



Food & Wine

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

Issue 154

November 2025

2025 AGM REPORT

RIOJA FESTIVAL

**2025 YOUNG CHEF
COMPETITION**

BRANCH REPORTS

Chairman's message



I'd like to start by thanking all of you who supported my election, along with the rest of Exco for the next 12 months. I'd also like to congratulate John Nicholas as he begins his term as Chair of International Council, which is a great honour.

Our AGM and members' forum at Bristol was a very enjoyable and lively

weekend with many highpoints, including the dinner at Thornbury Castle which will live long in the memory. As John has mentioned, the AGM confirmed the restructuring of Exco into six committees, each charged with delivering specific priorities. Phillip Kim's article in this issue summarises the new approach.

For those who weren't able to join the meeting, I wanted to highlight some of the points, and to outline how you can help us to accelerate the pace of change and renewal.

As background, over the last 11 years our region has lost some 444 members, equivalent to 35% of the total. With relatively little recruitment and an aging membership, we are facing a serious threat to our continued existence. Some branches have been able to increase numbers through word of mouth – we should be proud to tell friends about what we do and invite them to join us – but for many the story is one of decline and worries about future viability. To survive, we need to change, building on the best bits of what we do now.

Our strategy leverages our rich base of assets and aims to produce a core programme of events and content that are

Cover photo: Rioja Festival © Wayne Markus

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 131 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

repeatable, both in branches and in regional/new territory locations. Branches are of course free to programme whichever events are best suited for their membership throughout the year. The aim is to take some of the load of event curation centrally and reduce the number of times we have to 'reinvent the wheel'. We will support this with external marketing to publicise our events and build awareness of a strong IWFS brand to people who have never heard of us. Finally, we will be investing in digital capability to allow our content to be distributed to independent members and branches wherever and whenever they choose to consume it. In time, as we build the number of independent members, we will help them to coalesce geographically around existing and new branches. This will not be an overnight exercise – it may well be a year before we are in a position to market our 'relaunch' and longer before we see results in terms of increasing membership numbers – but we believe that this will enable us to build a strong and sustainable future for our Region.

Three initiatives which we will be developing throughout the next 12 months are as follows:

a) Judgement of Paris, 50 years on

The story of the original Judgement is told in the highly watchable (but apparently historically questionable) *Bottle Shock*, starring the incomparable Alan Rickman. On 24th May next year, the 50th anniversary, we will be organising our own Region-wide 'Judgement plus 50' event. We'd like as many branches as possible – in all countries in our Region – to take part in a large-scale blind tasting, culminating in a Eurovision-style results collation. We'll source the wines centrally at cost price, using our collective buying power, and distribute these to participants (we will explore how we might be able to ship to non-UK branches). We'll then publicise the results as loudly as possible to raise our profile. Any help you can give by organising a tasting, either as a Branch or more informally as a group of friends, would be greatly appreciated.

continued on page 3 ➔

Message from the Global Chairman



Zero Inbox; Zero Tasks. Isn't that everybody's dream; to have no emails left to address; to have completed all your tasks. Wouldn't that be lovely?

I bring this up in the context of my term as International Chairman of IWFS, and that my term will end this Fall, when I pass the baton to IWFS Europe Africa's John Nicholas. Your next Chairman's letter will come from John.

Once that transition takes place, I will have two years remaining in my term as a Council member appointed by IWFS Americas.

And so, I reminisce, which feels appropriate, because when my final term on Council ends in 2027, I will have had the privilege to serve IWFS for 25 years. It has been just that, a privilege I will never forget, for a gift that keeps on giving. I awaken every day, looking forward to whatever awaits me on the IWFS playing field, knowing that in a pinch, I can reach out for help, and it will always be there.

Let me briefly remind you where Council sits in the hierarchy of the IWFS universe. IWFS Ltd. is the founding company of the society which is the foundation of our allegiance. For the many decades before the three global areas each incorporated in 2015, it was the 'straw that stirs the drink', as cash and major decisions flowed through Council, which serves as its board of directors. In 2015, when the three global areas incorporated into IWFS Americas, IWFS Europe Africa and IWFS Asia Pacific, each of the three companies projected their missions with full accountability for all financial activities and membership

➔ *continued from page 2*

b) Drink More Fizz!

Building on the excellent *Sparkling Wines of the World* Monograph, author Essi Avellan MW will be taking part, along with Mimi Avery, in the popular Wine Blast podcast to be broadcast in November. We hope to be filming some of the tasting and will develop a tasting package to share with Branches.

c) Young Chef Competition

Already praised as the "premier competition for young chefs in the north of England", the 2026 competition is already set to be the largest yet. We would still like to expand the geographic coverage of the competition and ultimately roll the concept out across the entire region. The work required by any participating branch is relatively straightforward – essentially organising a

services. Each company was unique to its area of the world and was on its own to see fit how best to prosper.

And yet Council remains; the custodian of the most important obligation of the International Wine & Food Society, which is to nurture and promote the global nature of the society and its brand, with its potential to create lasting bonds within and amongst its members around the world.

You will know that Council is doing its job when there is a broad calendar of events available to all members; when there is dialogue amongst the leadership of the area companies; when there is structured communication to all our global members; when there is a healthy, informative website. Essentially, when there is sharing around the world, there is evolution and growth.

And yes, the three area companies are each holding up their end of the bargain. Each of them has engaged in development of new leadership teams, which are conjuring up wonderful new programs to delight their members. A great deal of imagination and hard work goes into creating our standard programs of monographs, festivals, lectures, and magazines. Yet continued enhancement has taken place over the years, both within and in the spaces between them. They have created wine-tasting videos, virtual tasting programs, catering school competitions, as well as an app containing reference to all the benefits of membership. And much more.

Think of it like a menu at our IWFS restaurant. When someone comes to enjoy a meal, they come with varying degrees of appetite and wallet size. So, there should be something for everyone, whether it be appetizers, side dishes, entrées, desserts or cheese courses. I believe that the IWFS menu holds its own, and will continue to do so, if we continue to pour our passion and creativity into it.

Now, here I sit, with a bloated inbox, and a great many tasks yet to complete for this wonderful organization. It delights me so.

Mike Donohoe
Global Chairman

heat at each college to select one or two students to take part in the Final in Leeds on April 24th, 2026. It's a lot of fun, plays a great part in developing the next generation of chefs and in raising our profile more widely.

If you feel that you can get involved in any of these initiatives, or in any of the Committee activities, please get in touch. Many of us have benefitted greatly over the years from the opportunities that being part of IWFS affords, and our challenge together is to ensure that those same opportunities are available for the next generation.

Stephen Harrison
Chair, IWFS Europe Africa

Contents

DID YOU KNOW?

- Chives belong to the same family as onions, garlic, and leeks, the alliums, but give us a milder taste.
- They're rich in vitamins A and C and contain antioxidants that help fight off free radicals.
- Chives are native to Asia and Europe, thriving in temperate climates.
- They've been cultivated for over 5,000 years – so they're one of the oldest known herbs.
- In medieval Europe, chives were believed to have magical properties and were hung up in homes to ward off evil spirits
- Chives pair well with fish, cheese, and eggs, so they're a popular addition to omelettes, scrambled eggs, mashed



potatoes, and fish pies. They can also be used to make chive oil, which adds extra flavour to dressings and marinades.

- Chive flowers are edible, too, and can be used to add colour and flavour to your dishes.

PUBLICATION DATES

- **Food & Wine Online (e-newsletter) Issue 25**
December issue, deadline for copy from contributor 30th November 2025. *Copy for the online e-newsletter to sec@iwfs.org*
- **Food & Wine (printed) Issue 155**
March issue, deadline for copy from contributors 31st January 2026. *Copy for printed magazine to editor.eaz@iwfs.org*

Please send your photographs and text file separately.

Advance notice of your events at which members of other branches would be welcome can also be included, along with booking details.

As always, we invite your event reports, articles and pictures.

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From the Editor

I started to write this in early September – the sun had just stopped shining after several weeks when we dined and imbibed with friends outdoors until 10.00 pm, the grass didn't demand to be cut, the birds sang cheerfully, we expected the more pessimistic public utilities and local authorities to declare a drought but dismissed the idea, and all the time wished the good life might continue. Now all has changed – the less optimistic prevailed, successfully prayed for rain and were rewarded with thunderstorms, flash floods and damp (but greener) grass: the birds look depressed.

Looking forward... from autumn this year our Europe Africa Chairman, John Nicholas, will take the Chair of the IWFS internationally. Congratulations to him and also to his wife Joan who, I am sure, will be of immense support in this demanding role. A vote of thanks must go to him for his leadership over six years during which time the Society introduced the annual Young Chef Competition, in cooperation with catering colleges and industry sponsors, to encourage and support students in their chosen profession. And we welcome Stephen Harrison as our new chairman, who took over the role at the AGM in Bristol.

One of the major features of the Society in recent years has been the promotion of wine pairing. The Society has always published the combined annual membership and vintage chart card carrying the evaluations of the Wine Committee, it also publishes 'on-line' the IWFS app pairing recommendations and now you can 'Ask André' on-line for suggestions. There are of course other sources of advice and a recent one was spotted which clearly sought to include a broader range of gastronomic temptations and to encourage the appreciation of wines amongst a wider audience: a recommendation is promoted on the wine label you see in the picture.



For the future please continue to submit your reports of events, announce events at your branch, especially where guests from other branches and around the world would be welcome (give plenty of notice!). Write to the Editor with your comments, your suggestions, your criticisms.

Peter McGahey
Editor

Food & Wine

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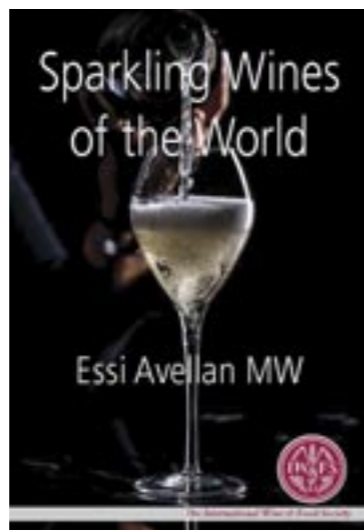
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News from the International Secretariat

As you move into the Autumn your thoughts may well be turning to festive celebrations – who is coming this year, dishes to serve, wines to celebrate and those to accompany the meal? How to make it extra special? Well, the IWFS is here to help you this year with pages full of suggestions on sparkling wines to serve, in this year's monograph, *Sparkling Wines of the World*. This monograph has been written by Essi Avellan, an MW (Master of Wine) and expert in all things sparkling. Essi is recognised as having one of the best palate's when tasting sparkling wines so we are very pleased that she agreed to author this topic for us.

Essi gives readers an insight into the countries and regions, outside of Champagne but still using the traditional method, now producing some of the best sparklers. Italy is making great strides in quality metodo classico wines in particular in



Franciacorta, Trentodoc and also Alta Langa. Further afield are from Napa to New Zealand and also to Nova Scotia – there are many more. As you flick through you can read about the sparkling wines she has tasted and those she recommends.

We trust you received your copy with the last issue of *Food & Wine* and that you get inspiration to try something new and with the confidence this it will still

give the quality and gravitas that you are seeking for your celebrations – cheers.

This is the time of year when your new Vintage Guide for 2026 will be released, either in the printed Vintage Card format or via the Vintage App online. The quality of the vintage advice is second to none as our Wines Committee members are key figures in the wine trade and the majority are Masters of Wine along with our Wine Consultants who are also recognised experts in their field. The Wines Committee meeting in May was led by Chairman Ron Barker and attended by committee members Stuart Leaf and Gordon Lloyd (IWFS members) and Charles Taylor MW (MD of Charles Taylor Wines) pictured left to right below. Konstantinos Lazarakis MW joined online from his base in Greece. Follow-up meetings are held for those members unable to run through their areas of speciality. Stand-out regions on next year's Card are Rioja, North-West Spain (Priorat/Penedes), Oregon, Central Otago and South Africa.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce new members of our valuable team of Wine Consultants whose advice,

Podcast alert – join 10,000, maybe more, followers of Wine Blast, if you are not already one. This is a hugely popular, award-winning, entertaining and informative podcast presented by Susie and Peter (authors of our *Essential Guide to English Wines* monograph) with a global audience. They are on their seventh series and take a look at a broad spectrum of wine topics – more recently with an exclusive two episode interview with Jancis Robinson OBE MW. We are very pleased to have sponsored an upcoming episode where they are focussing on our *Sparkling Wines* monograph and interviewing the author Essi Avellan. The episode is due to air around 14th November (date to be confirmed) – so keep an eye, or ear, out on <https://susieandpeter.com/podcast/>.




provided freely, is invaluable to us. It is great to welcome the following:

Chris Kissack Loire Valley

Chris Kissack is the creator, reviewer and writer of thewinedoctor.com which he established in May 2000. Chris is a recognised specialist in the wines of Bordeaux and the Loire and you can read his comment on the wines that he has tasted recently on thewinedoctor.com. He joined the wine team at The Wine Independent in 2025 as their principal reviewer and senior editor for Bordeaux.



Sarah Heller MW Valpolicella (Amarone)



title in its inaugural 2015 edition. She serves as Italian wine reviewer and columnist for Club Oenologique, wine editor for Asia Tatler, a host of the television series *Wine Masters*, and co-designer of the award-winning Elements Collection of crystal stemware with Lucaris. Her educational video series has reached over 10 million students worldwide, and she is a sought-after speaker on Italian fine wine, Champagne, and wine investment.

Sarah's work bridges wine's cultural and sensory dimensions; her Visual Tasting Notes and other artworks have been exhibited and published internationally. She is a Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy and Honorary Advisor to Hong Kong's International Culinary Institute.

A Yale graduate in fine art, Sarah began her wine career in New York and Hong Kong and has collaborated with wineries across Europe. She speaks multiple languages, including Italian, French, German, Chinese, and English.

Sarah sent us a message about her favourite wine and food matchings: "I've been enjoying the new styles of Amarone with Cantonese barbecue like char siu and roast pork. The wines' drier style still gives enough impression of sweetness to echo the sauces and their brighter acidity cuts beautifully through the fattiness."

Marcus Rafanelli Washington

Marcus Rafanelli is a Seattle native, with extensive domestic and international winemaking experience. He is a 2008 graduate of the Walla Walla Community College (WWCC) Institute for Enology & Viticulture (EV) program and holds a B.S. in Biology from Boise State University.



While at WWCC's EV program, he worked as a harvest intern at L'Ecole N° 41, gaining experience in small-lot winemaking. After graduating, he made wine for a boutique Woodinville-based winery for six years, following which his career took him to renowned wineries in Australia and Germany.

He returned to Walla Walla in 2016, taking the role of Instructional Technician at WWCC and Cellarmaster at College Cellars. Marcus has been an active member of the Washington Wine Technical Group since 2009 and holds a place on the Advisory Board of the WWCC EV Program.

Marcus has three go-to food and wine pairings which he highly recommends and says they 'work everytime':

- Prosciutto and melon with a nice dry Grenache Rose (Provence or Washington State)
- Goat cheese with Semillon
- Chavignol cheese with Sauvignon Blanc

I would like to also take this opportunity to thank those consultants who have assisted us in previous years and have



now handed over the baton to other experts in their field of wine expertise and they are Jim Budd (Loire) (pictured left), who was awarded the IWFS Diploma in 2024 having served as our Loire consultant for 14 years; Lance Foyster MW (Austria), Emma Dawson MW (Valpolicella, Amarone) and Jean-Francois Pellet (Washington).

