

Circle Update

January 2016



CIRCLE OF
WINE
WRITERS

IN THIS ISSUE: Rocky times for Spain's DOs • Dry Riesling • Trentino trip • Australia's future

From the editor: **Wink Lorch**

Making the time to read

Nearly two weeks into the new year and I am still seeing resolutions floating into my social media streams. Several times I have read, “must make time to read more”.

We have been living in the age of the sound bite for some time and the success of Twitter and Facebook with their status update formats has given credence to the sound bite for everyone, not only politicians and advertisers. And then there's Instagram, which allows a picture to tell a thousand words, with only a short comment. And yet, magazines like *World of Fine Wine* (in our world) and *Intelligent Life* (in the real world) seem to thrive on very long, in-depth analysis articles. Someone must be making time to read them.

Analysing the results of the *Circle Update* survey has not been easy as there was little consensus – no surprise, for an international group of communicators with opinions. You can read my summary on page 5. It seems that we are doing something right, but what the survey indicated to me more than anything, is an impatience with long articles.

So, what now for *Update*? You will have already received

a separate report on last year's CWW trip to Franciacorta and I will continue to publish such reports for CWW-dedicated trips. This issue does include a long piece on a press trip to Trentino – the report was coordinated by Robert Smyth, our new deputy editor, who participated in the trip. However, apart from this, I have requested that – unless I'm absolutely convinced of the worth of something longer – feature articles should stick to a maximum of 1,500 words. This usually covers two spreads, including some photographs.

Topical pieces in this issue include an opinion piece from Richard Bampffield MW following the IMW's visit to Australia; Cathrine Todd on dry Rieslings, especially from Austria; and Amaya Cervera's article on the future for Spain's appellations following the departure from Rioja's



DOCa of our cover pin-up, Juan Carlos López de Lacalle of Artadi. Liz Sagues visits the Veneto, Peter Hallgarten reveals a renaissance in Txacoli, Peter May describes the birth of a new South African grape, while Michael Fridjhon appreciates a vertical tasting of Cape classics.

Jon Wyand is the issue's featured photographer and took the cover photographs. I thank him for allowing us to use a selection of his fabulous images of Burgundy and beyond, bringing more colour and life to our publication. Jon and his fellow photographers are much valued by our readers – on this the survey was almost unanimous.

This issue also includes reports on recent member events and tastings and much member news, including some fascinating tributes to the indomitable Aileen Hall, who died in December. I also enjoyed interviewing two members: Stephen Skelton, who is in the news having kept secret for nearly two years the news of Taittinger's investment into English sparkling wine; and Suzanne Mustacich, whose book *Thirsty Dragon* is receiving rave reviews.

My thanks are due to all contributors and to Robert Smyth, who has suffered (in his words) a baptism by fire, joining as deputy editor, only two issues into my own editorship. Welcome Robert, and I hope you will relish the task.

I hope you enjoy this issue and please do not hesitate to send any comments about *Update* to me or to the CWW committee. Submissions for April's *Update* should be sent to me by 7th March.

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Front cover: Juan Carlos López de Lacalle of Artadi, Rioja. Back cover: In the village centre of Puligny-Montrachet. Photos by Jon Wyand, this issue's featured photographer.

Membership of the Circle of Wine Writers (www.circleofwinewriters.org) is open to accredited wine journalists and other professionals communicating in the media about wine. As such, it is editorial policy to give the editor and each writer for *Circle Update* freedom to express his or her views. It must therefore be stressed that the Circle as an organisation does not formally associate itself with the opinions expressed by contributors, except where this is specifically stated.

Members who wish to send copies of articles in *Circle Update* to non-subscribers are requested not to forward the full issue. Pdf 'offprints' of specific articles are freely available from the editor, Wink Lorch.

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From the chair: **Jim Budd**

Tributes, thanks and a call to challenge bullying

I have a number of good things to report but must start on a very sad note.

Aileen Hall, a long-time member of the CWW and an Honorary Life Member, died on 7th December 2015 – the day of our Christmas party. She was 85 and had been suffering from dementia.

Aileen was a fine consumer journalist. A Google search reveals an article she wrote for the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1986 on wine fraud. Her career included being wine correspondent for *The Guardian* and editor for *Which? Wine Monthly* and chief inspector for *The Good Food Guide*. I have very fond memories of working with Aileen. She commissioned me to put together perhaps the first article on what became the Calais booze cruises, comparing the offer in northern France with what was available over here.

Quite rightly Aileen had exacting standards and would soon let you know if you were not meeting these, so she could be fierce. Aileen, however, was very kind and I valued her friendship. There are tributes and memories to Aileen on page 7.

Our Christmas Party held in the grand surroundings of Australia House was a great success. We are very grateful to both The Honourable Alexander Downer AC, the Australian High Commissioner, and to Wine Australia for kindly hosting us this year. It was a wonderfully relaxed event with lots of different wines to taste – both the Australian classics but

also a range of Italian varieties showing the country's now broadening range of wine styles. Our thanks to Laura Jewell MW and her Wine Australia team, as well as to Steven Morris and Andrea Warren, for organising and administering the party from our end.

In October we appointed Robert Smyth as the new deputy editor of *Update* and this issue is the first that Wink and he will have produced. My thanks to the other CWW candidates who applied. I must record a huge thanks to Liz Sagues, who has done such a brilliant job as deputy editor of *Update* bringing design skills of a very high order to our magazine. I am also delighted by the impressive response to the *Circle Update* survey.

We had hoped that the first stage in the updating of the CWW website would be in place by the time you received January's *Update*. The changes will streamline the administration of the Circle and allow us to use Andrea Warren's time more effectively. Unfortunately, Simon Woolf, who is updating the site, has hit a last minute hitch, which he is now working to resolve. My apologies for the delay. We aim to have the changes in place as soon as possible.

I am excited by the change of format around our 2016 AGM. The meeting will be on Friday 6th May at 11.30am at Portobello Gold, courtesy of Circle member Linda Johnson-Bell, whose husband Michael owns the restaurant. Then at 12.30 we will have a Crémant de Loire reception – could



Photo taken at the Christmas Party at Australia House by **Brett Jones**.

include a Montlouis as well – wines donated, courtesy of the retiring chair. At 1pm we will have a three-course meal (menu cost TBC, approximately £40 per head) – The Cyril Ray Lunch – followed by a whisky tasting, kindly organised by Colin Hampden-White.

Members will be very welcome to bring partners and guests to the reception, lunch and whisky tasting. This is the day following the London Wine Fair, which runs from Tuesday 3rd to Thursday 5th May, so we hope that a good number of you will be able to make what should be a very enjoyable occasion, although it might hinder people needing to make Friday evening deadlines. Already I am hopeful that we will have with us a full complement of our president and our two vice-presidents.

Continued on next page

During the event we will hold a bottle raffle to raise money for Room to Read (www.roomtoread.org). We will be very grateful for any donations of wine, spirits or even craft beer to include in the raffle – full details closer to the date.

I am delighted that Jayne Powell (aka Champagne Jayne) won a victory on points against the CIVC, but at considerable cost. The quite unnecessary case has now been settled by consent. Jayne has undertaken not to call herself a 'Champagne ambassador' and, if she mentions a non-Champagne sparkling wine on social media, she has to make it clear that this is not Champagne. Jayne keeps her Champagne Jayne moniker and all of her material on the web. There is no news yet on costs.

