron, Magnesium, Phosphorus, Potassium and Zinc.
2. Feeling tired in the afternoon? Put down the caffeinated soda and pick up a cucumber. Cucumbers are a good source of B Vitamins and Carbohydrates that can provide that quick pick-me-up that can last for hours ..
3. Tired of your bathroom mirror fogging up after a shower? Try rubbing a cucumber slice along the mirror, it will eliminate the fog and provide a soothing, spa-like fragrance.
4. Are grubs and slugs ruining your planting beds? Place a few slices in a small pie tin and your garden will be free of pests all season long. The chemicals in the cucumber react with the aluminium to give off a scent undetectable to humans but drive garden pests crazy and make them flee the area.
5. Looking for a fast and easy way to remove cellulite before going out or to the pool? Try rubbing a slice or two of cucumbers along your problem area for a few minutes, the phytochemicals in the cucumber cause the collagen in your skin to tighten, firming up the outer layer and reducing the visibility of cellulite. Works great on wrinkles too!!!
6. Want to avoid a hangover or terrible headache? Eat a few cucumber slices before going to bed and wake up refreshed and headache free. Cucumbers contain enough sugar, B vitamins and electrolytes to replenish essential nutrients the body lost, keeping everything in equilibrium, avoiding both a hangover and headache!!
7. Looking to fight off that afternoon or evening snacking binge? Cucumbers have been used for centuries and often used by European trappers, traders and explorers for quick meals to thwart starvation.
8. Have an important meeting or job interview and you realize that you don't have enough time to polish your shoes? Rub a freshly cut cucumber over the shoe, its chemicals will provide a quick and durable shine that not only looks great but also repels water.
9. Out of WD 40 and need to fix a squeaky hinge? Take a cucumber slice & rub it along the problematic hinge, and voila, the squeak is gone!
10. Stressed out and don't have time for massage, facial or visit to the spa? Cut up an entire cucumber and place it in a boiling pot of water, the chemicals and nutrients from the cucumber will react with the boiling water and be released in the steam, creating a soothing, relaxing aroma that has been shown to reduce stress in new mothers and college students during final exams.
11. Just finished a business lunch and realize you don't have gum or mints? Take a slice of cucumber and press it to the roof of your mouth with your tongue for 30 seconds to eliminate bad breath, the phytochemicals will kill the bacteria in your mouth responsible for causing bad breath.
12. Looking for a 'green' way to clean your faucets, sinks or stainless steel? Take a slice of cucumber and rub it on the surface you want to clean, not only will it remove years of tarnish and bring back the shine, but it won't leave streaks and won't harm your fingers or fingernails while you clean.
13. Using a pen and made a mistake? Take the outside of the cucumber and slowly use it to erase the pen writing, also works great on crayons and markers that the kids have used to decorate the walls!!



# *How Green is Your Trolley?*

## *by Chris Long*



**H**ow much do you worry about what you put in your supermarket trolley?

If you fill your basket with organic produce, pay that bit extra for Fairtrade products and stick to locally produced items are you doing your bit to save the world? Environmental concerns, rather than health benefits, are now cited by consumers as their main reason for buying local organic food and Fairtrade products.

Ever since the growth of organic production on a large scale there have been sceptics but today even some of our top scientists are acknowledging that organic is not necessarily green. Dr Norman Borlaug winner of the Nobel peace prize, the father of the green revolution, who died in September 2009, maintained claims that organic farming is better for the environment were “ridiculous”. In March 2009 he stated, “Don't tell the world that we can feed the present population without chemical fertiliser. That's when this misinformation [about the merits of organic farming] becomes destructive.”

With organic farming much more land is required to produce the same yields. Between 1950 and 2000 global cereal production tripled but the amount of land used increased by only 10%. Using traditional organic methods with crop rotation, composts and manures the area under cultivation would have tripled. The more intensive the production the more room you have left for rain forests Dr Borlaug claimed.

What of the argument that organic farming is energy efficient? Lord Melchett has pointed out that artificial fertilisers and herbicides are made using natural gas and this is “completely unsustainable”. The alternative, used by the organic movement, is to keep the weeds at bay ploughing, and to spread the crop with manure. Dr Anthony Trewavas of Edinburgh University argues that this uses more energy as the crop yield is much lower so a much larger area has to be covered by the tractor. The most environmentally friendly form of production is “no till” farming, a production method that has been used for years. This involves little or no ploughing and the control of weeds by carefully applied herbicides but this is not permitted on organic holdings.

Do you think you are helping the environment by buying only local produce in season, thereby cutting down on ‘foodmiles’? Not necessarily, a Department of the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) report, which analysed food supply chains in the UK, made some interesting revelations.

If you want to eat tomatoes in the winter it is better to truck them from Spain than produce them under heat in this country. A large truck full of groceries supplying a supermarket is much more environmentally friendly than a farmers market being supplied by dozens of small producers in their vans. A bag of salad being transported home in a four by four just doesn't make sense, however organic the lettuce is. Half our food vehicle miles are travelled by cars driving to and from the shops, a good case for the return of the network of local corner shops that are within walking distance in both large urban conurbations and country villages. Rather than ‘foodmiles’, Paul Watkins of DEFRA says it is more helpful to think of food-tonne miles, which takes the tonnage being carried into account. Research carried out by Lincoln University found that producing lamb in New Zealand and shipping it to the UK used less energy than producing it at home.

Do you feel good if you buy ‘Fairtrade’ coffee? The ‘Fairtrade’ movement is an anomaly, it doesn't guarantee a fair price for all third world producers, it benefits only those companies large enough and rich enough to pay up to \$1,000 certification fee. The ‘Fairtrade’ movement subsidises farmers when there is a world glut and those belonging to the movement sustain a reasonable income but with coffee prices tumbling, the small, non Fairtrade farmers suffer accordingly. The Fairtrade movement, by subsidising larger growers, is distorting world trade as much as the EU with their subsidies.

If consumers think they are changing the world by the way they shop they had better think again, they could be making things worse. ♦

*Chris Long has worked in the food industry for over thirty years and is now an independent consumer consultant whose articles are published world wide.*



# RECIPE WITH A STORY TO TELL

Once again we are very privileged to have received permission to reproduce a recipe from the captivating book Hereford branch member Ikka Boyd wrote for her daughter.

Ikka, with her husband John, founded the Hereford Branch and still take an active part.

Ikka, with a friend, formed her own catering company spending ten years cooking for an impressive portfolio of customers. She says her main reason for writing the book was, 'to satisfy the pleading of her newly-married daughter for advice and to ensure that these favourite recipes, some from her own childhood, would not be lost - maybe to be carried over for another generation.'

Below is Ikka's delicious recipe for an asparagus mousse, John tells me it is one of his favourites. The book contains some very interesting, tried and tested recipes. John still has some copies available, you can contact him - e mail [boyd456@btinternet.com](mailto:boyd456@btinternet.com) Tel: 01989 780214



## ASPARAGUS & EGG MOUSSE

### A Belgian recipe

#### INGREDIENTS

#### SERVES 4

225g/8ozs cooked asparagus  
4 large hard boiled eggs  
285ml/½ pt mayonnaise  
1½ tsp gelatine  
Salt & cayenne pepper



Melt the gelatine in a little hot water.

Chop the eggs roughly and purée in a liquidiser with the mayonnaise, add the gelatine and mix well.