Andrea Warren

2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING IWFS EUROPE AFRICA

On Saturday 13th September, 41 members were present representing several locations ranging from Manchester to Devonshire and London, as well as Lisbon, Portugal. Following the approval of the financial accounts and the re-appointment of Kathy Jeffrey as the Independent Examiner, John Nicholas – the outgoing Chair of IWFS Europe Africa – turned the meeting towards one of the most consequential agenda resolutions in the past several years to be proposed to members – the restructuring of the Executive Committee (Exco) for Europe Africa.

As set out in the AGM Notice circulated to members on 3rd September, the previously twelve member Exco was reorganised to six, with each of the incoming Exco members being the chairs of six Committees that aim to coordinate governance and activities across the region. The Committees are: Governance, Marketing, Events, Content, Branch Liaison, and Education/Charity Outreach. The Chairs and brief descriptions of each Committee are as follows:

- Governance – Chair: Jonathan O'Brien (Capital). Looking after Finance, Secretarial, Legal, Insurance and IT infrastructure.



Incoming Chair Stephen Harrison



Your six new Exco members taken at the recent AGM, left to right: Jonathan O'Brien, Clare Gill, Stephen Harrison, Geeta Lloyd, Phillip Kim, John Nicholas

- Marketing – Chair: Clare Gill (Independent Member). Looking after social media, website, advertising, publications, merchandise, public relations and alliances/partnerships.
- Events – Chair: Stephen Harrison (West Yorkshire). Looking after regional programming themes, international festivals, multi-branch events.
- Content – Chair: Phillip Kim (Capital). Looking after programming content - including videos and slide decks, other media assets, heritage content, wine primer.
- Branch Liaison – Chair: Geeta Lloyd (Devonshire). Looking after membership, inter-branch communications, branch scheduling coordination, member heritage and awards.
- Education/Charity Outreach – Chair: John Nicholas (newly appointed Chair of the IWFS Ltd Council of Management). Looking after charitable activities, including Heptinstall, competitions, charitable foundation formation, legacy donations.

Stephen Harrison was appointed as Chair of Exco. Jonathan O'Brien was appointed as Treasurer and Secretary. Together with John Nicholas, they will serve as company directors of IWFS Europe Africa Ltd.

The resolution to restructure Exco was passed with no dissenting votes, including 20 votes received by proxy.

Following the vote, the six new Exco members delivered a presentation that summarised their strategy to accelerate the evolution of Europe Africa. What followed was a lively 90-

minute discussion where many Society members expressed helpful views. The slides that were presented are available on our websites – www.iwfsea.org and www.iwfs.org.

The mandate of the restructured Exco with its six Committees is to focus more energy and resources into revitalising the Society in Europe Africa. The aim is to make coordinated investments in activities that support existing branches and attract new Independent members. Through the Committees, Exco will generate (a) programming – events and content - that is repeatable at both the regional and local levels; (b) external marketing programmes that communicate a strong IWFS brand to attract new members; and (c) an enhanced digital infrastructure (e.g. websites, social media) to provide efficient modern communication and distribution capabilities.

Along these lines, the theme for 2026 is to create activities around the 50th anniversary of the famous 'Judgement of Paris' tasting on 24th May 1976. That event dramatically transformed the wine world when a group of California (mainly Napa Valley) red and white wines bested top wines from Bordeaux and Burgundy in a blind tasting held in Paris. IWFS has the opportunity to organise similar blind tasting events across the region, with the results aggregated to produce our own authoritative 'Judgements'!

Other themes that Exco and the Committees are indicatively developing are leveraging the 2025 monograph on Traditional Method Sparkling Wines through bubbly wine tastings, and expanding the very successful Young Chef Competition into its fifth year. Furthermore, planning for next year's International Festival and AGM weekend are underway.

We need your help with these ambitious efforts! Membership of the Committees is open to any existing members as well as others who would like to get involved. We strongly encourage



John Nicholas awarding the André Simon bronze award to Phillip Kim

as many members as possible to respond to this call out to revitalise the Society that we all love.

Phillip Kim
Photos: Geoff Williams



At the AGM

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

IWFS Europe Africa Limited

The Annual General Meeting of IWFS Europe Africa Limited (Company or EA) took place in Bristol on Saturday 13th September 2025 to approve, *inter alia*, the Annual Report. The report had been approved by the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors and then examined by the Independent Examiner, Kathy Jeffrey. The Annual Report was approved at the AGM.

The Annual Report is available on the website, when logged in as a member, www.iwfs.org in Europe Africa, Resources, EA Administration, AGM Documents. Extracts from the financial statements have been filed at Companies House using the micro-entity exemption.

The following is an extract from the Annual Report.

IWFS Europe Africa Limited **Income and expenditure account** **for the year ended 31st December 2024**

	2024	2023
	£	£
Total operating income	41,470	36,041
Total administrative expenses	55,412	48,995
Operating deficit before tax	-13,941	-12,914
Net surplus from EAZ festivals and events	16,675	43,299
Surplus/deficit before taxation	2,734	30,385
Corporation tax on interest received	2,292	1,783
Surplus/deficit after taxation	441	28,602

Balance sheet as of 31st December 2024

	2024	2023
	£	£
Sundry debtors	1,839	7,095
Festival and event payments in advance	20,967	20,656
Cash at bank	302,058	281,172
Total current assets	324,864	308,923
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year		
Subscriptions received in advance	713	508
Festival and event receipts in advance	73,766	56,745
Sundry creditors	3,087	4,814
Total creditors	77,566	62,067
Net current assets	247,298	246,857
Accumulated funds		
Balance brought forward	246,857	218,255
Surplus/deficit after taxation for the year	441	28,602
Balance carried forward	247,298	246,857

Commentary

A small surplus after tax of £441 was generated in 2024 compared with the exceptional surplus of £28,602 in 2023 resulting from the success of the festival in Southern Africa.

Operating income in 2024 of £41,470 increased by £5,429 compared with 2023, partly as a result of an increase in interest income as funds were deployed on the Flagstone platform more effectively and an increase in membership fees following the increased fees, and despite a reduction in members of 63.

Total administrative expenses, however, increased by £6,457 to £55,412 compared with £48,955. The increase was almost entirely driven by marketing and advertising which included investment in the development of the strategy to attract new members, including the build of the new front-end marketing system aimed at attracting new members as well as supporting existing members in finding events and other news.

EA has a strong balance sheet with nearly £250,000 of accumulated funds, which together with net funds received in advance for future festivals, resulted in total cash at bank including Investments through the Flagstone platform, which are limited to £85,000 in any one holding, so that all the funds are protected under the Government's FSCS scheme.

EA has benefitted from the ongoing higher interest environment in the UK. The interest earned, even after taxation, together with the surpluses generated from festivals have enabled EA to meet its expense obligations to IWFS Limited and directly, without significant increases in membership fees, despite the continuing reductions in the number of members. We are now embarking on new initiatives to try to stem the relentless reduction in the number of members over the last 11 years. We will have to make investments using the funds garnered over the last few years.

I stepped in to finalise the 2024 Annual Report as Jon Doneley resigned at the beginning of 2025, because of increasing work commitments. Jonathan O'Brien, who has joined both Capital and London branch, has taken over the Treasurer function of the Company during 2025 and will be responsible for the 2025 Annual Report.

John Nicholas
Immediate past Chair
IWFS Europe Africa Limited

GALA DINNER AT THORNBURY CASTLE

IWFS EA AGM 2025

The beautiful Tudor surroundings of Thornbury Castle provided the perfect setting for the Gala Dinner of the 2025 IWFS Annual General Meeting.

Situated in South Gloucestershire, Thornbury Castle is now a luxurious hotel and restaurant. The present structure was originally conceived and constructed by Edward Stafford, in the sixteenth century. Stafford was the only man of his time to rival Henry VIII in wealth and ambition. Henry, being Henry, did not take kindly to this display so when Stafford was found guilty of treason and subsequently executed, Henry took control of the estate and the castle and it became a brief, beloved retreat for Henry and his second wife, Anne Boleyn.

After Henry's death in 1547, it passed firstly to his son, Edward VI and then to Mary I. In 1554, Mary returned it to the Stafford family.

Over the following centuries, it gradually fell into decline until 1800, when Lord Henry Howard, a Stafford descendant, decided to take up residence at Thornbury.

In 1850 his son, carried out a full restoration by the celebrated Victorian architect, Anthony Salvin. It remained in the Howard family until 1960 when Sir Algar Howard sold it.

In 1966 renowned chef Kenneth Bell bought the castle for £26,000 and established a restaurant. The present owners took possession in 2019 and began a programme to upgrade the castle and to develop a hotel and restaurant that maintains the richness of its Tudor heritage.

On arrival members were welcomed in the entrance hall with canapés and an aperitif of Prosecco Rose di Maria. This wine was delicate and refreshing, with delicate and complex floral and fruity notes.

The restored Tudor Hall was the setting for dinner and the staff provided excellent service throughout the meal.

The Menu

Starter

Hay Smoked Salmon, Cucumber, Smoked Roe, Radish, Samphire

Main

Roast Loin of Lamb, Pressed Potato, Tomato, Olive and Basil Jus

Cheese Board





Dessert
Warm Bakewell Tart served with Roasted Almond Ice-cream

Coffee and Tea.

The Wines

The wines came from the vineyard of Château Lions Lamartine which is situated on the banks of the River Tarn, at Lisle sur Tarn, in the Languedoc region of southwest France.

The Gaillac Blanc Sec 2023 had aromas of mandarin, apricot and wild flowers, with a rich and expressive palate, bursting with fruit, yet with a crispness that kept it fresh and lively.

The Gaillac Rouge 2024 offered a mix of currant fruit and herbal pine on the nose, as well as a crisp, medium-bodied palate.

After the meal, John Nicholas presented medals and certificates to Gita and Gordon Lloyd, Tim Hodges, Stephen Harrison, David Chapman, Alan Shepherd and Ian Nichol. All were thanked for their work and outstanding contributions to IWFS. Peter McGahey was thanked for all his hard work in arranging this year's AGM and for his work as editor of the *Food & Wine* magazine.

The evening was enjoyed by all based upon the ambience of the castle and the companionship provided by members from the UK, Portugal and the USA.

Angela Britland
Merseyside & Mid Cheshire

AVERY WINE TASTING IWFS EA AGM 2025

Following the IWFS Annual General Meeting 2025, Mimi Avery gave a presentation to members showing some wines sold by Avery's, exemplars of their kind. Avery's and Mimi herself are good friends of IWFS and well known to many of us. Indeed, John Avery MW, Mimi's father, was Chairman of IWFS Council 1996-2000 and President of the Society 2008-2012.

Fifth generation in the wine trade, Mimi regaled us with entertaining stories about Avery's business, including anecdotes about John Avery and her grandfather, Ronald Avery, as we tasted along.

Ronald Avery started to ship and bottle his own selections of Bordeaux, Burgundy and German wines in 1923. He was one of the first wine merchants to visit producers abroad directly, and regularly, particularly in Bordeaux. He introduced wines from St Emilion and Pomerol to the UK.

John Avery went to Australia in 1965 for the Ashes, and met a number of wine makers while he was out there. He was then the first to import wines into the UK from Australia, including Tyrrell's, McWilliams and Penfolds Grange Hermitage, from 1966.

That year he visited New Zealand, and was the first to import New Zealand wines a few years later. His influence was pivotal in popularising these wines in the decades following: in fact, he "practically invented the British market for wines from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA" (Christie's).

Château Thieuley Cuvée Francis Courselle 2015, Bordeaux AOC £15.99

50% Sémillon, 50% Sauvignon Blanc, oak fermented. A characteristic old style white Bordeaux, with rich round fruit and hints of tropicality. It is quite hard to find a wine like this now.





Mussel Pot Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2024 £12.99

There was more weight in the Bordeaux wine we tasted first, and more vibrant fruit in this – a typical gooseberry nose, with citrus fruit on the palate, and length. It is a good illustration of the more restrained style of Sauvignon Blanc now being produced in New Zealand.

Averys Fine Organic Riesling 2022, Pfalz Qualitätswein £14.99

An aromatic Riesling from a small family estate in the Pfalz, the second largest grape producing area in Germany. Floral and



mineral nuances on the nose, with that hint of petrol identifying the grape, and an almost bone dry taste, the minerality following through, plus apple and citrus flavours. Averys's best value own label white.

Averys Montepulciano d'Abruzzo DOC 2022 £10.99

From east of Rome. Part aged in oak, crunchy fresh cherry fruit, soft. Slightly more acidic than the next wine. Averys's best value own label red.

Averys Fine Claret Bordeaux AOC 2020 £14.99

100% Merlot. Classic Bordeaux. Some oak. Tobacco aromas, softened and rounded black fruit flavours.

Averys Fine Barossa Valley Shiraz 2021 £14.99

An old-vine, barrel aged Shiraz, from a family-owned winery that is one of Australia's largest producers of organic red wine. Bolder, bigger and rounder than Syrahs from the Rhône. Barossa-type nose of red fruit. Concentrated plum in the taste and a cedar finish. As it ages, spice, together with cracked black pepper notes, become more apparent.

We were delighted to participate in this tasting. Thank you, Mimi!

Rachel Burnett

DINNER AT THE HOLIDAY INN, FILTON

IWFS EA AGM 2025

After an action-packed afternoon when we were never longer than two hours without food and wine, our palates needed a little cleansing! We gathered for a restorative aperitif of Prosecco Il Baco de Sita, Italy. This wine is classified as Extra Dry but there was some residual sugar evident. It was an abundant creamy fizz with notes of apples, pears and a hint of white peach.

With our appetites duly perked up, we went into dinner in the Orchard Suite and were served a prawn and avocado salad with celeriac remoulade and basil oil. This was light and crunchy with delicate flavours, the perfect start to our meal. The accompanying wine was Picpoul de Pinet petit ronde from Languedoc- Roussillon, France. This was a very dry and salty wine with plenty of fruit, a good match for our starter.

Our main course of roast breast of duck in a port sauce with Dauphinoise potatoes, braised red cabbage and parsnip crisps was delicious. The duck was pink and juicy and the potatoes were decadence on a plate. The spiced cabbage reminded us that the weather had changed and we were into autumn! With this dish we enjoyed Granfort Cabernet Sauvignon, Pays D'Oc,

France. This was a smooth and rounded wine with plenty of black fruit and a little oak for substance.

We were then served with a very impressive cheese board bearing large hunks of Applewood Cheddar, Goats Cheese and Stilton. We learnt earlier in the day from Mimi Avery, at her fantastic wine tasting (see page 12), that the acidity of white wine cuts through the fat in cheeses with a white rind, so we were now presented with a choice of which of the two wines to enjoy (or maybe some went for both!).

In true IWFS style we had left some room for dessert which was a lovely and light blueberry crumble cheesecake with blackcurrant coulis, another nod to the change of season. Tea and coffee were also served.

Peter McGahey brought the chefs and Front of House Staff together (pictured below) for us to offer a hearty vote of thanks for a wonderful evening, sharing food and wine with friends old and new.

Nicola McLoughlin



EAZ 2025 FESTIVAL: THE BASQUE COUNTRY AND RIOJA

by *Dr Gordon Lloyd*



Our two days in the Basque Country and five days in Rioja sufficed to give a good, though not comprehensive, grasp of the wines of the two neighbouring, though very different, regions.