This is a miserable result for the CIVC. Jayne's undertakings could surely have been achieved without the best part of a week in the Federal Court in Melbourne and all the related expense. I admire Jayne for having the guts to stand up to the power of the CIVC and the Champagne producers. For fuller details, see my post:

<http://jimsloire.blogspot.fr/2015/10/world-exclusive-champagne-jayne-on.html>

In December another case of bullying by large corporations emerged. Domaine d'elles is a small, newly established domaine of 4.5 hectares. The two women running Domaine d'elles met at the wine school in Amboise and decided on a joint venture. 2014 was their first vintage. Recently they received a legal letter from expensive lawyers acting for *Elle* magazine, owned by the giant media group Hachette Filipacchi, demanding they ceased using their domaine name for the alleged similarity and confusion.

I would have thought that even pricey lawyers should know the difference between a magazine and a bottle of wine! Had the women launched a magazine called 'elles' then Hachette could reasonably object. Not having the time or the financial muscle to fight this nonsense, the women have changed the name of their estate to Domaine Ansodelles and borne the expense of new labels and the like.

As writers I think we should be challenging these unnecessary and bullying tactics by large corporations.

I wish you all a successful and fulfilling 2016.



Wink Lorch provides an analysis of last year's Circle Update survey.

What do you think of *Update*?

We received a gratifying 78 responses from members, 31% of the membership. The response rate from subscribers was less satisfying, just 16%, but we all do know about the pressures on time and how many surveys are sent out.

In addition to inviting responses to specific questions, we also invited comments. Perhaps proving that we all enjoy communicating, we received over 70 comments, some of which were general and some attached to specific questions.

I attended the CWW committee meeting in December to discuss the results and to decide, based on these results, whether there were any immediate changes we needed to make. The most important decision we made was to send out long reports of CWW trips as a separate document – the report on the visit members made to Franciacorta last November has now been sent out as separate report. For the moment, we are not making any changes to the format of *Update*. However, it will be sent out in two versions, the second without pictures for those who want to print it out.

A summary of results

Answers to the first four questions were as follows:

On what device do you open and read the pdf of CWW Update (tick all that apply):

- Desktop computer 54%
- Laptop computer 60%
- Tablet (iPad or other) 16.5%
- Mobile phone 12%

If the format of Update were to be made more mobile phone-friendly, would you be more likely to read it on your phone?

- Yes 34%
- No 66%

Do you think that the number of photographs in recent issues of Update has been:

- Just right 87%
- Too many 2%
- Too few 11%

We will always include reports on CWW-organised trips and tastings. We also publish feature articles by members about other trips and tastings. Do you think the number of these feature articles is:

- Just right 69%
- Too many 21%
- Too few 10%

The final question asked respondents to rate various types of articles and information that appear occasionally or regularly in *Update*, based on the last few issues. The responses were extremely varied, proving that you can never please everyone. Over 50% of responders found every type of article/information either slightly useful/interesting or useful/interesting.

Continued on next page

The comments

These were split between various types, depending where in the survey they were given. Below is a selection, divided by type.

Update format

There were several comments about the format of *Update* – and these varied between those who would prefer a version that was easier to print out and those who wanted it more easily readable on a phone. I find the latter rather mysterious as both iPhone and Android (Samsung-type) smartphones have pdf readers. Personally I find the Update pdf as legible as any articles are on my iPhone – it all depends if you like reading articles on a phone. Long articles are definitely more difficult to read on phones and in my view *Update* looks its best on an iPad or other tablet, onto which it's easy to download and save a pdf for later reading.

Photography

Our photographers received praise and more praise...

“Love the photography as it brings everything alive and helps digest of longer articles.”

“Always of very high standard; eye-catching.”

“We have so many phenomenal photographers such as Mick Rock and Steven Morris that more of their work should be shown when the opportunities arise!”

Trips, tastings and features

The comments received were as varied as the answers to the question asking which types of articles readers appreciated most. The meaning of some of them was hard to interpret.

“I think there are too many trips and tasting reports. Prefer features.”

“Great to have so much content, but the harsh reality is that I don't read any more than a tiny fraction of it. Think news and other brief nuggets of content might be more digestible.”

“I occasionally feel that, while the overall number of reports of trips is fine, the length can be a bit excessive.

I know there's much to report on from a trip that included plenty of visits and bottles, but I do feel nonetheless that articles would often benefit from greater concision.”

“There's a slight danger of 'I went and you didn't' switch-off, perhaps a little less detail needed. But articles about CWW tastings and events are fine, as we need to encourage people to come to them.”

“I do not know as I gave u trying to read the whole a ai as it was too difficult in my phone” [sic]

“As a member resident in the very deep south, I can't really get worked up about the trips. I glance at the reports but make use of the feature articles – even the recycled ones.”

“Looks like I need brief updates – very important. I think I am less keen on the articles as we can all be slightly self-congratulatory.”

“... I'd really appreciate a single, overview article from a trip, giving a snapshot/high level summary of what is going on in the region. Reading other people's tasting notes or lists of wines tasted is tedious in the extreme. Overall I would appreciate (perhaps shorter) articles which I can read in full... I find it hard to say definitively how useful I find the articles, so I have sat on the fence in my answers above. If I read the first couple of paras and am not grabbed, I soon pass on. Others I find I have read until the end, even if I didn't mean to, because they are written in an engaging way.” [Part of a much longer comment]



Suggestions for future content

There were comments suggesting changes, including a complete overhaul of the newsletter, along with other communication systems for CWW. Again these comments were highly varied. The following comments give constructive ideas for future content. If any member wishes to take these ideas forward and submit an article, please do get in touch with me.

“I would appreciate more articles about writing – including communication with editors and means of publishing, including online.”

“Perhaps – especially given the increasingly international composition of the membership – a kind of document completed by members in each country (and assembled in survey form) highlighting the big issues in their respective countries. In other words, what's making the wine news/controversy in South Africa, Australia, UK, etc.”

“I would love to see more detailed information about different terroirs and soils and how it impacts palate diversity.”

Comments from subscribers

There were two comments from subscribers that are particularly worth sharing.

“The publication is going from strength to strength, the team should be congratulated. Sometimes though certain articles are very lengthy, which is perhaps something to be addressed, particularly if you are planning more mobile users.”

“I like it, the mixture and balance of subjective and professional opinions/analyses, which should be one of the pluses of a well-run publication for a designated group.”

Conclusions

There were many other useful comments and I thank everyone who took the time to respond. I would also like to thank Andrea, who helped compile the results. It seems obvious to me that, in particular, the length of articles is a big issue for many people – this is something I address in my editorial on page 2.



Tributes to Aileen Hall: 1930-2015 CWW Honorary Life Member

On 7th December at the CWW Christmas Party, we heard the sad news that long-standing member Aileen Hall had died earlier that day at the residential care home where she had been living for four years. She was 85 and had been suffering from dementia.

Aileen's funeral took place on 29th December at the West London Crematorium, following which friends and family gathered at the home of Paul and Jeanne Strang. Aileen's family has requested if anyone wishes to make a donation in her memory it should be given to the Alzheimer's Society (www.alzheimers.org.uk).

We are grateful to Paul Strang for providing most of the following biographical information.

Aileen was born on 23rd May 1930 in Edinburgh and graduated with an MA from the University of Edinburgh in English, mathematics, French, moral philosophy, and geology. In 1951 she gained a diploma in education and qualified to teach English and maths in secondary schools, which she did in Scotland and the Channel Islands until 1957, when she moved to Canada.

In Canada Aileen taught at high schools in Oshawa, Ontario and later in Toronto – a former student recalls that she was “was much loved for her vibrant teaching style and her wonderful accent”. In the 1962 and 1963 elections she

stood as the New Democrat Party candidate in Ontario. From 1967-69 she was part-time executive director of Planned Parenthood of Toronto – her obituary in *The Guardian* (<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/dec/15/aileen-hall>) notes that: “Advocacy and encouragement of contraception, as well as the sale of contraceptive devices, were illegal in Canada until the repeal of the relevant laws in 1969, after a long struggle.” She also spent a year as assistant to the executive director at the Canadian Institute of International Affairs.

