



Food & Wine

MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL WINE & FOOD SOCIETY EUROPE AFRICA

Issue 146

March 2023

2021 VINTAGE REPORTS

THE FEAST OF ST PATRICK

AGM 2022 AT TORBAY

THE RISE AND RISE OF PINOT NOIR

**MAPPING OUT CHILEAN WINE AND
GASTRONOMY**



Chairman's message



This year is the 90th Anniversary of the 1933 Foundation of our Society in London led by André Simon.

The first event was held in London in January 1934 and soon after that André Simon sailed from Liverpool, where he initiated the formation of a branch, to New York. In the following months he initiated the foundation of several branches in the United States.

I hope that towards the end of this year, all branches and members will raise a toast to the vision and energy that André Simon gave to our Society over many years.

There are already two events organised for September this year: a gala dinner organised by London branch at Windsor Castle and a group of IWFS members have joined together on a transatlantic sailing to New York.

I hope that all our branches have put together an exciting programme of events for 2023. Please publicise them in "Dates for your Diary" and on the website.

One of the fundamental tenets of our Society is sharing good wine and good food with like-minded people. Invite members of other branches to join your events. If you are travelling near to a branch or see a particularly interesting event, you should be welcome to join such events – not just in Europe Africa countries, but anywhere in the IWFS world – provided spaces are still available. Even if events are not planned at the time of your visit, branch members may be able to give you ideas of good restaurants or other interesting venues to visit.

Another way to find places to visit when travelling is to look on the website at the excellence and restaurant awards which have

Cover photo: Irish coffee

The Society was formed on 20th October 1933 in London by wine writer André L Simon and bibliophile A J Symons. Within a month there were 230 members. Today there are over 6,000 in 139 branches worldwide.

The Society, which is an independent non-profit making organisation run by volunteers, is divided into three areas – the Europe Africa Zone, the Asia Pacific Zone, and the Americas.

In André's words, "The purpose of the Society is to bring together and serve all who believe that a right understanding of good food and wine is an essential part of personal contentment and health and that an intelligent



approach to the pleasures and problems of the table offers far greater rewards than mere satisfaction of appetites."

In the over indulgent society of the 21st century we endeavour to examine some of the excesses of the western diet and to persuade consumers of the need for quality rather than quantity in the food and drink they consume. To this end we support suppliers of quality produce worldwide.

New members are always welcome, please see page 3 for details. Please also visit our website www.iwfs.org or for information about the Society in brief visit our Wikipedia page http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Wine_and_Food_Society

been bestowed by IWFS branches. Always mention that you are a member if you visit such an establishment.

A "nag" – download the Members app onto your smartphone (I understand that not everyone has one, but the great majority of our members do) and once you have done that you can access parts of the website without having to login each time. Tabs on the app include Wine and Food Pairing, the Vintage card, latest publications and International Festivals.

Our Society is entirely dependent on the efforts of those who volunteer. Ensure that you and your branch recognise those members in your branch who put in a lot of effort for your enjoyment – at the very least a simple "thank you", but also by applying for Regional or Society awards.

Linked to this theme of volunteering, we all need to do our bit at some point during our membership. It is important that all branches have identified members who can and are willing to take over; in business speak, "succession planning". As a start, volunteer by organising a branch event or by taking on some of the administrative tasks of your branch. A lot of personal fulfilment and satisfaction can arise from "making things happen" for others.

Have some wonderful events in 2023.

John Nicholas
Chair, IWFS Europe Africa

Editorial

There is much comment in the media about the increasing cost of living and the consequent cutting back on non-essential expenditure and the increasing demand for less expensive products and services. An unscientific poll of venues that customarily offered family lunch on Christmas Day returned a majority that had decided against opening in 2022, citing staff shortages, staff costs, business overheads, local taxes and the necessarily high prices that people simply could not or would not accept – quite disappointing but highlighting issues that need to be addressed if the hospitality industry is to thrive.

IWFS maintains a unique position in presenting high quality gastronomic experiences for members and guests – the food, the wine, the company, the destinations, the festivals and venues. These experiences deserve to be expanded, publicised and enjoyed by a wider audience. Could there be opportunities to co-operate with food and wine producers in creating events as well as with established restaurants, chefs and restaurateurs? Such joint enterprises could contain costs without compromising quality. Several branches are supporting the next generation of chefs in catering colleges with competitions and dining events. Such events are typically less expensive and attractive to more people without compromising quality. And let's not overlook the universal developments in hospitality which attract the younger generation – our future members. Now they eat in popular chain restaurants but many of those offer a broad range of international cuisines and they ain't all bad. Could there be opportunities to embrace these chains as an excellent entry level introduction to more sophisticated gastronomy from which to progress to fine dining?

Your Executive Committee is striving to introduce the Society to the next generation of younger potential gastronomes – an application for membership form is printed in this magazine which can be photocopied or downloaded at www.iwfs.org. Please show it to your friends and invite them to join us.

In the first quarter of the year we welcomed the formation of a new branch in London – Capital Branch. See later for an outline of their forthcoming events.

Finally, you will see later in this magazine that all members are being invited to submit articles related to gastronomy for publication in subsequent editions – your opportunity to be published!

Peter McGahey
Editor

PUBLICATION DATES

- **Food & Wine Online (e-newsletter) Issue 20**
April issue, deadline for copy from contributors 31st March 2023.
- **Food & Wine (printed) Issue 147**
July issue, deadline for copy from contributors 31st May 2023.

Please send photographs separately from text.

Copy for Online to sec@iwfs.org, Printed to editor.eaz@iwfs.org

Advance notice of your events at which members of other branches would be welcome can be included, along with booking details. As always, we invite your event reports, articles and pictures.

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Contributors

AGM 2022 at Torbay

Leonie Allday is a former senior lecturer in Geography who in her retirement has indulged her passion for wine (and gin!) and now teaches for the Wine and Spirits Education Trust (WSET) as well as running a small business giving tutored wine, gin and port tastings. She has been a member of IWFS for 10 years and chairs the Bath and Bristol Branch.



For the last three years she has served on the EAZ Executive Committee, on which she is the Marketing and PR lead. Her other interests are her family, gardening, good food, reading, music and travelling.

The Rise and Rise of Pinot Noir

Bob Campbell MW fell in love with wine after joining Montana Wines, then New Zealand's largest wine producer, in 1973.



Bob gained his Master of Wine qualification in 1990, and is currently one of the directors of WineSearcher.com, the world's largest wine website. He looks after wine matters for a number of New Zealand magazines and is also NZ editor for the Australian magazine, Gourmet Traveller Wine.

Popular on the after-dinner circuit, over 22,000 people have attended Bob's wine certificate courses, which take place in New Zealand, Asia and Europe. Currently chairman of the New Zealand International Wine Show, he has judged in wine competitions in 12 countries.

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Mapping Out Chilean Wine and Gastronomy

Amanda Barnes is an award-winning wine writer and author of The South America Wine Guide. She came into wine through a love of food and with a thirst for travel, and discovered that both could also be found within the realm of the wine glass. Based in Argentina since 2009, Amanda is a specialist in the wine, food and travel destinations of South America but can also be found frequently traversing further afield visiting wine regions as the Editor of The Circular, the Circle of Wine

Writers' monthly publication, or for her personal adventure, Around the World in 80 Harvests.

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News from the International Secretariat

Dear members

In order to assist Society members to make a more informed choice about which wines to buy, either for laying down or for drinking, this year we have sourced the latest vintage reports from all the regions featured on our 2023 Vintage Card and App (2021 in the northern hemisphere and 2022 in the southern hemisphere). We have been able to do this with the kind assistance of many of our expert Wine Consultants around the globe and also our Wines Committee member Charles Taylor MW who has allowed us to use the vintage reports he has written for his clients for wines of Bordeaux and Burgundy.

Due to space limitations we are featuring vintage reports for a number of the classic European wine producing regions for the 2021 vintage.

We will publish the remaining regions, not included here, in a pdf document available on our website (www.iwfs.org/vintage-charts---cards).

We trust you find this useful in months to come.

All best wishes for 2023.

Andrea



Emptying the hod, 2018 harvest at Dom Luneau-Papin

Photograph © Jim Budd

2021 VINTAGE REPORTS

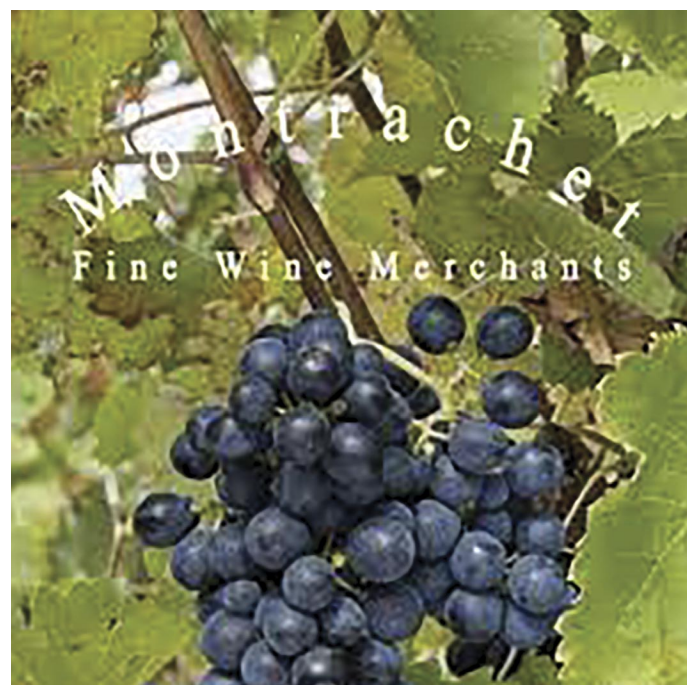
BORDEAUX

Charles Taylor MW

www.montrachet.com

After three hot summers producing dense, rich, full-bodied wines, the cool, humid season of 2021 has given fresher, lower alcohol wines that have fine balance and harmony. They will be ready for drinking relatively quickly and give a huge amount of pleasure from an early age. After a difficult spring and summer, fine weather in September and October enabled the grapes on well-maintained vineyards to reach a good level of maturity and develop excellent flavour and complexity.

The growing season got off to a good start with warm weather at the beginning of April that encouraged an early bud burst. However, frost during the nights of 7th and 8th April caused widespread loss of crop throughout Bordeaux, albeit not as devastating as in Burgundy, Champagne and parts of the south of France. May was generally cool and wet but conditions improved at the beginning of June enabling the majority of vines to flower successfully. The second half of June was extremely wet with more than double the usual amount of rainfall. The risk of mildew and rot was ever present and many properties lost a significant part of their crop, particularly of the more fragile merlot, to fungal diseases.



- Graves, Haut Médoc, Pomerol and St Emilion
5 not ready yet
- Graves (White)
7 not ready yet
- Sauternes
6 not ready yet

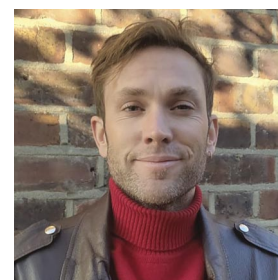
BURGUNDY 2021
Charles Taylor MW
www.montrachet.com
Crisp, fresh whites – elegant, fruity reds

2021 saw a return to traditional, classic Burgundy with the cooler summer giving wines with fresher flavours and lower alcohol. After three vintages of dense, concentrated wines, the 2021s are hugely attractive, fruity wines that will drink beautifully at an early age.

The growing season got off to a precocious start with temperatures in March as high as 25C. Bud burst was early and many vines were already in leaf when night time temperatures plunged to as low as -10C on the first weekend of April. Frost damage was widespread with the earlier-budding chardonnay on higher slopes the worst affected. This included much of Chablis and the premiers crus of Meursault, Puligny and Chassagne. In these areas the yields were as low as 10 hl/ha (20% of a normal crop) and given the small size of many parcels, some wines have simply not been produced.

A cool summer with regular rainfall required continual vigilance against oidium and mildew but the severely reduced crop allowed the fruit to ripen more easily and the best wines were made with little or no chaptalisation. Vinification was less easy than in 2020. The fruit required careful sorting to eliminate unripe or rotten berries. The whites benefitted from a more severe debourbage than normal and most red wine producers opted to destem the majority or all of the bunches. Macerations were gentle with less pumping over and punching down of the cap.

- Côte de Beaune (Red)
4 not ready yet
- Côte de Nuits (Red)
5 not ready yet
- Chablis
6 not ready yet
- Côte d'Or
5 not ready yet


BEAUJOLAIS
Will Heslop
www.flintwines.com

Beaujolais experienced many of the same climatic challenges as the Côte d'Or in 2021. The frost that swept through Western Europe from 5th to 8th April coincided here with budburst, and would ultimately contribute to a total yield some 30% below average. A damp spring and early summer brought the threat of mildew and caused uneven ripening. This called not only for extra work in

July and August continued cold and dismal with temperatures and sunshine well below the average of the past thirty years and in complete contrast to the preceding three summers. From mid-August, it became drier but there was little water stress on the vines which continued to put their energy into producing leaf rather than ripening the fruit. At the end of the month, hopes of a successful harvest were low but things started to change dramatically with an increase in temperatures and a much-needed emergence of sunshine.

By the middle of September the dry whites were being gathered under excellent conditions with perfect ripeness and an excellent balance of sugar and acidity. The white grapes had enjoyed the cooler summer weather and 2021 is a great vintage for dry white Bordeaux. The merlot harvest started in the third week of September and was affected by localised, heavy rain that inevitably caused a dilution effect or forced growers to pick a few days earlier than they would have ideally done. In many cases, however, the fruit was ripe and the low yields often gave a natural concentration that was missing in vineyards cropped at higher levels. The cabernet sauvignon, in contrast, with its thicker skins was able to take full advantage of the warm, sunny weather that lasted well into October and gave wines with excellent ripeness and greater concentration. Most of the best grapes in the Médoc weren't picked until the second week of October with some châteaux holding on to finish the harvest as late as 22nd October.

The sweet white harvest had been severely affected by the April frost and many châteaux have been unable to produce wine at all. What little fruit survived was of excellent quality and there are some conspicuous successes but they are few and far between.

The red wines have a similar level of depth and concentration to 2014 and 2017, both cool vintages that produced fresh, balanced wines. Often, the 2021s are riper and fruitier with more charm. I like the quality of the tannins and they will give great pleasure relatively quickly. It is a vintage to enjoy and the best examples will age gracefully in the medium term.

the vineyards, but additional sorting of the crop, so at the majority of domaines a higher proportion of grapes than usual were de-stemmed, and therefore underwent yeast fermentation rather than carbonic maceration. A balmy August represented a welcome prelude to harvest which typically began around 10th September – a full three weeks later for most growers than in 2020. The positive news is that the best wines are nothing short of sensational! They are a return (after a succession of high-quality but warmer vintages) to the fragrant, fine-boned and lower-alcohol wines produced par excellence by Beaujolais's signature Gamay grape.

