



# Buckingham Wine Circle

June 2021

## Sweet Wines

Hello everyone and welcome to the latest newsletter, expertly put together by Terry and I am grateful to him for the effort he puts into the production of it.

Our heart-felt condolences go out to Ruth Newell and her two daughters, of whom he was rightly very proud, for the sad loss of Robert Munday who was always a cheery participant in the Wine Circle's activities. Although Buckingham born and raised, Robert was also a very enthusiastic supporter of Sunderland F.C.

There are very interesting articles from Richard Eckersley, who is joining us when we next meet, on sweet wines. Mary Simons has also contributed a very interesting article on South African wines and Nick Aldren's article makes excellent reading.

Finally and hopefully when the COVID-19 restrictions come to an end later this month, we can look forward to meeting up again at Chafor Wines in Gawcott in September.

Kind regards to you all

*Ken*

Sweet/dessert wine as a broad category is often unfashionable, misunderstood, overlooked or ignored; but I love it. As with dry wines, there's so much variety here, and the more you dig the more the wealth of wonderful wine that can be found... though due to lack of popularity, it sometimes needs a bit of a search!

Contrary to the name, I often find dessert wine at its best on its own well after the dessert is gone. With high sugar and acidity, it tends to age well and once open lasts much longer than dry wine, so can be sipped leisurely across evenings. I've always enjoyed these wines and in the name of discovery I have poked about for some I have tried before and shared below.

**Sauternes** - a good starting place as it is easy to find, this is rich and sweet and complex and one of the dessert wines you will find in the supermarkets (usually along with muscat). Apart from Port this might be the best known sweet wine and it comes from the Bordeaux region. The Tesco and Waitrose versions are both good

and cost £10-15. If you like roquefort cheese this is one of the best food/wine combinations you can find. The wine is made from botrytised grapes which attract a 'noble rot' which gives them their character.

"In wine there is wisdom, in beer there is freedom, in water there is bacteria."

Attrib Benjamin Franklin

**Colheita port** - essentially a tawny port but from a single harvest (most tawny is blended across years). Smooth flavours of dried fruit and nuts and caramel, with understated power, quite unlike vintage port. Barros Colheita 1996 is an outstanding example and although a lot for a single bottle it can be drunk over many weeks because it is made with oxygen contact, so opening it does not really change things -

[www.exelwines.co.uk](http://www.exelwines.co.uk).

**Recioto di soave** - Made by drying out grapes for weeks or months on mats in warm conditions such as attics, achieving great concentration. Very pure and concentrated fruit

flavours, well defined, freshness.

[www.greatwine.co.uk](http://www.greatwine.co.uk) do a fine example which tastes so convincingly of mandarins you really have to check the bottle to be sure it's made from grapes.

**Banyuls** - not all dessert wines are made from white grapes! One example of a red sweet wine is Banyuls, which comes primarily from grenache noir. The wine is made in southern France and it is aged outdoors in the full sun in huge glass demijohns, tempering its intensity and giving it a sunny aspect.



**Tokaji aszu** - also known as Tokay and as 'the wine of kings and king of wines'. The world's first classification system was put in place here in Hungary in the 1700s. They make complex and delicious dessert wines using similar production approaches as Sauternes. For the best wines there are 5 puttonyos, then 6

puttonyos and finally for those with the heaviest wallets there is 'eszencia' which only the luckiest will try <http://www.royal-tokaji.com/essencia.php>

**Beerenauslese riesling** - riesling comes in many forms including sweet, and these dessert wines made in Germany are exciting and as with many German wines, comfortably low in alcohol. Trockenbeerenauslese will be even sweeter, with the name being confusing as 'trocken' means dry in German, but this refers to the grapes on the vine which are

harvested so late they have become dry and the sugars and flavours have come together. Sweet riesling wine can be found from elsewhere, usually with 'late harvest' on the bottle.

**Eiswein** - this is wine produced from grapes which have frozen on the vine. They can be expensive, and reading about the production begins to explain why - in Germany many years do not get cold enough to produce the wine at all; producers leave grapes on the vine beyond usual harvest dates in the hope of a serious cold snap at

the end of the season when the grapes are very ripe... if the cold comes, the grapes have to be harvested at night so it is cold enough to get them to the winery still frozen - they are legally required to pick them at -7C or lower! The best bits stay frozen when the grapes are pressed and are then used, producing a tiny amount of spectacular wine.

*Richard*

## A Fair future for South African wine

Over a year ago Covid-19 hit and we entered our first lockdown. Did your wine consumption increase as a result? This has been a global pandemic, of course, and people around the world have been struggling – some more than others.