Aileen returned to Britain in 1970 becoming chief inspector for *The Good Food Guide*, published at the time by the Consumers' Association (CA), when Christopher Driver was its editor. As well as inspecting restaurants, Aileen co-edited, under the pseudonym of Hilary Fawcett, with Jeanne Strang, *The Good Food Guide Dinner Party Book*, which was published in 1971. This was followed by *The Good Cook's Guide* in 1974 (also with Jeanne Strang) and *The Good Food Guide Second Dinner Party* (1979) which she alone wrote. As part of her inspector's role, Aileen also wrote newspaper articles concerning restaurants appearing in *The Good Food Guide*. She joined the Guild of Food Writers.

She then changed to writing about wine, and edited

the *Which? Wine Monthly* for a number of years, as well as becoming wine correspondent for *The Guardian*. Aileen was a winner of the Glenfiddich Wine Writers Award in 1987 and retired from wine writing in the early 1990s.

Peter Hallgarten salutes Aileen's career

Aileen was a very strong voice in the important expansion phase of *The Good Food Guide*. The team produced succinct factual reports, which were all part of the amazing upsurge of interest in the restaurant world from the 1960s. As chief inspector for the *Guide*, her no-nonsense reports assisted both consumers and restaurant owners, the latter mostly grateful for her insights into their successes and indications for improvement potential.

As both writer and editor, she was very strict but always positive, as I recall, in a kindly way, ensuring that the final product was as perfect as possible. Her time as wine correspondent for *The Guardian* was marked with plaudits from importers and consumers who appreciated her fair, unbiased reportage. The annual *Which? Wine Guide* epitomised her devotion to accuracy. Her Glenfiddich wine writing award in 1987 was a well-deserved recognition for her excellent work.

Aileen's passing marks the end of an era of wine writers, who were the earliest to create the positive atmosphere for bringing growers and wine merchants into the public domain.

RIP Aileen, the wine trade salutes you with thanks for all the creative writing which helped make wine drinking more than just a liquid pleasure.

Paul Strang shares some personal memories and a flavour of Aileen's work

As chief inspector of *The Good Food Guide* Aileen asked my wife Jeanne in the early 1970s to help edit two of *Which?'s* cookbooks. This involved testing recipes, in her kitchen and ours, which had been provided by restaurants in the *Guide*. A three-cornered friendship quickly developed, which included visits by Aileen to our house in South West France. Her help was especially valuable to me on a whistle-stop tour of the

vineyards of Fronton: I was at the time preparing my chapter on that area for my first wine book on the South West. Her judgements and comments on the many growers we visited were always accurate and to the point. Memorable too was an invitation from Jean Jouffreau to visit Clos de Gamot in Cahors, where we were all privileged to taste generously from his *musée* of old vintages going back to the 1920s. We also enjoyed a bibulous weekend culminating in Aileen's *intronisation* as a Dame of the Jurade of Saint Emilion.

When Aileen was still at *The Good Food Guide* she asked Jeanne to go with her to Paris because she was preparing an article for *The Guardian* comparing the two Grand Vefours restaurants in Paris and London. The following is a quote from her published report which gives the flavour of her pungent literary style:

"...yet even in the Paris Grand Vefour there were two, or rather three, odd lapses of taste. The ashtrays on the tables are bloated white hands, slightly cupped, infinitely disgusting... and this the inspector took for a temporary aberration until a fellow diner's sweet, oranges Maspronne arrived. This is two halves of an orange, placed cut-side down and side-by-side on a plate like two technicolour breasts, with nipples of crystallized violets, coated with and becalmed in a lurid pink syrup... It tasted as vulgar as it looked..."

In London her flat was but five minutes' walk from our house, so we were frequently regaled with tales of her visits to restaurants, and of her regular complaints that as a sole woman diner, she was usually given a diminutive table either next to the kitchen door or the lavatories. I was always surprised, in view of the fuss she created so often, that she was able to sustain her anonymity. As a writer she was immensely professional and serious, but as a companion she was bubbly and laughing.

We have a fond memory when around 1972 we tasted with her a Bâtard Montrachet '47 and she commented on its "big fat buttery nose." Our niece Caroline, aged 14 or so, roared with laughter – and still does.

Memories of her last sad days will not overshadow the many happy times we shared, going back over more than 40 years.

Rosemary George MW remembers some helpful recommendations

I have Aileen to thank for my very first glass of New Zealand wine. It was sometime in 1983 or 1984. We had arranged to meet for a drink at the Cork & Bottle. Aileen was early; she always was, and I was late. She greeted me with the words: "Don [Hewitson, owner of said wine bar] has got this great new wine which he says we must try." We did – and it was so good, we had a second bottle. The wine was Montana Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc. And I never thought that some 20 years later I would write a book on New Zealand wine!

Aileen could be a difficult friend – she never hesitated to let you know if something was not up to scratch. But she was also very generous, supportive and loyal. Food inevitably featured a lot in our friendship. She carried on inspecting for *The Good Food Guide* long after she had given up being their chief inspector and was generous with her invitations to lunch, but you were expected to work for your lunch. She wanted a thorough assessment of the wine list, and we were not allowed to choose the same things from the menu, nor anything that did not make any demands on the kitchen. Salad was simply not an option!

When Christopher and I were planning our honeymoon, and driving to the Isle of Skye, Aileen suggested a gastronomic tour through the north of England, and the Lowlands of Scotland, taking in the Miller Howe and a remote restaurant at the end of a long drive down a single track road, somewhere north of Glasgow. Dinner at the end of that track was well worth the journey and we would never have found it without Aileen.

Stuart Walton recalls Aileen's kindness and her mercilessness

Despite the great advances achieved in workers' rights, the glad suffering of fools is evidently still a principle of many people's job descriptions. It's safe to say that Aileen would have treated any such contract with the contempt it deserved, even had anyone been brave enough to put one in front of her. In a wine world much given over to the

consecration of pretension and the bland mendacities of PR, she was entirely intractable, outspoken to the verge of inflammatory, and often immensely funny. If her writing retained a sense of good-natured propriety and unflashy authority, in person she was a living incarnation of the principle that, having attained a certain age, women have an inalienable right to say what the hell they want, and let anybody dare try to stop them.

I don't mean to make Aileen sound ferocious, although she could be that if she thought you weren't listening to reason. She was also extravagantly kind to those just embarking on their careers. As chief inspector for *The Good Food Guide* for many years, she was always encouraging and inspiring to youngsters in the office, fun to be around, and a fierce defender of the ethical protocols of the *Guide*. When I was trying to gain an entry to wine journalism, she was the only established writer, apart from Paul Levy, who ever replied to me, her courteous little postcards in blotchy felt-tip promising to give me some work on *Which? Wine Monthly* – a promise she honoured in due course.

When it came to dealing with self-constituted authority, however, she was merciless. Back in the day when a woman dining alone in a restaurant was thought to have been tragically abandoned, she was once upbraided for ordering a bottle of wine, by a waiter who presumed to ask her whether she was aware quite how much wine there was in a whole bottle. There was only ever going to be one winner in that standoff. I recall her bemusement at one of the supermarket tastings in the 1990s when she requested a very junior girl to open a replacement bottle of something that was corked. As the assistant replied that she would ask the group's public relations director to taste it for her, Aileen let her know with bracing bluntness that she hadn't been asking for confirmation, and in a voice that would have carried across a fogbound English Channel, said to me: "They think we're a bunch of wankers, don't they?"