- 5 not ready yet (we have erred on the side of caution for the rating and will review next year to see if the wines develop the depth and richness of 2020).


ALSACE 2021
David Ling
www.confrerie-st-etienne.com

A small crop of high quality dry wines, fragrant, agreeable to drink and with excellent ageing potential. Yields were about 20% lower than average. The weather triggered some anxious moments, including isolated spring frost damage and sporadic torrential rain storms, but happily August was hot and dry, setting up a perfect September vintage. Picking started on 13th for Crémant d'Alsace and on 20th for still AOC wines.

Conditions were ideal for dry, aromatic wines, the sunny days and cool nights encouraging growers to delay picking as long as possible for perfect maturity, especially Pinot Gris and Riesling. 2021 is a fine Riesling vintage, with elegant wines of great purity and sound structure. 2021 Gewurztraminer is rather less aromatic than in recent years but in fact this easy-drinking style suits modern tastes. As usual, Sylvaner, Pinot Blanc, Muscat and lighter-soil Pinot Gris were harvested right at the start to maximise freshness and drinkability.

Picking of the late-harvest VT and SGN wines began on 4th October although very little was made, as many growers preferred to take full advantage of the weather and concentrate on making fine dry wines from their top vineyards.

Commercially, Alsace wine sales have recovered to pre-pandemic levels, up roughly 10% in France and 20% overseas in 2021, but sadly the noticeable surge in demand from China and Russia will fall victim to current events.

- 6 not ready yet


CHAMPAGNE 2021
James Simpson MW
www.polroger.co.uk
One of the more challenging vintages of the last 20 years.

Highs of 120mm rainfall in October 2020 and January 2021 signalled a wet year to come. After heavy spring

frosts left 15% of the vineyards affected, severe downpours and intermittent mild weather resulted in mildew setting in throughout the Champagne region over the summer, leading to losses of around 30%. Average rainfall across the year was 80mm. These complex weather conditions demanded significant extra work in the vineyards. The harvest started on Saturday 11th September (Meunier from the village of Trois Puits) and ended on Thursday 30th September (Chardonnay from the village of Grauves) and, despite a small crop, the quality was good.

- 3 not yet released


LOIRE VALLEY
Jim Budd
jimsloire.blogspot.com

Largely due to April frost 2021 was a very short vintage with little stock available from the most popular appellations. The April frosts even hit Sancerre, which is very unusual as with its often steeply sloping vineyards usually escapes serious frost damage. Overall 2021 was around 35% down on 2020 with some regions like the Pays Nantais down around 75%.

Following a cold spring and a poor summer picking started considerably later than in recent vintages, which have been


Chenin Blanc, late September 2011



Autumn colours, Chavignol, Sancerre

Photograph © Jim Budd

early. The Ban des Vendanges for Muscadet, which starts early, was on 15th September 2021. In recent years Muscadet has started in early September even in the latter part of August.

As often happens a fine September and October saved the vintage. Overall 2021 is a return to a more 'classic' Loire vintage with lower alcohols and more vibrant racy acidity.

This difficult year will spotlight the good producers. In the dry whites Chenin Blanc appears overall to have been more successful than Sauvignon Blanc. Although there are some good Sauvignons there are ones that have little fruit combined with high, green acidity. Most of the reds were picked in October the dry sunny autumn provided healthy grapes providing some promising wines again with lower alcohols and more marked acidity than in recent vintages. The fine autumn produced some very good sweet wines in Anjou.

Given the raised level of acidity the best 2021s ought to age well but may need time to show their best.

- **Red**
4 not ready yet
- **Sweet White**
6 not ready yet
- **Dry White**
4 not ready yet



RHONE VALLEY

John Livingstone Learmonth
www.drinkrhone.com

2021 Northern Rhone: a tricky vintage. Frost, then mildew late on after rainfalls through the year, so yields were down from the norm. There are clear, terroir wines that are aromatic, light and easy to drink. The

most noble sites have performed best, with early ripening Cornas in good shape, also Hermitage. Côte-Rôtie was more afflicted by rain, and dilution, but there are pretty, perfumed wines there. Saint-Joseph reds are good at times, Crozes reds variable. The whites are stylish, clear running and will develop well thanks to lower degree and higher acidity than in recent years. Tiny amount, but very good Condrieu.

2021 Southern Rhone: a complicated year. Some frost, a cool summer, and ripening difficult to secure for some. Good to a few very good Chateauneuf reds, some miss the mark. A pretty decent year at Gigondas, but, as with all appellations, it's best to stick to the leading names and their most noble terroirs. The best are appealing, well crafted, sing a tune. Degrees are lower, the wines fresher than recently, so it's a relatively early drinking vintage, a year to drink ahead of 2019 and some 2020s as a rule. The whites are cool, some very stylish, even the Côtes du Rhône, while the best Chateauneuf whites are absolutely outstanding.

- **Rhône (Red) – North & South**
4 not ready yet
- **Rhône (White) – North**
5 not ready yet



Royal Tokaji

HUNGARY

Charles Mount
www.royal-tokaji.com

After a late start everything was on track at flowering in mid-June. The summer was quite hot but turned unusually cold in the end of August and beginning of September. This weather delayed ripening and kept high acidities. Our harvest for dry wines finished in October. Those with enough patience who waited 'til October, will have wines with a very bold structure, good minerality and balance. The high acidities helped us with the sweet wines, were very clean and pure fruit was produced. Aszú berries of excellent quality and very good concentration were picked individually by hand. A very good year for botrytis wines.

6 not yet released



ITALY

Piedmont 2021
Michael Garner
Tria Wines Co-author – Barolo: Tar and Rose

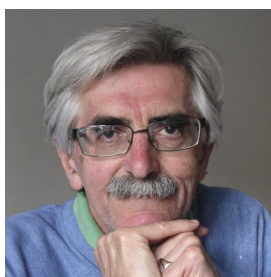
All factors considered, 2021 so far looks like becoming a highly promising vintage.

The early part of the year saw abundant rainfall which built up good reserves ahead of the prolonged dry weather to come. Nebbiolo, an early ripener, escaped the last of the cold snaps in early Spring. Pretty much ideal weather for the rest of the Spring following through into the summer though a violent hailstorm in mid-July struck the Langhe. However, vineyards in Barolo and Barbaresco were not affected. The summer stayed dry with average and not excessive temperatures. Marked diurnal temperature differences towards the end of September kept ripening on an even keel. The fruit remained in a very healthy condition for harvest which began in in late September for Barbaresco and early October for Barolo. There was a reasonably abundant crop of perfectly ripe grapes which thanks to the sparse rainfall prior to picking, are much smaller than those harvested in 2020 leading to good level of polyphenols.

6 not yet released

ITALY
Valpolicella (Amarone)
Michael Garner
Tria Wines Co-author – Barolo: Tar and Rose

As in recent years the pattern of uneven weather continued throughout 2021. Temperatures were just above average in the early part of the year then dropped below average until the summer and through into harvest time in September, which was slightly warmer than usual. Rainfall was extremely patchy with above average rains in January, April, May and July while March, June and September were much drier than normal. Localized hailstorms fell during May and July. Repeated Peronospora treatments were required because of the heavy May rainfall. Some idium but little rot was found. Harvesting began slightly later than usual in the second half of September. Thanks to the warm August temperatures, good sugar and anthocyanin levels were recorded in the fruit. So the vintage promises to be very good indeed but we should be able to make more of a balanced judgement later in 2023.

6 not yet released

ITALY
Tuscany (now including Bolgheri)
Richard Baudains
The vintage is widely considered as very good to excellent.

Climate extremes challenged producers and called for focused vineyard management. Regional

production was down 25% on 2020, but the vintage is widely considered to be very good to excellent, and potentially superior to the also very good 2020. The winter was unusually mild and wet. A generally cool spring delayed bud burst and frost in inland areas reduced the crop. The feature of the summer was the extended period of drought, which lasted until well into September, however groundwater reserves from the winter rain and the absence of long periods of extreme temperatures reduced the impact of drought stress. Red grapes were picked from mid-September in excellent conditions, in one of the shortest harvest windows of recent years. Producers report healthy grapes with excellent phenolic ripeness and good sugar/acidity balance. Predictions for both Bolgheri and the Sangiovese-based denominations inland are for concentrated wines with aromatic intensity, ripe fruit quality, soft tannins and great elegance. The wines are expected to be approachable relatively early, but will have considerable ageing potential.

6 not yet released
ITALY
Sicily
Richard Baudains

2021 vintage in Sicily was slightly up on 2020 but the region experienced anomalous weather patterns over the growing season. Almost total absence of rainfall from April to mid-August caused local drought stress and called for emergency irrigation both in the centre of the region and on Etna. Temperatures peaked in July and early August, but they were

mitigated by substantial night-time cooling during the run in to the harvest. Predictions are for white wines with intense aromatics and reds with great structure and concentration, similar in style to the very good 2020 vintage.

6 not ready yet

VINTAGE PORT
Richard Mayson
www.richardmayson.com

The summer of 2021 was unusually cool in the Douro (in complete contrast to 2020). Following on from a wet winter, early spring was mild and flowering took place early, around three weeks ahead of normal.

May and June were cool months (especially at night-time) and there were no extremes of temperature during the summer (the average July temperature was 23.6°C compared with an average over 28°C in 2020). However, there was no significant rain. Picking began early (around beginning of September in the Cima Corgo) just as it began to rain heavily. Initially this was welcomed but it continued to rain on and off all through month and picking became a stop-start affair over a period of six weeks. There are reports of some fine wines being made at the start of vintage with good colour and elegance but grapes picked in late September and early October were certainly affected by the wet conditions. Yields overall are estimated to be below the ten-year average but up considerably on the small, concentrated 2020 harvest. At the time of writing, it is too early to talk about declarations but it seems probable that some good single quinta vintage Ports will be released in the spring of 2023.

4 not yet released


THE FEAST OF ST PATRICK

17th March


The 17th March is the day dedicated to remembering St Patrick – the patron saint of Ireland and a grand man himself. He was born in mainland Britain and, it is rumoured, he was Welsh, but moving on, his success in banishing snakes from Ireland and guiding his flock along the path to gastronomic enlightenment is enviable and undeniable. The day is celebrated with elaborate festivals throughout the world – notably in America – rivers are dyed green, there is traditional music and dancing in the streets. Irish whiskey, Guinness and contemporary versions of old feasts are widely enjoyed. A selection of the delights offered is reflected in the menus of family homes and fine dining venues including:

Mini Shepherd's Pies

In Irish, shepherd's pies are called pióg an aoire. These pies are unique in that they use biscuit dough as a base, which helps to



contain all that delicious filling and creamy mashed potato topping.

The minced beef filling includes mixed vegetables and a blend of cider vinegar, ketchup and salt. Adding shredded cheese makes these pies even more delicious.

Corned Beef Brisket

St Patrick's day menus traditionally feature corned beef and this recipe for corned beef brisket relies for its depth of flavour on an overnight dry rub. In the rub you'll find kosher salt, sugar, cinnamon, coriander and ground black pepper. After it soaks in overnight, rinse the meat before cooking.

Put your brisket in a large pan with water, carrots, potatoes, onions, cabbage and a sprinkle of coriander and cinnamon. Simmer for 90 minutes and let it all rest for an additional 30 minutes.

Or try...

Irish Beef Stew

For this stew you'll need flour, stewing beef, onions, carrots, potatoes, turnips and dark beer or Guinness. Add some bacon for extra flavour. Cook all day in a slow cooker.

Serve with **Colcannon**



Colcannon is an ancient Irish dish, made with mashed potatoes and greens like kale or cabbage. As a variation select mashed cauliflower, kale and bacon.

Irish Soda Bread

Ireland offers many varieties of soda bread, which contain no yeast and use baking soda as a leavening agent. Some varieties include currants or raisins for a hint of sweetness.

Serve this bread with the corned beef brisket or Irish beef stew.

Irish Coffee

This coffee cocktail incorporates freshly-brewed coffee, brown sugar, double or whipped cream and Irish whiskey. Serve the coffee and top with cream.

AGM 2022 AT TORBAY

by Leonie Allday



One of the many highlights of the 2022 EAZ AGM in Devon was a visit to Sandridge Barton Vineyard, the new home of Sharpham Wine. This took place on the Friday – we set off from our hotel in Torquay at the very civilised time of 10.30am and were at Sandridge Barton within an hour.

Some of us had visited the winery at its original home on the Sharpham Estate, higher up the Dart valley, but the recent move to Sandridge Barton in Stoke Gabriel has created new opportunities for this well-established Devon vineyard, including the creation of a brand new state-of-the-art winery.

Sharpham was established by Duncan Schwab (a surveyor from London who had grown up in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley) some 40 years ago, and benefited hugely from his early experience of winemaking across different countries and cultures. However, for many years most of the grapes have come from the significantly larger estate of vines at Sandridge Barton (30 ha) and the move has been timely. The Sharpham name is being retained for now, alongside Sandridge Barton, as it is so well-known. It remains one of the best-regarded vineyards in the South West.

The original Sharpham plantings of Madeleine Angevine and poly-tunnel Chardonnay were quickly supplemented by trial sites of some 15 other varietals, but over the years, with the climate warming and with the move to Sandridge Barton plus

the acquisition of the Stony Field vineyard, which is rich in limestone (compensating for the loss of the original 8 ha at Sharpham), there has been more concentration on the sparkling wine varieties – pinot noir, chardonnay and pinot meunier.

As the grape harvest was in full swing we were not able to explore the vineyards but we were given an excellent tour of the production facilities and an interesting tasting by Tom Wedgery, member of the management team, who was infectiously enthusiastic and of course very knowledgeable.

Our first wine was their first ever vintage sparkling wine, a traditional-method Blanc de Blancs (2013) made from 100% chardonnay, very crisp and dry with just 7 gm of residual sugar. Whole bunches of grapes were very lightly pressed in short bursts, with different parcels of grapes kept separate for blending purposes. Fermentation of the base wine was slow and cool, after which the wine remained on its lees for 80 months (English sparkling wine regulations stipulate a minimum of nine months). Classic in character and delicately citrus on the nose, it showcases apple, floral and creamy notes on the palate. It has a fine mousse and a long finish. It retails at £39, about average for an English sparkling wine.

Although Bacchus and Pinot Gris are also grown, the most important still white wine grape in the Sharpham stable remains Madeleine Angevine – and the two examples we tasted were



very different. The Estate Selection 2021 (£17.20) was very dry, perhaps surprisingly so given its pronounced floral nose (elderflower, honeysuckle), but on the palate tempered by notes of gooseberry and a subtle salinity. We had also tasted the free run and press juices – these are the juices extracted before fermentation – which of course were considerably sweeter. With lunch we drank the Dart Valley Reserve 2021 (11%, £15), which was noticeably softer, slightly less dry and very food-friendly, as well as a Pinot Noir Rosé (11.5%, £16.50), which divided opinion!