The Basque Country is squeezed between the Coast of the Bay of Biscay and the steep mountains of the Sierra Cantabrica to the South, having a temperate, wet, oceanic climate, where the local Hondarrabi Zuri and French Folle Blanche grapes manage to thrive, against all odds.

By contrast Rioja straddles the broad River Ebro valley with the Sierra Cantabrica to the North and the Sierra de la Demanda to the South leading to significant climatic variations across the region. Towards the east, in Rioja Oriental, Mediterranean influences increase, favouring the Garnacha and Mazuelo grape varieties. To the west the valley rises to Rioja Alta and the climate becomes progressively continental, favouring the Tempranillo and Graciano varieties. To the Northwest lies Rioja Alavesa, which is subject to Atlantic influences and where the soils are predominantly calcareous clays compared with the ferrous clays elsewhere.

Whilst the Basque Country wine is all about the resurgence of its local Txacoli (pronounced Chacoli) wines, produced from a blend of Hondarrabi Zuri and Folle Blanche, Rioja is in greater flux. Traditionally characterised by a quality hierarchy based on the number of years a wine has been aged in oak barrels and bottles and with blending across the region, Rioja is now seeing a growth of single vineyard and single village wines, and wines produced outside the traditional classification system, as producers develop their own individual wine styles.

Basque Country Pre-festival

Vineyard visits

Monday 19th May

Bodega Berroja

Bodega Berroja is situated in the Basque province of Bizcaya in the foothills of the Sierra Cantabrica near Guernica (Viz. Picasso masterpiece) and, with 24ha under vines at 250m above sea level, accounts for 16% of the vines area in the province. The Txacoli D.O. allows up to 20% of international varieties (e.g. Riesling, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc) in a blend but on average 90% of a blend consists of Hondarrabi Zuri. In addition, other local grapes are allowed such as Folle Blanche, Petit Manseng etc.

The first wine we tasted was Bodega Berroja Aguirrebeko, Bizkaiko, Txakolina, 2023, a blend of 85% Hondarrabi Zuri, 10% Reisling and 5% Folle Blanche. The zesty acidity balanced the aromas of white flowers, red apple, pear and lemon zest, with bitter and mineral notes on the palette and a long finish, giving a very good wine.

The next wine was Bodega Berroja Lento Latido, Bizkaiko Txakolina, 2023, with the same grape blend as the Aguirrebeko but the wine had spent 12 months on the lees in a steel tank after fermentation. The aroma profile was the same as above with added buttery tones and added creamy texture. With a long finish this was another very good wine but with added complexity from the secondary autolytic notes. Both this and the previous wine would be perfect matches for fish or seafood.

The final wine, Berroja Berezi, Bizkaiko Txakolina, 2021, Crianza Sobre Lias, was an 80:20 blend of Hondarrabi Zuri and Riesling. Faint aromas of bread were complemented by a lively acidity and a creamy texture on the palette, with barely any citrus notes. Lacking balance and structure it was a disappointing end to an otherwise interesting visit.

Restaurant Wines

Sunday 18th May

Aitaren Boulevard, Bilbao

Our first adventure on arrival in Bilbao was to find our way to the wonderful Aitaren Boulevard Restaurant, on the banks of the Nervión River on the edge of the Casco Viejo. The first wine was Señorío Otaxaran, Finca Loreako Ama, Bizkaiko Txakolina, 2023. The wine was medium lemon in appearance with balanced aromas of apple and pear, grapefruit and citrus and a



high acidity. The wine had a long finish and served as an excellent aperitif.

The next wine was Marques de Murrieta Reserva, 2020, which will be covered below.

This was followed by Gorka Izagirre Zura, Bizkaiko Txakolina, 2021. The Zura wine is produced by the Gorka Izagirre winery from 100% Hondarrabi Zerratia grapes in 5000 litre oak vats. After fermentation, the wine was aged on its lees in the same vat for 10 months, after which it was aged for several more months in the bottle. The wine had fleeting aromas of grapefruit, lemon zest and toasted bread, was medium bodied and had high acidity and a shortish finish. It was rather disappointing lacking both balance and fruit intensity.

The final wine of the evening was Habla 29, 2020, a blend of the international varieties Malbec, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon from a winery in Trujillo (Cáceres) in Extremadura, in Southwest Spain, and so lacking any local character. After fermentation, the wine was aged in French oak barrels for 12 months. Aromas of black cherry, blackberry, black plum and bell peppers, with faint wood notes and high acidity, resulted in a balanced, well-structured wine with integrated, ripe, silky tannins and a longish finish. Overall, the wine was somewhat rustic.

Monday 19th May

Evening Pintxos Tour

The 'tour' was a gentle meander through the Casco Viejo of Bilbao from one bar to the next enjoying one or two pintxos (i.e. tapas) at each bar along with a glass of wine (or cider!!). The first wine was Lapazaran Txacoli, Bizkaiko Txacolina made from a blend of Hondarrabi Zerratia, Hondarrabi Zuri and Riesling. Fresh aromas of grapefruit, lemon zest and pear, along with a zesty acidity resulted in a simple, balanced wine with a distinct Atlantic character.

The next bar served us Valdelares, Navarra, Rosado, NV, produced from 100% Garnacha. Sadly, I failed to write a note on this wine, as I did on the Gurutzeta Sidra Natural we tasted at the next bar!! However, I did manage to comment on the Izadi Crianza, Rioja Alavesa, 2021. The Alavesa province, although within the Rioja D.O., is part of the Basque Country and so this wine classifies as "local". It is a blend of Tempranillo, Garnacha and Graciano that, after fermentation, spent 14 months in a mixture of French and American oak barrels. The wine had medium intensity aromas of red cherry, blackberry, black cherry and cedar, and ripe, velvety tannins. However, lacking fruit definition and concentration, it was undistinguished and only had a medium finish.

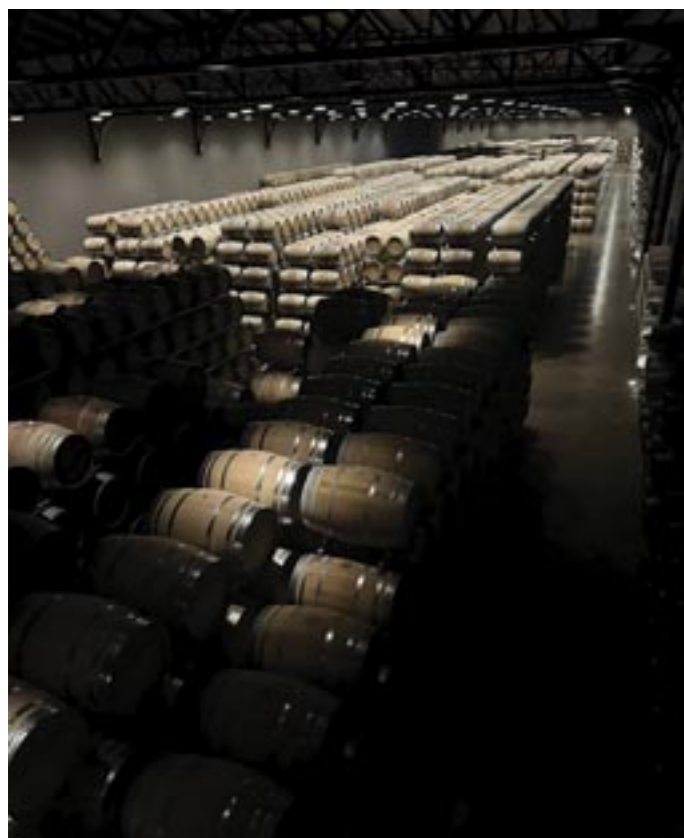
Rioja Festival

Vineyard visits

Tuesday

Aureo Palacio de Correos

Having arrived at the Aureo Palace Hotel in Logroño, our base for the remainder of the Festival, our first tasting was at dinner at the hotel that night. Ruben Provedo, a local winemaker, presented some of his (not commercially available) wines, with proceedings hampered by Sr. Provedo's limited English.



aromas of pear, grapefruit and peach, with bitter notes on the palette. With a long finish this was an outstanding wine,

This was followed by two red wines, the first of which was Marques de Murrieta Reserva, 2020. The blend of 82% Tempranillo, 7% Graciano, 7% Mazuelo and 4% Garnacha had concentrated aromas of red cherry, red currant and oak. The wine had good balance and the well-integrated, ripe, silky tannins and high alcohol level provided structure. This outstanding wine had a very long finish.

We ended with Marques de Murrieta Gran Reserva 2014, with the same blend as the 2020 Reserva. After 30 months in oak barrels the wine was aged for a further 4 years in bottles. Concentrated and complex primary aromas of red cherry and red current, secondary oak and tertiary aromas of mushrooms and forest floor were well balanced by the wine's acidity and there was greater body than with the Reserva. Ripe, velvety tannins and high alcohol levels were well integrated and the wine had a very long finish. With plenty of structure this was an exceptional wine and illustrates why Marques de Murrieta is considered part of Rioja's royalty.

Bodegas Luis Cañas

Bodegas Luis Cañas is a family-owned winery in Rioja Alavesa, founded in 1928, which produces 2.3mn bottles of wine/yr. from grapes from 140ha of in-house vineyards and 360ha of third party vineyards. The first wine was Luis Cañas Rioja Blanco, Viñas Viejas, 2023 and produced from a blend of 90% Viura and 10% Malvasia Riojana sourced from over 57-year-old vines. Fermentation was in small oak barrels followed by ageing on the lees in concrete tanks for 6 months. Aromas of elderflower, apple, peach, grapefruit and apricot, with a creamy texture on the palette, resulted in a complex, very good wine with a long, balanced finish.

Luis Cañas has a strategy to develop single vineyard wine production. The first such wine we tasted was Finca El Palacio, Rioja Alavesa, Viñedo Singular, 2019, with 6880 bottles produced from a field blend of 75% Tempranillo, 20% Graciano and 5% Viura from a 2.2ha site. Prominent, complex aromas of blackberry, black cherry, chocolate and tobacco were well balanced. However the prominent, ripe, fine-grained tannins were not well integrated and the finish was medium(+).

The next single vineyard wine was Camino Leza, Rioja Alavesa, Viñedo Singular, 2019, with 2300 bottles produced from a blend of 95% Tempranillo and 5% Viura from a 1.5ha vineyard. Primary aromas of black cherry, blackberries and tertiary aromas of earth were again balanced by firm acidity but, as with the last wine the prominent, fine-grained tannins were not well integrated and the wine had a medium finish. This was disappointing as I expected greater refinement from such single vineyard exemplars.

The final wine was the more traditional Luis Cañas Rioja Alavesa, Gran Reserva, 2018. Produced from a blend of 95% Tempranillo and 5% Graciano from 62-year-old vines, the wine had intense aromas of black cherry, blackberry, oak and tobacco. This elegant, balanced, well-structured and outstanding wine had a long finish.

We started with a Malvasia, 2023, which had been aged in clay amphorae. Complex, intense aromas of pear, peach and banana, with a creamy texture and spicey notes on the palette were balanced by a fresh acidity, ending with a long finish to give a very good wine.

The next wine was Tempranillo Blanco, 2023, which lacked acidity, flavour intensity, complexity and balance. Flabbiness was its most notable characteristic.

The next wine, a 100% Garnacha, had poorly defined aromas of black fruit and stewed plums which the low acidity failed to balance. This was a wine lacking elegance, definition and structure.

The final wine was a Tempranillo Tinto which similarly failed to impress, ending, except for the first wine, a very uninspiring tasting.

Wednesday

Marques de Murrieta

Our first stop was at the pristine and venerable Bodega Marques de Murrieta just outside Logroño. Founded in 1852, Marques de Murrieta was the first winery in Rioja to adopt Bordeaux winemaking technology such as the use of large wooden vats for fermenting the must and the introduction of oak barriques for the ageing of wine. In addition, it was the first Bodega in Rioja to export wines to France (in 1870). Marques de Murrieta only sources grapes from its own 360ha of vineyards, producing 1.2mn bottles of wine annually. Besides in Rioja, Marques de Murrieta has 12ha of vineyards in the Rias Baixas region in Galicia, the source of the first wine we tasted, Pazo Barrantes Albariño, 2021. Having been aged before bottling for between eighteen months and two years in acacia barrels, the wine's high acidity perfectly balanced the concentrated fruit

This interesting visit to Luis Cañas suggests that foregoing wider blending options by restricting production to small single vineyards may compromise quality unless the plots are optimal.

Bodegas Eguren Ugarte

Bodegas Eguren Ugarte is a family- owned winery founded in 1870 and situated in the picturesque, walled village of Laguardia. The first of two wines was Eguren Ugarte Rioja Reserva, 2018, a blend of 95% Tempranillo and 5% Graciano. Poorly defined aromas of black fruit, secondary aromas of wood and tertiary aromas of tobacco, earth and mushrooms were well balanced. Ripe fine-grained tannins were well integrated and the finish was longish. It was a good wine, but the fruit flavours were poorly defined and the wine lacked refinement.

We finished with Eguren Ugarte Festive Time Wines 50's, 2019, comprising 100% Tempranillo. Restrained aromas of poorly defined black fruit were balanced by the wine's medium acidity with well-integrated ripe, silky tannins giving a medium finish. Whist lacking complexity and concentration, this was a pleasant quaffing wine.

Thursday

Viñedos del Contino

C.V.N.E. is a family-owned winery that was founded in Haro in 1879. It is the largest winery in Spain in terms of vineyard area, owning around 1000ha. Contino is one of eight wineries within the group, with a vineyard area of 62ha, which is the sole source of its grapes. The impressive manor house setting and immaculate vineyards seemed to augur well for the tasting. However, sadly, this was not to be.

The first of three wines tasted was Contino San Gregorio, Rioja Blanco, 2021, a blend of 80% Viura and 20% Garnacha Blanca. It had been aged for a year partly in one -year-old 500 litre oak barrels and partly in concrete. Aromas of red apple, honey and peach lacked the concentration to balance the acidity, affording only a medium finish. Whilst a good wine, the lack of fruit intensity was disappointing.

Next came Contino San Rafael, Garnacha, 2021. The well-defined aromas of strawberry, redcurrant and red cherry, with spicey notes on the palette, were balanced by the wine's acidity and the restrained, ripe velvety tannins were well integrated resulting in a long finish. This was a very good, fresh and equilibrated wine with bright red fruit flavours.

The final wine was Contino Rioja Reserva, 2020, a blend of 86% Tempranillo, 6% Graciano, 6% Mazuelo and 2% Garnacha. Faint aromas of poorly defined fruit lacked the concentration to balance the acidity. The ripe, velvety tannins were not integrated and the finish was only medium with any fruit flavours fading quickly. This was very disappointing, with the lack of concentration and definition in the Reserva and San Gregorio totally unexpected and suggesting that these wines might have closed up for whatever reason.

Posada Mayor de Migueloa

We returned to Laguardia for lunch (and yet more wine) at Posada Mayor de Migueloa which, despite being a hotel and restaurant, is also one of the smallest and oldest wineries in

Rioja. As we threaded our way to the restaurant past a bottle labelling machine and the odd oak barrel there was a sensation of returning to a distant artisan past. The first of our wines was Juliett Golf Bianco made from a 100% Viura blend that was fermented in steel vats and remained on the lees until bottling. In fact, Migueloa had not got round to labelling the bottles we were served! This did not detract from a wine which had fresh aromas of red apples, peach, bananas and white flowers, was well-balanced and had a medium finish. The wine was good, simple and quaffable.