In April 2020, as cases soared in South Africa, wine production ceased and both the sale and export of wine was banned for five weeks. When exports resumed, there were delays at ports and domestic sales were still restricted. Now, one year on, the wine industry is slowly recovering. Exports have been good but unsold wine for domestic sale has been a big issue— at one point in 2020 there were 300m litres of wine gathering dust in winery cellars. The future is still uncertain. Cases have been rising and with only approximately 0.3% of the population having been vaccinated,

a new domestic sale ban has been imposed. The impact on the workforce has also been heavy with somewhere between

14,000 and 28,000 roles lost. Many

of these workers were already vulnerable with low incomes and poor working/living conditions.

There is, however, a bright spot in all this doom and gloom. Fairtrade Standards are working to address these challenges by ensuring all workers, regardless of race, are working in safe conditions, and are receiving a minimum income. Workers growing the grapes that go into Fairtrade wine receive an additional Fairtrade Premium, which they can decide how best to spend for the benefit of their communities. In 2019, the 20.5m litres of Fairtrade wine consumed in the UK alone generated over £1m in Fairtrade Premium, proving that we are not only a nation of wine lovers, but also a nation of people who love to do good.

Whilst it is a little too far to arrange a Wine Circle trip to help consume that ocean of wine in the cellars, when you buy a bottle of wine with the Fairtrade Mark you know you are giving your support and helping to improve workers' livelihoods.



Buckingham is a Fairtrade Town, one of over 600 communities across the UK that has made a commitment to support Fairtrade and choose these products wherever possible. Looking for the Fairtrade Mark has never been easier, with a huge range of different wines available at most major retailers - The Co-Op, to Sainsbury's, Lidl and M&S, Waitrose, Tesco and Asda as well as from independent wine merchants. (Not all branches of these supermarkets carry the full range of Fairtrade wines, however, several are available in the Buckingham shops – you just have to look out for the Fairtrade Mark!) Much of this information came from the Fairtrade Foundation – follow this link for more on all things Fairtrade <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk> \* For more information on Buckingham Fairtrade Town please check out their Facebook page [www.facebook.com/BuckinghamFairtradeTown](https://www.facebook.com/BuckinghamFairtradeTown)

*Mary*



## Bottoms Up

Just following on from my recent article about the Wine Society - it would seem I wasn't the only person during the first lockdown to explore new wine suppliers as the active membership grew from 146,000 to 171,000 - this resulted in 951,000 orders processed which was 40% more than the previous year. The headline was in the run up to Christmas when 232,000 bottles were packed in 15 days - so my mixed case order of 12 bottles in the scheme of things seems somewhat insignificant! I planned to make a few wine society recommendations but as we all

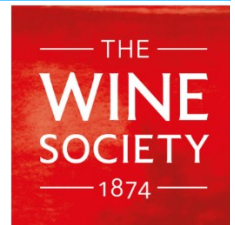


have our own personal preferences and budget it's probably best for me to say I've tried an eclectic mix of grape varieties and countries of origin and I haven't yet had a poor wine. What I would say it that so far I

haven't really experienced a Wow wine - but that is maybe due to me sticking to a budget of between £8.50 to £12 per bottle - which is why I enjoy being a member of the Buckingham Wine Circle with tastings being organised at places like Waddesdon Manor where we can experience quality wines at a range of prices.

Hopefully we can all raise a glass together again soon

*Nick*

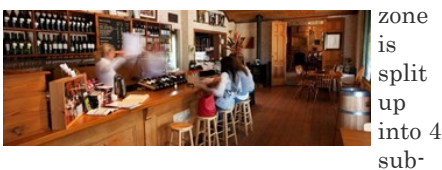


## Wine Regions of Victoria, Australia

The State of Victoria in South Eastern Australia has more than 600 wineries and around 21 sub-regions distributed across 6 wine zones. The wine zones are Central Victoria, North East Victoria, North West Victoria, Western Victoria, Port Phillip and Gippsland

### Central Victoria

The Central Victorian wine



zone is split up into 4 sub-

regions; Bendigo, Goulburn Valley, Heathcote and Strathbogie Ranges. The zone is known for its moderate climate and its small amount of rainfall. In general, Central Victoria has Cambrian soils dating back 500 million years. The soil is primarily made of Green Stone which is highly absorbent, allowing the earth to stay damp and fertile almost year-round.