Finally we were given their Pinot Noir 2021 (12%, £22) to taste. Tom explained that they plant an early ripening clone which had actually been picked even before the Madeleine Angevine. In this hot, dry year the normal de-leafing (to assist ripening) meant that some of the grapes got sunburnt(!), splitting their skins, very unusual in the UK. As with the Madeleine Angevine, we were given some free-run and press juices to taste – these had aromas of hedgerow and hay but were noticeably sweet on the palate. Some of our number preferred these juices to the actual wine! However the wine, a blend of crushed and destemmed and pressed whole fruit, was appreciated for its depth and structure.

Tom explained that the Dart Valley is uniquely suitable for pinot noir production as due to the mild climate and the influence of both river and sea the growing season is some two weeks longer than in the vineyards of the South East, assisting the ripening process and resulting in a richer wine than is often possible in UK vineyards, where Pinot Noir is still very much a work in progress. Interestingly, Ed Dallimore, in his new book *The Vineyards of Britain* (Fairlight Books, 2022), rates the

Sandridge Pinot Noir in his top five out of the many he tasted in the course of his research. The juices are fermented spontaneously and the wine is neither fined nor filtered. Though light and bright, it was more interesting and complex than we might have anticipated, with lots of wild strawberry and bramble fruits, a little spice and a little pepper. It was well-balanced with fine tannins and developed well in the glass. Drinking well already, it could probably take up to five years of ageing.

The vineyard has an excellent visitor centre utilising beautifully converted farm buildings incorporating a shop and restaurant (Circa) with indoor and outdoor seating. We were given a very interesting and delicious light lunch consisting of a large number of sharing plates featuring local produce. Although the vineyard is not organic, no pesticides, fungicides or herbicides are used and sustainability is important, with solar panels providing electricity, rainwater harvesting, air-source heat pumps and spring water extraction to reduce the carbon footprint. Nothing is wasted – the restaurant uses the disgorged lees from the sparkling wine to make sorbets and granitas! There are also two buildings used for holiday accommodation. Many UK vineyards are developing such facilities – not only do visitors expect a complete “package” these days, but also such diversification is critical to viability in still climatically marginal areas where in perhaps three or four out of 10 years it is not possible to make good wine.

Altogether this was a very enjoyable experience and it will be interesting to see what further developments take place in the coming years.

THE HISTORY OF THE GREAT VINE

Hampton Court Palace, London

The Great Vine, *Vitis vinifera* 'Schiava Grossa', is now 255 years old and is the largest grape vine in the world. It was planted in 1768 while Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was in charge of the gardens at Hampton Court. Lancelot 'Capability' Brown directed the planting of the Great Vine from a cutting taken at Valentines Mansion in Essex. In 1887 it was already four feet (1.2m) around the base. It is now 13 feet (3.9m) around the base and the longest rod is 120 feet (36.6m).



The Vine grows on the site of the first greenhouse at Hampton Court. It is grown on the extension method where one plant fills a glasshouse, as Victorian gardeners thought this method would produce a larger crop. There have been five or six glasshouses on the site throughout its history. In 1969 a new glasshouse was needed. The average crop of black dessert grapes is about 600 pounds (272kg), however in the autumn of 2001 it was 845 pounds (383kg) – the best crop ever.

THE RISE AND RISE OF PINOT NOIR

by Bob Campbell MW (from 10 years ago, Food & Wine)

Many countries produce Pinot Noir but only a handful can boast "First Division" status. It's hard to say when New Zealand gained entry to the elite group that somehow manage to make magnificent wine out of this thin-skinned, genetically unstable grape variety but it would certainly be in the past decade. That represents extraordinary progress when you consider that the history of premium Pinot Noir in New Zealand began in 1982.

In the beginning

In 1982 Canterbury winery, St Helena, produced its second commercial vintage. A Pinot Noir from that vintage boosted the new winery's fortunes by winning a gold medal at a local wine show. Wine enthusiasts who snapped up the few hundred bottles discovered a wine of power and complexity. By today's standards it was a fairly average Pinot Noir but at the time it stood head and shoulders above its peers. St Helena 1982 Pinot Noir was an inspiration to the handful of producers who were trialling the variety in the early eighties.

The first record of Pinot Noir vines in New Zealand dates back to 1869 when Joseph Soler planted a one-hectare vineyard near Wanganui. Vines planted included Black Burgundy, Black Morillon and Black July – all synonyms for Pinot Noir according to wine historian, Keith Stewart. It seems likely that Pinot Noir cuttings may have been



Jason Flowerday busy in the winery at Te Whare Ra Wines, Marlborough.



included in a shipment of 50 vine cuttings imported from Sydney by James Busby in 1833. Busby was New Zealand's first winemaker and is also regarded as the Father of the Australian Wine Industry.

If indeed good Pinot Noir was made in the late part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century it didn't survive phylloxera, a neo-prohibition movement and a general ambivalence toward quality table wine.

I credit jet aircraft and the growing affluence of baby-boomers with a growing interest in premium wine that sparked in the seventies, smouldered in the eighties and raged in the nineties. Jet aircraft allowed easy passage to Europe while a growth in disposable income made the fare affordable. Young New Zealanders headed north in droves to gain "overseas experience". Those that returned brought with them a taste for good wine.

Martinborough's scientific start

In 1979 soil scientist, Dr Derek Milne, published a study which detailed the similarities between the soil of Martinborough's climate and those of premium French wine regions. Four wine enthusiasts, including Milne himself, planted vineyards in Martinborough producing their first wine in 1984. Others followed, including trained winemaker Larry McKenna, a man now widely known as "Mr Pinot Noir".

Martinborough is one hour's drive east of Wellington. It offers a readily identifiable Pinot Noir style thanks to the region's relatively small size, its homogenous gravelly soils from a single river terrace and the length of time it has been making top examples of Pinot Noir. In fact vine age may also make a contribution to consistency as well as the concentration and rich texture of Martinborough Pinot Noir.

Martinborough was the country's Pinot Noir capital until around 2005 when the brash, new Central Otago region rudely snatched the crown from Martinborough's head.

Top producers: Ata Rangi, Martinborough Vineyard, Dry River, Craggy Range, Escarpment, Kusuda,



Winter in the vineyards of Aurum Wines, Central Otago.

Central Otago wears the crown

Resentment at this loss of status still simmers in the Martinborough region although Central Otago's winemakers are blissfully unaware of it. Their isolated region is after all bigger with twice the vineyard area. It has majestic scenery with snow-capped mountains and azure lakes. It's an inland region with a continental influence in contrast to the rest of the country's coastal maritime wine regions. Central Otago is the world's most southerly wine region. Nearly two-thirds of Central Otago's vineyard is devoted to Pinot Noir which, in a good vintage, can be very good indeed. Central Otago makes the country's most distinctive Pinot Noir. To be best in the world of wine it is not enough to be very good, you also have to be distinctively different.

There is something about the plump, ripe fruit character of Central Otago Pinot Noir that makes most stand out in a crowd. Add to that the occasional signature of wild thyme character and they couldn't be from anywhere else in the world. I write "most" because the cooler sub-regions of Gibbston, Wanaka and much of Alexandra produce wines on the edgier end of the style spectrum. These can often be more interesting and complex than the more sensual, easy-to-love,



fruit-bomb styles of warmer districts, particularly when the wines have benefited from a little bottle age.

Top producers: Felton Road, Mt Difficulty, Amisfield, Akarua, Rockburn, Quartz Reef, Burn Cottage Vineyard, Pisa Range, Grasshopper Rock, Doctors Flat, Valli,

Marlborough offers a bargain

Marlborough boasts 60% of the national vineyard and has 50% more vineyard area devoted to Pinot Noir than Central Otago, which comes a distant second.

Marlborough was a slow starter in the quality Pinot Noir stakes. Although over-cropping has been cited as the likely reason for early failure I think the move away from lighter, bonier soils to the clay-rich soils in the so-called Southern Valleys at the base of the Wither Hills played a more significant role. Quality also received a boost when Pinot Noir vineyards were established on hillside sites rather than the valley floor.

This large and vibrant wine region now makes some of the country's best examples of Pinot Noir. It offers fertile ground for Pinot Noir bargain hunters because the region is unfairly perceived to be in the shadow of more fashionable areas such as Martinborough and Central Otago. It's also hard to pin down a Pinot Noir style in such a large and diverse wine region. "Supple, elegant wines with flavours suggesting red fruits" is my stock response when asked to describe a regional style. I can think of many exceptions.

Top producers: Fromm, Dog Point, Churton, Villa Maria, Terravin, Nautilus, Cloudy Bay, Seresin, Auntsfield, Herzog, Clos Henri



Dom Maxwell, winemaker at Greystone Wines, Waipara Valley.

Nelson – a region of two halves

Nelson's two most prominent wine growing areas are the Waimea Plains and the Moutere Hills.

Pinot Noir from the Moutere Hills is, in my view, more structured, intense and often more austere than its accessible cousin from the flats. I detect a suggestion of chalky minerality in the Moutere wines although that impression may be slightly heightened by the knowledge that the mostly clay soils on the hills are reasonably rich in limestone. They are high energy wines boasting a backbone of taut acidity, a factor perhaps in their ability to age well.

Top producers: Neudorf and Woollaston on the Waimea Hills; Greenhough and Waimea on Waimea Plains.

Waipara – head for the hills

Like Nelson, Waipara has two distinctly different sub-regions; the lighter and often more gently aromatic wines grown on sandy soils and the richer, bolder and more intense wines grown on soils with a higher clay (and often limestone) content.

A short 15-minute drive west of Waipara is a chalk-rich area called Pyramid Valley. Only two winemakers are making wine there but have demonstrated an ability to produce outstanding Pinot Noir. Pyramid Valley Pinot Noir could be the "next big thing" although the limited availability of land and a fairly marginal climate means that wine is likely to remain scarce.

Top producers: Pegasus Bay, Greystone, Muddy Water, Glasnevin, Mountford, Black Estate; Pyramid Valley: Pyramid Valley Vineyards, Bell Hill.



Vynfields, Martinborough.



Awatere Valley, Marlborough vineyard at dawn



Harvest time at Dog Point Vineyard, Marlborough.

Where to from here?

New Zealand Pinot Noir has a reputation for being deliciously accessible upon release raising the question “how does it age?” The top wines of our most serious Pinot Noir makers, such as Ata Rangi and Felton Road Block 5, age extremely well. They are often less accessible when young but with bottle age develop great complexity and silkier textures. It is no coincidence that these producers tend to use a higher percentage of whole clusters during fermentation. Whole clusters boost the extraction of tannins to produce firmer more astringent wines that develop well and gain greater complexity with bottle age. An increasing number of wineries are now using whole clusters to add extra depth and increase the ageing potential of their wines.

Vine age, better vineyard site selection and the development of promising new regions such as the limestone-rich Central Hawke's Bay and Waitaki Valley in North Otago promise to drive the growth in Pinot Noir quality as well as promote greater diversity.

The wines of today are significantly better than the wines made a decade ago. I confidently predict that the Pinot Noir produced in ten years time will have advanced at a similar pace.

All photographs © Bob Campbell

MAPPING OUT CHILEAN WINE AND GASTRONOMY

by Amanda Barnes (from 10 years ago, *Wine, Food & Friends*)

There aren't many places that can boast the prodigious geographical diversity of Chile: deep forests buffeted by creeping glaciers; sun-cracked deserts and white washed salt flats; snowcapped mountains, smoking volcanoes and the dizzying heights of the Andes; fertile valleys with rolling hillsides; and an enviable expanse of Pacific coast spanning 29° of latitude. The heart of Chilean wine and gastronomy reflects this topographical potpourri and any glimpse into Chilean cuisine reveals an encyclopaedia of endemic ingredients.

One of the greatest influences in shaping the country's culinary culture is the coastline, stretching over 4,000 kilometers (2,400 miles) across the entire length of this skinny nation. The coast is one long fish counter for Chileans: established favourites like oysters, small sweet scallops with melt-in-your-mouth corals, fleshy salmon, pink and succulent clams, Patagonian King Crab and enormous Pacific sea bass are accompanied by a plethora of weird and wonderful native sea dwellers, such as the Humboldt Squid (reaching a monster-sized two meters or six feet), Erizo de Mar (sea urchins which are quite logically translated as 'sea hedgehogs'), Cholgas (a gargantuan relative of the mussel), Picoroco (a ginormous and irrefutably ugly barnacle) and so much seaweed that you wonder if biofuel will be Chile's next cash cow.

Most Chilean seafood and fish are prepared simply and often eaten raw with just a dash of limon de pica (a small sharp lime), Pebre (Chilean condiment of coriander, onion, chili, garlic and olive oil) or a pinch of their delicious Fleur de Sel. The Spanish influence is seen in rich fisherman's stews and other fusion influences arising in dishes like ceviche, sushi, clams 'al parmesano,' shellfish pasta and risotto, seafood pastry pies and even the humble battered fish sandwich makes an appearance.

It almost goes without saying that the perfect pairings for most Chilean seafood are crisp, aromatic and fresh coastal wines. Pioneered by winemakers like Pablo Morandé in the 80s, the main coastal wine regions of Casablanca, San Antonio and Leyda benefit from brisk sea breezes and protective, low coastal mountains creating a buffer from extreme cold and a cavity to bathe the vines in cool morning mist before the afternoon sun emerges. The varied coastal wine regions, which extend to the borders of the Atacama desert region, produce wonderful seafood pairings: the herbal aromatics and citrus fruit of crisp sauvignon blanc from coastal Leyda; the voluptuous, tropical and chalky chardonnay from Limari; or

the earthy and fruity cool climate pinot noir of Casablanca Valley. Further inland, the natural acidity and mineral notes of the chardonnay from Malleco, one of the southernmost wine regions in the world, also works well in seafood pairings.

Intensely aromatic whites – riesling, gewürztraminer and viognier – have seen a rebirth since the exploration into cooler climates. Their acidity, off-dry nature and sublime fragrance make them fun pairings for the influx of Asian cuisine using local seafood.

Moving in from the coastal mountain range, the country morphs into warm flat plains, breeze brushed foothills and the rugged start to the Andes. Naturally the cuisine shifts focus onto land dwellers and Campesino (rural) cooking dominates. The simple Huaso Asado (Chilean cowboy's BBQ) with grilled meats like pork, beef and lamb, are an ideal partner to the bigger reds from the Central valleys.

The Asado tradition of hours spent around the fire warrants an equally time-absorbing wine. Syrah is Chile's new champion and the deep black fruit, rosemary, smoky and pepper notes, juicy tannins and bright acidity of syrah from Apalta in Colchagua is dreamy with slow-cooked Patagonian lamb. “Apalta is mostly colluvial, with granite and some clay – it's a great terroir for syrah for its soil and water,” says winemaker Andrea Leon who makes terroir selection syrahs.