This was followed by G de Jaime, Crianza, 2019, a blend of 85% Tempranillo and 15% Graciano. Aromas of black and red cherries, red currants and blackberries were sufficiently concentrated to balance the firm acidity whilst ripe, silky tannins were well integrated. With a high alcohol level, the wine had plenty of structure and quite a long finish. It was a good wine but lacked fruit definition and elegance.

Elena Corzana

Elena Corzana might best be described as a *Garagiste* (in French), producing *Vinos de Autor* (Spanish), i.e. a very small scale specialist, artisan wine maker. She is an agricultural engineer and oenologist who had worked in vineyards and wineries around the world before returning to her native Navarrete, a village near Logroño, where her family has had vineyards for generations. In particular she has worked on reviving the very rare Maturana Tinta grape variety which had all but disappeared by the mid-1990s. The first wine we tasted was Elena Corzana Blanco, 2024, Maturana Blanca. Produced exclusively from Maturana Blanca grapes, the pale lemon wine



spent six months ageing in steam formed oak barrels (using steam rather than a blow torch to manufacture barrels avoids any charred wood flavours). Well-defined and concentrated aromas of apple, peach and lemon, with mineral notes and a creamy texture on the palette, balanced with this excellent wine's high acidity giving a long finish.

The second wine was Elena Corzana Minutero (means 'minute hand' on a watch), Rioja, 2023. Produced from 100% Maturana Tinta, the wine had aromas of black cherry, blackberry, blueberry, bell peppers, violets, vanilla and oak, with spicy notes on the palette. The well-defined, concentrated fruit and acidity resulted in a balanced wine with well-integrated, muted, silky tannins. This was an outstanding and well-structured wine.

The final wine was Elena Corzana Maturana, 2022, produced from 100% Maturana Tinta. The grapes were first fermented in clay amphorae and then aged for a further 12 months in clay amphorae, giving a deep ruby, balanced wine with concentrated aromas of black cherry, blackberry and black plum, with spicy notes and considerable structure. This was a powerful and very good wine, with considerable body and a long finish, but somewhat lacking in fruit definition.

This was a very accomplished tasting and many of us wished that Elena Corzana had brought along more wines to savour.

Friday

Haro – Barrio de la Estación

By a miracle of diplomacy and guile, our guides managed to organise a joint tasting by all the wineries in the station district (except for the haughty Bodegas Lopez de Heredia which does not engage with the great unwashed) within the beautiful



grounds of the C.V.N.E. winery. Except for Marques de Murrieta (and, of course, Lopez de Heredia), it seemed that all the royalty of Rioja were represented. Six tasting stations were set up offering a wine from each Bodega, as follows:

- La Rioja Alta, Viña Ardanza Reserva, 2019. A blend of 80% Tempranillo and 20% Garnacha, the wine was well balanced with well-defined aromas of red fruits, oak vanilla. Well integrated ripe, velvety tannins and a high alcohol level, along with the acidity, provided plenty of structure. This outstanding wine ended with a long finish.
- Gomez Cruzado, Seleccion Terroir, Montes Olbarenes, 2022. A blend of 65% Viura, 25% Tempranillo Blanco, 5% Malvasia and 5% Garnacha Blanca and Calagraño, the wine was fermented and then aged for 12 months with 80% on its lees in new French oak barrels, with 20% aged on its lees in concrete eggs. The wine had very well-defined aromas of apple, pear and peach, a creamy texture and high acidity. This outstanding well-balanced and structured wine had a long finish. It was, without doubt, the best white wine of the Festival.
- C.V.N.E. Imperial Reserva 2019. The wine was produced from a blend of 85% Tempranillo and 15% Graciano/Mazuelo/ Garnacha and had excellent balance between the well-defined aromas of black cherry, blackberry, vanilla and wood and its firm acidity. The ripe, fine-grained tannins were not fully integrated but provided further structure along with the high alcohol level. With quite a long finish this was a very good wine.
- Roda, Reserva, 2021. This blend of 89% Tempranillo, 6% Garnacha and 5% Graciano was fermented in oak Vats followed by 14 months ageing in French oak barrels (40% new) and 20 months in bottles. Concentrated, well-defined aromas of red cherry, red currant, vanilla and oak balanced the wine's high acidity. Ripe, silky tannins and high alcohol levels provided structure and the wine had a long finish. This was an outstanding wine.
- Flor de Muga, Rosado, 2024. Pale pink with aromas of strawberries, red currants and peach, this wine was 100% Garnacha from 75–90-year-old vines. The grapes underwent a short maceration before the free-run juice was collected for fermentation in small oak vats at low temperature. This was followed by at least four months ageing with batonage. Despite the understated acidity and body the wine was well balanced and the medium alcohol levels well integrated giving a medium finish. This is a good, pleasant uncomplicated wine ideal for a summer's day.
- Bodegas Bilbainas Lumen, Reserva Brut Rioja, 2020, Blanc de Noirs. This wonderful cava, produced from 100% Garnacha was aged for at least 24 months and displayed aromas of brioche along with strawberry and red currant. It was well balanced with a long, elegant finish.

Viñedos Paganos

After our exhausting but stimulating adventures in the Barrio de la Estación we moved on to a tasting at Viñedos Paganos, one

of the five wineries of the family-owned Sierra Cantabria group. For their red wines, Viñedos Paganos concentrates on 100% Tempranillo blends. Our first wine was Sierra Cantabria Blanco, 2024, a blend of 30% Sauvignon Blanc, 20% Viura, 36% Tempranillo Blanco, 7% Malvasia and 7% Matruana Blanca. The Sauvignon Blanc was fermented in oak barrels with the remaining grapes in stainless steel vats. The wine was fresh with zesty acidity and balanced fruit with aromas of apples and pears with spicy notes and a creamy texture on the palette. This outstanding wine had a long, refined finish.

This was followed by Sierra Cantabria Rosado, 2024, produced from a blend of 40% Garnacha, 55% Viura and 5% Tempranillo. This outstanding wine had precise, well-defined aromas of strawberries, raspberries and peach and a lively, fresh acidity, giving a balanced, long finish.

The first red wine was Sierra Cantabria Rioja Crianza, 2021, a 100% Tempranillo blend and aged for 14 months in old oak barrels. Concentrated aromas of blackberry, black cherry, cedar and charred wood were balanced by the wine's high acidity. Intense, ripe, velvety tannins were well integrated along with the high alcohol levels, giving quite a long finish and a very good, though somewhat rustic, wine.

Next came San Vicente, Rioja, 2021, from a 100% Tempranillo Peludo blend and was much more distinguished than the Crianza. The grapes were selectively sourced from a single vineyard (Finca Canoca) and, after fermentation in small tanks, the wine was aged for 20 months in 90% new French/10% new American barrels followed by a year in bottles. Deep ruby, the wine had concentrated aromas of blackberry, black cherry, cedar and vanilla, which balanced the lively acidity. The high, ripe, silky tannins and alcohol were well integrated culminating a long finish with spicy notes on the palette. This was an outstanding wine, with elegance, refinement and power.

The final wine from Viñedos Paganos was El Puntido Rioja, 2021. This was a single vineyard wine and very similar in profile to the San Vicente Rioja but with added mineral notes. It was also outstanding.

Saturday

Bodegas Tritium

Bodegas Tritium is located in a 15th-century building in the town of Cenicero, Rioja. It has only 8ha of vineyards, with vines between 90 and 113-years-old, and so is a small producer with probably no more than 45,000 bottles/yr. output. The winery emphasises the use of oak barrels larger than the classic 225 litre barrique for ageing to reduce the oak influence on the wines. The first wine we tasted was Tritium Viura & Garnacha Blanca, 2024, a 50:50 blend of the two grapes. 90% fermented in stainless steel tanks with 10% in new French barriques, the wine had prominent aromas of apple, pear, peach and melon, with a creamy texture on the palette, with balancing acidity and a longish finish. It was a good, easy drinking wine.

The next wine was Tritium El Largo, Graciano, a 100% Graciano blend fermented in French oak vats, in which it remained for a year, before ageing for a further year in French barriques and two years in bottles. The wine had medium intensity aromas of



red cherry, red currant, blackberry, wood and tobacco, along with fine-grained tannins that were not fully integrated. The wine was good, with balance, structure and a longish finish. However, the tannins were a little awkward.

An unusual wine followed, Tritium Amfora. This was a blend of Tempranillo, Mazuelo and Garnacha which had been aged for 11 months on the seabed in clay amphorae. The wine was balanced, with fresh aromas of red cherry, red currant and black cherry and spicy notes on the palette. This very good wine had a long, structured finish and was notable for the freshness of its fruit flavours.

Next came Tritium El Largo, 4 Variedades, 2018, a blend of 55% Tempranillo, 15% Garnacha, 15% Graciano and 15% Mazuelo where the grapes were separately fermented in 500 litre French oak barrels and then aged for two years in 500 litre French oak barrels. The wine had medium intensity, well-defined aromas of blackberry, black cherry, tobacco and cedar, ripe, velvety tannins, good structure and a long, balanced finish. This was a very good wine.

Our final wine was Tritium Mazuelo Rioja, 2020. 100% Mazuelo Riojas are unusual (the grape variety can be difficult to handle) and the winemaker was quite proud of his creation. The grapes were fermented in 500 litre French oak barrels before ageing for 15 months in 300 litre French oak barrels. The medium ruby wine had medium intensity aromas of red cherry, red currant, strawberry and blackberry and ripe, fine-grained tannins, which were not fully integrated (Mazuelo is noted for its high tannin levels and astringency). With soft, red fruit flavours, this very good wine the wine had a longish finish.



Bodegas Tritium was more of a hospitality venue than a trade outlet, with limited in-house production of off-beat wines and sales direct to the consumer. This can be a very effective strategy to maximize returns and Tritium seems to be doing it very well.

Finca La Emperatriz

Finca Emperatriz is steeped in history – it was formerly owned by Eugénie de Montijo, the wife of Napoleon III and hence the last Empress of France. The Montijo family sold the estate in 1996. The estate itself is situated at 570m elevation at the top end of Rioja Alta, close to the border with Castilla Leon and the Basque Country, and so has a pronounced continental climate. Our first wine was Jardin de La Emperatriz Rioja Blanco, a 100% blend of Viura. This was a simple wine with aromas of apple and peach balanced by fresh acidity. It was a good, easy-drinking wine.

This was followed by Jardin de La Emperatriz Tinto, 2019, a blend of 93% Tempranillo, 7% Garnacha. After fermentation it underwent 14 months ageing in 70% American/30% French one to two year old barrels. The wine had barely distinguishable aromas and lacked any fruit definition or concentration to balance the acidity. Ripe, velvety tannins and high alcohol levels were totally unintegrated. This was the most disappointing wine of the entire Festival and seemed to have closed up completely. However, we were amply compensated by the next two wines.

Finca de La Emperatriz Blanco Reserva, 2019, was produced from a 100% Viura blend with 50% fermented in concrete tanks

and 50% in oak barriques followed by 4 months ageing on the lees with batonage. The wine was then aged for eight months in concrete tanks followed by nine months in a mixture of new and used oak barrels. Concentrated, well-defined aromas of crisp, green apple and brioche were balanced by high acidity to give a well-structured wine with a long finish. This was a very good wine.

The final wine was Finca de La Emperatriz Rioja Tinto, Reserva, 2019 made from a blend of 71% Tempranillo, 25% Garnacha and 4% Viura. The grapes were co-fermented in concrete tanks before ageing for 18 months in 60% new French/40% used American oak barrels. Prominent aromas of red cherry, black cherry and red currant with subdued aromas of vanilla and oak were balanced by the wine's high acidity with ripe, silky tannins and high alcohol levels well integrated resulting in a long finish. Wonderful freshness resulting from the cooler climate resulted in an outstanding wine.

Restaurant Wines

Wednesday May 21st

Marques de Riscal

Marques de Riscal's 'City of Wine' is nothing if not grandiose and it is quite breathtaking to stand in front of the Frank Gehry-designed Hotel Marques de Riscal with its roof cascading down in a riot of multi-coloured metal ribbons. However, our dining venue was elsewhere in a banqueting suite adjacent to Riscal's pristine, automated winery operation. Unlike many other producers in Rioja, Marques de Riscal does not produce white Rioja wines. Instead, in 1972, it built a new, modern winery in

what was then the quality backwater that was to become the future major Rueda wine region. This led to the revival of the traditional Verdejo grape variety in the region along with the introduction of international varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc.

Dinner was to be a gastronomic epic with a total of seven courses and 12 accompanying wines, served as pairs. The first pair was Marques de Riscal Verdejo, Rueda, with well-defined aromas of gooseberry, grass, lemon and fennel, with peppery notes on the palette and zesty acidity. The wine had a long, balanced finish and was a very good, fresh fruity wine. This was accompanied by Marques de Riscal Arienzo, Rioja Crianza, 2022 which was 100% Tempranillo and aged for 18 months in barriques. The wine had aromas of red berries, red plum, cedar and smoke and ripe, silky tannins. It was well structured and balanced, but the fruit was not well-defined. It had a longish finish.

The next pair started with Herederos del Marques de Riscal, Sauvignon Blanc, Rueda, 2021 which was arresting with high, classically varietal aromas of gooseberry, grass, bell peppers, peach and pineapple, with salty notes on the palette and high acidity. It was balanced, had a longish finish and chiselled structure. This was accompanied by Herederos del Marques de Riscal, Rioja Reserva, 2020, which had been aged for 24 months in American oak barriques. Aromas of red cherry, redcurrant and oak, with spicy notes on the palette, and ripe, velvety tannins were well-integrated and balanced giving an outstanding wine with plenty of structure and a long finish.

Of the next pair the white wine was Herederos del Marques de Riscal Finca Montico, Verdejo Sobre Lias, Gran Vino de Rueda. It was fermented in stainless steel vats and the remained for at least four months on the lees. Along with the classic aromas of lemon, gooseberry and fennel, the wine had a creamy texture

and a long, perfectly balanced finish. An excellent wine with complexity. The second wine was XR de Marques de Riscal, Reserva, 2020, a blend of Tempranillo and Graciano, and is produced from specially selected barrels of wine from the normal Reserva production. With black fruit and smoky oak aromas and spicy on the palette, the wine had a long finish and was a wonderful, powerful well-structured wine.

Marques de Riscal Limousin, Verdejo, Rueda had been aged for six months in French oak barrels and exhibited the classic Rueda aromas, with a creamy texture. It had a luxuriously long finish and was an outstanding wine. This was paired with Marques de Riscal Gran Reserva Rioja, 2019, a 90% Tempranillo/10% Graciano blend that had been aged in oak barrels for 2-2½ years followed by three years in the bottle. It had complex aromas of black cherry, blackberry, mushroom, tobacco, leather, liquorice and oak, a long finish and was an exceptionally well balanced, powerful and complex wine.

The next pair of wines started with Marques de Riscal XR Rosé, 2024, a pale pink blend of Garnacha and Viura grown on (at least) 50-year-old vines. It had aromas of strawberry, banana and melon, with spicy notes on the palette and a long finish. It was a simple, balanced, but very good wine. Next was Marques de Riscal Rioja, 2019, 150 Aniversario, produced only in the best vintages from grapes (80% Tempranillo/20% other) from at least 80-year-old vines. The wine had been aged for 32 months in French oak barrels and had red fruit and smoky oak aromas with peppery and spicy notes on the palette, with well-defined fruit. It had plenty of structure and a long, well-balanced finish. Oddly, its aroma profile was not as complex as the Gran Reserva.