### North-West Victoria

The North-

West wine zone is made of only two regions; The Murray Darling and Swan Hill. Though the list of regions is small the zone is responsible for producing a quarter of the wine in Australia and a third of the chardonnay. The area is hot, dry and has minimal rainfall. The area is known to the locals as 'Sunraysia'.



### North-East Victoria

The North East wine

zone is sectioned into six beautiful regions; Alpine Valleys, Beechworth,



Glenrowan, King Valley, Rutherglen and Upper Goulburn.

The zone sits on the western foothills of The Great Dividing Range. Alpine Valleys and King Valley climb different altitudes providing diverse climates all throughout the region. The cooler climate gives the grapes unique aromas and maturity as they spend more time on the vine.

### West Victoria

The West wine zone is subdivided

by three wine regions; Henty, Pyrenees and The Grampians. The zone lies victim to what is called katabatic winds. When the temperature rises in the morning, the dense, cold air from the mountains drops into the gully giving the region a cooler-climate. The cool-climate allows an excellent habitat for growing crisp Chardonnays and suckling fruity Rieslings.



### Port Phillip

The Port Phillip wine zone is home to some of the most renowned wines in Australia. The zone is split up by two main regions; Yarra Valley and The Mornington Peninsula, and then three smaller regions; The Macedon Ranges, Sunbury and Geelong. The region produces more Pinot Noir than any other zone in Victoria because of the ocean winds



coming from the Bass Strait cooling the vines

and allowing the grapes more time to ripen. Port Phillip is a coastal wine zone, making it the perfect combination of a beach holiday and wine country tour.

### Gippsland

Gippsland is the largest wine zone in Victoria but it is also the most recently declared, receiving its title in the 90s. The zone is so vast and the wineries so isolated that they tend to have their own climate, making it a very intricate viticultural zone. The zone lies east of Melbourne, taking up a rather large stretch of coastline. Its coastal position offers a cooler-climate providing perfect conditions for Pinot Noir and

Chardonnay.

The zone is laced together by over 50 wineries, all of which are boutique, individually run, and charismatic in their own charms. From coast to country, to the Great Dividing Range in the west, there is nothing but green pastures, rolling hills, fields of produce and of course vineyards.

Well hopefully we have given you a little bit of insight to the state's wealth of wine. Victoria is abundantly rich in history and wine culture, not to mention we didn't even dive into what you can get up to in Melbourne City.

*Maree and Ken*



**Buckingham Wine Circle**

**Provisional Programme 2021**  
Thursday 16th September  
Chafor Wine Estate—paella and wine tasting  
Thursday 21st October  
Waddesdon Wine Cellars  
Thursday 18 November  
“Call My Bluff”  
December  
Christmas Dinner

**More Detail**

**Chafor**

The cost for this evening will be £25 to include the tour of the vineyard, tasting and a meat paella. A ‘pay’ bar will be available for additional drinks.. A separate notice will be circulated when the bookings open. As numbers are limited, bookings will be accepted with full payment on a ‘first-come-first-served’ basis.



**Call My Bluff**

This was unavoidably cancelled in February 2020. The evening is free to the 2020 members who opted to continue their membership. The ‘Guest’ charge of £10 will apply to others. Prospective members would be very welcome.

**Waddesdon**

The cost of the evening is £30 per person. This includes transport from the Buckingham Community Centre with pick-ups in Thornborough, Winslow and Whitchurch. A separate notice will be circulated when the bookings open. As numbers are limited, bookings will be accepted with full payment on a ‘first-come-first-served’ basis.

The tasting includes a white Rhone blend from Casablanca that has won a gold medal at Vinales. A dry white from the grand cru estate of Chateau Rieussec in Sauternes. One of the finest Chenin blanc to come out of South Africa, that is partially

produced in amphora as an orange wine.. Samsara, quite possibly the finest Syrah from South Africa and rivals French equivalents at the £50 mark. A double gold winning Cabernet from Apalta. A rich and complex Malbec blend from Vista Flores and a single estate Pomerol from DBR Lafite.. The retail bottle range goes from £22.00 to £75.00

- The wines are expected to be-
- ⇒ Coleccion Blanc 2018
  - ⇒ R de Rieussec 2018
  - ⇒ Anima 2017
  - ⇒ Apaltagua Signature Cabernet 2013
  - ⇒ Samara 2011
  - ⇒ Los Vascos Le Dix 2016
  - ⇒ Gran Corte 2012
  - ⇒ Blason de L'Evangile



**Articles and Comments**

your contribution would be welcome so please email it to

terry.wagstaff@live.co.uk

by 25th July for the August issue