Another favourite of the cowboy culture and prepared all over Chile is the hearty stew. Usually with a base of root vegetables, coriander and full flavoured meats like cow tongue, it pairs well with what really was a Campesino's wine of years past: carignan.

In the Southern regions of Maule, Itata and Bío Bío some gnarly-trunked, old-bush vines had been forgotten by the wine world, until recently. Old vine carignan from Maule is a muddle of rich cassis, mulberry and wet earth with a refreshing acidity. “Carignan from Maule is concentrated but not necessarily rustic,” says owner of Santiago wine bar Bocanariz, Katherine Hidalgo. “It has a countryside flavour but it can be super elegant.”

País too is a rediscovery. Once the most planted variety in Chile, it was later dismissed as table wine to make way for noble varieties, although now the old vines – some up to 350 years old – are producing unique wines. More rustic than carignan, país has dark fruit and drying tannins with attractive floral and citrus notes.

Like anywhere, stews in Chile are made big. They are inherently for sharing. One treasured national dish is Estofada de San Juan, a stew comprising dried and smoked meats with acid cherries and always eaten on 24 June, National Indigenous People's Day. As part of the necessity of the day, the native Mapuche tribe had a rich culinary culture preserving foods - still echoed in contemporary cuisine.

The Mapuches also developed techniques cooking directly in the fire. The Rescoldo method of cooking in the ashes is still avidly practiced in



Mapping the wines of Chile.



*Amanda Barnes,
contributing writer.*



*Matt Wilson,
cover photographer.*

the campfire and roadside favourite: Tortillas de Rescoldo (flatbreads cooked on embers resulting in a rich smoky flavour).

One spectacular indigenous dish is Curanto, coming from the lost-in-time Chiloe archipelago. Villagers tie a stilted house onto a platform and, with oxen, drag it to a new location in an annual 'Minga' ceremony. This century-old tradition is followed by a Curanto cooked for the entire village: a large hole filled with hot stones where layer upon layer of shellfish, meat, potatoes, vegetables and dumplings are covered by native Nalca leaves and cooked underground resulting in a medley of flavours. Time-conscious, less romantic chefs can replicate it in a pressure cooker.

The greatest Mapuche inheritance though is Merkén. This heady combination of smoked chili peppers, coriander seed and sea salt is used to add flavour to many dishes in Chile, which unlike its name-sake actually features little spice in typical dishes.

The smoky flavours of Mapuche cooking methods work well with the fruit forward, spicy and oaked Central Valley wines. Merkén has an almost poetic pairing with the country's signature grape variety: carménère. Its fruity spiciness, earthy flavour and softer oak-aged tannins sit quite happily alongside the smoked pepper. "The smoky taste of Merkén is a bridge with the oak of the wine," says Chilean food guru Pilar Rodriguez.

Carménère occasionally still gets a bad rap as being overly green, but since winemakers started harvesting it almost a month later than previously practiced, contemporary styles are softer and fruitier but still with appealing spice. "Carménère is a great variety with a medium body so you can pair it up or down, with lighter or heavier dishes," says Marcelo Pino, Best Chilean Sommelier 2011. "It's a very versatile wine."

Cabernet sauvignon is equally as versatile in food pairings. "The commercial style of Chilean wines makes them very easy to drink and pair," comments Argentine sommelier Martin Mantegini, "even cabernet sauvignon." The most acclaimed Chilean cab is arguably from the rocky Andean terraces of Alto Maipo, reaching up to 800 meters in altitude and producing deep, layered and lush wines with cassis, red fruits, chocolate and herbal aromas.

The softer merlots and jammier, medium-bodied reds of the Central Valley are often paired with the nation's No.1 comfort food, Pastel de Choclo: a casserole with a base of 'pino' (minced beef, chicken, raisins, boiled eggs and onions), topped with a corn crust. The creamy corn used in many Chilean kitchens, especially for Humitas (wrapped with onion and basil in corn husks) can also call for buttery oaked chardonnay from Limarí. The valley borders the driest desert in the world - the Atacama - and has mineral rich soils that give the chardonnay a steely edge that cuts through creamy dishes while retaining its tropical fruit characteristics.



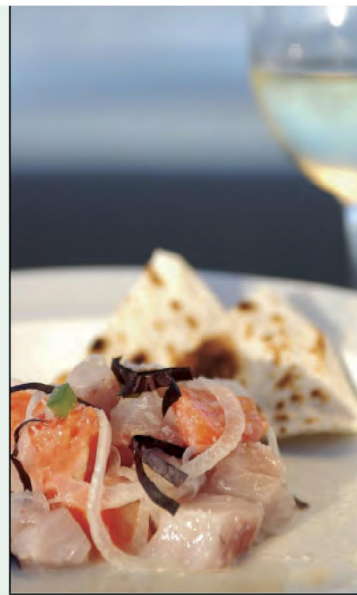
Working in the vines.

The different soils and microclimates are terroir porn for wine-makers, but Chile's diversity also makes it a forager's paradise. Although foraging is as old as time, it has scavenged its way back into fashion in Santiago. Thirty-five-year-old Chef Rodolfo Guzman has taken foraging and Mapuche techniques into haute cuisine in his molecular gastronomy restaurant, Borago, where he serves unique dishes involving soil, trees, fungi, flowers and parasites in a theatrical tasting menu. Guzman also started a research institute with Universidad Católica documenting Chile's endemic flora and fauna. "Chile is the coldest country in Latin America, that is why we are so different to the rest," enthuses Guzman. "You might jump into the sea water and it's freezing, but it's wonderful in your mouth. The geography makes so many endemic ingredients. All of Chile is abundant and in many different ways."

This abundance and diversity in food and wine makes Chile mouthwateringly good to explore.

Publisher's Note: Amanda Barnes is a British journalist who lives in Argentina to focus on wine and travel writing. She is Editor of the Argentina-based magazine Wine Republic and also works as a freelance writer for travel and wine publications including Wine-Searcher and Fodor's Travel Guides. Based in Mendoza, she covers the wine regions of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. Find out more at www.amandabarnes.co.uk.

Photographer Matt Wilson is another Brit who has found a home in South America, Chile to be precise. His works appear in world-renowned magazines such as Decanter and Vanity Fair UK. See more of his photos at www.mattwilson.cl.



Ceviche and a lovely white

VEGETARIAN CHEF AWARDS EVENT

International Wine and Food Society Northern Branches

The UK has an increasing number of people enjoying vegetarian meals, the popularity of which can be clearly seen in the burgeoning range appearing in many restaurants and supermarkets. Recent reports have suggested that as much as half of the UK population could be vegetarian or vegan in less than 20 years. The next generation of chefs are starting to seize the trend and developing new and exciting vegetarian options.

Following the success of last year's event, the International Wine and Food Society is organising this competition for the highly-talented young chefs now making their way through the Northern Catering Colleges to find the best plate of food made exclusively with vegetarian ingredients. Sponsorship for the competition is being generously provided by The Vegetarian Society, which has more than 50,000 members, and recently celebrated its 175th anniversary. The competition will showcase:

- Fabulous vegetarian ingredients, demonstrating their quality and versatility in modern cuisine;
- Our regional catering colleges and the extraordinary talents of their staff and students;
- The opportunities that hospitality offers for a worthwhile career;
- The outstanding range of wines available from independent wine retailers in the UK, together with a demonstration of the benefit of pairing the correct wine with the correct food for a truly synergistic tasting experience.

The Competition will reach its climax on 12th May at a prestigious awards lunch to be held at Bolton University, where we will present four awards to students for the best original vegetarian dishes.

The Competition

We are inviting up to 10 Northern catering colleges to participate in the competition. There are three stages:

- A heat at each college during February and March where we will pick two students to progress to the Final. A team of IWFS members, college tutors and chefs from The Vegetarian Society will judge this stage. A core ingredients pack will be sent to colleges in time for the heats.
- A Grand Final, to be held at Warrington College on Friday 21st April. This will be judged by a team of well-known chefs, led by Paul Heathcote MBE.
- The Awards Lunch where we will present trophies and prizes to the winning students. The lunch will be hosted by award-winning professional chef and Great British Menu contestant Stephanie Moon who works closely with many of the colleges being represented.

Students at each college will compete to produce a main dish which includes at least one of the following four ingredients:



Beetroot, Potato (to include all derivatives), Rhubarb and Tofu. Students will have 90 minutes to create their individual entries.

The Awards Lunch

The winners will be presented with a trophy celebrating their success in the competition and the surprise winners will only be announced at the Awards Lunch. The lunch will be for 80-100 people, comprising members of the IWFS, representatives of the Vegetarian Society and other sponsors, Bolton College, together with two winning students and a tutor from each college. The meal will feature manifestations of vegetables paired with wines to accompany each dish.

The Awards

The four student winners will receive a trophy, a winner's certificate and funds celebrating their success in the competition.

The colleges will receive an IWFS Excellence Award, valid for two years (extendable) which can be displayed at their premises.

Every student entering the competition will also receive an IWFS certificate.

Wine Pairing

The IWFS was founded on André Simon's premise that a "right understanding of good food and wine is an essential part of personal contentment and health". In particular, the pairing of wine and food creates a fusion greater than the sum of the individual parts. The Society has several distinguished Masters of Wine (MW) as members, who will form part of the team selecting the wines for the event.

The International Wine & Food Society

EUROPE AFRICA ZONE

You can download or complete an APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP at <www.iwfs.org>

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WEST YORKSHIRE BRANCH AWARDS

At the AGM of the West Yorkshire branch, held on 27th November, chair Stephen Harrison highlighted three successive years of growth in branch membership numbers. From 36 at the end of 2019, which was just before Covid struck, the current membership stands at 59.

However, unbeknown to Stephen, another high spot of the evening was to be the surprise presentation to him of the IWFS Exceptional Service Diploma and Medallion.

Immediately before the award presentation Stephen had pointed out that the cumulative growth in member numbers of just under 70% had been achieved despite making no marketing effort. Branch events now routinely attract 30 or more attendees – some 50% more than just a few years ago. He added that while West Yorkshire continues to thrive this is sadly very much not the case throughout the Europe Africa Zone where many branches are ageing rapidly and, as the Zone management have reported, membership numbers are falling (down almost a third in the last decade).

Stephen explained that in an era of unparalleled interest in, and supply of, extraordinary food and wine, West Yorkshire's strategy is to provide unique, exciting, stimulating and special opportunities to learn more about and enjoy different foods and wines sourced from a wide range of producers. Our events are balanced between those that are food-led, wine-led, and producer-led but almost all are fundamentally in keeping with the IWFS core purpose, the celebration of the unique synergistic partnership of wine and food .

EAZ has recognised there is an opportunity to exploit this trend and develop a clear agenda to reposition the region for growth. Lessons have been learned from the Black Pudding Competition and, with support from EAZ, a Strategy Group chaired by Stephen has been established with a number of branch members taking part. Part of the remit – to exploit the potential



for a robust social media infrastructure – will be tested and we are hopeful that the branch will be able to take advantage of this when rolling out its exciting programme for 2023.

In presenting the award on behalf of EAZ, former EAC Marketing Manager and past branch chair, Tim Gittins, said that it was the pioneering approach that Stephen has championed that prompted EAZ to award him the Exceptional Service Diploma and Medallion.

The citation read, "Stephen is a long-standing member committee member and has been chair of West Yorkshire for five years or more. During these Covid times he has overseen an enthusiastic and thriving branch and seen its membership increase. He has co-founded the Northern Branch team with Tim Hodges and others and co-managed a very successful Black Pudding Competition for northern catering colleges and greatly assisted the EAZ with his strategy presentations and teamwork."

Here's to the future!

Sue Timme

MERSEYSIDE & MID-CHESHIRE PRESENT EXCELLENCE AWARD

In December the Merseyside & Mid Cheshire Branch gave an Excellence Award to The Church Green in Lymm, Cheshire. This was in recognition of an excellent event enjoyed by members and friends of Northern Branches, in July 2022. The award was presented to Owner/Chef Aiden Byrne, by Chairman Tim Hodges and Committee Members Paul Bishop and Angela Britland. The branch will be revisiting The Church Green in 2023.

Angela Britland



Bath & Bristol

THE MINT ROOM, BATH



It's some years since our last visit but the reputation of this high-end "daringly different" Indian restaurant encouraged us to return in November. In 2020 The Times voted it No.1 in the 30 best restaurants for a curry.

The menu features distinctive, adventurous and well-presented dishes partnered with a sprinkling of familiar Indian items.

We were treated to their "Taste of India" menu including a wine flight. Each plate was superlatively well-prepared and packed full of flavour.

The tasting menu was sumptuous – we started with a selection of Indian street food accompanied by a glass of champagne.



This was followed by Rajasthani lamb chops served with sweet potato patties and accompanied with a glass of South African Word of Mouth Viognier.



The next course was one of their signature dishes – Sea Bass Moilee, served with a glass of Pulpo Albariño Pagos del Ray from Spain.

As if we hadn't had enough variety, we were then served the main course of Beef Chettinad, Butter Chicken, rice, spiced vegetables and Indian breads, which came with a glass of Bodegas Corral Don Jacobo Rioja Crianza from Spain.

And finally to round off the splendid meal was a trio of sweets accompanied by Garonnelles Lucien Lurton Sauterne from Bordeaux.



The Mint Room boasts that: "We create, cook and serve dishes made only from the highest quality, British grown ingredients. Each dish is perfected by our Chefs before being added to the menu, with taste and presentation being of the highest importance. We pride ourselves on putting the customer first" After our visit we are fully in agreement with their sentiment.

Janet Bagot

Bath & Bristol

CHRISTMAS LUNCH AT STOBERRY HOUSE, WELLS



In our branch we always like to end every year on a high, and this was certainly the case this year.

Stoberry House is the home of members Tim and Frances Meeres-Young which for some years, until Covid, they had run as a very successful boutique B&B and event venue.



Both the house and its parkland setting are glorious and, despite the fact that extensive building works are in train, Frances was keen to welcome us for this occasion. She and her lovely staff provided us with a selection of stunning canapés, which were accompanied by our "house" champagne (Daniel Clergeot) from our branch cellar.

A succulent rump of English lamb with a potato and morel Dauphinoise stack and red wine jus, followed, accompanied by a medley of seasonal vegetables. With this we drank a delicious Mercurey 1er Cru "Clos des Myglands" 2017 from Domaine Faively. 2017 was an early vintage, thanks to an exceptional flowering period in late May and a good summer, and this single vineyard ("monopole") wine, matured in French oak for 15 months, is a classic, well-balanced wine which is drinking very well. Its black and red fruits, tannic backbone and smooth finish made for a perfect pairing with this robust lamb dish.