It was an honour to be present at the official retirement do that the CA threw for her. In the august Marylebone Road precincts of an organisation in the grip of a political correctness regime of surpassing penetration, she gave a

farewell speech of rollicking impropriety, including among its many sallies her regret that sexual harassment in the workplace was passing into history, the feel-good factor, as she put it, regrettably putting an end to the 'good feel factor'. The gasps of horror from the CA 'politburo' were a treasure. She told us that some business cards she had just had made up to see her through her remaining freelance career had come back from the printers with the designation, 'Aileen Hall – Wine Waiter'. Another piece of idiocy that would require her attention.

The Glenfiddich award in 1987 recognised her contribution to wine journalism in a generation that still made it anything but easy for a woman to get ahead in what remained a very paternalistic field. Meanwhile, her inspection reports for *The Good Food Guide* were always among the most entertaining, perfectly lucid, forensic and fair in her judgment of what was served, but also riotously funny. I can only presume she never found out that the *Guide* has now been acquired by Waitrose, but I somehow don't find it hard to guess what she would have thought of the matter.

That Aileen should fall prey to dementia was particularly heart-breaking in somebody whose faculties had always been of such coruscating sharpness, and the last few times I ran into her at tastings and receptions were something of a torment, but she remains a very vivid presence nonetheless in memory.

A final thought from Tim Atkin MW

In April 1989, I was offered the job as wine correspondent of *The Guardian*, replacing the incumbent, Aileen Hall. To her credit, Aileen invited me to lunch at Bibendum to congratulate me, rather than buying a small voodoo doll and sticking pins in it, as some people would have done. She turned up with a box of chocolates and ordered a great bottle of wine. Remember, that this was someone whose job I'd just been offered and accepted. "I'm the editor of *Which?*" she told me, "so I don't need two jobs. And I'm glad it's you." Aileen's kindness and selflessness have always struck me as remarkable, especially the older I get. There's a lesson there for all of us.

Membership changes and news



We are very pleased to welcome Yolanda, a new member to the Circle



Yolanda Ortiz de Arri

Yolanda is a freelance journalist who writes for the websites Spanish Wine Lover (English/Spanish) and 7 Caníbales (Spanish). Before freelancing, she worked in print, TV and online media. She is fluent in both Spanish and English after living in the UK for 13 years, where she worked at *The Financial Times*, among other media outlets. She now lives in the Basque Country and travels frequently to the Sherry Triangle.

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Resignation

Adam Lechmere
Brian St Pierre – wishes his membership to lapse

The Circle currently has 257 members.

News about members

André Simon Food and Drink Book Awards 2015

We would like to congratulate three members, who feature among the four titles shortlisted in the drinks category for the André Simon awards 2015: **Suzanne Mustacich** for *Thirsty Dragon*; **Richard Mayson** for *Madeira*; and **Oz Clarke** for *The History of Wine in 100 Bottles*. The winner will be announced at a ceremony at the Goring Hotel in London on 28th January.

New magazines and books

Chandra Kurt: At the end of last year Chandra published the 18th edition of her yearly wine book *Weinseller* (in German and French) and launched a new wine magazine called *Weinseller Journal*. This magazine is published in



German with a print run of 10,000 copies per issue and will appear four times a year. “*Weinseller* speaks directly to wine consumers, who are looking for a good glass of wine for every day – without needing to be a wine expert,” says Chandra. Wink writes: Printed on matt paper, the first edition that

I’m holding in my hands, looks like a highly professional production with excellent photographs. It runs to over 100 pages and includes a mixture of wine recommendations and features, as well as education. Chandra explains that the concept of the magazine is for buyers to collect and keep each issue.

For more information, go to:

www.chandrakurt.com/weinseller/weinseller-journal

For news on forthcoming books by Caroline Henry, Keith Grainger, Liz Palmer and Jancis Robinson MW, see our books section on page 40. You will also find news there on two recent books by Tom Stevenson.

Other news

Richard Bampfield MW: Richard is a member of one of the committees organising the International Cool Climate Wine Symposium in Brighton from 26th-28th May this year and urges CWW members to consider attending. “Given the calibre of the speakers and the depth and breadth of the programme, there will be enough material to fuel articles for the rest of the year,” he maintains. “Key themes being addressed include climate change, new vineyard and cellar technologies, lower alcohol in wine, vine balance, the marketing of cool climate wines and, of course, the prospects for English wine.”

Members should contact Andrea for a promotional code giving a discount for CWW members on 1-day or 3-day tickets.

For the full programme and to make the most of the discount visit www.iccws2016.com.

Stephen Skelton MW: Stephen has been involved with the recently-announced Domaine Evremond since the beginning, over two years ago. No surprises there! “It started with a telephone call from Patrick McGrath, MD of Taittinger’s UK agents, Hatch Mansfield,” he recalls. They asked him if he was interested in discussing an English Sparkling wine project. “From that call I have been helping prepare budgets, searching for sites and generally providing specialist knowledge about the peculiarities of growing grapes in the UK, something the French still find hard to comprehend. It took us a while to find the right site, but find it we did. Free draining chalk, great fruit-growing land, and conveniently near to the Eurostar station. All we need now is to wait.” See also Wink’s interview with Stephen on page 17.



Amanda Barnes: Amanda is taking to Kickstarter to launch *Around the World in 80 Harvests*, an innovative new project that incorporates several cutting-edge media platforms, with a good old-fashioned book as the end goal. “During 2016 and 2017, I plan to visit 80 of the world’s wine destinations, from the great classics through to real oddballs to document the harvest, people and place.” However, backers will not merely be funding Amanda’s travel plans: “This will be an interactive journey that everyone can experience and enjoy – with live video streams from the vineyards, web interviews with producers and active social media,” explains Amanda. She adds that local photographers will document each harvest and compile videos, while she puts together an in-depth database for each region and writes wine and travel guides to form part of the website, digital magazine and, eventually, book. The Kickstarter campaign is planned from late January through to late February. In the meantime, take a look at www.aroundtheworldin80harvests.com.

Charles ‘Chuck’ Byers: Not news, but a message that your committee feel it’s important to share from Chuck, who wrote to Andrea before Christmas: “If those that I met when in Virginia last year are indicative of the quality and professionalism that are in our membership, and I so believe this is true, then our group is indeed the very best worldwide. I would like to congratulate the organisers of all the events for their initiative and imagination – such fine choices. It is sad that I cannot take part in more of your outings!”

Featured photographer: Jon Wyand



Right: Eduardo Chadwick of Viña Errazuriz and Seña, Chile.



Jon writes: Since 2012, when my photographs last appeared in *Update*, wine photography has become more competitive. But, it's not just writers picking up cameras... I have enjoyed picking up my pen.

In spring 2013 I began work shooting the Hill of Corton and the three villages of Pernand-Vergelesses, Aloxe-Corton and Ladoix-Serrigny. It involved a monthly week-long visit for 15 months and working with a French publisher for the first time. *Une Année en Corton* was a photo book and I left the text to someone else. However, Neil Beckett at *World of Fine Wine* very kindly offered me the chance to chronicle these visits in a four-part series and that has been followed by the ongoing Burgundy Portrait series.

On the photography side I've been fortunate to get back to Chile and Argentina, at someone else's expense, for the first time since 1989.

It's been a good three years on the recognition front: a Roederer in 2013, Errazuriz Wine Photographer in 2014 (under the auspices of the Pink Lady Food Photography Awards) and, in France the OIV (Organisation Internationale de la Vigne et du Vin) awarded *Une Année en Corton* a Special Mention in its 2015 awards. Not bad for a book that's 85% photography.