Place six asparagus tips around the bottom of your mould. Chop the rest of the asparagus fairly finely by hand and stir into the mayonnaise mixture. Season well and pour into the mould and leave to set overnight. Unmold and cut into wedges.

Ikka says she sometimes makes it in a bowl and scoops each serving out onto a plate and garnishes it with asparagus spears and watercress. Serve with toast.

## SIMPLE LEMON CHEESE MOUSSE

**This is a light cheesecake for those that don't like cheesecakes!**

#### BISCUIT BASE

Oil a 23cm/9" loose bottomed cake tin or line with cling film.

175g/6ozs crushed 'Hobnob' biscuits

75g/3ozs butter

40g/1½ozs sugar

Melt the butter, stir in the sugar and biscuits and press into the bottom of the cake tin.

#### CHEESE MOUSSE

One packet of lemon jelly squares

400g/14ozs full-fat soft cheese

100g/4ozs sugar

150ml/¼pt whipping cream

2 lemons

Melt the jelly squares in 150ml/¼pt of boiling water then stir in the juice of the lemons. Place in the fridge until it starts to thicken while you make the base.

Beat together the cheese and sugar then stir in the almost set jelly. Fold in the whipped cream and pour into tin. Refrigerate until firm, remove from tin and decorate with whipped cream and crystallised lemon rind.



## MERSEYSIDE AND MID-CESHIRE VISIT NEW ZEALAND



On the last day of February six members of the branch, plus four members of the Manchester Branch, left the winter weather of England for autumnal New Zealand. After a two night stopover in Hong Kong we arrived in Auckland eager to sample the delights of New Zealand's cuisine, but more especially the fruits of her wineries.

The early highlight of the trip was a lunch, on 5<sup>th</sup> March, at Mollies Boutique Hotel, organised by Marlene Tuohey, President of the Auckland Branch of the IWFS. Besides enjoying the company of fourteen members of the branch, we were treated to a superb meal accompanied by a selection of New Zealand's finest wines.

From Auckland we travelled south east to Napier in the Hawke's Bay wine region. From there we enjoyed a full day of tastings beginning with Craggy Range. This is one of the country's premium producers. It specialises in single vineyard wines from the North Island. Its home is at the base of the spectacular Te Mata Peak and this beautiful winery has an acclaimed restaurant, Terroir, where we enjoyed a delicious lunch. The vineyard has 100 hectares in the renowned Gimblett Gravels area, where the focus is on claret-style reds, Syrah and Chardonnay. Further south, at Martinborough, the focus changes to wines made from Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir.

The second tasting of the day took place at Trinity Hill. Here the wines are made by John Hancock, who built a reputation at Delegats and Morton Estate. The winery is at the base of Roy's Hill in the Gimblett Gravels district, where he owns 36 hectares of vines. His flagship red, The Gimblett, is a Bordeaux blend but he also makes single varietal wines from not only all the "main" white and black grapes, but also from Cabernet Franc, Malbec, Viognier, Tempranillo, Montepulciano, Petit Verdot, Touriga Nacional and Arneis. However, we felt that the winery's experimentation in such a wide range of varieties resulted in its spreading itself too widely.

From Trinity we moved on to Mission, the oldest wine estate in NZ. The vineyard is located in the original and beautiful buildings which formerly housed a Roman Catholic Mission. Vines were first planted in the early 1850's. We tasted examples of its entry levels wines, then from its "Vineyard Selection" range, finishing with two from the "Reserve" range. All the wines impressed the members of the party who were still tasting after three vineyards in one day!

En route to Wellington we visited Murdoch James, near Martinborough. Here we enjoyed a tasting presented by Roger Fraser, who founded the estate in 1986. The tasting was followed by a delicious lunch. All the dishes were superb but a dessert comprising walnut crème brulee, raspberry sorbet and lavender panna cote, was of particular note. Amongst the wines, the Pinot Gris was particularly well received but all the wines tasted and those enjoyed with the lunch, were appreciated by the party.

An account of our visit to the wineries of the South Island will appear in the next edition.

We would also like to take this opportunity to announce that our esteemed tour director, Val Bishop, will be organising a cruise on the Douro River in Portugal, in September 2011, and hopes to organise a visit to our branches in the Philippines in 2012.





# around the branches - Members Entertain at Home

## Leicester Branch

We started the New Year with a wine tasting at the home of Douglas and Shirley Smith. Thirty two of us assembled in their elegant drawing room and enjoyed an Italian aperitif, a sparkling wine, Alboro Secco Frizzante, from Emilio Romagno. It was made with the Spergola grape at £8.99. Moving into their large dining room/ hall we sat at five round tables for a wine tasting tutored by Duncan Murray, an independent wine merchant from Market Harborough. He introduced seven wines from Southern France, predominantly from the Languedoc region.

1 - A dry Muscat which had a pleasant nose but seemed lacking in taste - Mas de Jacquet 2008 - Vic la Gardiole. £7.20

2 - Picpoul de Pinet, Beauvignac 2008 from Pomerols made by an Englishman. £7.99

3 - A rosé - Cour St Vincent Rosé de Camille 2008 - from the St Vincent de Barbeyraques vineyard at Cassis near Marseille made from Cinsault, Grenache and Syrah. £7.20

We then moved on to the reds which I thought very good.

4 - We started with Cuvée 'Crunch' - Domaine du Poujol - Vailhaquès made from Syrah, Mourvèdre, Carignan & Cinsault, - excellent value at £5.99.

5 - Vin d'Une Nuit 2008 Beauvignac also from Pomerols and named because the syrah grape juice is left on the skins for only one night. £7.99

6 - Domaine Sainte Croix Magneric 2004 from the Corbières region made from Carignan, Grenache, Morrastel Bouchet and Syrah - £8 if one bought two.

7 - La Sauvageonne VDP 2005 - St Jean de la Blaquière made from Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon. £14.99. This is a Bordeaux style wine made by an Englishman and still showing much tannin but it will probably develop well.

Ton Van Dermeen of Oliver Catering Services produced an excellent supper of cassoulet with pork, sausage and duck legs and a delicious almond and prune tart, which rounded off a very convivial evening. Our thanks are due to Tony Willis who arranged the event.

*Mary Jewell*



## Capital Branch Wine & Cheese Party with a Difference - a Retro 70s Evening



No, we didn't stand around drinking cheap 'Spanish Chablis' with some lumps of cheese and pineapple on cocktail sticks as we did in the 70s! We presented a three course dinner featuring cheese, telling members that on some of the courses you will not even know there is cheese involved but the flavours will dictate the type of wines served.

We started the evening with Carpentier Champagne from the branch cellar accompanied by cheese straws and thin light crisp cheese pennies.

Our first course was A Trio of Scallops, served in their shells in true 70s fashion, but, in a very light Béchamel subtly flavoured with star anis. These were gratined with a dusting of parmesan and breadcrumbs so that it didn't detract from the delicate taste of the scallops. With this we drank a very interesting 2007 Planeta Chardonnay from Sicily, £19.45. A delicious smooth creamy wine with all the traits of a good Burgundy it complemented the delicate flavours of the scallops beautifully. A Sorbet du Marc followed as a palate cleanser, to everyone's surprise this contained a light fromage frais.