A delicious trio of desserts: lemon posset, marinated strawberries and a chocolate slice, followed and for those with hearty appetites cheese and mini mince pies. An excellent Margaret River chardonnay from Vasse Felix (2016) was served throughout the meal to non-red-wine drinkers and as an accompaniment to the cheese.

Always a convivial event, Tim and Frances went the extra mile in ensuring that we all mixed well – by requiring some of us to move tables between courses. This apparently involved a complicated and impenetrable computer algorithm but led to much merriment. A good time was certainly had by all.

Leonie Allday

Berkshire

CROOKED BILLET LUNCHEON



Well, didn't we have a lovely time the day we went to the Crooked Billet? Situated just a few miles from Henley on Thames, Tatler lists them in the top five places to eat and some Berkshire Branch members are lucky enough to have this dream pub, hidden in the Chiltern hills, as their local.

Paul Clerehugh, his family and his hardworking team have not only been harvesting and sourcing local produce for many years, encouraging locals to swap home grown produce for lunch, he worked tirelessly through lockdown providing meals for the NHS and heavenly takeaways for locals which certainly saved a few marriages! He regularly pops up at Henley Royal Regatta, The Traditional Boat Show and Henley Agricultural Show. Music is also his great love; he was formerly the bass guitarist with Sweet and he draws a fantastic monthly crowd to some seriously talented artists from boogie, rock, rhythm & blues. It's this amazing energy and enthusiasm that makes every meal here special.

He managed to squeeze us into a very busy schedule and did us proud. A glass of Bouvet Ladubay Saumur Brut on arrival with a dash of rhubarb briottet liqueur, followed by a selection of canapés; smoked chicken parfait and crispy pancetta en croûte, mushroom arancini, goat's cheese with CB honey and smoked mackerel with gooseberry dip.

The seventeenth century inn has a relaxed atmosphere and we dined in the red room where ancient and amusing photos adorn every wall. Paul kindly welcomed us and was truly delighted that we had come. Ever generous, we had sourdough with basil and red pepper pesto and delicious green and black olives followed by our starters served with Definition Chablis. Our President, Julian Jeffs, his wife Deborah, Chairman Colin Mair and 11



members were there to toast the Berkshire Branches 450th meeting.

Starters

- Barkham Blue cheese soufflé, frisée, beets, walnut pesto
- Seared Cornish Porthilly mackerel fillet, rösti button, gooseberry relish
- Pink pan fried Oxfordshire pigeon breast, local cherries, Pea shoots, crouton

Mains

- Orkney Halibut, Charlotte potato and Portland crab, lemon butter, green beans
- Chicken Milanese, sauté parmesan truffle potato, zucchini friti, tomato and basil
- Pink carved rump of Stoke Row lamb, late season Scottish asparagus, broad beans, samphire, heirloom radish, green herb dressing

Cheese and Desserts

- An interesting and unusual selection of local artisan cheeses with oatcakes, Piccalilli and grapes. Cheeses included Nettlebed Witheridge, Unpasteurised Spenwood Ewes Oxford blue, Cotswold soft Jersey
- Golden caster meringue, thick cream, local strawberries
- Dark chocolate nemesis, Crooked Billet salted caramel ice cream

Highlights were the Oxfordshire pigeon and Orkney halibut but everything was delicious, well cooked, generous and beautifully presented. Despite being truly sated, we all managed to squeeze in one of his fantastic puddings – chocolate nemesis (a classic from River Café) and a locally sourced cheeseboard that rivals anything French. Just when we thought that we would have to be rolled to our cars, we were brought coffee, tea and delicious homemade fudge.

We were spoilt rotten and, if you fancy being spoilt too, sign up to receive emails of all future events at www.thecrookedbillet.co.uk. You won't regret it and may even find that you're sitting next to a celebrity, rocker or even a royal!

Charlotte Parratt

Capital

OUR INAUGURAL EVENT AND THE FUTURE

Maybe it was the wine talking. It was Barolo, sipped while visiting the magical mist-haloed hills that encircle Alba. So yes, definitely. The glass in hand was fresh yet deep – a perfect balance of youth and age. The war between traditionalist and modernist winemakers for the soul of this region that raged in the 1970s had reached an amicable settlement over a decade ago. Since then, the winners have been anyone who loves really good Nebbiolo juice.

The IWFS Piemonte tour in May 2022 stirred a similar inspiration for a few participating Society members, who wondered what could be done to help keep the Society vibrant and appealing to new audiences. Concepts and ideas were informally batted around for months. Certain principles were accepted as fundamental, of course – hearty comradery around food, promoting education and sharing knowledge. But the breakneck speed of change in the global wine and the food industry – driven by climate change, shifting demographics and turbulent economic trends – posed challenges that called for fleet-footedness to keep pace. The conversations hit a crescendo during an extraordinary dinner party at an IWFS member's home in November 2022. By the end of an overindulgent weekend that propelled – foolishly perhaps – a dash of bravado, a resolution was reached: to create a new branch in the London metropolitan area, one that could embrace the foundations that the Society has laid for ninety years but add something a touch different.

The name 'Capital Branch' has been resurrected (a former branch bearing that name was merged with the Surrey Hills Branch a decade ago). The operating committee is a tight-knit group of individuals with diverse perspectives. The committee members have deep personal roots in the US, Africa, Italy or East Asia, as well as the UK. Age-wise, they hail from the 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s. Some have wine certifications, such as DipWSET, or restaurant/catering industry expertise. Some are just highly enthusiastic food/wine newbies, but with strong organisational experience. Elena Frank, the Branch's Membership Secretary, is a new Society member who "wants to be in a real community of people with passion for the magical world of wine – to learn, share, comment on, and pair with food."

The guiding catchwords to create events include 'outreach', 'fun', 'exploratory', even 'experimental'. Core to the overall programme is a Masterclass Series called Uncorked (led by the Branch's self-proclaimed Cork Dorks) which delivers a proprietary tasting methodology for white, red and sparkling wine. The series is intended to go back to the basics of wine tasting and demystify it in a fun and inclusive way. A key benefit of this programme will be to provide a common baseline for all branch members. The first event of the series – on White Wine – was held in mid-February as the Branch's inaugural event. Masterclasses on Red Wine and Sparkling Wine are planned for the first half of 2023. The Capital Branch intends to 'productise' this series – as well as other events – with infographics and recorded video, in order to make them repeatable and available to other IWFS branches.

Other multi-sensory events that the Branch is planning over 2023 include:

- Pairing wine with music
- Visualizing the taste of wine through visual art
- Spices and ethnic food and wine pairings
- Wine forgery and counterfeiting
- A sister act pairing Italian food and wine
- Update on biodynamic farming and natural wine
- Disrupting the global wine trade through Non fungible tokens (NFTs)

Several will feature guest speakers who are experts in their respective fields.

The Branch targets attracting 100+ new Society members over the next couple of years. The branch is in the process of building its website and an active social media presence.

The Capital Branch committee welcomes collaboration with other IWFS branches on joint events, charity initiatives and resource sharing. A strength of the Society's de-centralised structure is that it allows diversity to flourish. At the same time, like the Barolo and Barbaresco regions that have come together to evolve products that are appealing both while young and over decades, enduring strength emanates from holding to common values and a sense of place.

Philip Kim

The International Wine & Food Society
CAPITAL BRANCH

Our inaugural event!

Uncorked: WHITE WINES

Wine tasting Masterclass by the Capital Branch Cork Dorks

Part of our proprietary Uncorked wine tasting masterclass series, including Red and Sparkling wines

- De-mystifying styles from around the world
- Guided tasting of six distinct wines
- WSET-Diploma qualified former-sommelier instructor
- Takeaway Infographics

Entertaining, inclusive and interactive!
Canapes and welcome glass of bubbly to celebrate the launch of our branch

RSVP: Elena Frank
elenarepole@hotmail.com
When: Wednesday, 15th Feb 2023
How much: £ 45 per person
Time: 18:30-20:30
How to pay: Lloyds Bank, Omar Sayed,
A/C 22160768, Sort code: 30-90-72
Where: Royal Air Force (RAF) Club
128 Piccadilly, London W1J 7PY

Herefordshire & Monmouthshire

AN INFORMAL LUNCH BEFORE CHRISTMAS AT 57 BRIDGE STREET



The legacy of Covid lockdown social distancing is al fresco dining now sheltered with four-sided marquees that have become "permanent" features at so many eateries. Light, airy and exotically draped like a Bedouin tent, warmed with pungent wood burning stoves and illuminated by faux Louise XIV chandeliers, they have become impressive and desirable venues of choice for casual dining – anything from morning coffee with home-made pastries to imaginative bistro compilations alongside the traditional pub grub favourites of fish or steak with chips. Such is the ambience of 57 Bridge Street in Usk, Monmouthshire. This now redundant bank has metamorphosed into a delicatessen with a cosy bar and informal refectory tastefully decorated and furnished with room for at least 40 fellow travellers.

Our party of 16 branch members and several guests gathered at midday in mid November for what has become a regular feature of the branch calendar – an Informal Lunch at which everyone selects from the menu what they wish and are then responsible for their own account. It is a popular formula complementing

the more formal branch events and offers the opportunity for members to share opinions on the variety of the chef's creations. It has become a tradition that the chairman greets everyone with a glass of wine (soft drinks on request) and on this occasion the choice was between Paparuda Pinot Grigio (Romania) and Martinfort Malbec Belles Vignes (France).

No 57 offers an imaginative selection on their regular menu and has a daily specials selection. The most popular starter for our group was Lobster Bisque and the favoured main was Sea Bream with Fennel and Lemon Risotto, Brown Shrimp and Roast Fennel. One person was disappointed with the Herefordshire Flat-Iron steak – overcooked – but, no problem, it was willingly replaced. Also featuring on the menu: Welsh Pork Rib-eye with green pesto, Cavolo Nero and Parsnip Crisps, Tagliatelle with Butternut Squash and Mushroom Ragu. Desserts included White Choc Orange Pot and the ubiquitous Sticky Toffee Pudding.

Overall an occasion enjoyed by all and the opportunity to browse the delights in the deli was embraced by many.

Peter McGahey



Herefordshire & Monmouthshire

LUNCH AT THE FELIN FACH GRIFFIN: FRIDAY 7th OCTOBER 2022

Our branch borders Wales so we often venture over there for our events. On this occasion we realised we hadn't visited the Griffin at Felin Fach for some years (it is quite a long drive), not since June 2017 to be precise. At that time the Griffin had flattering reviews in the Food Guides and Sunday Supplements In the category "warm and welcoming dining pubs with rooms". In 2019 it was awarded a Bib Gourmand in the Michelin Guide.

Felin Fach is a small village on the road between Brecon and Hay on Wye, the town of books famed for its Literary festival in May. The pub is surrounded by the hills of the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountains, some of the most impressive scenery in Britain. Worth a visit for that alone.

The Griffin was acquired in 2000 by the Inkin brothers. Charlie, an established chef who had worked at Ballymaloe in Ireland, was looking to start his own business. In 2002 he was joined by his

brother Edmund and together they slowly built up a reputation.

When Charlie decided to retire from the kitchen they looked for a chef to replace him. The present head chef is Nick Evans, who was previously at Northcote Manor in Lancashire. He and the Inkens discuss menus. The cuisine can best be described as Modern British, in other words, traditional dishes with a twist.

The Griffin is one of a group of three old pubs that market themselves under the distinctive Logo EAT DRINK SLEEP. The other two are in Cornwall. The Gurnards Head is near Zennor, St Ives, the The Old Coastguard is on the Parade in Mousehole.

The three are closely linked, promoting each other, exchanging ideas and staff, all aiming to create venues "where the soul is restored and the appetite satisfied". All three are set in lovely

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scenery offering comfortable accommodation and a high standard of cuisine.

The Griffin looks like a converted farmhouse, its stone walls painted a vivid terracotta. Inside, under low ceilings, there are several connecting dining areas with scrubbed pine tables of varying sizes. When we arrived many were already occupied and a satisfying buzz of conversation filled the air.

As a group of 11 we were directed to a large room where an old cream Aga presided from an alcove and where two tables had been pushed together. We fitted round them nicely. Being so close together proved to be an advantage for our chairman as, during the course of the meal, he was able to bring up branch business for discussion without bothering other diners.

We normally begin our events with a welcome drink at the bar paid for out of branch funds. At the Griffin there was not the space available for us to do this, so once seated we were invited to simply help ourselves to a glass of one of the two bottles of wine already opened on the table. The white was a Côtes de Gascogne NV and the red a Toscana Rosso 2013, simple vins de table but very acceptable. Peter McGahey, our Secretary and Treasurer, had selected these with the help of the management as part of a three course, three options menu including wine and coffee.

The meal began with warm sourdough bread and butter followed promptly by our first courses. I had a very colourful plateful of thinly sliced beetroot and apple with a candied walnut garnish and white balsamic dressing. Delicious! Pan fried Hake fillet was the choice of the majority attracted by an unusual red wine sauce with wild mushrooms, smoked bacon and shallot, set off by simple creamed potato. This combination worked for me.

Deserts followed. The usual Sticky toffee pudding, a chocolate tart with Guinness icecream and something fruity in the shape of banana fritters with banana ice cream. This was the popular option.



Coffee was then served, allowing our Chairman to thank Peter for organising the event and those present for coming.

Altogether we had enjoyed a very good meal with excellent service at a very reasonable price. The gorgeous views we would drink in on the way home in the sunshine was a bonus.

On the future for the Griffin, if you look at their website you will see that, like many others in the hospitality sector, they have decided to restrict their opening hours to suit the present dire economic situation and their own particular circumstances. So for the Autumn and Winter the pub is only fully open from Thursday to Sunday and their rooms from Wednesday to Sunday.

To attract more business they have launched two schemes with special rates. The first is available all year and called The Sunday Sleepover covering Sunday lunch, supper and a hearty breakfast on Monday. The second is called The Winter Escape, offering Dinner, Bed and Breakfast for two at rates under £200. This ends on 23rd March 2023. Both schemes are available at all three pubs in the EAT DRINK SLEEP group.

At the Griffin they will be buoyed up by thoughts of the Spring walking season as it is an ideal place for those who love the hills. And as May approaches they know that that the dining spaces and the rooms will be filled by patrons of the Hay Festival. If you are one of those you will know to book early. The Felin Fach Griffin is a very special place!

Margaret Muir

Herefordshire & Monmouthshire

CHRISTMAS DINNER AT THE COTFORD HOTEL, MALVERN

There was snow on the day we celebrated Christmas with our traditional black tie dinner at a Gothic style Victorian hotel at the foot of the beautiful Malvern Hills. It was built in 1851 as a summer residence for the Bishop of Worcester and what used to be the Bishop's private chapel now hosts an award-winning restaurant – L' 'amuse-Bouche – where they offer "Modern French" style cuisine.