Jon's blog is at www.jonatcorton.com.



Above: Ladoix-Serrigny in December.

Left: Burgundians Lalou Bize-Leroy; Noël and Jean-Claude Ramonet.

Right: The Aÿ press house at Champagne Louis Roederer; Burgundian, Dominique Laurent.



Wink Lorch reports on the Circle's 2015 Christmas Party.

Photos by Brett Jones (BJ) and Jim Budd (JB), with more on the next page.

Australia does us proud

The venue for the 2015 CWW Christmas party, Australia House, is distinctive from the outside – a triangular Grade II listed building, on the corner of Aldwych and the Strand, which was built mainly before the First World War, but only opened in 1918. Once you are inside and past the necessary security, you enter into a grand, high-ceilinged hall with a feeling of spaciousness that seems totally fitting as the official London home of this vast country. The welcome from the Wine Australia team was similarly generous, open and completely appropriate. There was absolutely none of the upright stuffiness one might feel on a visit to certain other country's ambassadorial buildings.

A number of Circle members arrived early to seize the opportunity to make the most of the pre-party tasting and

the wines on show, which were spread across five themed tables and were available through the party. Table 5 was particularly interesting to many of us with a line-up of reds made from Italian grape varieties. That Sangiovese and Nebbiolo are grown in Australia may not have surprised many people, but to find a delicious Montepulciano and a couple of rich offerings from Nero d'Avola proved that unusual excitements do emerge from this country so often associated with a narrow range of varieties.

A tasty Sir James Hardy sparkling was offered to all guests on arrival and there was a steady supply of very nourishing and inventive canapés supplied by Stock and Bailey. Wine Sorted organised the tasting logistics.

The official speeches were short and entertaining and began with a welcome by Laura Jewell MW, regional director for Wine Australia.

CWW president Rosemary George MW then gave a brief speech thanking both the Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, His Excellency The Honourable Alexander Downer AC, and Wine Australia for their welcome. She reminisced on the early days of Australian wines in the UK and how a confusing tawny port had appeared in the Master of Wine (MW) examination of 1979. She also mentioned how

High Commissioner Alexander Downer watched by Laura Jewell MW and Rosemary George MW. (Photo BJ).



Rosemary George MW and Alexander Downer on stage. (Photos JB)



the trip to Australia of 40 MWs in 1985 was an eye-opener to all but one MW, the late John Avery MW, a pioneering importer of Australian wines.

Rosemary continued her speech talking about the diversity of Australia today, 30 years on from that trip, with wines now available from more than 60 regions. She noted also the country's amazing old vines, saying, "the oldest Mourvèdre is to be found, not in France, but in the Barossa Valley where it was planted in 1853."

Her speech concluded by sharing with us the High Commissioner's choice of charity for the event, to which funds from ticket sales from the party will go – the children's charity Barnardo's.

The High Commissioner, Alexander Downer, then welcomed us, sharing his own experiences and thoughts of the Australian wine industry. From 1984 to his retirement from Australian politics he was the Liberal Member of Parliament for Mayo in South Australia, a constituency that included the Adelaide Hills and Langhorne Creek among other wine areas. He even owned a vineyard himself.

Mr Downer mentioned the expansion in the number of small wineries and said, "we always need to embrace change and be creative." He continued, "the Australian wine industry is one of the industries we can be the proudest of in our country" and noted, "our wines are creative and innovative".

My personal thanks to our hosts' generosity and to CWW member Steven Morris who organised the party, together with Andrea Warren.





Michael Edwards (L) reminds Hamish Marett-Crosby of his name... (Photo BJ)

A CWW Christmas party vignette from **Hamish Marett-Crosby**.

Hello, again, I think

becoming totally impossible, and rude, to ask the name of he or she you have spent ages pretending to know.

Thus it was with a sense of relief I arrived at Australia House on 7th December and immediately had a name tag stuck on to my jacket. Gazing myopically around, I was intrigued to see that everyone seemed to have a name of the same length but, peering closely, I found we had all been given the same name (the room was full of people apparently called Wine Australia), so the feeling of having been saved possible embarrassment was short lived. I had to revert, therefore, to keeping an eye out for those I did know and resort to using their memories to check names, thus hoping to avoid the twin hazards, either of forgetting an old friend, or claiming close companionship with a complete stranger.

There are those who, during a conversation, won't look you in the eye but, instead, look over your shoulder in case someone more important should be coming into view and around whom they can be seen to orbit and so gain what they imagine is reflected glory. Thus it was at one of the

Circle's embassy Christmas parties where I was intrigued by the antics of a young man trying the wines on offer. In a loud voice he mused at the impressions he was getting from the contents of his glass and was doing this through the clichéd approach of asking himself questions. Thus our little group's exchange of news and gossip was interrupted by such sounds as: "Am I getting berries here? Yes, but are they garden berries or woodland berries? Is that a vegetal background or is it more rustic? Do I perhaps detect a hint of cedar wood and pencil shavings on the nose?" And on, and on, he went. Intrigued by this display we stopped talking and looked at each other in disbelief only to realise that one of us was an uber-famous media wine figure and this display was being played out purely for his benefit.

But this is the time for New Year resolutions and mine is to launch a campaign for no one to socialise without a name tag – also showing position held – prominently displayed. If successful, I can then relax knowing that the annual CWW social endurance test can be faced with total (perhaps misplaced) confidence.

Pop goes the cork and I start celebrating. The reason? I've survived the annual CWW Christmas party without, as far as I am aware, committing any major social solecism or upsetting anyone. Believe me, this has not always been the case.

Office parties are difficult enough to cope with, but at least you have the advantage of knowing the names of most people there, unless of course partners are included. In that event you can go badly wrong discussing, with someone you think is a co-employee, the ins and outs of office politics and shifting social patterns (aka who is doing what and to whom) with one of those affected and thus unwittingly stir the pot even further.

In common with many, I find names and faces memorable, but impossible to put together. And, as a result, I find myself carrying on a conversation for too long thus

More party-goers (photos BJ)

On left: Our treasurer, Tom Lewis takes notes; A regular guest, wine consultant Allan Cheesman, and Laura Jewell MW of Wine Australia. On right: 'This blogger' (chariman, Jim Budd) has obviously amused Stephen Skelton MW; All smiles for Steven Morris, English Wine Producers' supremo, Julia Trustram Eve and Anne Kriebehl MW.





Rosemary George MW reports on the CWW tasting at London's Naval Club, where Brett Jackson (left) of Bodegas Valdivieso presented the wines of Vigno, Vignadores de Carignan. Pictures by Wink Lorch.

Carignan comes back to life in Chile

First a brief introduction to New Zealander Brett Jackson: He trained in New Zealand and then started work as a flying winemaker, which took him to Chile on a two-year contract with the Lurton brothers, and 21 years on he is still there, working as chief winemaker for Valdivieso.

Old Carignan vines are proving to be increasingly important and rewarding in the Languedoc, as well as in Roussillon, so it was fascinating to find that something similar is happening in Chile. You would not immediately associate Chile with Carignan but as Brett explained, the variety was introduced into Chile in the 1930s. Early in that decade there was a massive earthquake in the Maule area, which devastated the local economy that depended largely on viticulture. At the time País was the most widely planted variety, but Carignan was suggested as an alternative to compensate for some of the defects of País, providing good acidity, colour and longevity. By the 1960s there were quite extensive plantings of Carignan, which sadly largely disappeared during the 1980s, and in the following decade of the 1990s the export boom concentrated above all on Bordeaux varieties.

