



NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021



Welcome to Buckingham Wine Circle's February 2021 newsletter. The committee members join me in hoping that you are all well and that 2021 turns out to be a better year than last. Unfortunately, there is no change in the COVID-19 restrictions as this newsletter is circulated but things may change for the better after the 8th of March. We all hope that we can meet as soon as possible and, in the meantime, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Richard Eckersley as a new member as and when we can meet. The total number of members is 45 following some members deciding not to rejoin in 2021 so, if you know of anyone who may be interested in joining us, please ask them to contact our membership secretary, Mary Simons. The maximum membership is currently limited to 50 so there are 5 places available.

As you will know, I managed to obtain a quantity of Black Stump Durif Shiraz from Laithwaites at half price and I ordered a total of 75 bottles that were subsequently delivered to some of our members. The feedback I have had has been very positive in respect of the quality and price of this excellent wine that Ray Smalley first introduced me to. I hope that Laithwaites will repeat this type of offer in the future and, if they do, I will let you all know.

Finally, as always, a big thank you to Nick Aldren and Ray Smalley for the very interesting articles.



Ken

Thrice Recommended



The first really odd wine name is probably Est! Est! Est! It perpetrates a medieval story concerning Bishop Johannes Fugger of Augsburg. He was travelling from his Bavarian see to Rome in 1111 to attend the coronation of Emperor Henry V and, on each day of the journey, he sent his faithful servant Martin ahead to scout for the inns with the best wines. When Martin found one he was on orders to chalk 'Est' on the door so that his master would know he could enter in confidence. The word was merely an abbreviated code for *vinum est bonum* -the wine is good. At Montefiascone, about 100 miles short of Rome, Martin found an inn with wine of transcending quality. He wished the bishop to be in no doubt and wrote Est! Est! Est! On the door. Fugger was more than impressed, he was converted. He could not tear himself away from the wine and his journey ended there in the town where he is buried at the church of San Flavio. His epitaph, said to have been written by Martin, blamed his expiry on the excess of the wine. But this did not deter Montefiascone from adopting the name that commemorates the legend.

Wine Tasting in South Africa

In March 2017 Viviane & I along with two friends went on a touring holiday to South Africa along the Garden Route from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth via Franschhoek the main wine region in South Africa.

We spent four days in Cape Town visiting Table Mountain where we were befriended by a Dassie known as a Rock Rabbit whose closest relative is an elephant.



We drove an hour and a half up to Franschhoek (French Corner) which is one of the prettiest towns in the Winelands, we stayed in a Guest House which was like a three star hotel, a short walk from our accommodation we picked up the Wine Tram which stops at over 20 Wineries, a very civilised way to taste wine.

The first winery we stopped at was the Franschhoek Cellar where we had a Chocolate & Wine Tasting which was fabulous I wouldn't have thought red wine and chocolate would go together but it did.

The next winery was Roca - Dieu Donne Estate where we had lunch and wine tastings - my favourite was their 2015 Shiraz, so good I brought a bottle home, a fabulous location with stunning views over the Winelands.

We boarded the tram and alighted at our next Winery which was the Ricketty Bridge Winery where we had another tasting of fabulous wines.



The following day we drove to Oudtshoorn and Knysna and then along the Garden Route to the Amakhala Hillsnek Game Reserve.

We noticed this on route which we thought was amusing:-

"This Route 62 attraction certainly makes for a fun tale. The story goes that Frank Ronald (Ronnie) Price bought a tiny farmer's cottage on a remote section of the R62. His aim was to

open a farm stall, selling fresh produce to the passing trade. He painted the name 'Ronnie's Shop' on the side of the building, but business didn't get off to a cracking good start.

Then one day, his friends decided for a laugh, they would add the word 'Sex' to the name, making it read 'Ronnie's Sex Shop'. Pretty soon this irresistible sign brought in loads of passers-by, and Ronnie's initial irritation was transformed as he began to see the business opportunity his establishment's



newfound popularity presented. On the advice of these very same friends, Ronnie opened a pub... and the rest, as they say, is history."

The Game Reserve was great, not often you see a double headed elephant!

We thoroughly enjoyed our Road Trip and the fabulous scenery and of course the excellent wines we tasted along the way.

Ray

Wine supplies in lockdown

While it has certainly been a challenging last few months for all of us, we need to keep positive, and the challenge I tackled was to find a new and exciting wine provider for the lockdown months.

In the past number of years I have used the Sunday Times Wine Club, Laithwaites, Naked Wines, Virgin Wines and Majestic, supplemented along the way of course with wines from the main supermarkets and Waitrose Cellar and Ken Webster with bottles of Black Stump Durif Shiraz !

Whilst all provide great wines, I had been recommended to look at the Wine Society by Decanter magazine as they apparently offered something different from the companies mentioned above - consistently good quality wines but with most cheaper than on the high street along with top buyers and impeccable customer service. "We put members before profit, ensuring you get wines selected in quality alone at the fairest prices for you and the people who make them" Unfortunately it seemed that due to the lockdown at the end of March 2020 others had the same idea as me and the Wine Society was closed for new members until the end of May in order to satisfy existing members orders !

The cost of becoming a member of the Wine Society is £40 - this is a lifetime subscription with no commitment in purchasing any wine, however on placing your first order you receive a discount of £20 - you also receive a share certificate - I'm member 4628xx - following somewhat late in the day after Arthur Conan Doyle who became the 3266th member in 1910 (the Society was formed in 1874)

The Society makes a big thing of their heritage - "whether we're sourcing our members new favourite wines from an artisan producer in Bordeaux, blending exclusives with maverick growers in the new world or following our instincts to scout out the best new producers from off the beaten track, we've spent over a century forging relationships with growers who share our passion for quality at every price"

Whilst heritage is of course important, the Society doesn't come across as stuffy and stuck in the past - they have embraced technology as lockdown continues with no permitted gatherings allowed meaning no wine tastings, masterclasses etc these have been replaced with online virtual events, including winemaker tastings, masterclasses with the Society buyers on both Zoom and Instagram - all of which are later made available on the Wine Society YouTube channel

To date I've ordered 4 cases of 12 bottles - just one case was a special pre mixed case put together by the Wine Society for Christmas - the other cases were my own eclectic selection from regional France to Italy and Spain and Sicily, to the Americas, Australia and New Zealand with grape varieties from Chardonnay and Riesling to Carmenere, Merlot or Shiraz

All wines ordered come with tasting notes, drink dates and food pairings

For the next newsletter I will share with you some of my favourite purchases from the last few months.

Nick Aldren

Please send any articles you would like to be considered for inclusion in our April Newsletter to
Ken Webster
E.mail kenwebster641@sky.com
If you would prefer to receive a printed copy please let me know.