With its high ceilings and views across beautiful gardens, it's the perfect spot for fine dining – probably appreciated more in warmer weather! It has won various awards including Worcestershire Restaurant of the Year for 2016, 2017 and 2019 and has maintained two coveted AA rosette awards for culinary excellence since 2010. It is mentioned in the Michelin Guide. We were delighted to be joined by members from Manchester, Bath & Bristol, Merseyside & Mid Cheshire and chairman John Nicholas and his wife Joan who are members of Zurich branch. In total we were a party of 29, which included several guests. This year we seated guests at smaller tables of five or six – this proved to encourage conversation and, to further lift the spirit of the season, we identified each table as one of Santa's reindeer: Dancer, Prancer, Comet, Cupid and Dasher. Grace was said by Margaret Muir – a member of the branch for 25 years –



Chris Hill



John Nicholas

the Grace was offered in French and she thought may have been familiar to André Simon .

From the range of choices on the menu the most popular starters were Chicken Liver and Cognac Parfait and locally Smoked Salmon. For the main course guests selected from Hereford beef, salmon fillet, roast turkey and lamb rump steak.

A cheese board followed and then desserts: Christmas pudding, Crème Brulée and a dangerously calorific Dark Chocolate and Griottine Cherry Mousse.

For wines we selected a Chenin Blanc/Semillon from South Africa and an Argentinian Malbec – both suggested by the IWFS wine pairing app.

The evening concluded reluctantly – most guests were staying overnight and a post prandial tincture in the lounge ensured a good night's sleep.

I am delighted to report that we will be welcoming two of the guests to the branch in 2023 as full members. The pictures confirm a "good time was had by all".

Scraping frost from windscreens the morning after enhanced the feeling of seasonal goodwill.

Sue Smith

Leicester

JOINT MEETING WITH NORTHAMPTON

On Saturday 10th September our Leicester Chapter entertained 12 members from the Northampton Branch. Twelve of our members were present.

The venue was The Attic restaurant in the Kilworth Springs Golf Club. The restaurant is two storeys above the club with large windows giving us an excellent view of the course, deep in the countryside – no houses to be seen at all.

We were welcomed with a glass of sparkling wine – NV Ferghettina Franciacorta Brut from Italy. 85% Chardonnay, 10% Pinot Nero and 5% Pinot Bianco. There were plentiful supplies of this so we all mingled happily waiting for luncheon to be served.

We started with a choice of vegetable soup, slices of melon with strawberries and a raspberry sorbet, ham hock croquettes or pan fried mackerel. I chose the ham mixed with sage and onion to form a rissole with an apple purée sauce and two slices of crisply fried bacon. I was pleasantly surprised as I hadn't expected a golf club to produce food like the best gastro pub.

We drank a 2021 Vasse Felix Classic Dry White Semillon Sauvignon Blanc from Margaret River, Western Australia – 75% Semillon and 25% Sauvignon Blanc. This wine was Jancis Robinson's wine of the week on the 12th of August 2022.

The red was a 2012 Château Lanessan Haut-Medoc Bordeaux 60% Cab. Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 4% Petit Verdot and 1% Cab. Franc – a 2022 Wine Society Champion.

The two wines were served together and so we chose our own one to go with the food and found excuses to taste both!

There was a choice of five main courses including beef, cod fillet, pan fried chicken, one vegetarian and one vegan dish. I enjoyed the cod fillet on a bed of samphire with fondant potato, asparagus and beurre noisette. The beef was a very popular choice with blue cheese mousse and sweet potato purée. My husband chose the chicken and was a little disappointed as the skin wasn't crispy enough for him and I don't think lentils are his thing.

Three puddings followed, Eton Mess (fruit served with tiny elegant meringues), Black Forest Chocolate Pavé with Cream and Cherries or an Orange and Passionfruit Pana Cotta with a Mandarin and Orange sorbet – all to a very high standard. One could also have ice cream or cheese and biscuits. We finished the leisurely meal with tea or coffee.

Our thanks are due to Richard Dear, our Chairman, who arranged the event and chose and provided the Wine Society wines.

Mary Jewell



Kilworth

Liverpool

CHINESE NEW YEAR, 31st JANUARY 2023



A visit was made to the Liverpool branch who were holding a celebration of the Chinese New Year of the Rabbit at the Yuet Ben Restaurant.

Since 1978, the restaurant has stood on Upper Duke Street and Shandong-born founder Yuh Ho Yau's unique style of northern Chinese cuisine is still served there.

One of Liverpool's oldest Chinese restaurants, Yuet Ben has welcomed loyal customers and celebrities alike for decades.

Over the years, famous faces including Cliff Richard, Dawn French and Les Dennis have dined in the restaurant. The family-run restaurant has also become internationally renowned and has been featured on cooking programmes broadcast across the world.

Since 1992, the business has been run by Yuh's daughter Theresa and her husband Terry Lim, who was taught the trade by his father-in-law as a waiter.

Members from the Blackpool & Fylde Coast and Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire branches attended to make a surprise presentation of an EAZ Diploma and medal.

The award was made to recognise the resourceful efforts that Terry had made in founding the branch in 2012 and keeping the branch going throughout the difficult Covid period when few events could be held.

Ron Barker, chair of the Society Wines Committee and a member of the EAZ Awards Committee, made the presentation to Terry Lim who commented that Ron along with Paul Bishop used the Yuet Ben for one meal in the 2011 Merseyside five day Festival and persuaded him to set up a new branch in 2012.

Yuet Ben's (which means "Welcome Honoured Guest") cuisine was absolutely delicious and the famous barbequed ribs were exceptional and drinking eight different wines from China made it an enjoyable and fun evening for the forty-seven guests.

- Deep Fried Dumplings
- Chicken with Spring Onion and Ginger Oil
- Seabass in Mild Sweet-Sour Sauce
- Longevity Noodles
- Pineapple Rice
- Yuet Ben's Barbeque Ribs

The wines served were:

- Great Wall Château Sungod Blanc de Blancs 2006
- Xige Single Vineyard Chardonnay 2017
- Copower Jade Fei Tswei Viognier 2017
- Treaty Port 'The Débutante' Rosé 2016
- Treaty Port 'The Philosopher' Syrah Blend 2016
- Copower Jade GOGO PANDART Cabernet Sauvignon 2017
- Copower Jade GOGO PANDART Merlot 2017
- Silk Road Vineyards Icewine 2017

Tim Hodges

London

A TASTING OF 2008/9/10 CLARETS

This wonderful tasting, held at the Army and Navy Club in Pall Mall, led by Jeffrey Benson, featured ten wines from the cellar of one of our members, Lancelot Jaundoo.

We tasted the clarets in flights of three.

Château d'Angludet, Margaux: 2008, 2009, 2010

This estate had been neglected since before the Second World War until Peter Sichel acquired and completely renovated it in the early 1960s. It has been converted to biodynamic farming methods. It remains in the Sichel family ownership. The terroir is mainly sand, gravel, and clay. Around 50-55% of the blend is Cabernet Sauvignon.

All three of these vintages are among Angludet's best, all delicious.

Château Batailley, Pauillac: 2008, 2009, 2010

The estate was bought by the Borie family in 1932 and subsequently, in 1942, divided in two (the smaller part forming Château Haut Batailley). It remains in family ownership. The terroir is gravel, clay and sand, with clay and sandstone below the surface. Around three-quarters of the blend is Cabernet Sauvignon.

All three wines were a pleasure to taste.

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London

THE WINES OF VIRGINIA, CALIFORNIA AND OREGON



On 27th October at the Army & Navy Club, with a full house, we tasted 10 wines from North America, from well-known and lesser-known estates, from a variety of grapes, from 1984 to 2020. The wines are from California unless otherwise stated. An internet search found that no wines from Virginia are currently on sale in the UK. Most of these wines have been kept a long time by the organiser.

Frei Brothers Sonoma Reserve Russian River Valley, Chardonnay, 2017, 14% Andrew Frei came from Switzerland and set up a vineyard in Sonoma in 1890. His sons are the brothers. Pale straw. Low bouquet. Good Chardonnay flavour, acidity and length. Oaked. 8/10. (I score the wines subjectively for overall quality and pleasure given, out of 10. I am a generous scorer.)

Breaux Viognier, 2020, Virginia, 14% The Viognier vineyard was first planted in 1996, about 900 feet up the Blue Ridge Mountains in Northern Virginia to escape the late spring frosts at the valley floor. This bottle was very kindly brought from Virginia by Melissa Holloway who arrived back in Britain that morning. Lovely light gold. Attractive big complex bouquet. Good body and acidity. Rich. Much enjoyed. More to it than the Chardonnay. 9/10.

Lemelson Vineyards Thea's Selection Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon, 2010, 13.5% 14-16 months barrel-ageing. Established in 1999 by Eric Lemelson. The vineyard was previously a cherry orchard for Maraschino cherries. Light red with some black. Legs. Good Pinot Noir nose with blackberries, raspberries and rose petals. Lots of flavour, including rose petal. Slightly austere. Good length. 8/10.

Hahn Monterey Merlot, 2003. 13.5% (front label) or 14% (back label) Aged in French oak. The Swiss Hahn couple came to the Santa Lucia Highlands in the late 1970s. Black-red. Legs. Good fruity bouquet. Excellent fruit flavour and length. Very smooth. Biggish body. Keeping very well. Rich. 8½/10.

Cline Ancient Vines Mouvèdre, Contra Costa County, East Bay of San Francisco Bay, 2015, 15.5%

Ten months in 30% new American oak. Fred Cline was a 'Rhone ranger' and bought a 350-acre horse farm in 1989 and moved the family wine business (family cellars from 1982) there. Black-purple. Big legs, big fruity bouquet and big impact. Very warming, with loads of fruit. Very pleasant, with the high alcohol seeming balanced. 8½/10.

Virginia Cabernet Franc Reserve, Barboursville Vineyards, 2007, 13% More

than 12 months in French oak. Founded in 1976 by an Italian from the Veneto, Gianni Zonin. Black-purple. Legs. Attractive black-fruit nose. Very good fruit flavour and length. Has soft tannins. Keeping well. 8/10.

Ridge Petite Sirah York Creek, Spring Mountain, Napa, 1984, 13.5% Bottled August 1986. Eighteen months in small oak barrels. Founded in 1959, one of the earliest high-quality Californian wineries, now rated a 'first growth' in California. Petite Sirah is known as Durif in Australia. It probably came from a natural cross of Peloursin x Syrah in Durif's vine nursery. Black/purple/brown. Big legs. Excellent complex bouquet. Plenty of tannins but not aggressive. Enough fruit. Keeping well. 8/10.

Boxwood, The Boxwood Winery Middleburg Virginia, 2007, 14.2% Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot. This winery is the dream of John Kent Cooke, owner of the NFL Washington Redskins. Founded on a farm in 2001. Black, some purple. Legs. Lovely fragrant bouquet. Lovely flavour. Complex. Will keep. A superb Bordeaux-style wine. 9½/10.

First Press Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa, 2011, 14.5% Purple, pale edges. Good bouquet, flavour and length. Very pleasant. Keeping well but will not improve. 8½/10.

Frog's Leap Zinfandel, Napa Valley, 2016, 14% 78% Zinfandel, 20% Petite Sirah, 2% Carignane. Zinfandel is the same as Tibidrag and Primitivo, from Dalmatia originally. Carignane/Carignan is the same as Mazuelo from North-East Spain, used in Rioja. John Williams and Larry Turley started a winery in 1973 with Cabernet Sauvignon. Frog's Leap, on an old frog farm, had its first wine in 1981. John Williams is famous for his sense of humour, including making a Leapfrogsmilch wine. Red-black with pale edges. Legs. Excellent fruity bouquet and flavour. Very silky, with soft tannins. Lovely length. A joy to taste. 9½/10.

Dr Bernard Lamb

London SAVOIE WINES



It is some years since Laurent Faure last entertained London Branch to one of his wine tasting dinners at le Vieux Comptoir, so we were well due for a return visit. This time the wines were from the Savoie region of France. These are mostly consumed locally and only tiny quantities ever find their way to the UK. Those on offer this evening came from Domaine Jean Vullien in the village of Fréterive, well known to some members as they treated an International IWFS group to a superb lunch in their winery during a regional festival in 2016.

The aperitif was a Crémant de Savoie. Like crémants from other regions, such as Alsace, this is made in much the same way as champagne, although the timings are different. The region has only been authorised to use this appellation since 2015. The grapes were 40% Chardonnay, the remaining 60% being the local grapes Jacquere and Altesse. Those members who go skiing in this region will undoubtedly have tasted them in the mountain restaurants at lunchtime! It compared well with other crémants that we have tasted.

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Château Roc De Cambes, Côtes de Bourg: 2008, 2009, 2010

This estate has the best reputation in its appellation. It was purchased in the late 1980s by François Mitjavile, equally highly regarded for his Tertre Roteboeuf in St-Émilion. The terroir of the small vineyard, only 12.5 hectares, is largely limestone and clay, similar to St-Émilion. The blend is largely Merlot.

All three were lovely wines, with years ahead.

Tinto Pesquera, Ribera Del Douro, Reserva Especial, 2010

Tinto Pesquera is the flagship property of the Familia Fernández Rivera, known for top quality Tempranillo wines – this was 100% Tempranillo. Terroir of clay and sand, with limestone, marl and chalk layers.

A contrasting but super wine with which to conclude this tasting. Many thanks to Lance for his generosity in sharing these wines with us, and to Jeffrey for leading the tasting.

Rachel Burnett

The first course was a chicken liver parfait, with eau de vie de poire, and was served with two wines, one a Roussette made from the local Altesse grape, and the other a Chignin Bergeron. Bergeron is the local name for Roussanne, more commonly associated with the Northern Rhône, a 100 miles or so to the south. The Roussette was fresh and clean, like most of the wines from this region: the Chignin Bergeron more fully flavoured: it is commonly regarded as the best of the Savoie whites.

For the main course we were served Boeuf Bourguignon, accompanied by two red wines. The first was a local wine from the Mondeuse grape. This is historically related to Syrah, and the most widely grown red grape in the region. The second was Pinot Noir – not at all common in this region as it can be hard to ripen in the cold climate. It is perhaps worth noting that Jean Vullien was a nurseryman, whose main business was supplying plants to wine makers in Burgundy. By picking his sites carefully; sheltered in the harsh winters and well-exposed to the sun in the summer, he has succeeded in producing some very good Pinot Noir.

For dessert we had an excellent pear tart with cream flavoured with Génépi, a local liqueur. This was accompanied by a late harvest Chignin Bergeron from 2009: a very special treat as it is only made comparatively rarely in those years when the conditions are right. Whilst most Savoie wines are best drunk fairly young, the late harvest wines keep much longer because of the high levels of sugar. This one was absolutely excellent and would stand up well against many from other regions.