The arrival of two Baron de Chirrel wines signalled the end of this magnificent flight of wines which showcased the quality and creativity of the Marques de Riscal operation. The first was



Baron de Chirrel Verdejo, Viñas Centenarias, 2022 which was produced from pre-phylloxera, un-grafted vines over 100 years old and the wines was aged for six months in small, Austrian oak barrels. Well-defined aromas of gooseberry, grapefruit, fennel, pear and melon, with a creamy texture, led to a long, well-balanced finish. This was an exceptional wine. Finally, we tasted Baron de Chirrel, Rioja, 2019, produced from grapes from low-yielding, 80 to 110 year old vines with the juice fermented in French oak vats followed by 16 months ageing in French oak barrels and 20 months in bottles. Aromas of black fruits, oak, leather and tobacco, with spicy and peppery notes on the palette, were perfectly balanced, resulting in a magnificent, powerful and exceptional wine with a long finish. This was certainly one of the best Riojas of the trip.

Saturday 24th May Palacio de Samaniego

Our final of the Festival dinner and the opportunity to enjoy another flight of wines. We began with Cava Conde de Haro, Brut Reserva, DOCa Rioja, a blend of Chardonnay and Viura. Aromas of green apple, grapefruit, dough and brioche, with a creamy texture and zesty acidity resulted in a very good, well-balanced wine with a long, elegant finish.

This was followed by Amaren, Barrel Fermented, Rioja Alavesa, a blend of 85% Viura and 15% Malvasia and produced by the

Luis Cañas Group. After lees ageing in old, French oak barrels for 8-10 months, the wine had aromas of apple, pear and peach, with a creamy texture and a long, well-balanced finish with no oak notes. This was very much a food wine.

Next up was a Rosé, Izadi, La Gran Rosa, DOCa Rioja, produced from 70% Garnacha Tinta and 30% Garnacha Blanca. The pale pink wine had aromas of strawberry, peach, redcurrant with an unctuous, spicy palette and a long, refined finish. This was an excellent rosé.

The red wine was Launa Crianza, Rioja, produced from a 100% Tempranillo blend. After ageing for 15 months in French and American oak barrels (20% new), the wine had aromas of red and black fruit and cedar and a longish, well-structured and balanced finish. It was a good food accompaniment.

The last wine of the Festival was the dessert wine Javier Sanz Vivanco, Dulce de Invierno, DOCa, Rioja. It was a blend of 80% Verdejo and 20% Muscat grapes that had been late-harvested, air dried and then frozen before pressing to achieve a highly concentrated must. The resulting wine was pale brown with aromas of caramel, fig, stewed plums and greengage, was sweet, with a balancing acidity to give a long finish to this very good wine.

IWFS EXCELLENCE AWARD

by Geeta Lloyd



We are delighted to announce that Orestone Manor has been presented with the IWFS Excellence Award in recognition of its outstanding food and service, on 26th June 2025, by John Slater, former Chairman of the Devonshire Branch of the International Wine & Food Society. John had the pleasure of presenting the Excellence Award certificate and sticker to Neil D'allen, Chef Patron, and Craig D'Allen, General Manager of Orestone Manor.

As part of the award presentation, a small stock of IWFS business cards and publicity leaflets was also provided to Orestone Manor, which will be made available to guests upon request.

This recognition highlights the continued commitment of Orestone Manor to culinary excellence and exceptional hospitality — a true reflection of the IWFS values.

Bath & Bristol

AFTERNOON TEA AND CHOCOLATE TASTING AT STOBERRY HOUSE, WELLS

On a very hot afternoon in June we gathered at the beautiful home of members Tim and Frances Meeres-Young for a truly indulgent occasion.

We began with a glass of an excellent Loire crémant, the Wine Society's Saumur Brut NV, taken whilst enjoying the fabulous gardens which are worth a visit in their own right.

We then sat down in the conservatory and were treated to an amazing afternoon tea, beginning with a refreshing elderflower posset, delicate but generously-filled sandwiches and delicious scones with home-made jam and clotted cream.

There followed a bewildering variety of cakes, macarons and gâteaux, all accompanied by a variety of teas and tisanes. It was quite impossible to sample everything on offer although most of us did try! This was a tea to knock spots off the offering of the finest hotels – it is not for nothing that we had previously given Frances an Excellence Award in recognition of a similarly superlative buffet lunch last year.



As if this wasn't enough, tea was followed by a chocolate tasting, given by Emily Collett of 'As Raw As', an artisan chocolate company based in Somerset.

Emily makes her award-winning chocolate from scratch in small batches using unroasted Creola cacao beans from Peru, in her view the queen of cacao and responsible for just 0.01% of global production. Her chocolates don't contain any dairy, refined sugars, gluten, soy or anything artificial. After a fascinating explanation of how her chocolate is made Emily gave us five samples to try. This was challenging in such hot weather and the little pastilles were melting as fast as we could consume them! They ranged from 'Coffee Caramac' (very sweet), through 'Toasted oat, hazelnut and sea salt' (some found this too salty), 'Orange Sparkle' (much enjoyed and the winner of a Great Taste Award), 'Raspberry Beetroot Boost' (78% dark chocolate with a complex flavour profile – my favourite) to '90% Dark'. This last one was too bitter for some but dark chocolate aficionados were pleased with Emily's suggestion that anyone facing a long flight might like to take dark chocolate 'medicinally' (it's an anti-coagulant) rather than aspirin!

What a wonderful afternoon we had!

Leonie Allday



Cape Town

CELEBRATION OF FINE FOOD, WINE AND INNOVATION – GRUB & VINE

On Thursday 5th June, the Cape Town Branch gathered at the renowned Grub & Vine restaurant on Bree Street for an evening celebrating fine food, exceptional wine and culinary innovation. The event was well-attended with 29 members and eight guests joining the festivities. We were especially pleased to welcome John and Mwansa Chitoshi, visiting members from the Melbourne and Lusaka branches.

Chef Matt Manning, one of Cape Town's rising stars in the hospitality industry, curated a 'Tastes of the Cape' menu that showcased his remarkable talent for pairing the region's finest ingredients with exceptional local wines. The standout dish of the evening was the starter: Crusted Tuna with Avocado Mousse, Vermicelli Crisps, Citrus Mayo and Pickled Onion Petals. This beautifully presented course was perfectly paired with the Culture 'Steen' Chenin Blanc 2022, crafted by the acclaimed winemaker Chris Alheit – both the dish and the wine were simply sublime.

Guests also had the pleasure of sampling a selection from the Culture Club Wines, a newly launched in-house label by Matt Manning. These wines aim to redefine the concept of the 'house wine' by offering a premium range produced by some of

the top winemakers featured in Manning's establishments. As he explained:

"We wanted to introduce a premium wine collection under our own label, produced for us by the same top winemakers whose wines we feature in our bar."

The evening was a resounding success – an elegant celebration of culinary creativity and local excellence. A memorable experience enjoyed by all.

Catherine Granelli



Devonshire OUR AGM



The 48th AGM of the Devonshire branch took place in fine style, hosted by Geeta and Gordon Lloyd at their home on 20th July 2025. David Rowe, Chairman welcomed 34 members and one guest, before smoothly guiding us through the formal proceedings of the meeting. With business concluded, members raised a glass of Cava Conde de Haro Brut and enjoyed catching up in the sunshine

Dinner was a delightful buffet-style affair, thoughtfully prepared by Geeta and Gordon. Members helped themselves to a tempting array of dishes: prawn cocktail platter, a fish platter accompanied by cucumber relish, melon with Parma ham, and the standout Ottolenghi Chicken Marbella served with steamed potatoes and a green salad. The meal was beautifully complemented by excellent wines: Gavi di Gavi Montessoro, La Glustiniana 2023 and Moulin-à-Vent Les Thorins, Domaine du Moulin d'Éole 2023.

To round off the evening, dessert was a true group effort. A luscious fruit pavlova by David Rowe and Linda Baker took centre stage, joined by a refreshing fruit salad and a generous cheese board arranged by Heather and Kenneth Turner, as well as a tangy citron tart.

The evening was a perfect mix of convivial company, excellent food and wine, and a shared sense of tradition – a wonderful way to mark our 48th year.

Geeta Lloyd

Devonshire

ORESTONE MANOR IN SOUTH DEVON



A warm welcome, historic surroundings, and fine food made for a truly memorable evening as 27 members gathered on the 26th June at the charming Orestone Manor in South Devon. This special event was organised by Geeta and Gordon Lloyd, whose efforts ensured a seamless and enjoyable experience for all who attended.

With its rich heritage Orestone Manor offers more than just a picturesque escape. Once the home of the celebrated narrative painter John Callcott Horsley – designer of the very first Christmas card – the manor holds a special place in British cultural history. In 1857, Horsley painted a portrait of his brother-in-law, the legendary engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, right here at Orestone Lodge. That painting now resides in the National Portrait Gallery.

Today the manor is a family-run hotel where Chef Patron Neil D'Allen, alongside his wife Catherine, leads a talented kitchen team. Neil's son Craig D'Allen is the General Manager, and with his wife Laura ensures guests receive the warmest welcome and attentive service throughout their stay.

Our evening began with a selection of canapés, accompanied by a couple of glasses of Vilarnau Cava Brut Nature, Reserva 2021—a refreshing and elegant start.

Guests then enjoyed a range of seasonal starters; each beautifully paired with Marqués de Riscal Verdejo 2024 (Rueda):

- Cream of Mushroom and Tarragon Soup
- Salmon Gravlox, Cured in Rhubarb and Gin, with Sous Vide Rhubarb, Grenadine and Lime

- Chicken Liver Parfait, Toasted Brioche and Caramelised Red Onion Marmalade
- Asparagus and Parmesan Cheese Tart with Tzatziki and Rocket

For the main course choices included:

- Pan Roasted Devon Lamb Rump, served pink, with Redcurrant, Port & Mint Jus Lie and Herb Crisp
- Brixham Landed Cod Fillet with Samphire and Almond and Capier Beurre Noisette

Both mains were served with market vegetables and minted Cornish new potatoes; accompanied by Marqués de Riscal Rioja Reserva 2024.

No evening would be complete without something sweet.

Members were treated to a tempting selection of desserts and cheeses:

- Treacle Sponge with Crème Anglaise or Ice Cream
- Black Forest Roulade with Berry Coulis, Liqueur-Steeped Cherries, White Chocolate Soil & Blackberry Ripple Ice Cream
- Lemon Posset with Meringue
- A Trio of West Country Artisan Cheeses with Chutney, Fruit and Biscuits.

To round off the evening, tea and coffee were served as members reflected on an evening of delicious food, fine wine and excellent company.

Geeta Lloyd

Devonshire

A CELEBRATION OF SPAIN

On 7th September 2025, members from the Devonshire Branch attended a spectacular event hosted by David Rowe and Linda baker at the home of our Chairman, David Rowe. What awaited them was not a lunch in the ordinary sense but a carefully choreographed experience – an exploration of Spain's culinary soul, paired with some of its most celebrated wines.

The creator of this experience was Chef Ryan Swift, Owner and Executive Chef of Dood and Frink. With roots in his family's restaurants, Michelin-recognised training, and leadership of major festival kitchens, Swift has built a reputation for both precision and imagination. Yet on this afternoon, he chose intimacy over scale, showcasing a style that married classical Spanish technique with his signature seasonal creativity.

The journey began with vibrant Gordal and Arbequina olives and smoky roasted piquillo peppers, paired with the saline elegance of Hidalgo Pastrana Manzanilla Pasada. From there, guests savoured pan tostado con tomate, ensalada rusa, Jamon Ibérico, queso Manchego croquettes, and patatas bravas, each paired with a crisp Rezabal Txacoli (2024) and Regina Viarum Mencía (2023).

The middle of the afternoon deepened the journey with Gambas al Ajillo sizzled in garlic and olive oil served with a

Fefiñanes Albariño, Rias Baixas, 2024, followed by pollo al chilandrón offered rustic comfort, while braised pork cheek dissolved into rich perfection. Charred broccoli added balance, with the bold structure of Muga Reserva Rioja 2021 amplifying every flavour.

Dessert was no less dramatic. A silken crema Catalana with shortbread, a fragrant almond and orange cake with cream, and finally a decadent pastel de chocolate. These courses found their soulmates in a medium sweet Oloroso Sherry and the opulent sweetness of González Byass "Nectar" Pedro Ximénez.

Guiding the wine pairings was Dr Gordon Lloyd, whose hand-picked Spanish selections showcased the diversity and elegance of Spain's vineyards, ensuring that every glass both complemented and elevated the plate before it. "Food tells the story but wine completes it". This afternoon, every glass was chosen to be part of that narrative.

Conversation flowed as effortlessly as the wine, laughter rose between courses, and every dish told a story that lingered long after the last sip.

Geeta Lloyd



Herefordshire & Monmouthshire FISH PIE LUNCH



Friday the 13th June 2025 looked kindly upon the Society and the sun shone for an informal 'Fish Pie lunch' held at the home of Barb Atley set in the beautiful Monmouthshire countryside. All the food was prepared and supplied by members and 13 of us came for what was the first lunch with this theme.

We met at noon and while the fish pies were cooking in the oven, began the occasion with aperitifs and plates of various canapés made by Pam Williams, out on Barb Atley's terrace and enjoying the warmth of a summer's day, before being called to lunch.

Herefordshire & Monmouthshire A MOODY 'DO'

A longstanding favourite Gastro-Pub in the hamlet of Upton Bishop (near Ross on Wye), The Moody Cow, welcomed our branch for lunch after an absence of probably two years. Apart from enjoying excellent cuisine the occasion was to celebrate the retirement of our Chairman Michael Hoddinott who had completed his term. The tribute to Michael was led by branch founder member John Boyd who had travelled from his home in Worcestershire with his wife Anita for the day. Michael has also been a founder member over 25 years ago.

We were welcomed with a glass of Taittinger Champagne courtesy of Michael. The menu, from which we had pre-selected, included such delicacies as smoked aubergine soup, Severn and Wye smoked salmon, Three cheese tart sporting prominent regional cheeses from Herefordshire and Shropshire. A particular favourite leading the field was the slow roasted belly pork with maple syrup, rosemary and smoked paprika glaze. BBQ Spare Ribs lathered in Captain Morgan Rum enhanced sauce came a good second.

Ever mindful of the wrath of the pleasure police and the dearth of rural transport, many accompanied their food with Guinness Zero (not half bad, and I'm Irish) fizzy water or half a lager – the non-drivers indulged in glasses of wine from an extensive and impressive list – a good time was had by all!

As we wound down, on behalf of the branch, John presented Michael with a bottle of Lebanese wine – recommended and

The main course was the fish pies, which were made by Rosemary Trump, who had undertaken the coordination of the food, and Ann Hay – they were served with green peas and vegetables.

Wines served were a Muscadet de Sèvre et Maine, Lacheteau 2023 (12% abv) and a Côtes du Rhône, St Jean d'Ardières 2023 (13.5% abv) both of which had been brought from France by Peter McGahey for the occasion.

Dessert was a Sicilian lemon tart served with fresh raspberries and cream, the wines continuing for each course, and finally coffee.