The owners of the Gillmore Winery took the initiative to develop Carignan in a more serious way in the early 1990s, De Martino and Valdivieso followed soon after. Brett

explained how Valdivieso was the first to sell Carignan as a varietal wine in the mid-1990s, and has been working with it ever since. Initially Carignan was not recognised as an officially 'noble' grape variety so that it could not be labelled and exported as such. Recognition arrived in 2002. Then in 2010 the early pioneers instigated Vigno to create a real appellation wine.

Brett talked about geography. The vines are grown in Secano Interior, the dry interior close to the Coastal Ranges, a mountain range, which is more ancient, thus lower than the Andes. The region still has a lot of small growers with tiny plots of vines. And the initiative has been winemaker driven rather than company led, with a diverse group of producers ranging from some of the largest like Concha y Toro to some of the smallest like Garcia + Schwaderer.

The group concentrates on old vines, which are defined as being over 30 years old, but are often 50 to 60 years old. Most Carignan is planted on its own roots, or it may be grafted onto old País vines. Although people are also now beginning to wake up to the quality of País, the price of País grapes is much lower than for Carignan; compare 15-20 cents per kilo as opposed to a \$1 per kilo for Carignan. Altogether there are about 900 hectares of Carignan in Chile, but for the moment there are very few new plantings.

So Vigno is seen as a real DOC, produced only by its 15 members in the Maule valley. The vines are all dry-farmed bush vines with a yield of 3 - 5 tonnes per hectare and the wines are always aged for a couple of years in either barrel or tank, or both. Of the group six wineries have their own vineyards, while the others buy grapes from the local farmers. All the wines must be labelled Vigno, as an attempt to create an appellation with a standard of grape variety, origin and age of vines. Brett observed that Chile can tend towards a blanket approach, and that individuality is a challenge.



We had 14 wines to taste, grouped by area, from Melozal which is warmer, Cauquenes to the south, Loncomilla and then a pair from a couple of cooler areas closer to the coast, Sauzal and Empedrado. It would be tedious to describe each wine in detail. I wondered how easy it would be to tell the difference between a southern French and a Chilean Carignan, and the wines I particularly liked were those which tended towards less use of oak. The best had ripe perfumed fruit, with nicely integrated tannins and good structure. In the line-up there were familiar names like Undurraga, Morandé, Miguel Torres and de Martino, as well as smaller, and to me quite unknown wineries, such as Odfjell, Gillmore and Viña Roja, which is Pablo Morandé's new estate.

The tasting added another fascinating dimension to the growing diversity of Chile.



A small group of CWW members joined local resident **Colin Hampden-White** in Wapping, East London to taste biodynamic wines at Victualler wine bar. Colin reports and took the photographs.

Victory for Victualler

Right: Daniil Vaschchilov in his shop/bar. Below: the line-up of wines.

For over ten years at least, there has been a wine establishment in the same Wapping location, including Threshers and Wine Rack. None has lasted for more than a year. They were selling regular wines, nothing unusual in that, but they were selling nothing interesting either. They were trying to be safe. To have something for everyone. It seems the residents of Wapping weren't interested in safe. Considering Wapping has a very good Waitrose, there are plenty of safe, and also interesting, choices close to hand.

A little over three years ago now, a new type of wine bar opened at 69 Garnet Street, Wapping. It is still there and thriving. So what have they managed to achieve where so many others have failed? On the face of it the offering from Victualler would seem to be a tough sell, but they have worked hard and taken their customers on a journey.

When they first opened, there was a mixture of wines. However, there were more natural and biodynamic wines than at most other wine bars. What really set them apart from the former shops and bars was the ownership. Victualler is owned by Daniil Vashchilov, and he is passionate about two things: the wine he stocks and serves, and his customers.

Anyone visiting his bar unsure of what they would like is taken on a trip through the wines until they find something they like. Through this trip Daniil explains each wine, why they taste the way they do, where they come from,

who makes them and the ethos behind each winemaker. Daniil has educated his customers and now has almost a completely natural and biodynamic wine list.

Along with his wines he serves fabulous charcuterie. Daniil doesn't simply have one supplier for this. He sources everything individually. Cheeses from many different countries, smoked meats from all over the UK. He has the same attitude to his food selection as he does his wines: they must be of the best quality.



Wines Tasted

1. Domaine de Clovallon Les Aires, Viognier IGP d'Oc (Languedoc), France 2014
2. Celler Escoda-Sanahuja Els Bassots, Chenin Blanc Conca de Barbera (Catalunya), Spain 2013
3. Radikon Jacot, Tocai Friuliano Friuli, Italy 2008 (11 bottle)
4. Maison en Belle Lies L'Etrange, St-Aubin Burgundy, France 2013
5. Gut Oggau, Neusiedlersee Atanasius Burgenland, Austria 2013
6. Julien Courtois, 100% Gamay, Soings-en-Sologne Vin de Table (Loire), France 2008



Continued on next page

I have been visiting Victualler since it first opened and have witnessed the way Daniil has successfully kept customers and encouraged new ones. I have experienced his list expanding and have introduced wines to him. At our last Cyril Ray Dinner, we enjoyed wines supplied by the Burgundy Portfolio, owned by Andrew Corben-Clarke. He kindly gave us some Syrah from La Maison Romane made by Oronce de Beler, wine which has had the approval of Daniil for some time. Daniil also stocks Burgundy Portfolio wines from Maison en Belle Lies and from Nathalie Fèvre. The wines in Victualler are all available to buy and take home, as well as behind the bar.

With Andrea Warren's help I organised the CWW tasting at Victualler to experience why this bar is going from strength to strength.

There were only six of us: myself, Wink Lorch and Brett Jones, who had just flown in from Bulgaria, Liz Sagues and a few guests. Daniil was undeterred and presented the wines with the passion of a man on his favourite subject talking to an auditorium.

Our first impressions were very good, and as we tasted our way through six wines, there wasn't one we all didn't

like. We all agreed the highlight was the Austrian Zweigelt/ Blaufränkisch blend, Gut Oggau, 2013 Neusiedlersee Atanasius from Burgenland. As Wink put it "thank God, no oak". It seemed she and Brett had tasted quite a bit of oak in Bulgaria and these wines were fresh, fruity and mostly without oak, and those wines that did have oak were beautifully balanced.

During our tasting and discussions, Daniil referenced several other wines, either because of style, location, or other wines by the same makers. As we finished our last wine, he disappeared and returned with half a dozen other wines. It was clear the tasting wasn't over yet.

So for a tasting that was billed as 4pm to 6pm., we found ourselves trotting merrily out of the door sometime after 8pm, having experienced not only some new wines, but also Daniil's infectious enthusiasm and hospitality. It's easy to understand why his bar is popular and thriving where others have failed.

Victualler is open every day from 2pm – 11pm.

Below: Brett Jones at work recording the label as Liz Sagues looks on; Daniil presents the charcuterie.



*A separate report has been produced reporting on last November's CWW trip to Franciacorta. Here, **Michelle Cherutti-Kowal MW**, who was on the visit, gives an evocative introduction to the history of the region and the evolution of sparkling wine production there.*

Franciacorta

In 1570, a medical doctor from Brescia, named Gerolamo Conforti, published a book called Libellus de Vino Mordaci (Book on lively wines) in which 'mordaci' referred to regional wines that were lively or spritzy and foaming. He not only gave tasting notes on the wines he sampled, but he commented on how widely the wines were distributed and listed the health advantages of drinking them. This is one of the earliest records about sparkling wines from the region of Franciacorta.

The modern history of Franciacorta dates back to 1961, when a young winemaker named Franco Zilliani, while working for the Berlucchi winery, made a sparkling wine using bottle fermentation. In recognition of this wine's success, the region obtained DOP status in 1967, specifying that their sparkling wines must be made by the metodo classico (traditional method). The region was elevated to DOCG in 1995.