Once again an excellent evening ably hosted by an old friend.

Alan Shepherd



London NEW MEMBERS WINE TASTING AND SOCIAL

With Ashling Park Estate and Sugrue South Downs
Presented by Dermot Sugrue and Gail Gardner

Nothing much happened during the pandemic, Right! Well actually, no. Aside from some successful on-line tastings – wine, cheese and chocolate – London Branch actually recruited some new members. It was quite a surprise to see, in January 2022, how many new people had joined us since 2019. Sadly though, it was clear that they hadn't had much of an experience of IWFS so far. Few of them had elected to join our events on-line, clearly if we wanted them to renew we were going to have to do something about involving them in Branch activities and introducing them to some of our more established members.

With that in mind we elected to run a New Members Event in September 2022, targeted at those who had joined in the previous three years but also involving some of our long term supporters. We contacted each of the 'newbies' individually offering them, initially, a limited selection of dates. Using their feedback we settled on 8th September, little guessing what a momentous day it would turn out to be. Some 30 members, old and new in roughly equal proportions, gathered at the Army & Navy Club for a tasting of Award winning English Wines from Sugrue South Downs and Ashling Park Estate.

Thanks to Branch member, Cheryl Roux, we were very fortunate to secure the services of Dermot Sugrue and Gail Gardner to lead the tasting.

Gail Gardner is Managing Director and all-round powerhouse at Ashling Park Estate. The vineyard, not much more than a decade old, is already scooping trophies from under the noses of more established producers. In 2020 they won a trio of prizes at the WineGB Awards for Best Classic Cuvée NV, Best Sparkling Rosé, and Best Sparkling Wine in the South East. Then in 2021 they won Best Classic Cuvée NV for a second time. Established on a former hay meadow, it is planted with Chardonnay, Bacchus, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier grapes and the wines are described as having a puppyish vim with creamy smooth edges.

As well as its vineyard, Ashling Park has also been actively developing its role as a sophisticated tourist destination. For those who are planning a staycation, Ashling Park is close to Chichester, the beaches of the Witterings and the South Downs National Park. It has five lodges where you can stay (designed and built by Will Hardie of Amazing Spaces fame), and the restaurant on site focuses on hyper-local ingredients.

Dermot Sugrue is a well known figure in English wine making. Starting his career at a contract winery in Suffolk he moved to Nyetimber in 2003, becoming head winemaker in 2004 and going on to establish the estate as one of the premier English sparkling wine producers. In 2007 he started work at Wiston Park winery helping to plant the estate and becoming their winemaker. Ashling Park estate followed in 2009. Not content with these achievements Dermot was also looking for an opportunity to create his own label Sugrue South Downs.



Dermot Sugrue presenting

He found this initially at Storrington Priory Vineyard. Effectively a walled vineyard on one hectare of greensand, the vineyard produces exceptional fruit but can be subject to frost. Dermot's early vintages 2009-2011 were based entirely on Storrington grapes, but 2012 was a disastrous harvest with no grapes picked. An alternative was needed. It was found at Mount Harry Vineyard near Lewes on which Dermot took a long lease in 2012. Mount Harry is 2.5 hectares of chalk, a south-east slope and relative proximity to the sea minimise the possibility of frost. Since 2013 Mount Harry grapes have predominated in Sugrue South Downs wines, although Storrington still supplies a small proportion.

Dermot likes to allow his wines to become what they will become. His 'Trouble with Dreams' is becoming something of a classic, while still retaining its power to surprise: a blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from the same vines, the wine changes every year in response to wind and weather and, more recently, the subtle influences of geology as the vines enter their second decade and their roots explore further and further from the root stock.

Full tasting notes from the evening follow. We tasted 11 wines in total and, while English wines will probably always retain their ability to divide the room, these showed just how far English wine making has come and how far our wine makers fully deserve the accolades they achieve. We were very grateful to

Dermot and his wife Ana and to Gail Gardner for giving us their time and introducing us to such interesting wines. One member commented that "This whole tasting has cemented in my mind that fact that Dermot Sugrue is the best wine maker in England!"

London Branch runs about a dozen wine tastings in a normal year, but this time we were using a slightly unusual format. To encourage mingling we suggested that half the attendees change tables midway through the evening. This encouraged more people to get to know each other and successfully met one of the key objectives of the evening.

As a social event the evening went well. Members enjoyed the chance to socialise as well as taste some interesting wines. The Club, with its military background, was more than somewhat distracted by the sad news of the afternoon and less well organised than we expected. Overall the evening was a success and certainly an event we will repeat from time to time.

Tasting Notes

Aperitif: Ashling Park Rosé 2014

A delicious blend of 80% Pinot Noir, and 20% Pinot Meunier grapes grown on chalk slopes of the South Downs, West Sussex. It is a wonderfully elegant, full-flavoured wine with delicate red fruit, long length and complexity. Perfect as an



Stephanie Robertson enjoying the wines

aperitif as we had on the 8th September 2022 but it will also go with a range of lighter starters.

Ashling Park Classic Cuvée Non-Vintage

A Pinot led NV English sparkling (60% Pinot Noir, 30% Pinot Meunier and 10% Chardonnay). It has elegance and finesse; truly worthy of its Gold trophies! Citrus notes with a touch of white blossom and peach. It has a wonderfully subtle autolytic character of biscuit and brioche and a great acidity. This would be brilliant as an aperitif and with smoked salmon.

Ashling Park Blanc de Blancs 2014

Of course this is a 100% Chardonnay and it really shows in its purity of flavour and a fantastic balance between the richness and zestiness. An elegant nose of fresh lemon and lime, delicate brioche and white flowers. The palate is full of lime, a touch of almond, and wonderfully toasty notes. This wine could hold up to many dishes and even venture into the main course with a chicken or pork dish with a creamy sauce.

Ashling Park Bacchus 2021 (still)

Some call Bacchus England's answer to Sauvignon Blanc! And Ashling Park's Bacchus is bright, fresh and pronounced. A single varietal wine that is crisp and is packed full of elderflower and minerality. Perfect on a hot summer's day by its self or with some olives and charcuterie.

Ashling Park Rosé 2021 (still)

1st thing that comes to mind is strawberry and cream with this pretty pink rosé! A wonderful example of an English blush still rosé. Full bodied with a fantastic balance with the red apple, berry fruit and great acidity. Like the Bacchus perfect for a summer's day or anytime you wish to taste a bit of summer!

Sugrue South Downs: 'The Trouble With Dreams' 2017

Sugrue South Downs is the personal project of Dermot Sugrue, who's also behind a number of top English sparkling wines, such as Ashling Park! This is an incredible English Sparkling wine of 60% Chardonnay and 40% Pinot Noir. The Chardonnay dominance of this wine shines through with a clean and pure citrus fruit with a touch of tropical and a flinty note. Toasty and brioche flavours add to the complexity. Perfect at any time of day in my opinion! Delish and plenty more years to develop even more.

Sugrue South Downs: 'Cuvée Boz' Blanc de Blancs 2015

Dedicated to Dermot's late brother. This 100% Chardonnay full of crisp green apples, wonderfully bright lemon, lime and a slight herbiness. It was a great full palate with brilliant toasty, roasty, yet flint like character. This Blanc de Blancs has been vinified in stainless steel which shows! This has the option to be kept for a long time to come! Perfect to enjoy by itself, it needs nothing else! But if pushed it would be perfect with a seafood lunch.

Sugrue South Downs: ZODO Zero-Dosage MV

A multi vintage English Sparkling wine with zero dosage. Another show stopper. Clean fresh, with racing acidity and wonderful weight yet the feeling of weightlessness. Green apples notes followed by ever so subtle autolytic character and

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Manchester

CHRISTMAS LUNCH IN THE MUSEUM ROOM AT MANCHESTER HALL

On a very cold, sunny Sunday in Manchester 50 hardy souls met for lunch in the Museum Room in Manchester Hall to celebrate the approach of Christmas. Manchester Hall, a Grade II listed building designed by Percy Scott Worthington in 1929, has had an impressive refurbishment combining the period with the modern. The Museum Room has been elegantly decorated and is a most light and attractive room radiating an historic atmosphere with a beautiful ceiling decorated with plasterwork highlighted in gold.

Under the twinkling chandeliers we enjoyed, as an aperitif, a delicious Bouvet-Ladubay Brut Rosé which demonstrated pink fruits and a very good clean finish.

We began the meal with Roasted Parsnip Soup with a Parmesan Crisp and Truffle and Chive Cream. The creamy concoction of flavours was absolutely delightful and intriguingly matched with Pedro's Amontillado Sherry... It worked!

To follow we were served very tasty locally shot Pheasant (one diner discovered a pellet!) accompanied by Pickled Blackberries, Roasted Cauliflower Purée and Fondant Potato with a Juniper and Port Sauce. This was excellently matched with a Domaine du Clos Naudin Pinot Noir from Southern France which certainly felt like an older vintage in its texture and length.

Before the dessert course we enjoyed some cheeses, Cashel Blue and Rutland Red, accompanied by Fig, Red Grapes and Charcoal and Oat Crackers.

Dessert was a light and delicious Almond and Pear Tart served with Toasted Almond, Chantilly Cream and Candied Pear. These flavours married well with the Definition Sauternes from Southern Bordeaux which accompanied the Tart.

➡ *continued from page 36*

the most pleasant sea spray note. This is my personal favourite from the tasting. Perfect pairing would be Lobster with butter, simple but would let the wine sing.

Sugrue South Downs: Rosé Ex-Machina 2016

A limited release rosé English Sparkling wine made from 50% Pinot Noir, 20% Pinot Meunier, 30% Chardonnay with a bright and pretty pink colour. This wine has a floral nose of rose and strawberries. On the palate this wine has gorgeously small bubbles, a wonderful mouth feel from the two Pinots but the small amount of Chardonnay really does add a wonderful zing; of course you cannot forget about the biscuit! As with all of Dermot's Sugrue wines there is a minerality to it. Perfect for a lighter main dish or post dinner.

Sugrue South Downs: Cuvée Dr Brendan O'Regan MV

A multi vintage prestige English Sparkling wine made up of 60% Chardonnay and 40% Pinot Noir, aged in oak barrels. It is named after Dermot Sugrue's grandmother's brother, who



Ronnie congratulated the chef on a delightful meal, highlighting the soup in particular.

David and Linda Connor

essentially invented duty-free in Ireland! Truly another fantastic wine from Sugrue. Flint, white flowers, green apple, and that signature smokey minerality. Notes of brioche and toast leading to a long length and finish. Has enough complexity that it can pair with many dishes!

Sugrue South Downs: 'The Trouble With Dreams' 2014 magnum

Truly a delight and a special occasion to be able to taste both the 750ml and the magnum of the same wine, albeit different vintages with the same blend of grapes. Only 200 bottles. An incredible wine that has won many gold medals. Both the nose and the palate are precise and elegant with lingering caramel on the length. A joy to taste!

This whole tasting has cemented in my mind that fact that Dermot Sugrue is the best wine maker in England!

Stephanie Shepherd

Northampton

2022 ANNUAL DINNER AT HAMBLETON HALL



One result of flooding two valleys in the mid-1970s to create Rutland Water, a reservoir for the East Midlands, was that Hambleton Hall, a Victorian hunting lodge, now found itself on a peninsula with a stunning view over the new lake. The building's potential was soon spotted by Tim and Stefa Hart who opened it as a small country house hotel in 1980. It quickly became known for the excellence of its cooking. Northampton Branch first visited Hambleton on 22nd November 1981, slightly anticipating the award of a Michelin star. It has kept the same ownership, our regular custom and its star, ever since. The first two facts are remarkable, the third is a record for the UK.

Betty Meadows had been at the 1981 dinner and took over organising them in 2000. After the 2021 event, her twentieth (the dinner scheduled for 2020 having been cancelled thanks to Covid-19), and now aged over 90, she felt that it was time to hand the baton over. Her successor was the youngest member. As an avowed fan of Hambleton, the new organiser was very keen to do it, though he was acutely conscious of the responsibility he bore to do his bit to maintain the high standards Betty had led the Branch to expect. He had absorbed from her the knowledge that the best thing to do was to liaise closely with the right people and be guided by them. If Aaron Patterson (Head Chef at Hambleton for many years, and now the Chef Director) recommends something, one should take note.

On the evening of 9th October 2022 twenty-one members and one guest (including Betty and the slightly nervous new organiser) gathered in the drawing room at Hambleton to enjoy a glass of their long-standing House Champagne. It's a Blanc des Blancs from René Beaudouin, a small producer from the delightfully named village of Nogent l'Abbesse, situated just east of Reims. The organiser would say that he usually likes at least some Pinot in his Champagne, but he knows Monsieur Beaudouin's Chardonnay creation hits the right spot.

A couple of well-chosen canapés prepared our taste buds for the delights in store. Summoned through to the bigger dining room, we settled round the large white linen-clad oval table for our first course, a small cup containing a Bouillon of baked potato. If you were to think that a dish based on a humble



baked potato might be (shall we say) a little beneath a Michelin starred kitchen, think again. At this level of cooking, the imagination of a top chef is bound to surpass that of the diner. Made from a stock including baked potato skins, the aromas and then the umami flavours of the clear soup conjured up fresh autumn evenings and wood fires. A tortellino containing something unspecified (but savoury and delicious), and a little artfully charred miniature sweetcorn, lurked in the depths. Not an easy dish to match with wine, but the autumnal tones of the recommended Los Arcos dry Amontillado Sherry from Lustau suited it very well.

The bouillon was followed by a Terrine of Bouillabaisse. It arrived as a beautifully cut marbled slice containing tuna (seared and slightly rare in the middle) and an assortment of other perfectly cooked fish, laced with tomatoes and peppers, all held together by a clear gel made from lobster shell stock. The flavours of the original Mediterranean soup were evoked by subtle hints of garlic, saffron, orange zest, anis and fennel. It was garnished with a little samphire and some small soft dots of something zingy. For most of our party this was the standout dish of the evening, visually and gastronomically. A young (2021), dry Furmint from Château Dereszla in Tokaji, Hungary, despite originating far from the Mediterranean, accompanied it nicely.

One could be forgiven for thinking that Rib Eye Pork, even the free-range kind from Redhill Farm near Gainsborough, with crackling and an Apple, Prune and Armagnac sauce, might be a bit conventional. How wrong could one be? Clearly some magic with a filleting knife had gone on in the kitchen, because it looked quite unlike rib-eye anything the organiser had ever seen; no bone, just a small block of tender and succulent meat cut in elegantly thin slices. It was topped by a wafer-thin slice of apple set at a jaunty angle like a hat at a smart wedding.