Our main course was rib eye steak stuffed with basil pesto with cream cheese, served on a bed of crushed, minted new potatoes accompanied by courgettes baked in a cheese custard. With this we drank a Tim Adam's Fergus 2000 Clare Valley, Australia (ex cellar). To quote Tim Adams in December 2003 - *"A fascinating wine, dominated by Grenache fermented on Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Shiraz marc (the left-over skins, pips and so on following fermentation). A good rich colour. Full and open, with plenty of strawberry fruit on the nose. The palate is where this wine really shines though. It has super-ripe tannins, with perfectly poised, gentle acidity, which is entirely appropriate for this medium bodied wine. Brilliant flavours, of strawberries with black treacle, and liquorice too. This is lovely, warm and rounded stuff, and yet nicely balanced."* After ten years it has softened beautifully and is showing all the characteristics of its antecedence. It stood up well to the strong flavours of the dish.

A very light lemon cheesecake (see page 22) was accompanied by a Château Rieussec 1981 and a Concha y Toro 2002 Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc (both ex cellar). Both of which showed up well with the dessert.

Coffee was served with chocolate truffles - minus cheese!

*Pam Brunning*



# around the branches - Members Entertain at Home

## LONDON BRANCH ENJOY'S 'SOUTH WEST FRANCE' IN THE BARBICAN

Having visited Gascony over recent years house-hunting, Nina and I are passionate about the region's gastronomy. We have found encouragement from our stays at a chambre d'hôte in the Gers, where our hosts, Francis and Colette have provided us with many memorable dinners at derisory cost; 20 Euros for four courses and all the wine you care to drink. The latter is courtesy of the Plaimont co-operative, of which Francis is one of a thousand rightly proud growers.

Thus inspired we held two "soirées" at home on consecutive Saturday evenings. The idea was to recreate not just recipes, accompanied by appropriate wines but also the "convivialité" we had experienced in France. We offered a choice of apéritifs; a young Cotes de St Mont Blanc, marketed as "Colombelle" (Nicolas). A white that can accompany shellfish or be served on its own it is made principally from Colombard grapes, medium-dry with citrus and also tropical fruit notes. Secondly, "floc de Gascogne" (Nicolas); a blend of unfermented grape juice and eau de vie, the base spirit of Armagnac. The braver of heart chose "pousse-rapière", in English "rapier thrust", named in honour of local hero, d'Artagnan; a cocktail of fizz, orange liqueur and Armagnac served well chilled. After two of these our guests certainly were!

Duck gizzard virgins greeted the salade de gésiers with some trepidation but in the main they were converted to this earthy combination of pan-fried duck offal and crispy-cold winter leaves dressed with homemade cep oil, shallots and garden herbs. Two wines, both from the same chateau, accompanied the salad; Cahors Ch de Gaudou Tradition and Renaissance, both 2006 (both Majestic). The Cahors being a blend of 70% malbec, merlot and tannat, is an approachable wine that gives brambly fruit and decent structure. The Renaissance however, being 100% Malbec, is in every way a bigger wine; 0.5% more alcohol, heavily perfumed, with more sous-bois, architectural tannins and tinges of violet. At the early stages of drinkability, it creates a sense of indulgence and anticipation; you feel you are entering the boudoir of a "femme d'un certain age" in the making.

The main attraction was then presented; a slow-cooked (6 hours) cassoulet, which required more than 24 hours preparation. Restraining schoolteacherly tendencies, I contented myself with explaining that there are three main towns laying claim to being the dish's birthplace; Toulouse, Carcassonne and situated between the two, Castelnaudary. Not aiming for strict authenticity, I called my version "Cassoulet de Barbican". The dish consisted of dried haricots ("cocos") soaked in water overnight then cooked along with a bouquet garni, clove-studded onion, celery and carrot. Added to this among other ingredients on day 2 were pork fillet, belly and organic pork sausages all fried in duck fat, with confit of duck added for good measure. An hour before the end of cooking the dish was crowned with a "hachis" of minced garlic and parsley overlaid with breadcrumbs. Just before serving this was toasted under the grill and then, following invocations to Ceres and attendant minor deities, anointed with walnut oil.

Again two red wines were sampled, this time from the Madiran region. A well-rounded, blackcurranty, Plaimont-produced Cotes de St Mont 2006 (Nicolas), which is a blend of 70% Tannat and 30% Cabernet Franc, followed by a 100% Tannat, Ch d'Ay-die 2006, (Waitrose). The latter generally needs a goodly period of bottle-ageing and it was just about old enough to be out on its own. Again highly-perfumed, with a bouquet of ripe plums, robust and built to last, its chocolaty, black cherry flavours preceded a long finish and provided an excellent match for the rustic earthiness and bean-creaminess of the cassoulet. Oh la-la!

Cheese honours fell to a Pyrenean ewe's in the first week and Rocmadour (a half-crown sized goat disc) in the second, which we consumed with the remaining red. There then followed the Roquefort, accompanied by another Waitrose wine; Jurançon Moelleux Ch Jolys 2006. The effect was akin to the Christmas Port and Stilton experience, with the saltiness of the cheese in counterpoint to the sweet lusciousness of the wine.

The Jurançon also did excellent service with the croustade aux pommes; apples soaked in Armagnac and baked in puff pastry. The competition as to sweetness was shaded by the dessert, with the wine's acidity, providing agreeable freshness and balance.

With coffee Nina served her "bouchée surprise"; a velvety chocolate paste presented on a wafer spoon. This heralded the entry of the Armagnacs. The Ch du Tariquet XO (Waitrose) is a good value blend of Armagnacs with a minimum of 12 years in oak. It is reduced to 40% alcohol but retains plenty of character and has a nose of butterscotch and walnut, giving candied fruit and vanilla on the palate followed by a medium-length marzipan finish.

Our hardier guests rose to the challenge of the Ch de Lacaze 1982, a cask strength Armagnac from a now defunct estate. The spirit, mahogany in colour, is much deeper than the Tariquet. The nose also is more expansive, and it unleashed, along with a surge of alcohol, prune, quince and brioche. After the explosive, numbing first taste, the mouth is entertained by something of a symphonic performance, with passages of unfolding and overlapping flavours. Caramelised orange and well-integrated toasted oak accompanied the fat, glycerine mouthfeel once the initial attack subsided. Finally notes of cocoa joined the party and amid the complexity of the long finish there was medicinal eucalyptus and also nutmeg. It would in a nut-shell be the sort of Jaffa cake-flavoured nectar that a koala bear who has led a blameless life (and with a taste for drink strong enough to make its fur stand to attention) could look forward to being handed on passing through the gates of heaven!

*Joe Coten*



Nina with her Cassoulet





# around the branches - Berkshire

## BORDEAUX & BEYOND

Today most cru classées Bordeaux wines are out of reach of the pocket of most of us, except, perhaps for special occasions. Following corporate careers, Tony Hill, John Green and John Lotinga set up Bordeaux & Beyond in 2006 to offer small French family run vigneron, who produce only a few thousand bottles per year, a channel to the UK market for their wines. Tony and John came along to share with 35 IWFS members 9 wines from their list, focussing on Bordeaux.

Bordeaux & Beyond ([www.bordeauxetbeyond.com](http://www.bordeauxetbeyond.com)) currently list some twenty seven wines, half of which are from Bordeaux. They are also members of the Association of Small Direct Wine-Merchants ([www.asdw.co.uk](http://www.asdw.co.uk)) which incorporates 30 small wine importers and publishes an online magazine called GrapesTALK.