The lunch was generally hailed as a success and everyone expressed great appreciation of the food provided. At the conclusion of the lunch the Chairman, Michael Hoddinott, expressed the thanks of everyone to Barb Atley for her generosity in inviting us to hold the lunch in her delightful house and we departed full of fine fish pie and uplifted by good fellowship and conversation.

Nigel Williams



described by Majestic as Bordeaux style but not known to any of us.

A success all round.

Peter McGahey

Herefordshire & Monmouthshire LOW TIDE AT CHEPSTOW



Beside the river Wye at Chepstow, just as the river joins the Bristol Channel and on the Welsh side of the old (seriously old and sensibly furnished with traffic lights) single carriageway cast iron bridge into England, is an Italian restaurant, Panevino. An extensive menu is offered, the staff are excellent – but few, if any, are Italian!

We selected this venue on the recommendation of two of our members for a branch lunch experience in August. From our table and the through the panoramic windows overlooking the estuary we were delighted to observe low tide – the Bristol Channel has a 14m rise and fall – we arrived to enjoy the lowest tide with many fathoms of mud lined river banks. However this did not distract from an excellent lunch and the mud was well covered by the incoming tide when we departed mid afternoon.

Our branch has adopted a policy for these relaxed occasional lunches of each member pre-selecting two courses, from a menu curated for the group, and having an open bar where everyone can choose what they would pair with their choice –



from an aperitif through to coffee. It works well for us and we offer the experience at a prix fixe including drinks.

The selection was:

To start

Scallops alla Sambuca, Mozzarella Milanese, Funghi con Aglio, Gamberoni Siciliani, Polpetta.

The mains

Walnut Gnocchi, Pappardelle Cacciatore, Risotto 'Panevino', Pollo Marsala, Grilled Tuna Salad.

Several styles of sticky desserts were offered on 'own account' to those who couldn't resist or who might feel faint from lack of nourishment before they retired to their homes for dinner!

It was judged a total success by the 16 members of our branch present and we showed a (very) modest financial surplus which will go towards supporting another event.

Peter McGahey

London A GARDEN PARTY AT CUMBERLAND LODGE



Following our highly successful dinner at Windsor Castle, we decided to hold a sumptuous garden party with wines and food at the exclusive Cumberland Lodge, with beautiful vistas over the Windsor Great Park.

Cumberland Lodge is a seventeenth century Grade II listed country house in Windsor Great Park three miles south of Windsor Castle. It is not open to the general public. Some of you will remember seeing shots of the Lodge in the 2010 film *The King's Speech*. Since 1947 it has been occupied by the charitable foundation known as Cumberland Lodge, an educational charity and social enterprise that exists to empower young people to lead the conversation around social division. The gardens of Cumberland Lodge are Grade I listed on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

We started with a talk on the history and current role of the Lodge, followed by a tour of the most notable rooms. Then we moved out in the garden for a glass of wine and a three course menu of substantial canapés.

- Spiced Cornish Crab Cake, Avocado Purée
- Ballotine of Prawn and Smoked Salmon
- Mushroom and Parmesan Croquette
- Parma Ham, Mozzarella, and Tomato Roll

- Fillet Steak Sandwich
- Venison Cottage Pie
- Lobster Risotto
- Strawberry Meringue
- Chocolate and Vanilla Profiterole
- Stilton, Brie and Montgomery, Chutney and Bread

The wines were:

- Mâcon Villages Blanc Bel Air, Burgundy
- Maison Sichel 1883, Vin de Bordeaux

This was a new style of event for us, and greatly enjoyed by all.

Alan Shepherd

London BATTLE OF THE PINOT NOIRS

This tasting took place on 24th July at The Army and Navy Club. It included an introduction to Pinot Noir wine production. The 10 wines, from seven countries, were of course served blind to avoid possible bias. They were served individually, with no need to identify which was which, although people could try if they wished. They were asked to score the wines on whatever system they wanted, then at the end had one vote for the best wine on a show of hands. They were also asked to vote for their second best wine. I put my scores out of 10 for each wine, but did not vote.

Albert Road Pinot Noir 2024, Western Cape, 13%. Lightly oaked. South Africa. Deepish red. Rose petal and vegetable bouquet. Good depth of flavour. Some length. 8.5/10. Votes, 0 for 1st, 1 for 2nd.

Clocktower Taylor River Single Vineyard Pinot Noir, Marlborough, 2023, 13.5%. New Zealand. Darkish red. Legs. Good bouquet with rose petal. Slight sweetness, some length. 7.5/10. Votes, 0.

Palataia Pinot Noir, Pfalz, 13%. Touch of oak. Germany. Red, pale edges. Legs. Good bouquet and flavour, with plenty of flavour. Slight sweetness. 8/10. Votes 0 for 1st, 1 for 2nd.

Lyme Bay Pinot Noir 2021, grapes from Crouch Valley, Essex, 13%. England. Slightly paler red. Legs. Rose petal and raspberry bouquet but not big. Slight sweetness. Excellent flavour and complexity. Good length. 9/10. Votes, 2 for 1st, 4 for 2nd.

Louis Latour Marsannay Rouge 2023, 13.5%. France. Purple. Small legs. Low bouquet with some cabbage. Big flavour. Long. 8.75/10. Votes, 0.

Noble Vines Collection 667 Pinot Noir Monterey, 2019, 14.5%. California. Purple. Big legs. Good fruit bouquet. Lovely fruit flavours. I liked it very much. 9/10. Votes, 0 for 1st, 1 for 2nd.

Maison Riveraine Bourgogne Pinot Noir 2022, 12.5%. France. Deep red, slight black. Legs. Rather restrained bouquet. Very fruity. Some obvious tannins. 8.75/10. Votes, 1 for 1st, 0 for 2nd.

Sharpham Single Vineyard Pinot Noir 2022, Sandridge Barton, South Devon, 11%. England. Purple. Legs. Good but restrained bouquet. Good fruit. No tannins. 8/10. Votes, 0.

Oyster Bay Marlborough Pinot Noir, 2022, 13.5%. New Zealand. Good red. Big legs. Excellent bouquet. Good flavour. Slight sweetness. Delicious. The best for me. 9/10. Votes, 4 for 1st 3 for 2nd.

Elephant in the Room Palatial Pinot Noir, 2024, 13.5%. Australia. Red. Legs. Good classic Pinot Noir red fruit bouquet. Slight sweetness. Very good fruit. 8.75/10. Votes, 4 for 1st, 1 for 2nd.

The votes for best wine were tied at four each for Oyster Bay and for Elephant in the Room, a New World triumph. The Lyme Bay came top for 2nd votes, with 4. Some of these wines cost about £30 a bottle, more than the two winners, both from Waitrose: Oyster Bay £16, Elephant in the Room £11 reduced to £8.

The club provided a cold buffet. The evening was very sociable and enjoyable, with requests for a future Battle of the Chardonnays, in the same format.

Bernard Lamb

National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges, organiser and presenter



London

WASHINGTON STATE WINES



Member Ian Shane presented wines he had selected from excellent suppliers in Washington State, an up-and-coming US wine region, the second largest in the US after California. Some were from the rare 2018 vintage, and several are unobtainable now, even in the US.

Ian provided helpful information on the area. He introduced us to its American Viticultural Areas, AVAs, geographically defined regions. Washington State currently has 21, which vary significantly by size, climate, terroir and the grape varieties planted. We also had a map, vintage chart and a note of the terroirs, weather and day temperatures in the different regions. There are over 1,000 wineries and 400 grape growers

Lu & Oly, We Sat Down by the Ocean, 2018, \$38 (USD)
Viognier 60%, Chardonnay 40%. The 2018 vintage was notably warm in much of the growing season. There were ideal weather conditions at ripening and at harvest. "Big colour, big flavours," said one winemaker.
An easy drinking wine, medium bodied with a long finish. Aromas of pear and apple, and the palate shows tropical fruit and stone fruits, balanced with a little oak.

DeLille Cellars, Sagemoor Vineyards, Riesling 2022, \$37
An agreeable Riesling, fresh and full bodied.

Owen Roe Abbot's Table 2021, \$30
Sangiovese 38%, Zinfandel 28%, Blaufrankisch 18%, Grenache 10%, Malbec 6%. An unusual, even odd, combination for this blend. Red fruit aromas and palate. Great fruit and balanced acidity, with some tannin – there was discussion about whether it was too tannic or not enough. Not unlikeable but of course it was hard to place: "confusing" was one comment!

DeLille Cellars, Le Dessein, 2022, \$47
This was a more familiar blend of Grenache 47%, Mourvedre 34% and Syrah 19%, and generally we felt it was more successful than the previous wine. More overt than Rhône wine from these grapes. Bursting with fruit. A little sweetness on the palate. and a lengthy, spicy finish. Tasting well now, it would keep for several years.

Pollard, Merlot, 2018, \$36
Merlot 79%, Cabernet Sauvignon 21%. Another wine from the 2018 vintage. A complex bouquet with plum, cherry and black fruits, and a savoury taste. Integrated tannins.

Andrew Will, Two Blondes Vineyard Red, 2018, \$82
Merlot 64%, Cabernet Franc 20%, Cabernet Sauvignon 12%, Malbec 4%. Two Blondes is a single-vineyard site, planted with these Bordeaux varieties. Again, the 2018 vintage. Dark fruit, spice, and a "leaf" taste, "autumnal", from the Merlot. Fruit forward. Still tannic. Nicely proportioned, full bodied with a long finish. It will last.

Gramercy Cellars, Cabernet Sauvignon, 2018, \$60
This and the next wine from Gramercy Cellars are their premier wines. They said: "To say the 2018 vintage is exceptional would be an understatement... near-perfect".
We found complex aromas and palate, including red fruit, dark cherry, graphite, spice. Still developing. It showed balanced tannins, elegance, structure and depth.

Gramercy Cellars, John Lewis Syrah, 2018, \$149
We had hoped for much, but sadly this wine, at least this bottle, disappointed us and was not generally liked. We got practically nothing from the nose and the taste was unappealing.

Stuart Leaf from the US, who is a member of the IWFS Wines Committee, joined us this evening. He kindly brought a bottle from his own cellar:

Quilceda Creek Cabernet Sauvignon, 2010, \$250
Mainly Cabernet Sauvignon, a tiny dash of Merlot. A high ABV at 15.2%. Opulent, full bodied, concentrated fruit, yet refined, multi-dimensional and balanced. It's a classy wine, and was a splendid conclusion to the tasting.

Our appreciative thanks to Ian Shane for sourcing the wines and presenting this tasting, and to Stuart Leaf for generously sharing the last bottle.

Rachel Burnett

London

AN INTRODUCTION TO WINES FROM SLOVAKIA



The Naughty Grape, <https://thenaughtygrape.co.uk/>, is a major importer of wines from Slovakia, specialising in small batch, low intervention /organic wines from family-owned wineries. They put together an interesting tasting for London Branch, at the Army and Navy Club in Pall Mall.

Since Slovakia gained independence in 1993, its wine industry has been rejuvenated, with many skilled winemakers from a new generation. An increasing range of wines is being exported, although the wines are not yet well known in the UK.

The wines selected for us this evening were from the Small Carpathians region, apart from the two wines from Tokaj. Close to the Austrian border in the south west, with sunshine, well-drained sandy loam and rocky soils, it is home to nearly half of Slovakia's wine producers.

The wines were chosen from a few of the best producers, examples to illustrate the different grapes and styles that Slovakia offers.

Matysak Sekt Brut Sparkling Méthode Traditionnelle Blanc de Blancs, 2019, £28.25
100% Chardonnay, four years on the lees. We learned that most sparkling wines in Slovakia are vintage. A vanilla-cream nose, fresh, fruity and quite dry on the palate.

Martin Pomfy Ryzling Rynsky 2023 – c. £31 (out of stock)
The wines from this producer are made with minimal intervention and some are certified biodynamic. This wine has ageing potential for up to ten years. It has a complex aromatic aroma of apricot, acacia flowers, honey and raisins. A spicy and floral palate, with minerality and a long finish.

Ostrozovic, Lipovina Special Collection, 2022, £23.95
This and the last wine of the evening are from the same producer, in the Tokaj wine region. The Lipovina grape is also

known as "Tokaji Hárslevelű", and is usually blended in sweet wines. It will age for 8-10 years. It is rare to find as a single varietal, as in this wine, which is dry. The nose is floral, peach and honey, and the palate is of peach, apple and hints of citrus fruit.

Terra Parna Vintro Cuvée 2017, £27.50
Alibernet, St. Laurent and Modrý Portugal are the three grape varieties in this wine, aged in barrique. Alibernet is a cross of the red varieties Alicante Bouschet and Cabernet Sauvignon, developed in 1948 by researchers in Odessa. It is mainly grown in Slovakia. The aromas and flavours are reminiscent of Cabernet Sauvignon: blackcurrants, forest fruit, chocolate, wood smoke. It is most often used in blends.

St. Laurent (described further with the next wine) is an aromatic grape variety related to Pinot Noir, but less subtle and more robust, grown in cool climate regions of central Europe, particularly Austria and the Czech Republic.

Modrý Portugal ('Blue Portugal' – but not from Portugal) is most commonly found in Austria and Germany, also in Central Europe. It has been cultivated since the 17th century in the Small Carpathians. Scents and flavours are stone fruit and floral, and it is low in acid and light bodied.

Zlaty Roh St Laurent 2022, £29.85
The wines from this producer are organic and biodynamic. The St Laurent grape has aromas and flavours of sour cherry, also black fruit and hints of tobacco and spices. Wines from the grape are often matured in oak and will age to show soft tannins. They are medium bodied and smooth.

Vins Winery Dunaj Series Barrique 2020, £35.25
The Dunaj grape, cultivated in Slovakia, is another cross,

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Liverpool

LIVING THE HIGH LIFE

Hope Street Hotel sits handsomely in the heart of Liverpool's Georgian quarter with Liverpool's two magnificent cathedrals as the book ends of Hope Street. The Fifth One, Hope Street Hotel's private dining room is where the Liverpool branch dined on Wednesday 11th June.

We congregated on the private terrace to enjoy a beautiful early summer evening with a glass of prosecco and some very interesting nibbles and, of course, the breathtaking panorama across the city out to the Welsh hills, Snowdonia and beyond! After dinner drinks were also imbibed here to enjoy the unusual 'Mediterranean' weather.

After we had our group photo taken we were called into the elegant dining room which has two walls of glass. The view is as

breathtaking as the light as it streams into the dining room.

As Chairman Terry Lim had just arrived back from Malaysia at 5am, Vice-Chairman Nigel Williams opened the meeting and welcomed members and friends including members from the Merseyside and Mid-Cheshire branch. Dinner started with a plate of cured salmon accompanied by a glass of Vinho Verde; followed by poached and roasted chicken as the main course, which was accompanied by a New Zealand Pinot Noir. Vanilla cheesecake was served with coffee or tea to complete a very satisfying and enjoyable meal for all. Terry happily closed the meeting having been nicely satiated with the good food, wine and company!

Nigel Williams



➔ *continued from page 34*
deriving from a cross-breeding programme to create a grape suitable for local conditions.

This wine's aroma is of dark fruits, black cherries and plum jam, notes of spice, dates and earthy undertones. The flavour demonstrates rich ripe fruit, then dark chocolate, with good acidity countering its full body and sweetness. Structured, smooth medium tannins mean a good ageing potential. It has had 16 months in barrique. It is a complex wine with a long finish. It scored 98/100 in the Vinalies Internationales Paris 2025.