If you have not received your report, please contact Andrea Warren for a copy.



*Photo by
**Jenny
Mackenzie.***



Meet the Member: Firstly, Stephen Skelton MW, a pioneer in not only English wines but also self-publishing, and secondly, Suzanne Mustacich, the author of the recently-published *Thirsty Dragon*. **Wink Lorch** conducted these interviews by email. Photographs supplied by the interviewees.

Stephen Skelton MW: ‘I have found the perfect site to grow grapes ... and just need £5m to get started.’

For over 40 years Stephen’s career has revolved around growing grapes and making wine in the UK. In 1977 he established Tenterden Vineyard in Kent, a pioneering English wine venture, which today is the base for Chapel Down Wines.

While remaining a winemaker and consultant on winegrowing in England and Wales, Stephen also turned to lecturing and writing about English wines and viticulture in general. He became a Master of Wine in 2003 and has taught viticulture to WSET Diploma students for many years.

Stephen self-published his first book in 1989 – quite the pioneer. He has since written four more books, including the wine student handbook, *Viticulture – A guide to commercial grape growing for wine production*, the industry handbook, *The UK Vineyards Guide* (in two editions, with a third on the way) and most recently, *Wine Growing in Great Britain*, a complete guide to growing grapes for wine production in cool climates. A member of CWW since the mid-1980s, he was secretary from 1990 to 1997.

In December 2015 it was announced that Champagne Taittinger was establishing a vineyard to make sparkling wines in the UK, together with partners Hatch Mansfield and others. Stephen was involved as a consultant from the start of prospectations two years ago, keeping the project a tight secret for two years, (see members’ news on p. 10). On his

website he describes this as, ‘undoubtedly the most exciting project I have worked on’.

What is important to you about membership of CWW?

It’s always good to meet people engaged in the same profession in order to swap ideas and experiences. I started to lecture for the WSET on viticulture in 1982 and began to write a little but then, when I sold my vineyard (today the home of Chapel Down) in 1986, I thought that wine writing might provide some additional income and joined the Circle.

‘Only mad dogs and Englishmen...’ In retrospect, which one of these terms do you think describes your persona best, when thinking about that decision nearly 40 years ago to plant a vineyard in southern England?

Like a lot of things in life, one often looks back with incredulity at the path one took and can never quite remember how it happened. In 1973, aged 25, my (then) wife and I saw a house for sale in Kent that had a vineyard attached. Although we didn’t buy the house, a seed must have been sown because by September 1974 I was writing letters to German wine producers asking them if they would give me a job for 12 months so that I could learn how to become a winegrower. It helped that I had the support of my father-in-law, a generous man without whom we would

not have got started. He said that if I did the work, he would find the land. At the time, I don’t remember thinking it was a particularly mad idea, unusual maybe, perhaps risky, but I had the confidence of youth and the arrogance to think I could do things better than most other English and Welsh wine producers were doing at the time.

Do you ever have doubts about the future of English wine?

One thing I have learned in life is that you can never predict the future or at least, you can never rely upon the expectations you have of the future. We know a few things about the future of English and Welsh wine. The planted area has more than doubled in ten years and when all these recent vineyards are fully cropping and their stocks of sparkling wine mature, there will be more, much more, of it about. Where it will sell is anyone’s guess, but my hope is that the wine buying public will take to it in greater numbers and drink it not only instead of other sparkling wines, but also increase their consumption of sparkling wines in general.

The weather is probably the most unpredictable element in UK wine production and in truth the most worrying. The biggest worry is yields. Without the right weather at the right time, grape yields suffer and low yields do not make for a sustainable sparkling wine business. The history of UK vineyards is littered with failures, many because their yields

– and therefore their income – were far too low to keep the business afloat.

You are obviously a great believer in education with a string of qualifications to your name, not least the Master of Wine, and as an educator yourself. Is wine education essential to be a good wine writer and why?

The best wine writers are the ones who have a good grasp of the whole business of wine. Not just the viticultural side, but also in the winery and the office. It's too easy to be bamboozled by slick PR people and glossy handouts if you don't know the nuts and bolts of how vines grow, grapes are turned into wine and the economics of the business. You only become an MW if you know something about every aspect of wine production, which is why it's a unique qualification. As an MW you may not be the world's expert in any particular aspect, but you know enough to ask the right questions.

You were one of the earliest wine writers to self-publish a wine book, was it worth it?

My first book was in 1989, which I self-published, and I had 5,000 copies printed, almost all of which sold. I certainly recouped the cost of production, but probably didn't earn much of an hourly wage. My next book was published by Faber & Faber in 2001 and despite winning the André Simon

Wine Book of the Year award, I can safely say that it never made me any money. After that I decided to go back to self-publishing. I discovered the publish-on-demand (POD) website Lulu (www.lulu.com) and Lulu and I have together published and sold quite a few thousand books. Since my first Lulu book in 2007, I have discovered Amazon's POD company, CreateSpace, plus Google AdWords, and together they have made a huge difference to my sales and income. With both Lulu and CreateSpace, the net returns, after taking all my sales costs (including AdWords) into account, are around 50% of the cover price. I currently have three books selling and sales of around 120 per month across all titles. The quantity may not sound very much, but it works for me and provides a decent return for the effort involved.

I see that you've recently completed an MA in creative writing. Can we expect a novel from you soon? Or did you see this as a way to improve your wine writing?

My MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia was in Biography and it is my intention at some stage to write one. It will probably not be a cradle-to-grave biography of an individual person (so yesterday) but an object biography about a thing. If you don't think an 'object biography' sounds very interesting, read *Mauve* by Simon Garfield. It's all about --- the colour mauve.

What's the stupidest question anyone has asked you about English wine?

Apart from "how many times a year do you pick the grapes?" I guess the questions that annoy me the most are "why is English wine so expensive?", "why is English wine taxed so much?" and (latterly) "why don't we have a name for English Sparkling Wine like Champagne, or Prosecco or Cava?"

What other very cool climate countries on the fringes of the viticultural limits have the most potential for the future?

I spend almost all my working time in the UK and seldom visit other marginal regions. However, knowing how many vines are being planted in places such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Baltic Germany and Poland, it won't be long before their wines start finding a larger market. I am a consultant to a new vineyard, which will be planted in Norway this year, but I don't expect Norway to expand its vineyards very quickly. It will be an interesting journey though.

When you're drinking wine at home and it's not from England/Wales, what wines do you enjoy drinking the most?

Almost anything (good) from anywhere. Germany, Alsace, Portugal, Spain, New Zealand for whites. Rhône, Bordeaux, Italy for reds. And almost anything sweet.

What question would you like to answer that I haven't asked you? And can we have the answer too, please!

Would you like to be 25 again? Yes, very much so, as I think there is a great future in growing grapes in the UK and I want to be part of it. I have found the perfect site to grow grapes for making superb still and sparkling wines and just need £5m to get started. Can I please have your cheque book?



*Far left: Stephen on a visit to the Napa Valley in 1986.
Left: In Bourne Farm Vineyard in Kent in 2015.*

Meet the CWW Member 2:

Suzanne Mustacich: ‘I’m writing for people who are passionate about wine, and I think of my stories as an ongoing conversation with them.’



Originally from the US, Suzanne lives with her family in Bordeaux and is currently a contributing editor for Wine Spectator. She joined CWW in 2013.

Suzanne has worked as a TV producer and screenwriter, including presenting a Web TV series on wine. She has written widely on wine trade issues and used to be a regular correspondent for Agence France-Presse (AFP), reporting on the wine trade in Bordeaux.