Before we got into the clarets, we tried a Sainte-Foy Bordeaux Blanc 2008, called Vin Passion. This is made bio-dynamically by the wine maker at Pontet-Canet from 33% each of Sauvignon blanc, semillon and muscadet, giving it a floral nose and a freshness which belied its length. Then Tony asked us to help them with a problem. The most recent vintage of their existing chablis supplier was not up to scratch and the directors could not agree on which new Chablis to list. So, we blind tasted two premier crus: a traditional spare and stony 2004 Chablis from Domaine Fourey and a more modern fruity style 2008 with a touch of oak from Domaine Christophe Camu. Both were very drinkable, but very different, and on a show of hands the room was split down the middle – not much help there then! Maybe they should list both?

On to the clarets, starting with Chateau Henri at £8, which is unusual and old fashioned in being 100% merlot. This delivered fruit and vanilla flavours but the tannins made it quite dry. We then moved on to a Chateau Lafleur Beausejour, Cotes de Castillon 2007 at £9, made with 75% merlot and 25% cabernet franc from vines which are mostly over 25 years old. Light, some fruit, an honest drinking claret. Next came a Chateau des Moines, Lalande-Pomerol 2004 at £11.50 comprising 73% merlot, 15% cabernet franc, 10% cabernet sauvignon and 2% malbec. Why 2% malbec? – well, it is hard to define, but you certainly know when it is not there! This was a well balanced wine.

The Chateau La Rose Monturon, Saint Emilion, 2007 at £13 is made from 80% merlot, 15% cabernet sauvignon and 5% cabernet franc. This is a “garagiste” wine, the 8000 bottles being made entirely by hand in a modern style and matured for 12 months in French oak. The colour is cherry red, with fresh fruit flavours and good acid balance, perhaps reminiscent of a good chianti? The next wine from Chateau Micalet, a 2001 Haut Medoc at £11 is labelled cru-artisan, one of 44 such properties, made legal in 2006. Here they produce about 25,000 bottles from vines averaging 30 years old. The cepage is 45% merlot, 45% cabernet sauvignon, 7% petit verdot and 3% cabernet franc and the rounded, long fruit in the mouth delivers very good value for money. Finally we tasted Les Hauts du Tetre 2005 from Margaux, the second wine from the vineyard, 40% cabernet sauvignon, 35% merlot, 20% cabernet franc and 5% petit verdot. Earthy nose, real berry flavours and controlled acid is the reason this wine got top score of the evening and has sold out at £22.

Interesting to see that malbec is still being grown, albeit in small quantities, and also the traditional petit verdot being included in some blends. In fact, of last year's new vine plantings, 62% were merlot, 25% cabernet-sauvignon, 12% cabernet franc and only 1% for all the other grape types!

In the absence of our chef Charlotte, supper was provided by Noel from Deliciously French ([www.deliciouslyfrench.co.uk](http://www.deliciouslyfrench.co.uk)) in Station Parade, Cookham. The menu consisted of a duck and pork cassoulet with green salad followed by a trio of genuine french tarts (if you will excuse the expression) of pear & chocolate, raspberry and traditional French apple. This went down really well with a glass of the 2002 Chateau Micalet. The branch will be buying both vintages of Micalet to lay down in our cellar for a future tasting.

## BETHANY WINES FROM THE BAROSSA VALLEY

The Schrapel Family came to the Barossa Valley (named after Barossa near Andalusia) from Silesi on the “George Washington” in 1844. They planted their first vines in 1852 from cuttings carefully nursed from Europe, the grapes at that time were all sold on. It was not until 5<sup>th</sup> generation Geoff and Robert Schrapel built their winery in 1981, that they made their first vintage.

With three vineyards across the area, they managed to retain many of their older vines through the Australian Government's Vine Pull Scheme of the 1970s. They are now well known both for the quality of their wines and for their hospitality.

The Branch has been trying to arrange a tasting of Bethany wines for some time. Johanna Raffan was therefore very pleased to welcome Mark Chapman of Peter Osborne Fine Wines in Watlington, their UK importer, in order to present a selection from his range of Bethany wines. After a good German Sekt aperitif, not out of keeping since Barossa is still a very Germanic region, we went on to taste a 2007 Dry Riesling, a 2006 Reserve Riesling and a 2007 Barrel Fermented Semillon. The Rieslings both exhibited a very traditional nose with the Dry being quite high in acid and the Reserve being better balanced. The Semillon showed a much lighter nose but had an intense flavour – good drinking!

The 2007 Bethany Cabernet Franc Rose was rich with lots of summer fruits although it might be a touch sweet for some palates.

Now on to the reds: first up was the 2006 Bethany Old Vine Grenache. These old vines deliver low volume/high quality grapes and the result can be tasted in the glass. Good colour, a distinct nose is followed by spice in the mouth and a long aftertaste. This scored well with the group. The 2005 Bethany Shiraz went half a step further up the ratings: this wine coats the tongue with rich, long, very well balanced flavours – almost meaty.



Tony Hill



Serious tasting



Cassoulet

## around the branches - St James's



### ST. JAMES'S in ST. JAMES'S STREET

Dinner in March took the branch to the part of London after which it is named, St. James's, in the heart of clubland. Here, we dined at L'Oranger, a delightful restaurant whose omission from the galaxy of Michelin stars is truly astonishing. If it had been in our power to confer stars, we would have given at least one on the spot! Apart from the extremely talented chef Laurent Michel, who comes from Provence and has trained at Taillevent, among other establishments, the restaurant also has an excellent Manager, Nordine Mohamed, who has been in charge for 10 years, and a truly outstanding sommelier, Lucio Penetra. Of Portuguese origin and French upbringing, he is one of the most knowledgeable we have ever come across. He was voted 'best sommelier of the year' by The Tatler last year and is an expert at finding slightly obscure wines at very comfortable prices. Something every member in London is looking for: a delightful bottle at a

sensible price that is offered with very intelligent food and wine matching suggestions.

After an agreeable glass of Bouvet-Ladubet's sparkling Saumur Sapphire Brut, we moved to the private dining room for our feast of six courses and six wines. Wintry vegetables "bouquet", was a very simple and successful dish of salad on a base of lightly spiced aubergine purée. Lucio's skill was immediately demonstrated by matching this with Bruno Sorg's excellent Pinot Blanc 2008 from Alsace. The soup course was a very luxurious version of what Yorkshire farmers call "windy soup", a delicious cream of Jerusalem and globe artichokes topped with a delightful deep-fried *cromesquis* of foie gras. Before you start reaching for your dictionary, I can tell you that the *cromesquis* was a ball of foie gras inside a light crust. What we could not understand is how it was possible to fry it without completely melting the foie gras! Second helpings of soup were offered, and indeed could not be resisted by many guests. The wine was Château Bouscassé Pacherenc de Vic-Bilh 2007. This unusual wine is somewhat in the style of a dry Jurançon but a little richer thanks to the addition of the petit courbu grape.

Our next course was a roasted scallop in the shell with caviar sauce served with a very successful Pouilly Fuissé 2007 from the Domaine la Soufrandise. The wine was a reminder of just how truly burgundian the wines of Pouilly Fuissé can be, it was rich, complex and intense and a perfect match with the dish. The red burgundy which followed was also a case of a wine scoring well above its appellation: Côtes de Nuits Villages is only one notch up from the basic Bourgogne appellation and yet this tasted more like a decent village wine of the Côte d'Or. The reason? This wine had come from the Domaine Claude Chevalier which has been winning medals since the Expositions Universelles of the nineteenth century. It accompanied a superb poultry pot-au-feu grand-mère garnished with chicken liver pâté on toast served with a delicious creamy sauce.