Martin Pomfy Cabernet Franc 2021, £37.85
Another wine from Martin Pomfy. This wine has had 28 months in small oak and barriques and then two months in stainless steel. It won a Grand Gold medal 92-93/100 in the Vinalies Internationales competition.

The aroma is of dark berry fruits and violets with earthy tones and dark chocolate. The taste is spicy-fruity with an elegant tannin texture and balanced acidity.

Ostrozovic Tokaj 4 Puttonyos 2008, £42.95
The Tokaj wine region lies 90% in Hungary and 10% in Slovakia. The whole region is celebrated for sweet wines made from grapes affected by noble rot. The grapes used are Furmint,

Hárslevelű and Yellow Muscat. "Puttonyos" is an indicator of the level of sugar still used for Slovakian Tokaj. However, with the changing climate, noble rot is less prevalent, and some wines are therefore produced to be lighter.

This wine was aged in oak barrels in tuff cellars. Volcanic tuff is a type of rock that influences the terroir in the region. It is porous, which has enabled extensive cellars to be excavated with ideal conditions for maturing wine in barrels. They have a constant microclimate with high humidity and a temperature of around 10°C.

It is in classic Tokaj style, with complex roses and other floral aromas and flavours of black coffee, raisins, walnuts and dark chocolate, and a honey finish. It has exceptional potential for long ageing.

This tasting provided a welcome opportunity to try some excellent wines from Slovakia, where an attractive array of wines is being made, using both international and a significant number of crossed grape varieties, by many estates of recent origin, whose winemakers are developing the latest techniques and going for minimal intervention and organic production.

Rachel Burnett

Manchester

PRIVATE DINING AT PICCOLINO CAFFÉ GRANDE

Members of the IWFS Manchester branch, together with several members from other NW Branches, including Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire, gathered in the early evening for a private dining event, held at Manchester's stunning Piccolino Caffé Grande, just off Albert Square, adjacent to Manchester's iconic Town Hall.

This venue's private dining room provided a welcoming and vibrant space for our party to mix and mingle. The azure colour of the upholstery added to the mediterranean ambience.

A Sparkling Forchir Ribolla Friuli Brut proved to be the perfect aperitif and a delightful way to start off this convivial Italian themed evening. Ribolla Gialla is an ancient grape variety dating back to Roman times and these are grown on rocky soils close to the Carnic Prealps in Friuli. This unique grape variety produces a flavoured, fruity Italian sparkling wine with bright acidity and notes of lemon, orange peel, dried apricot, quince, honey and almond. The versatility of this grape really excels in sparkling wine, producing one with bubbles that are fine and persistent.

With floral and fruity aromas, this sparkling wine is wonderfully fresh and savoury, with a thirst-quenching minerality. Forchir was historically one of the first bottlers in Friuli.

Nicola Mcloughlin, our Chairperson, welcomed everyone and wished them an enjoyable evening sampling the traditional Italian dishes on the bespoke menu. Nicola modelled one of the very attractive IWFS aprons and advised that they were available for purchase from the IWFS website. She also highlighted forthcoming diary dates noted on the reverse of the menu cards.

The first course consisted of a beautifully and appetisingly arranged Antipasto Misto. It comprised Piccolino's signature selection of Italian artisan salami and cheese: Parma ham, Spianata Calabrese salami, salame Napoli, mozzarella di bufala, Pecorino Romano, ricotta. Freshly baked bread, balsamic onions, pickled hot peppers and caper berries.



This very colourful starter was perfectly paired with a dry white Italian wine, Stemmari Grillo Sicilia, made with Grillo grapes, grown in sandy terrain with plentiful sunlight.

Native to Sicily, Grillo is the island's most iconic white grape, once used primarily in Marsala, now appreciated for its fresh, floral, and mineral qualities. The wine is made using a 'reduction' method, where grapes are pressed and destemmed under inert gas. Stemmari is known for producing quality wines at affordable prices. The wine has a deep straw yellow colour with a balanced flavour, delicate acidity, and aromas of tropical fruits, jasmine, and white flowers, with notes of peach, apple, pear, minerals, honey, and citrus.

The main course of the evening's delightful menu comprised of Mafalde al Ragu, thick ribbon shaped pasta, 24 hour slow-cooked beef shin ragu, parmesan, flat leaf parsley, extra virgin olive oil.

This hearty rustic dish was perfectly complemented by Montalto Organic Nero D'Avola. This wine is from Terre Siciliane, Southern Italy, which encompasses regions like Campania, Basilicata, Puglia, Calabria, and Sicily. Different winemaking traditions and styles define each region. This wine has a deep red colour with purple tones, notes of plum, blackcurrant, liquorice, faint tobacco, vanilla, red cherry, raspberry, with a medium body, subtle tannins, mineral acidity, and a spicy finish.

The authentically Italian menu was rounded off with a traditional dessert of Affogato, a palate refreshing combination of amaretto, espresso coffee, amaretti biscuit and vanilla ice cream.

At the end of the meal Nicola thanked the Restaurant staff for their attentive service, and for looking after our party so well. Our group were in no hurry to break up the party, and many stayed on chatting and enjoying catching up with one another. Thanks to the Committee, especially Deloras Amato, for all the hard work in organising another successful and enjoyable event.

Dr Jane Barber

Manchester

WINE TOUR: DIFFERENT, INTERESTING AND INFORMATIVE FUN



Leaving the magnificent Mahatma Gandhi statue behind us members of Manchester Branch were led (at speed to begin with!) across the River Irwell to the first of four restaurant venues where wine and food had been carefully chosen and beautifully paired.

Kel, our guide, is a wine and food writer who also recently qualified via Manchester Wine School. When she mentioned being beguiled with 'red water,' we knew we were off to a good start!

Our first venue was Kallos, Salford where we were welcomed with a sparkling Greek wine Domaine Karanika Brut Cuvée Speciale Xinomavro. It had sharp green apple notes and soft bubbles which had the same effect in the mouth as a sherbet bonbon. Our second wine was from Macedonia. Accompanied by freshly baked domed pitta bread and tzatziki we then tried squid, aioli and pickles. We were definitely feeling in Greek holiday mood.

Next we visited Tast on King Street, an old favourite of our society. This Catalan restaurant, owned by Pep Guardiola, sees him bringing many ingredients over from Spain including the sheep's cheese which was to accompany our wines.

Our lesson from Kel was to be 'cool' (a welcome thought having climbed three flights of stairs to our table on the top floor though this hadn't really been her intended meaning) and taste two white wines side by side.

Kel had us recognising the subtle differences in the wines by first testing our musical ability to recognise two different notes. Some of us knew these were a major third apart but more importantly, everyone knew that the wines were to our liking. We had instructions to sip, lean forward so the wine would fall forward in the mouth, but we were not to dribble! The Albariño, Rias Baixas, Terra Gauda O Rosal showed wonderful pear aromas and salty rivulets. The white Rioja Solar de Randez 2023 proved to be many people's favourite wine of the day.

Leaving rather reluctantly and admiring the mock Tudor facade of the building opposite (we needed Neil to tell us if we were describing it correctly) we wound our way to Sterling – downstairs in the old stock exchange building, dark and discreet and rather smart and also owned by a name in the football world, Gary Neville.

We passed the bronze Homeless Jesus statue on the bench outside St Ann's Church prompting us to remember the homeless themselves and comment on the many links between religion and wine and The Drunkenness of Noah.

Sterling wines were orange wines also known as skin-contact white wines, skin-fermented white wines or amber wines. The first Gonzalez Bastias Naranjo from Chile, cloudy and tasting of peach and orange blossom with a hint of scrumpy cider and the Rainbow Juice Gentle Folk Wine from Australia tasting of watermelon and strawberries were truly interesting. They were accompanied by a most delicious cheese doughnut smothered in a smooth creamy cheese sauce.

And finally to 10 Tib Lane. Now we were to sample French red wines accompanied by charcuterie, pickles and nocellara olives. Domaine Coudoulet Charlotte Cinsault Langedoc, cherry recurrant and strawberry, and a St Emillion Château Dubard Bel Air, blackberry, plum fig and liquorice and black pepper, were a splendid end to a wonderful wine tour.

We loved our tour guide, Kel, who passed on her enthusiasm and knowledge in an amusing and modern way. The carefully chosen venues were well prepared for us and the wines and snacks were matched perfectly and suitably varied. We loved the event altogether and would repeat it again tomorrow! A great success!

Ruth Hurst



Manchester

LUNCH AT THE BLACK FRIAR, SALFORD

The Black Friar pub is a must on the branch's annual calendar these days as it delivers excellent food in an exceptional environment. This year the wines were chosen by the restaurant. Located in Salford, albeit a 10-minute walk from Manchester Victoria station, this once popular community pub has gone through major changes since its opening in 1886. It closed following a fire and fell into disrepair, abandoned and eventually derelict, the pigeons the only visitors for 15 years.

Then, in 2021, as part of the Blackfriars complex, the old grade 2 listed pub was refurbished, gentrified. The unusual front elevation along with its sandstone framed fenestration washed down and polished. All this to no avail as today the front is awash with a psychedelic display of a huge pink tap with a cascade of floral splendour, presumably a temporary arrangement but spectacular, nonetheless. The immediate internal area is restored as the old pub so as not to disappoint but, off to the rear and side, light abounds through the external glass walling to create a welcoming, bright environment. The reception was al fresco in a tastefully landscaped area.

Appropriately we started with a summer cocktail of gin, chambord, prosecco and soda, a sprig of mint and ice – very refreshing on such a muggy day.

Nicola gave her usual professional succinct oration welcoming all 37, five of whom were from other branches or guests.

We sat to a glass of Macabeo Sonadora, La Mancha 2023, a fresh blend of Verdejo and Airén grapes that are renowned for young vibrant wines. The wine complemented firstly the grazing board of sourdough bread, nocellara olives, tapenade and house whipped butter, followed by a choice of starter: a fashionably retro Crab Vol au Vent or a Broad bean and jalapeno tortellini.

The wine was crisp, appley and fresh; the bread, olives, tapenade and butter surprisingly light and certainly delicious. The vol au vent was scrumptious, firm pastry with crab and shrimp custard that oozed out with a piquancy that suggested painstaking preparation, where every scintilla of the crab had been used to achieve the flavour. It was complemented with watercress and lightly seasoned watercress purée. The tortellini was served with mabooj, confit tomato and a pine nut crumb.

A glass of Grenache Carignan Les Lauriers, Languedoc 2022 was paired with the Yorkshire seared chicken breast, boneless chicken wings, honey and rosemary gnocchi with broccoli. The wine was soft and silky textured, with flavours of plum and cherry. The chicken was seared, moist and flavoursome. The boneless chicken wings were crispy and the rosemary gnocchi delicious, all complemented with broccoli and once again watercress puree.

Nicola gave special thanks to chef Ben Chaplin and his staff for once again providing a culinary delight.

The meal was finished with a splendid looking strawberry and pistachio éclair with strawberries, pistachio crème patissière and white chocolate. It presented a challenge but the lightness of the choux pastry made matters easy.

At this point, Nicola surprised 'birthday boy' Alistair with a cake to celebrate his 82nd birthday. We finished with tea and coffee.

Sincere thanks go to the committee for all their hard work and choosing this wonderful venue again. The Black Friar pub is a gem of a restaurant delivering excellent food and wine in a cleverly designed interior that is a catalyst for conviviality.

Rod Bowden



Merseyside & Mid Cheshire

MIDSUMMER WINE AND TAPAS



The picturesque village of Great Budworth was the setting for the Merseyside & Mid Cheshire Branch Midsummer Event. The delightful village hall was the venue and our Secretary, Hilary Rylands, and her team created a lovely ambience. We were joined by friends from The Blackpool & Fylde Coast Branch.

The theme was a South American Wine Tasting and Tapas.

The aperitif was: Altamana Grande Reserve Ita Semillon 2021 from Chile. This was followed with a tasting of The Wine Society's Exhibition Limari Chardonnay 2023, also from Chile.

Merseyside & Mid Cheshire

WINES FROM WALES

In July Merseyside and Mid Cheshire visited a Welsh vineyard and winery near Conwy, in North Wales.

Gwinllan Vineyard is situated just off the A55 at Llandudno Junction and overlooks the estuary of the River Conwy, Conwy Castle and, in the distance, the Eryri (Snowdon) range of mountains.

It was founded in 2012 by Colin and Charlotte, and it now covers three acres with 3,000 vines.

It is situated in the Craven Triangle, a traditional fruit growing area, with an especially suited microclimate, created by the sea, the estuary and the Eryri Mountains.

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The first dish was the perfect starter for a very warm summer day: ceviche prawns, mixed with tomatoes, cucumber and lime juice, served with tortilla chips. This was paired with Faldeos Nevados Torrontes 2023, a wine from Argentina.

This was followed by Chicken Cazuela, a traditional South American stew with chicken thighs, potatoes, carrots, bell peppers, green beans and smoked paprika. This was paired with a wine from Uruguay; Pisano Family Selection, Grand Reserve Tannat 2023.

Koyle Cerro Basalto Cuartel G2 Carmen ere 2021, from Chile, accompanied the third dish, which was Beef Empanadas. These were puff pastry parcels, stuffed with mince beef cooked with mixed herbs, onions, garlic and smoked paprika, served with a tomato salsa.

The last savoury tapas was Chorizo Al Vino: pan fried chorizo, with a hint of chilli, in a red wine reduction. This was paired with Mendel Mendoza Luja' de Cuyo Finca Mendel Malbec 2021, from Argentina.

A sweet course concluded the tapas tasting. Chocotorta, a traditional Argentinian dessert of creamy chocolate dulce de leche, layered with coffee infused biscuits.

Mont Gras Handcrafted Rio Bio Riesling 2020 was the final wine presented and served by our wine steward, Paul Bishop.

The delicious tapas dishes were created and cooked by Chester Chef, David Bishop.

Everyone was agreed that it was the perfect event for a summer Saturday, in a village that is said to be the prettiest in Cheshire.

Angela Britland



Merseyside & Mid Cheshire

AN AFTERNOON WITH THE ALPACAS



Our summer picnic event was at an alpaca farm near Tarporley in Cheshire.

We were delighted to be joined by friends from all the Northwest Branches of IWFS: Manchester, Liverpool, Blackpool & Fylde Coast and Vale Royal.

We had a delicious Hog Roast provided by Richard Roastie of Nantwich. This was followed by an array of delicious desserts prepared by our hostess, Dianne Hall and her daughter Gillian.

The wines were selected by our wine steward, Paul Bishop. The aperitif was The Wine Society's Crémant de Loire, 2022. The main course was accompanied by a Côte du Rhône, 2022 and with the desserts, a Madeira was served.

Forty member and friends attended and everyone enjoyed the lovely sunshine and the delightful alpacas.

Angela Britland

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They produce:

- Pefriog, an award-winning sparkling wine.
- Solaris and Pydew, white wines.
- Pinot Noir Rosé
- Rondo, a red wine.

After a tour of the vineyard conducted by the owner, Colin, members and friends from Manchester and Blackpool & Fylde Coast, enjoyed a tasting of four wines: Solaris, Pydew, Pinot Noir Rosé and Rondo. All were enthusiastic about the wines,

and personal preferences differed, but the whites were generally preferred. I favoured the Pydew, which had a lovely bouquet and was lower in alcohol.