On the side, what looked like a green cherry turned out to be a roasted crab apple. The crackling, a few delicate little curls of puffy, crispy deliciousness, offered no threat to even the most delicate teeth. The sauce provided the bass notes, but with enough apple to give it freshness. A little braised Kohl Rabi and

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Surrey Hills

FONDUE LUNCH

Members of the Surrey Hills Branch met for an enjoyable Fondue Lunch, not quite with the scenery of the Alps but in Sunninghill, near Ascot. The setting was at La Cloche at the Carpenters Arms, a country pub and restaurant which is known for its classic French cooking.

We started with the customary glass of bubbles before a Fondue Savoyarde. Wonderful pots of bubbling cheese in which to dip an assortment of the traditional bread and potatoes accompanied by delicious charcuterie. There are numerous versions of the history of this dish but, to most of the members, the event recalled not only winter vacations but its popularity in the 1960s where we diversified from the traditional cheese fondue – seemingly anything could be dipped in a pot of simmering oil or chocolate. Very different from the original simple and inexpensive food of the original fondue.

After the richness of the fondue, the chef had prepared a dessert of fruit and coconut sorbet. Our group agreed it was a perfect autumn lunch reminiscent of après ski without the

➡ *continued from page 38*

a couple of melting pieces of potato added further variety to one's mouthful. Superb.

Hambleton had proposed half a dozen very tempting candidates for the wine to accompany this course. To solve his dilemma the organiser had conferred with a couple of members whose wine knowledge he particularly respects. They suggested he choose the 2020 Morellino di Scansano from Fattoria le Pupille in Tuscany. Scansano is a small town and DOCG area in Western Tuscany, roughly halfway between Florence and Rome (but not in a straight line). Morellino is the local name for the Sangiovese grape. Vinified and matured in steel tanks with a small amount of two other grape varieties, Elisabetta Geppetti's elegant wine is probably not intended for long keeping, but with its nose of cherry and red fruit and smooth, fruity flavour, it was a great choice.

After the health of His Majesty had been drunk in 20-year-old Tawny Port from Graham's, we were served two cheeses, Barkham Blue and Highmoor. These were served quite simply



exercise and an opportunity to get together again with like-minded foodie companions.

Diana Mineck

with grapes and celery, and date and walnut bread from Hambleton Bakery. The Barkham Blue and the Port made an excellent partnership. There seemed to be less excitement about the Highmoor, which seemed to lack a certain wow! factor by comparison.

We finished with a small lemon tart accompanied by a little sorbet of garden sorrel. The organiser had thought that he wasn't very keen on sorrel but having been assured by both Aaron Patterson and Tim Hart that the sorbet was sensational, he had taken their word for it. They were quite right, of course. It had a delicious citrus-y flavour which perfectly complimented, but was quite different to, the lemon of the tart. The 1413 Tokaji Aszu from Disznókó served with it – sweet but not too sweet – went well. The 1413 apparently refers to the first recorded mention of the vineyard; the vintage we were drinking was 605 years later.

The evening was now almost at an end. Dominique Badduel, Hambleton's sommelier, had told us all about the wines we had drunk and he and Graeme Matheson, the restaurant manager, and their respective teams had looked after us impeccably throughout. The food had been magnificent, beautifully presented, and its amount expertly judged. Surveying the diners as the coffee and chocolates were served, the organiser thought he could discern a purring contentment.

Finally, the kitchen brigade came in to receive our applause, and were thanked on our behalf by our Chairman, Dr Nigel Kay. Head Chef Charlie Jones and his team had ably upheld Hambleton's high standards. Hopefully the new organiser can keep his job for another year.

Piers Smith-Cresswell
Photos: Tim Kidger

Sussex

CHRISTMAS AT OCKENDEN MANOR

So this is Christmas! What a pleasure it is to be able to celebrate Christmas with the Sussex Branch after the years of the pandemic. So here we were again able to enjoy a Christmas Dinner at Ockenden Manor in Cuckfield, a country house hotel whose head chef Michelin Star award winner Steve Crane oversees the kitchens. The hotel now promotes itself on offering leisure breaks with a relaxed atmosphere, fine dining and a luxury spa.

The members and guests dined in one of their wonderful wood panelled dining rooms in all its glory decorated for Christmas enhanced with the added ambiance of snow adorning this beautiful building. This felt like a real privilege and it can only be said that the food met expectations on presentation, taste and service, smoothly overseen by Russell Burbidge the restaurant manager.

The menu gave the members a choice of entrées of crispy confit pork belly or assiette of heritage tomatoes with a main course of Sussex venison or roast fillet of turbot and desserts of warm Christmas pudding or dark chocolate pavé.



The accompanying wines were a 2021 Vermentino from France and a Sangiovese from Italy with a glass of Kir on arrival.

It was a truly wonderful start to the Christmas season and a memorable evening enjoyed by everybody. It was certainly a hard venue to have to leave, wanting to remain with the open fires and cosy relaxed Christmas atmosphere.

Julie Wagg

Sussex

FIG TREE RESTAURANT



Once again the Sussex Branch had the pleasure of visiting the quintessential village of Hurstpierpoint and the reputable Fig Tree restaurant, run by a husband and wife team with a passion for food and wine. It would be easy to miss this restaurant as the frontage looks remarkably like a village tea shop or cafe. However, it offers a very unpretentious welcoming and relaxed atmosphere for a restaurant that delivers food to an exceptional standard.

This restaurant is very much a favourite of the Sussex Branch and once again there was no disappointment in the quality of the food, taste, execution and presentation of the various plates served. The accomplished chef and his team pride themselves on using local and seasonal produce with artistry and creative flavour combinations.

The menu was a tasting menu which, when read, was hard to visualise and imagine how the plates would turn out. However, they certainly exceeded our expectations and it proved to be a truly culinary experience and an unforgettable evening.

The dishes shown show the skill exhibited by this restaurant. Oxtail, onion croustade. Cheese gougère. Salmon quiche with oyster dressing. Turbot, celeriac, wild mushroom. Chicken pancetta, potato, butternut squash.

The wines served were, Prosecco 'Argeo' Ruggeri, Fiano, Molino a Vento Sicily, Italy and Sangiovese 'Brunito' Da Vinci Tuscany, Italy.

We look forward to our next visit.

Julie Wagg

Vale Royal

WELLINGTON NIGHT AT LA POPOTE, MARTON, CHESHIRE

The branch had a fantastic end to the year with a superb dinner at La Popote in Cheshire, run by husband and wife Joe and Gaelle. The evening began with a Champagne Reception, there was a choice of starters and desserts, but the star of the show was the Wellington.

Everyone could choose between a Beef or a Salmon Wellington with delicious accompanying vegetables. Both were cooked perfectly and enjoyed by all. The white wine was Albarino, Terra

de Asorei and the red Camino 'Tinto Fino' Dominio Romano both recommended by the restaurant.

The evening was further enhanced as Founder Members Mark and Esther Greaves were presented with their Medals by Steve Graham. This was a special night to end the inaugural year for Vale Royal Branch and wonderful evening to begin the Christmas festivities.

Ali Graham



PERSPECTIVE



In this first 2023 edition of Food & Wine we are inviting members to have their say on any topics related to gastronomy and wines for publication in the summer and subsequent editions. Could you write between 1,000 to 5,000 words on the subject of your choice? You could be lyrical on great feasts of your life, your most romantic meal, the wines you

most enjoyed, your worst food nightmares, the companions who have shared your experiences, your eno-gastronomic aspirations, fast-food fantasies, a unique event or your perceptions and predictions of gastronomy in the next 50 years. What do you feel strongly about? What do you want to taste but have failed to find? Did you always secretly wish to become a chef? Do tell all...

Each year in time for the Festive Season there will be an award for the most compelling article and for two runners-up.

The deadline for copy for the next edition is 31st May 2023, but articles are welcome at any time.

Send your article, with pictures if you wish, to editor.eaz@iwfs.org

FESTIVAL OF FOOD AND WINE AT SEA

22nd to 29th September 2023

In September 2023 Cunard's Queen Mary 2 will sail from Southampton to New York on Friday 22nd, arriving on Friday 29th.

It will be a special voyage staging a Festival of Food & Wine on board and it coincides with the 90th anniversary of the founding of IWFS in November 1933.

We would like to suggest to IWFS members and their guests that this could be an excellent opportunity to meet on this cruise as an informal group. You will need to reserve and pay directly with Cunard (www.cunard.com), or with your travel agent, for the crossing and to make your own onward and return journey arrangements. The cruise reference code is: M329E

When you have reserved your crossing, please e mail peter.mcgahey@btinternet.com who will link all the bookings of IWFS members.

Please Note: This programme is not being organised as an IWFS EAZ Festival.

On this occasion IWFS EAZ will act only as a facilitator and focal point for the group on-board ship. IWFS will not be arranging any Society activities on board. There are already 30 members booked on the cruise.

Each evening during the voyage Cunard have offered IWFS guests an opportunity to meet for pre-dinner drinks in a private room and will dedicate an area in the Britannia Restaurant for those who wish to dine together.

Michel Roux Jnr will be joining this voyage and will be presenting features from the menu of his Le Gavroche Restaurant.

During the day guests are free to avail of the enrichment programme of food and wine related lectures, events and other on-board facilities.

If you will be staying in New York on the evening of 29th September we are planning to enjoy dinner with members of New York branch – details later.

Prior to the Festival of Food & Wine at Sea there are events which you may wish to include in your itinerary – Friday 15th September: London Branch Dinner at Windsor Castle, Berkshire, and the EAZ AGM 20/21 September with pre-cruise dinner on 21st September in Brockenhurst Hampshire. Details will follow.

Enquiries, email peter.mcgahey@btinternet.com.



LONDON BRANCH DINNER AT WINDSOR CASTLE

15th September 2023



Join us to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of IWFS in the historic setting of the medieval Vicars' Hall at Windsor Castle.

We will start with a tour of St George's Chapel, dating from 1475 and recently the scene of the committal service following our late Queen's funeral. The chapel is the spiritual home of the Order of the Garter where the knights' banners are displayed.

Then we will gather in the Dean's Cloister for a reception, followed by dinner in the Vicars' Hall. Built in the year of the battle of Agincourt in 1415, the Hall was the venue for Shakespeare's first performance of the Merry Wives of Windsor in front of Queen Elizabeth I at the Garter Feast on 23rd April



1597. It has a spectacular timbered ceiling, alongside many other original features.

We will be treated to a three-course meal with matching wines. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to dine in a prestigious location which is not available to the general public, so early booking is strongly advised.

Members of all IWFS branches worldwide are invited. For further details and to make a booking visit www.iwfs.london. You will need to register on this site and create a username and password if you have not already done so. The price per head will be £220 for members and £245 for guests.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

UK Berkshire

17th March 2023

Richard Bampffield MW, local Master of Wine, will take you through the 'Top wines from Lidl'. Our venue is The Neville Hall, Waltham St Lawrence. Aperitif served from 6.45 pm for a 7.15 pm start. Contact Colin Mair for details at colin.mair@ntlworld.com.

UK West Yorkshire

18th March 2023

The Wines of South Western France, a soirée featuring the wine and food of one of France's least well known regions, with wines presented by our friend, the hugely entertaining Patrice Lipatti-Mesme. For enquiries, please contact Sue Timme at suetimme@gmail.com, our secretary.

UK London

30th March 2023

Pinot Gris and Cabernet Franc Wines, join us for a tasting of interesting wines made from these grapes. Organised and presented by Dr Bernard Lamb, National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges. 7pm start at The Army and Navy Club. See our website <https://www.iwfs.london/> for more details.

UK Merseyside & Mid Cheshire

April 2023 (date tbc)

Yellow Broom, Twemlow Green, Cheshire one of county's most popular eateries in this picturesque village. Contact Hilary Rylands at hilaryrylands@talktalk.net for more details.

UK Berkshire

21st April 2023

This month we are looking at wines from artisanal producers in France with Tim North of Joie de Vin. Our venue is The Neville Hall, Waltham St Lawrence. Aperitif served from 6.45 pm for a 7.15 pm start. Contact Colin Mair for details at colin.mair@ntlworld.com.

FINLAND Helsinki

22nd April 2023

'Cucina povera Finlandese', creating a delicious menu by using 'cheap' ingredients! Contact Jaana Keränen, email jaana.keranen@live.fi for details.

UK London

11th May 2023

Lunch at La Poule au Pot, join us for another of our 'classic lunches' organised by Ronda Fogel, midday start. See our



website <https://www.iwfs.london/> for more details.

UK Merseyside & Mid Cheshire

12th May 2023

The North, 2023 IWFS Vegetarian Competition Awards Lunch – an opportunity to see the winners of this year's competition (as featured on page 21). Thinking of doing something similar in future? Don't miss the event being held at Bolton University Buildings. Lunch at 12.30 for 1pm. Contact Hilary Rylands at hilaryrylands@talktalk.net for more details.

UK Berkshire

19th May 2023

We are heading east to taste wines of Romania and Slovenia with Andrew Walker of Solaris Wines and guest presenter Jakob Kripp, owner of Prince Stirbey Estate. Our venue is The Neville Hall, Waltham St Lawrence. Aperitif served from 6.45 pm for a 7.15 pm start. Contact Colin Mair for details at colin.mair@ntlworld.com.

FINLAND Helsinki

6th June 2023

It's our birthday and we are celebrating with a trip to the archipelago for dinner at a restaurant on one of the islands (yet to be decided). Contact Jaana Keränen on email: jaana.keranen@live.fi.

UK London

8th June 2023

Lunch at La Vita e Bella, the next in our series of 'classic lunches' organised by Ronda Fogel, featuring set lunch menus and excellent house wines at well-established restaurants – midday start. See our website <https://www.iwfs.london/> for more details.

UK Merseyside & Mid Cheshire

22nd June 2023

Join us for dinner at The Church Green, Lymm, Cheshire – recently presented with our Excellence Award. Run by famous chef Aiden Byrne and his wife Sarah. Dinner 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm. Contact Hilary Rylands at hilaryrylands@talktalk.net for more details.

UK Berkshire

23rd June 2023

Visit to All Angels Vineyard (<https://www.allangels.com/>), Enborne where we will be tasting the sparkling wines of this estate owned by the Darley family in the heart of Berkshire followed by a meal. Contact Colin Mair for details at colin.mair@ntlworld.com.

UK Merseyside & Mid Cheshire

3rd September 2023

It's our Summer Picnic, which has become a regular favourite and will be held once again at the home of our members, Val and Paul, in North Wales. Contact Hilary Rylands on hilaryrylands@talktalk.net if you are in the area.

UK London

15th September 2023

90th Anniversary Dinner at Windsor Castle – yes, we are celebrating the Society's 90th Anniversary with a Dinner at Windsor Castle. It is not inexpensive, but this is a unique opportunity to dine in this prestigious location. Although a London branch event, members across the globe are welcome, so you are urged to book straight away if you are interested. This is now available for booking on line at <https://www.iwfs.london/events/iwfs-90th-anniversary-dinner-at-windsor-castle/>.