Now, the first of our puddings and pudding wines. Roast bananas, brunoise of fruits and vegetables with red fruits granite, all the flavours harmonised and the bananas did not dominate as might have been expected. Blindfolded, one would scarcely have been aware that the "fruits" included a little tomato and cucumber – they worked very well indeed and the crown of spun sugar on top was the height of elegance! The second pudding was a macaroon filled with a confit of kumquats served with a saffron ice cream. Perhaps the macaroon was a touch on the firm side but the flavours were excellent. How on earth do you match such puddings with wine? For Lucio it was easy, he served the first with a Muscat de Rivesaultes Domaine Poudroux 2007. A delicate style of Muscat with interesting nuances of white peach and rosewater. The second wine was far more intense, a Petit Manseng Doux from Comte Philippe de Nazelle's Domaine Cabidos 2006. It was extraordinary how the flavour nuances of this wine – grapefruit, quince and tropical fruit – picked up all the flavour nuances of the pudding. The big difference between the two wines was in the acidity, it was a touch low in the Muscat but quite pronounced on the Cabidos making this powerful, sweet, rich wine perfectly balanced and never cloying.

Thus, apart from coffee and *friandises*, ended a remarkable evening. Why will we remember it? Because marvellous cooking was so brilliantly matched with interesting and unusual wines, served by professional and friendly waiters. For many of us, this was our first visit to L' Oranger, but certainly not the last!

*Gregory Bowden and Ari Sofianos*

### BETHANY WINES cont.

Finally their 2006 Bethany LE Reserve Shiraz delivered really rich upfront style, stronger all round than the previous Shiraz and scored top marks for the evening. These wines are all 14 or 14.5% and are not cheap, so maybe they are sipping wines rather than drinking wines which would be a real treat for a special occasion. We also tried their N.V. Bethany Old Quarry Tawny Fortified which was smooth with a lovely aftertaste of raisins.

Charlotte Turner partnered the wines with a Moorish Lamb Casserole with Couscous. The delicious Lime Slice, from a recipe by Australian celebrity chef Bill Granger, which followed rounded off a very interesting and enjoyable evening.

*Chris Graham*





# around the branches - Manchester



## AN ILLUMINATING EVENING

We were delighted to learn that the proprietor of a Manchester branch favourite, Isis, Brett Stewart, had formed a partnership with wine importer and Italian wine enthusiast, Juliusz Lisowski, in a new restaurant called 'Bulb' in the recently-opened apart-hotel 'Light'.

After a warm welcome from Juliusz we enjoyed an apéritif of Da Bello Prosecco D.O.C. NV before sitting down to traditional Italian fare. The antipasto was "Verdura in Graticola with Tuscan beans and Parma ham" which had been dressed with a delicious "olio". To accompany it we were served an Egot Chardonnay/Trebbiano 2008 from Emilio Romano. It had a good depth of flavour and quite a long finish for such a modest wine.

Our Prima Piatti was a Risotto con Funghi which was made with wild mushrooms decorated with shavings of parmesan cheese. After some considerable thought, Juliusz had plumped for a red to accompany this dish, a Montupoli Montepulciano D.O.C. 2007. Made in the province of Abruzzo its flavour coupled with good acidity made it a perfect match for the richness of the wild mushroom flavours. This dish was well received by most members but a few were not keen on the "al dente" nature of the rice.

The main course, which was universally enjoyed was a chargrilled corn-fed chicken breast with freshly sautéed asparagus tied in a little bundle and dressed with a light basil pesto gremolata. The cooking had left the chicken with all its juiciness inside rather than dried out - which is easily done. With this we enjoyed generous quantities of a delicious white from Orvieto, that city on the border of Umbria and Lazio, a Custodi Orvieto 2008.

The evening was rounded off with an absolutely scrumptious Panettone and Butter pudding, which one experienced dessert lover amongst us pronounced as the best bread and butter pudding he had ever tasted, what more need be said. An enjoyable evening and a most successful event. *David Chapman*



## A MEAL EXPERIENCE

How the North West has changed - I have been fortunate, over the years, to be involved in the food and drink industry and I have witnessed a revolution in cooking. So, it was with joy that members attend our first event of the year at The Church Green. Proprietor Aiden Byrne was the youngest chef, at 22, to win a Michelin star. His outstanding skills have won him many awards and great respect from colleagues. This very professionally run enterprise is a good marriage of fun, fine dining and an outstanding wine list, a "gastropub" of distinction.

The apéritif was Villiera Brut Naturel 2006 from South Africa. Then a classical training shone through the quenelles of whipped salted butter with freshly baked breads. Our starter of queen scallops with truffle jelly and a Jerusalem artichoke sauce was a delicious combination of two shells one of hot roasted scallops, Jerusalem artichoke, delicate chervil, truffle and a sauternes sauce. The second shell had a base of black truffle jelly with scallops tartare with lemon juice on it which effectively "cooked" the scallops without heat. An unusual combination that tickled the taste buds. The dish was accompanied by Errazuriz Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2009 Chile.

The rump and rack of lamb with red cabbage puree and dried fruits was a labour of love. The lamb was delicious, the red cabbage had a hint of juniper and the sliced fig baked in honey and pear poached in red wine and port with braised shallots enhanced the dish beautifully. The Marqués de Riscal Rioja Reserva 2005 Spain was a perfect complement to the dish.

A dessert of dark chocolate covered with hazelnut dacquoise with a yoghurt sorbet was outstanding with unique combinations and flavours and a picture on a plate. Coffee, accompanied by some rather special petit fours, completed a most memorable "meal experience". *Patrick Trodden*

**EVENT COSTING:-**The Manchester Branch has always appreciated André Simon's valuable ideals of enjoying and learning more about Good Food and Good Wine in Good Company.

We are a Wine and Food Society and our members appreciate both. Some both equally, some mainly the Wine and some mainly the Food, but all value the enjoyment and the Company,

At our events we normally provide food and the equivalent of 4 glasses of wine (2/3rds of a bottle)

In finding a way of pricing an event that reflects the views and wishes of our members, anyone of our Committee members could have been co-opted onto either David Cameron's or Nick Clegg's Coalition negotiating teams. We take into account the views of the non-drinkers and minimal drinkers of alcohol and also our responsibilities to all the members when considering the implications of the Drink and Driving Laws. Our Branch covers a wide area and members drive considerable distances to attend events. So we felt we had to give drivers an option to reflect this important issue.

Our solution was to offer members a choice of:

The "Full" price for Food and Wine or

An "Aperitif Only" price for the Food + 1 glass of the welcoming/aperitif wine.

The price difference between the two depends on the price on the wine for the event This option applies to most occasions apart from wine tastings, fixed price (pp) per person events and the Summer Garden Party which we subsidise and hire a Marquee + tables and chairs.

We welcome guests – they are potentially our new members. However we do have a price differential of an extra £5 in both the above categories. This reflects the fact that our members have paid their IW&FS subs and contributed to the branch's administrative costs. It also encourages guests to realise that membership of the IW&FS is not only very worthwhile but also cost effective!