The wines are distributed by Tanners of Chester and are in restaurants and wine shops locally.

After the tasting we enjoyed a delicious lunch of local Welsh food, whilst enjoying the magnificent scenery.

Angela Britland

Oslo

ENGLISH SPARKLING WINE IS GETTING NOTICED

Norwegians like Champagne, and IWFS Norway decided to test how English sparkling wine compared to the real thing. A trip to Sussex was planned in collaboration with IWFS UK. Philip Kim, and 18 Norwegian Champagne Lovers from IWFS, came to England on 20th September to visit five Wineries in Sussex. Nine UK IWFS members joined, including John Nicholas.

During three days, the group visited Ashling Park, Hambledon, Wiston, Ridgeview and Sugrue South Downs. The verdict was clear: perhaps the French are the only ones who can call it Champagne, but the Sussex competition is amazing.

The five wineries all make first class sparkling wine. Their soil characteristics are equal to Champagne, and the climate in Sussex is becoming ideal for making the best sparkling wine.

After successful visits and tastings at the first four, we arrived at Sugrue South Downs, in the middle of their harvesting. As you know, Dermot Sugrue is an impressive figure in English wine making. Dermot welcomed us to his winery, where he described his philosophy as remaining a boutique winery, while continuing to contribute to the success and growth of wine making in England. He served us his new Rock Story next to the grape pickers harvesting, and trucks arriving with grapes.

Dermot stayed with us the entire afternoon and evening, as we enjoyed our closing dinner at Ockenden Manor, with Dermot's wines and Dermot continuing to add to our understanding of the wonder of English Sparkling wine.

Reira Ness



Surrey Hills LUNCH AT KINGHAMS



This long-established AA Two Rosette restaurant in Shere is the furthest east we have ventured in the last few years. Shere is an attractive village between Guildford and Dorking, recorded as Essira in the Domesday Book, not far from several well-known vineyards which enjoy the south facing chalk of the North Downs. It has notably been the setting for films such as *Bridget Jones: The Edge of Reason* and *The Holiday*.

Kinghams was built in about 1620 as a pair of labourers' cottages and became a restaurant in 1993 under the then ownership of Paul Baker. It has recently won Surrey Life's Restaurant of the Year twice and been runner up three times.

As is customary, the fifteen of us began with a glass of bubbles, this time Boschendal Methode Cap Classique Brut Rosé. The



starters on offer were Wild mushroom soup with truffle Chantilly and cep shortbread; Duck liver parfait with plum glaze and harissa brioche; and Cornish mackerel with tomato fondue, quinoa tabbouleh and citrus dressing.

The 'in betweens' available were Braised venison ravioli with marsala sauce; Preserved lemon glazed octopus with puffed wild rice and chickpea shades; or Scallops with salt baked kohlrabi, Granny Smith apple and lovage butter.

Mains were Beef fillet with broccoli, cavolo nero, onion mirin purée, pickled onion and poached apricot; Poached hake with braised lentils, wild mushroom crust and mushroom ketchup; and duo of Guinea fowl, smoked breast and ballotine with greengage, heritage carrot and plum purée.

And Finally, we had the option of Red wine poached pear mousse with cassis du Dijon glaze and spiced nut crumb; Basil and raspberry Baked Alaska with pain d'épice sponge and almond biscuit; or dark chocolate delicie with white chocolate sponge and passionfruit sorbet.

From Kingham's extensive wine list we enjoyed Santa Seraffa Gavi di Gavi 2023, Caparrone Montepulciano d'Abruzzo 2022, and the non-alcoholic Doppio Passo 'Alternativa'.

This was another unhurried event in pleasant old-world surroundings with suitably attentive staff. Presentation matched the quality of the food, which was first class. We will no doubt be back before too long.

Kip Punch

Sussex THE FIG TREE



It is always a joy and a privilege when you have a wonderful dining experience visiting a restaurant where the food is beautifully presented and delicious, and where you know the dishes could not be easily reproduced at home without skill and dedication. This was the experience enjoyed once again from the Branch visit to The Fig Tree restaurant in the Sussex village of Hurstpierpoint.

This little gem of a restaurant has been in the village for many years and earns repeatedly excellent reviews from its clientele who regularly return like the Sussex Branch for the consistent excellent dining experience.

Sussex GRIFFIN INN

Members of the Sussex Branch once again had the pleasure of visiting the Griffin Inn situated in the idyllic village of Fletching.

A pub that retains all its character and ambience of a bygone age and has a reputation for cooking classic pub food with a modern twist.

The dishes chosen by the members, for example, were pan fried chicken livers, rolled pork belly and a dessert of sticky toffee pudding, accompanied by wines of Morande Coleccion Privada Sauvignon Blanc, Chile and Bodega Norton Porteno Malbec, Argentina. It was a very successful and enjoyable evening.

Julie Wagg



The members were welcomed with an aperitif and then sat down to an *amuse-bouche* of a mini fish and chips and a cheese and chive ball accompanied by sourdough bread with a hint of onion and rosemary.

Everything was to tempt the tastebuds for the delicious arrival of the entrée choices of Trout, Burrata or an unusual Chicken and Ham Hock raviolo.

Then followed the beautifully presented and tasteful main courses with choices of either Turbot, Lamb, Gnocchi or Asparagus.

One of the excellent desserts they produced was a delicious Mango, Passionfruit, Pineapple Coconut Soufflé.

All dishes were accompanied by the wines of either a Forgeron Dubois, Sauvignon Blanc IGP Pays d'Oc, France 2023 or La Petite Syrah, Domaine des Yeux Languedoc, France 2023.

There was a general consensus from all the members at the end of the dinner that once again it had been a truly successful evening helped not only by the good food but the welcoming and attentive service given to us by all the restaurant staff. Long may the Branch continue to visit this restaurant.

Julie Wagg



Sussex THE SUNDIAL



It was the time again for the Sussex Branch to make its annual visit to Mary and Vincent Rongier's family-run restaurant, The Sundial in Herstmonceux.

This wonderful restaurant that has been in the village since 2000 fully deserves its excellent reputation and has been one of the favourite venues of the members and their guests for some years.

It could truly be said that it is a wonderful dining experience from the cosy atmosphere with its white table cloths to the

beautifully cooked and presented dishes with all the added little extra delights of canapés, amuse bouche, palate cleanser and pre dessert of traditional lollipops with the finale of their home made petits fours. It is always a wonderful evening.

Luckily the weather was in our favour so the members and guests were welcomed and enjoyed an aperitif of Crémant de Bourgogne with canapés in the restaurant garden.

We then moved inside for various delicious entrée choices including pan fried king scallops, teriyaki pheasant, lobster bisque and main choices including breast of duck, poached sea trout, saddle of lamb with delicious choices of desserts including raspberry millefeuille and yellow peach tatin style.

The wines that accompanied the meal were Chablis, Domaine Gautheron, 2020 and St Christol, Dom St Sophie, Languedoc Roussillon 2023.

It was a delightful gastronomic evening and I am sure nobody went home hungry.

Julie Wagg

DID YOU KNOW?



- Post pandemic, barbecuing and eating alfresco is now the UK's top summer home leisure activity.
- Three quarters of UK households own a barbecue grill of some sort. Hooded barbecues and smokers are rising in popularity. Hooded barbecues now account for 67% of sales.
- In 2023, it's estimated the UK held around 65 million barbecues. The average spend on food is £40 per barbecue, up £16 in the past five years.
- Chicken recently lost its top spot to pork as the most barbecued meat (33% of barbecued meat) and the demand for vegan and vegetarian alternatives has been growing fast.
- Women are increasingly taking on the traditionally male role at the grill, with 48% of barbecues having women at the tongs.
- A third of us attend nine or ten barbecues a year now, with the barbecue season stretching into spring and autumn.

YOUNG CHEF COMPETITION 2025

Friday 16th May 2025

The Awards Lunch for the IWFS Young Chef Competition 2025 held at Cheshire College South and West – Crewe Campus on Friday 16th May 2025.

The day was bright and sunny and IWFS members from Blackpool & Fylde Coast, Manchester, Liverpool, Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire, together with West Yorkshire, were fortunate enough to be in a happy environment celebrating the skill of the students and also the dedication of the tutors from nine northern colleges.

John Holden, Lead tutor at Cheshire College, made a warm welcoming speech on behalf of the college to the seventy guests.

Stephen Harrison compered the event and welcomed the guests: sponsors, judges, members of the IWFS and especially staff and students from the catering colleges.

This was the fourth Young Chef Competition. Chefs started the process in February in a series of regional heats, culminating at the grand final in April with the brief of creating a delicious plate of 'British Fusion' food incorporating black pudding as an ingredient.

The IWFS originally launched the competitions to celebrate the creative and technical skills of young chefs who are students at catering colleges, providing an opportunity for the chefs to develop their skills in a friendly but competitive environment. The Competition has grown each year and this year included nine colleges with two more in discussion already for next year. Head Judge Paul Heathcote MBE commented that the Competition is already seen as the premier young chef event in the North of England, a statement confirmed by many of the tutors at the lunch.

This year we extended the scope of the competition to include a test of the front of house skills of the students with a challenge to select a wine pairing to meet the needs of a visitor to a fine restaurant. This was in response to feedback from the hospitality sector that students leaving college frequently have little or no understanding of the skills of pairing wine and food. Pressure on college timetables from funding cuts has reduced the number of contact hours (anecdotally by half over the last 20 years) and wine pairing no longer features in most of the course syllabuses. This represents a substantial opportunity for the IWFS to offer an educational package to help fill the gap.

Judging duties for the Competition were split between two panels of judges, all of whom generously donated their time.

Judges at the final for chefs were:

- Paul Heathcote MBE
- Nigel Stewart, Head of Hotel Operations from Saga Cruises
- Matthew Wilkinson, Head of Kitchens at Ridding Park Hotel
- Richard Morris and Matthew McDermid from The Bury Black Pudding Company

For the Front of House Competition, the panel was:

- Paul Robinson, Head of Wine from Robinsons Brewery
- Ron Barker, Head of the Wines Committee of the IWFS
- Amanda Fitzsimmons of IWFS West Yorkshire Branch

The lunch was held at the Academy Restaurant at Cheshire College. Stephen thanked John Holden and his team for their help in preparing an excellent meal. He also thanked Andrea Guardascione, Andrew Dixon and the team at Leeds College for hosting the final in April. The meal was of a very high standard with both exceptional food and first-class service. Many members present commented that the restaurant should be considered for an IWFS Excellence Award.



The audience then heard motivational comments from four of the judges. Paul Heathcote congratulated the students and stressed that those who had participated should be proud irrespective of whether or not they had won a prize as the standard of the dishes had been very high.

Richard Morris, Director of The Bury Black Pudding Company, explained that the Company had supported the competition for a third year as they strongly support the provision of the opportunity for young chefs to develop and show off their skills.

Nigel Stewart from Saga Cruises pointed out that Saga are renowned for their commitment to colleague training and development and for their dedication to delivering outstanding hospitality. They see the competition as being an important way of helping to develop skills for the hospitality industry and encouraged the students to seize the opportunities in the industry.

Finally, Paul Robinson congratulated the front of house students for outstanding performances – even when they were a little nervous.

Ruth Hurst, Awards Officer from the International Wine and Food Society, presented certificates to the in-house heat finalists and Paul Heathcote presented all of the finalists with IWFS aprons.

The competition winners were then awarded their prizes.



Young Chefs

Judges' Commendation, **Charlie Sharpe** from Hugh Baird

Third Place, **Alfie Morris** from St Helens College, receiving the International Wine and Food Society Crystal Trophy and a cheque for £150

Second Place, **Millie Cobbett-Collier** from Scarborough College receiving the International Wine and Food Society Crystal Trophy and a cheque for £250

First Place, **Eifion Iball** (pictured below) from Leeds College receiving the International Wine and Food Society Crystal Trophy and a cheque for £500

Front of House

Third Place, **Grace Donnelly** from Leeds College receiving the International Wine and Food Society Crystal Trophy and a cheque for £150

Second Place, **Ryan Barnes** from York College receiving the International Wine and Food Society Crystal Trophy and a cheque for £250

First Place, **Caitlin Madden** (pictured right) from Wirral Met receiving the International Wine and Food Society Crystal Trophy and a cheque for £500.



Apologies were received from Angela Maher, Chief Executive of the Savoy Educational Trust, who wished all the contestants well in their future roles in hospitality and thanked the IWFS team for helping to nurture them. The IWFS Young Chef Competition has really appreciated the support of the charitable trust.

The afternoon closed with a message from IWFS EA Chair John Nicholas:

"My apologies for not being here to be part of this key event in the IWFS diary.

"Firstly I, as the current Chair of IWFS Europe Africa, would like to congratulate the prize winners for their success. I would also like to congratulate all the finalists on their success in reaching the final and I would like to ask your tutors to take back to your colleges our thanks to all the participants and wish them good fortune in the future careers.

"Now I would like to turn to the judges and sponsors without

whose support it would not have been possible to develop the competition. I thank all of you for your time and contributions.

"Finally, I would like to thank Stephen Harrison, Tim Hodges and the rest of the IWFS team on your behalf for their inspiring leadership, firstly in establishing this competition but also by making it happen yet again – now in its fourth year."

Plans for next year's competition will get underway in the autumn and the organisers would very much like to expand the scale of the competition to cover the whole of the country. If any branches would like to discuss how to develop links with their local colleges with a view to getting involved, please contact Tim or Stephen.

Tim Hodges
tim@new-pool.co.uk

Stephen Harrison
stephenharrison1@btopenworld.com

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

UK London

18th November 2025

An evening of favourite wines from members' cellars. 7.00pm at the Army and Navy Club, SW1Y 5JN. See www.iwfs.london for details.

SOUTH AFRICA Cape Town

22nd November 2025

Year-end function at the Gibbs' – featuring a White Wine tasting. Contact Norma Davison on davisonnorma@gmail.com for details.

UK Devonshire

27th November 2025

Ephesus, Torquay – a taste of Turkey and Greece under one roof. Contact Geeta Lloyd at geetalloyd@gmail.com

UK West Yorkshire

29th November 2025

AGM and 'Deliciously Yorkshire' - a menu based on the best of Yorkshire produce from the 'Deliciously Yorkshire' Awards 2025. Contact suetimme@gmail.com for details.

UK Blackpool & Fylde Coast

1st December 2025

We return again to the prestigious Fairhaven Golf Club for our Christmas celebration. 7.00 pm for 7.30 start. Contact Peter Smith at peterjsmith1955@outlook.com for details.

UK Manchester

6th December 2025

Christmas Lunch with aperitifs in the Library and lunch in the Museum Room in Manchester Hall. Contact Chris Redman at cdredman@talktalk.net for details.

UK Herefordshire & Monmouthshire

11th December

Black Tie Christmas Dinner at Orles Barn Ross on Wye. Contact Peter McGahey, email peter.mcgahey@btinternet.com for details.

UK Berkshire

12th December 2025

Still wines and ports of Douro with professional educator, Pippa Hayward. Contact Colin Mair at colin.mair@ntlworld.com for details.

UK Merseyside & Mid-Cheshire

13th December 2025

Christmas Celebration black tie dinner at the Grosvenor Chester. Contact Hilary Rylands hilaryrylands@talktalk.net for details.

UK Devonshire

21st December 2025

A Festive Afternoon at the Lloyd's home. Contact Geeta Lloyd at geetalloyd@gmail.com for details.