*Tricia Fletcher - Chairman*

# around the branches - Malmo

## VENDEL

The Swedish equivalent of the Guide Michelin is the White Guide. Our branch started off the spring season by visiting Vendel at Sturehof in Malmo, which has, for many years been one of Sweden's top rated restaurants.

After our amuse bouche of blue mussel in three versions (fried, terrine and soup) accompanied by a young crispy Sancerre Cuvée tradition 2008, Vincent Grall, we enjoyed the following well presented five course meal:

Lemon marinated haddock, new potato and nettle surrounded by fresh lumpfish roe  
Riesling Silverberg de Rorschwihr 2008, Rolly Gassmann

Cod, white asparagus, duck liver "pearls" and walnut

Pinot gris Schimberg 2007, Dirler Cadé

Pinot gris Rosenberg Dilicis 2004, Barmes Buecher

Fillet, terrine and sausage of lamb, wild garlic, artichoke and dill stock

Pinot noir Galpin Peak 2008, Bouchard Finlayson

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

Danish blue cheese, caramellized onion and roasted wheat

Furmint Lapis 2006, Királyudvar (Tokay)

Rhubarb, white chocolate yoghurt, small dark rye bread crumbs and raspberries

Botrytis Riesling 2008, Josef Chromy Wines (Tasmania)

The haddock was served under a glass cover which, when lifted, spread a light scent of smoke from alder sawdust over the plate and had of course also given an extra taste to the fish. Spectacular indeed.

The same went for the duck liver "pearls" which proved to be whipped duck liver mousse dropped into liquid nitrogen and the frozen fuming drops were added to the dish on presentation. The clean acid and fruity Riesling went very well with the fish.

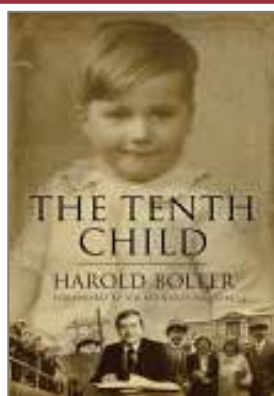
Asparagus might cause problems with wine but the dry, medium-bodied 2007 Pinot gris with a slightly bitter aftertaste solved that easily while the more well-developed 2004, lacked the acidity to match well.

Both Pinot noir were perfect choices to go with the lamb. The aromatic South African and the fairly unusual red Chassagne-Montrachet being more developed and elegant.

The modern well-balanced medium-sweet Tokay coped very well with the cheese and the Botrytis Riesling was an excellent choice to match the sometimes tricky rhubarb.

The evening was a superb way to greet the late, eagerly long-desired spring and we look forward to forthcoming events.

*Rolf Fransson*



## Champagne Socialist

**Harold Bolter**, a former Chairman of the Manchester Branch, in his acclaimed autobiography "The Tenth Child," recommends IWFS membership to "anyone who enjoys good food, good wine and good company."

Born into abject poverty, the tenth child of an impoverished, but waywardly talented storeman, Harold recalls his work as Industrial Editor of the "Financial Times," interviewing past Prime Ministers and dining with Prince Philip.

Later he becomes immersed in the Byzantine politics of running a nationalised industry as a director and company secretary of British Nuclear Fuels, best known for its controversial Sellafield reprocessing plant. He was the public face of Sellafield, a role which earned him a CBE – and a death

threat.

Harold's career in the nuclear industry ends abruptly when he resigned after being falsely accused of fraud. Sir Bernard Ingham, former Chief Press Secretary to Margaret Thatcher, says that his downfall and the innuendo surrounding it "beggars belief." Sir Bernard has contributed a typically forthright and beautifully crafted foreword to Harold's book.

Harold, never less than controversial, if not opinionated, comments on some IWFS attitudes to Champagne Socialists. "I have made lots of new friends within the IWFS," he writes, "even among those who occasionally irritate me by criticising 'champagne socialists.'"

"They appear to think that to want to see an improvement in the lot of the poor – and be prepared to help to pay for it through taxation – precludes personal pleasure.

That's as stupid as me suggesting that only people like me, who have made their way in the world against the odds entirely on their own merits, should be allowed to enjoy themselves gastronomically."

Wine and food interest apart, Harold's book is a fascinating and entertaining account of our times. He writes in a simple yet elegant manner which belies the major issues involved. A good read which provokes thought.

*Bill Redman, Manchester Branch*

"The Tenth Child" Book Guild Publishing £16.99 For more details Contact: Laura (01273) 720900 [laura@bookguild.co.uk](mailto:laura@bookguild.co.uk)





# around the branches - Zürich

## MEMBERS TAKE A FISH AND SEAFOOD COOKING LESSON



Chef Thomas Spyker giving instructions

warming of dozens of plates and serving dishes and finally four rolling prep stations, where members, suitably lubricated with Prosecco, were expected to turn out gourmet masterpieces. Each of these tables had been prepared with a recipe sheet and the ingredients that would make each of the courses. The group split up into groups and busily got to work chopping, mixing, stirring and of course enjoying a glass of white wine or two during the process. During all of this Thomas was moving from table to table offering suggestions and encouragement. It is amazing how many Wine and Food Society members are actually experienced cooks. Not only that, but everybody was having a great time learning a few new tricks of the trade here and there. The most notable one was that nothing gets done without a glass of wine (in the recipe of course!).

The menu was to be Bärenkreb ravioli mit Estragon-sauce, Geräucherter Salm auf Gurken mit leichter Zitonen-sauce, Gebratenes Zanderfilet auf Linsen mit weissem Balsamicoschaum and last but not least a light dessert, homemade vanilla ice cream with cherries and cherry red wine, balsamico and sugar reduction.



Ravioli in preparation

On April 21<sup>st</sup> twelve members of the Zürich branch came together at Cuchi Art to learn all about the art of cooking fish. Of course, if you live on the shores of any of the Swiss lakes, fish is one of the primary items on almost any restaurant menu. The plan was that we would all have to prepare and cook our dinner with every course a fish course excluding the dessert.

Cuchi Art is not a restaurant but kitchen situated in the ground floor of a large apartment block where groups come to learn the art and techniques of various cuisines by 'hands on' methods. Needless to say there was some trepidation amongst many of the members about just how this was going down. Thomas Spycher, the owner, chef, and instructor quickly put us at our ease with a glass of Prosecco and a quick introduction to the kitchen and to the menu preparations. The kitchen was in a large open room with two large commercial level stoves, one, a four-burner gas range and the other a four-burner glass top electric stove. Two large fridges, one for food items, the other for wines and water (by far the more important one!), a large dish warmer that could handle the



Oh Oh! What do we do now?

For those of you who may not know what Bärenkreb are, they are *Scyllarides latus* in Latin or in English, the Mediterranean Slipper Lobster. The lobster tails were split open and the flesh taken out. Some were sliced down the middle and saved for later. The rest were cut into small pieces to fill the ravioli which were then put into boiling water for three moments. Of course the sauce contained fresh Tarragon, cream and fish fond (stock - Ed) as well as white wine, cooked until the consistency you like. Remove the ravioli from the water and put into the sauce and stir about. Serve on a warm plate.

*Scyllarides latus*



Photo courtesy Wikimedia



# around the branches - Zürich

The smoked salmon (Geräucherter Salm) is not that salmon you see in your average grocery store from Scotland, Canada, Ireland etc, these were salmon fillets, which were put into a smoker with hardwood chips and slowly smoked for about fifteen minutes. The Gurken (Cucumbers) were peeled, halved lengthwise, stripped of their seeds and sliced, sautéed in lots of butter and some Dill added. The lemon sauce was spiced up with some hot chilies just to give it that 'je ne sais quoi' character.

Zanderfilet might be better known as pikeperch. Here the fish had a Sabayon of white balsamico vinegar, fish fond, shallots and with, of course, some white wine. A few of our members learned the fine art of brunoise when they had to chop finely several shallots and carrots for the lentil preparation. The lentils (Linsen) having been soaked for several hours were added to a sauté of shallots and carrots. Vegetable bouillon was added and the whole was allowed to simmer until just right.

Vanilla ice cream is not complete without fresh vanilla. So one group had the enviable task of splitting a few vanilla pods and warming them up in a saucepan of milk. No need to scrape the seeds out, they will do it themselves while sitting in the warm milk. When all was complete with egg yolks whisked in etc it was put in the ice cream maker and the team got on with the cherries. Evidently one needs a bowl of pitted cherries, Balsamico vinegar (at least five years old, none of that cheap salad stuff one buys at the

local supermarket or whatever), sugar, orange peel, and of course a healthy lot of red wine. Put it all in a saucepan and cook for a while. Enjoy a glass of red wine while you wait. Then separate the cherries from the juice by putting them in a sieve over an empty bowl and start reducing the remaining juice until it is syrupy, one adds drippings from the sieved cherries as you go along, you want all that red wine in the sauce(!), when reduced sufficiently add back the cherries and bring to a boil. Plate some cherries with their reduction, put a scoop of ice cream on and decorate with a sprig of mint and half a vanilla bean.

In any kitchen where there are four courses and everyone is vigorously making their particular course, there is the problem of logistics. Thomas to the rescue, the team making the first course would complete their course fully and serve it to the table. The rest would do all the prep work up to the final details and cooking and would sit and eat the first course. Then the second course team would do their cooking while the first team removed the first course dishes to the sinks and so went the rest of the courses. After a few more glasses of wine, we all got the hang of it and a fantastic

time was had by all. The various dishes were delicious, beautifully presented and served.

Thomas put his fingers in here and there to make sure things didn't get too far off track, but he did say that this was one of the few groups he has had that seemed to know what they were doing and did it well. A great accolade for an IW&FS intrepid twelve.

*John Macdonald*



Our next function will be a Sunday Luncheon on June 6<sup>th</sup> preceded by a short piano recital. The restaurant is the renowned Gasthaus Löwen in Menzingen ([www.loewen-menzingen.ch](http://www.loewen-menzingen.ch)).

Later in the year we will visit the Restaurant Braui in Hochdorf (near Luzern) for a Saturday Luncheon ([www.restaurantbraui.ch](http://www.restaurantbraui.ch)). The Braui has had numerous write-ups extolling the delicious seasonal menus and the creative chef.

Members from afar are welcome to join us, to do so e mail our President Philippa Keller at:- [keller-taylor@swissonline.ch](mailto:keller-taylor@swissonline.ch)



# around the branches - Capital



## MESSING ABOUT ON THE RIVER

There is nothing quite like messing around in boats on a beautiful sunny spring afternoon. We were actually watching other people lining up their boats to go through Boulter's Lock from the deck of the newly refurbished Boulter's Restaurant on Ray Mill Island on the Thames, whilst sipping a lovely cool Prosecco.

Helen and Pam in beautifully adorned boaters set the mood of bygone days on the Thames in a bright modern room with large open sliding glass doors which looked out over the Thames to Maidenhead Bridge in the distance

Feeling suitably buoyed up with the fine Prosecco Rosé Borgo Del Col Alto, we all sat down to a choice of:



Warm salad of Mackerel Escabèche  
or  
Rabbit and Carrot Terrine with Toasted  
Sour Dough

The mackerel was well marinated with good flavours in the warm salad of onion and peppers. The rabbit terrine however was a disappointment, the spaces between the chunks of rabbit and the tiniest baby carrots could have been filled up with a sauce or aspic to make it less dry. It looked and tasted as though someone had forgotten the last touch.



Seared Scottish Salmon with Confit Potatoes, Pan Fried Fennel, Pernod Butter Sauce  
Or  
Thyme Roasted Guinea Fowl Breast with Pomme Purée, Parmesan Grilled Leek  
and Sauce Albufera

The salmon was moist, the Pernod enhancing the taste of the fennel made it a very good combination to be tried at home. The Guinea fowl breast could have been dry, it wasn't, the sauce was delicate, the parmesan grilled leek cooked in one piece was delicious and tender served with a rich, creamy pomme purée worthy of mention.



Lemon Meringue Pie Soufflé with Raspberry Sorbet  
Or  
Apple Tart Tatin with Vanilla Ice Cream

The lemon meringue soufflé was an excellent choice, a triumph, and the accompanying sorbet smoothie was smooth and creamy. Head Chef Daniel Woodhouse was quizzed at the end of the meal as to how he had made the multi-layered soufflé but was reluctant to divulge a trade secret! Many people said they did not choose the Tarte Tatin because usually it was soggy and undercooked. This one was not! It was over-caramelized and crisped to the point of tasting burnt, a little less time in the oven and it would have been perfect, next time perhaps?

The staff were very pleasant and helpful and altogether it was a good meal in a lovely atmosphere, made even better by the warm sun shining in on us as everyone lingered happily over their coffee and petit fours and watched the boats on the Thames.

Ray Mill Island is a pleasant place for a walk with the lock on one side and the river on the other and families and pets took advantage of the lovely day.

It is worth a return trip, especially on a boat as there is a convenient jetty. Well done Pam!

*Ginette Grey*



## around the branches - Two AGM's



### *Surrey Hills*

We held a successful AGM at the Thai Garden Restaurant in Weybridge. We'd been there before and the staff were pleasant and attentive and we enjoyed a typical Thai menu. We started the evening with Champagne and through the meal we partook of their house red and white wines. Our Branch is small but 'perfectly formed' and we look forward to another interesting IW&FS year.

*Helen Mills*



### *Merseyside and Mid Cheshire*

Merseyside and Mid Cheshire held their AGM on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2010 and for the second year running this was at Chester Golf Club.

The evening began with a classical champagne style Seguria Viudas Cava

A combination of *Warm Bury black pudding with shallot, bacon, and red wine jus* provided just the right degree of contrast in taste and texture for a pleasing first course and was accompanied by mellow tasting Marquis de Caceres Tinto .

This was followed by *Seared scallop with a vanilla beurre blanc*, a light, delicate but, firm prelude to the main course and very well complimented with a Muscadet Sevres et Mains For the main course we were treated to *Local Old Spot pork fillet and belly with calvados*, appreciated by many members, it was enjoyed with a Chateau Neuf du Pape and followed by a delightful dessert of *Duo of chocolate delicie with wild raspberries* and closing with *coffee and petit fours*.

The Chairman, Paul Bishop gave his review of the year and welcomed a number of new members to the Society. The evening was considered to be an outstanding success and truly enjoyed by those present.

*Tony Overland*



### *Devonshire - SPRING LUNCH AT LANGDON COURT HOTEL*



A most successful event, in every way, was enjoyed by 33 members of the Devonshire Branch when they lunched at the Langdon Court Hotel, Wembury, a country house hotel situated on the outskirts of Plymouth. A pleasant one hour trip by coach in glorious sunshine was the start of a most enjoyable day. On arrival members were most impressed with the hotel, which was revealed in the Domesday Book as being held by a Norman Baron, eventually passing to the great Courtenays of Devon. Visited by the Prince of Wales and Lily Langry in their time, it was eventually sold and during the second World War was requisitioned by the Army. Following a succession of private owners it was purchased by the present proprietors in 2007 and is now a delightful country house hotel.

An excellent lunch was served in a beautiful dining room, the choices for starters were, seared scallops, cauliflower puree and sweet pickled beetroot or asparagus wrapped in parma ham. Main courses were fillet of venison with apricot and spinach root vegetable gratin in a rich venison jus or grilled fillets of sea Bass, creamed potato, purple sprouting and salsa verde. Tangy lemon tart with Devonshire cream or sticky toffee pudding with butterscotch sauce were the desserts with West country cheeses served as an alternative. Coffee and petit fours concluded a memorable meal.

*June Rallison, Secretary*







# The CROWN at WHITEBROOK

**Whitebrook  
Near Monmouth  
Monmouthshire  
Wales**

**NP25 4TX**

**Tel:- 01600 860254**

**[www.crownatwhitebrook.co.uk](http://www.crownatwhitebrook.co.uk)**



**T**his year four Welsh restaurants gained a Michelin star with James Sommerin and his team at The Crown at Whitebrook in Monmouth, being recognised for the fourth year running. Born in Caerleon, Gwent, James enjoyed baking with his grandmother as a child and was determined to become a chef when he grew up. For a Saturday job his father sent him to work in an Italian restaurant hoping to put him off going into the industry but the experience only made him even more determined. On leaving school he undertook formal cookery training, and then worked in a local hotel, before heading to the Farleyer House Hotel in Aberfeldy, Scotland. He returned to Wales and The Crown at Whitebrook in 2000 as Sous Chef and in December 2003 became Head Chef.

The Severn was shrouded in mist as we crossed the bridge at 5pm on a damp April Thursday evening. Booking a month ahead we had taken the last of their eight 'luxury bedrooms' for an inclusive price of £200 for dinner, from the à la carte menu, bed and full Welsh breakfast. The rain cleared and we enjoyed the winding drive up the picturesque Wye Valley, past Tintern Abbey, the second-oldest Cistercian monastery in Britain. Leaving the 'main' road and the Wye on our right we wound for several miles up a single track road before coming upon The Crown perched high on a bank beside the road. We speculated on the comments of foreign tourists on eventually arriving at this isolated spot.

We were warmly welcomed and shown to our room which was indeed luxurious, even if a little small, as were all the rooms in this old, long narrow inn, which has recently been completely refurbished to a very high standard. At seven there were already several diners enjoying aperitifs in the lounge. We ordered two glasses of Prosecco which were accompanied by an interesting selection of canapés, beautifully light parmesan beignets, a creamy celeriac velouté, a tiny cube of unctuous chicken liver parfait and a Chinese spoon of 'spicy tomato tapioca'. The latter being a little disappointing, lacking any distinctive flavor.

The Crown, offers a six course tasting menu at £55 plus accompanying wine at £35, a nine course tasting menu at £70 with accompanying wines for £50 and an à la carte option at £48. Several people were enquiring if the tasting menu was changed nightly as they had already had it the night before. They were assured it did - obviously a prerequisite in such an establishment. We had decided to stick with the à la carte as we have had some disappointing tasting menus recently and are a little tired of

them. When you find a course that is really good it has gone in one mouthful and the next is invariably not as good. All froth and no substance is a term I have heard a lot recently!

Renowned for its wine list, The Crown has over 200 bottles on offer. We ordered a bottle of Charles Melton's Nine Popes, from the Barossa Valley at £60. Charlie modelled his first wine, Nine Popes, on the most famous Grenache blend in the world, Châteauneuf du Pape – hence the name. Ours was a 2006, it was well balanced with lots of blackberry fruits and could have done with more ageing but went well with our game.





An amuse bouche of chorizo and tomato topped with roasted goats cheese had just the right amount of spice with a creamy goats cheese that tasted fresh and clean, not of the 'billy' as so often is the case.

The rolls - brown with larva bread and white with roast onion and thyme were perfectly seasoned and served with top quality Welsh butter. Not for the first time did my companion state that 'this chef has a good palate' - not a statement he makes lightly.

My starter consisted of slivers of tender ham hock on a bed of parsnip purée topped with a slice of lobster surrounded by a coffee sauce and napped with a foam. Beautifully presented, it looked a picture, the flavours were good but I found that the ham hock and the coffee sauce rather overpowered the flavour of the lobster. Quail with wild mushrooms and blood orange was intriguing to say the least. A thin sliver of pâté on a small finger of toast, a small lump of breast, half a soft centered quail egg served as a scotch egg and a bowl of quail and wild mushroom consommé. This was the only time salt was requested - the consommé had a little more flavour when salted but relied very much on the wild mushrooms for any character. The other component parts were unexciting and the quantities - even for a starter - elicited a comment about I didn't think we were having the tasting menu!

We tucked into another roll and anticipated the main course. The waitress did look at us a little strangely when she offered more rolls and we said yes please, as we might need them for mopping up the sauce on the main course. Well, I didn't expect a lot of meat, you don't when you order pigeon but half a pigeon? The breast and leg complete with foot was complimented by a slice of duck liver foie gras and accompanied by three small cubes of pumpkin and a teaspoon of a delicious pumpkin, chilli and ginger mousse. It looked fantastic, it tasted fantastic but the whole pigeon served with a few Welsh new potatoes would have constituted a reasonable sized main course. Himself fared little better - three small slices of loin of venison with three spiced baby carrots and two slices of wild mushroom were served on a bed of sorrel drizzled with coffee sauce and finished with a smear of carrot purée. Once again it was perfectly cooked, properly seasoned and the flavours were excellent complementing each other well but not exactly a main course portion.

At this point I decided to inspect the facilities and on the way found myself inspecting the quality of the polished wooden bar floor at close quarters. Returning to our table a little shaken and with the odd bruise or two, I didn't really take in the pre-desert, suffice to say there was a delicious little doughnut accompanying a pot of creamy something which was of the same high standard as the rest of the meal.

My dessert of pineapple, tonka bean mousse and coconut was a good combination as was our other dessert, a small slice of chocolate tart with banana mousse and peanuts. We retired to the lounge for coffee and a good selection of petits fours which filled a few holes.

The service was excellent, the young waitresses were very knowledgeable on the dishes and showed a real keenness for their job. Some of David Hennigan, the general manager's enthusiasm has obviously rubbed off on his staff. There was just one anomaly - the restaurant manager was French and seemed very out of place in this quintessentially Welsh environment. We spoke to James while drinking our coffee and complimented him on his admirable use of flavours that complimented each other so well. The whole impression was of a well organised dedicated Welsh team pulling together to produce a top class dining experience but I suspect some guests staying for week are tempted to pop into Monmouth to refuel occasionally. We did so next morning with their first-rate Welsh breakfast.





# Global Society Website

Designed to bring further benefits to members and to attract new members



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- See contact information for your own Branch Members and for Branch contacts in all Regions
- See Society, Regional & Branch information and forthcoming events from around the world
- Keep your own information up to date
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- Help your Branch and the Society to control operating costs and contain subscriptions

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- Keep your Branch programme up to date more easily
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