Her latest book, *Thirsty Dragon: China’s Lust for Bordeaux and the Threat to the World’s Best Wines*, was published in November (see p. 42).

You have been a member of CWW for a couple of years, what is the appeal of membership? Are you a member of other professional writing organisations?

I like to belong to a creative community. I always have. In Los Angeles, for years, I belonged to a writers’ group. My social and professional life was anchored in a creative environment. When I moved to Bordeaux, I felt the loss sharply.

I knew of CWW for many years before I joined. I felt it offered interesting tastings and interesting people. Unfortunately, my schedule hasn’t allowed me to participate very often, but I hope that will change this year.

I also belong to the press club in Bordeaux, but it’s

focused – obviously – on French issues, and has little to do with wine.

How long have you lived in Bordeaux and what are the best and worst things about living there?

I’ve lived in Bordeaux for 15 years. The quality of life is good. Bordeaux is a real city, small but cosmopolitan – and yet in minutes, we’re surrounded by vineyards.

So the best thing about living here is the manageable size of the city, surrounded by such a gorgeous landscape, smack in the middle of wine country. I have easy access to so many wine estates. And for interviews in the city, I ride my bike or walk. If I covered finance, it would be like living on Wall Street – but without the pollution, skyscrapers and exorbitant rent.

The worst thing is the poor selection of wine from other regions around the world. I’m hoping that the wine shop at the new Cité des Civilisations du Vin will have a good selection.

Please tell us about your experience of studying for a diploma (DUAD) from Bordeaux University and what has the qualification given you?

It was a challenging course. The wine science lecture series gathers some superb experts, but it’s probably more

science than the average wine writer needs to know. But it’s no doubt helped me when speaking to growers or scientists – [it’s given me] a much better idea of what to ask and why it might be important than if I’d not done the course.

The tasting work in the lab gave me a better sense of my own palate, my strengths, my weaknesses, increased sensitivity to wine faults and a very clear cut method for noting wines. Flowery or lengthy descriptions were frowned upon.

Who in the wine world has taught you most about wine and what was it?

Hmm, it’s hard to choose one. I pick up information as I go along. Never really stops. Denis Dubourdieu was one of our lecturers at the DUAD. He was a terrific professor.

For you, what have been the key differences between writing on wine for a general press agency and writing for the specialist wine press?

The big difference is vocabulary. The first time I wrote about a classification for AFP [Agence France-Presse], I was told I could not use the word ‘classification’. When you write for a wide, international audience you have to assume that the person reading the story knows nothing about wine. So I tried to find ways to use wine as a prism for exploring

current topics – health, environment, business, foreign trade agreements, whatever it might be. Those stories did very well, but depending upon the editor, it could be an immensely frustrating experience. I resist attempts by editors to dumb down my writing. I write for smart people. I figure if they don't know something, they'll look it up.

When I write for *Wine Spectator*, I assume a certain level of knowledge. I'm also conscious that I'm writing for a well-heeled, well-educated, primarily American audience. I'm writing for people who are passionate about wine, and I think of my stories as an ongoing conversation with them.

What do you find most frustrating about being a journalist specialising in wine?

I find it annoying when a vintner or publicist insists that their story is a story. Most times it's not a story. Usually I ignore them, but sometimes [when] I haven't had enough sleep or espresso, I am not the most polite version of myself.

Previous page: At LVMH's vineyard in Ninxa, China during research for the book.

Below: In Portugal.

Right: In eastern Turkey, on a quest for the source of the origins of wine grapes.



As a book author as well as freelance journalist, can you share any tips about how you juggle your time when you are in the middle of writing a book.

It is a challenge. When I've written long projects in the past, I had uninterrupted weeks. This was before I worked as a print journalist and before I had a family. I could lose myself in the story and the luxury of a daily routine, writing from eight until one or two o'clock each day, no interruptions, no phone calls, followed by exercise. Then some light editing in the early evening. For me, that is still the ideal writing schedule.

That was not my reality when writing *Thirsty Dragon*. As a freelance journalist I write news. I never know my schedule in advance. I'm also a parent with many commitments. I had to let go of ideal.



So I set daily word counts on Scrivener. I told myself I couldn't go to sleep until I'd hit the word count. I worked nights. I worked weekends. I ignored queries from other wine writers: "Aren't you done with your book yet?" Or better: "Aren't you worried that the whole China thing is already over?" And when I fell behind in my word count or my chapter revisions, I would make another espresso and say to myself, "just tell the story".

I'm now writing my next book and researching another. Until I reach the revision stage with deadlines from the publisher, I try to keep regular 'book writing' hours. I go to bed early. I wake up and write my book before anyone is awake.

What was the original inspiration for your latest book, Thirsty Dragon?

I've always enjoyed narrative non-fiction. And I wanted to write a book about the Place de Bordeaux. I also like adventure and suspense, triumph and failure.

But the challenge of writing a book about current events is deciding on the dramatic arc and the end point. Then China arrived. I sensed it could be a book, but I wasn't sure. Then I began investigating and the story emerged. One of the most difficult tasks was deciding which people would tell the story. You can only follow so many characters.

At the same time, I've always had an interest in emerging economies. I read Economics and Political Science at Yale, and wrote my thesis on political and economic modernisation in Turkey and Afghanistan. My only class on China was a memorable course taught by Jonathan Spence.

Are you dreading or looking forward to the en primeur week this year?

Resigned [to it]. And annoyed that the UGC has cancelled the blind tastings.

What is your great enjoyment in life when you're not tasting wine or visiting wine regions?

Travel. I love to travel with my family. We do quite a bit of hiking.

As another prominent Spanish producer leaves the appellation system, **Amaya Cervera** examines how the industry perceives terroir-specific wines. This article has been adapted from one originally posted on Amaya's blog, *Spanish Wine Lover*.

Does terroir matter in Spain?

The announcement by Artadi's Juan Carlos López de Lacalle of his departure from the DOCa Rioja is arguably the biggest setback for Spain's denomination of origin system. This rescuer of old vines and singular plots in Rioja Alavesa, such as the legendary Viña El Pisón, is not the first to make this move. Others, such as Gutiérrez de la Vega in Alicante and Raventós i Blanc in Cava, have quit their respective DOs. But Artadi's departure at the end of December questions the effectiveness of Spain's most prestigious appellation to create tools that ensure the singularity of its vineyards and terroir.

Rioja is in the spotlight, but there are signs that Spain's DO umbrella protection is no longer enough for many of those underneath it. Last November, two meetings were held to discuss the need to come up with an organization and classification system for Spain's vineyards to ensure the singularity of terroir wines beyond the generic label provided by a regional DO.

How to add value to Spain's top wines

López de Lacalle was one of the participants at a round table entitled Thoughts about Spain's great vineyards, held at Madrid's Club Matador. "All I want after 35 years of work is to be able to work comfortably," he said. Artadi's founder claims to be alone in his demands because the others fail to see a business future for terroir wines. López de Lacalle is also convinced that "the process of showcasing Spain's small wine growing practices is unstoppable." He remembers his five years as member of the Regulatory Body management team and his contribution to the rules set

up in 1990. Back then, he tried to convince his colleagues that "it was a historical moment to divide Rioja into separate zones" but his proposal failed to find support.

The Club Matador event was organized by leading Rioja producer Telmo Rodríguez (Cía de Vinos Telmo Rodríguez, Remelluri), who acted as moderator in a debate with the participation of producers (Daniel G. Landi of Comando G in Gredos, Pepe Raventós of Raventós i Blanc), critics and journalists (Luis Gutiérrez, Víctor de la Serna, José Peñín and myself), distributors, wine traders and even an art expert, Vicente Todolí. The only regulatory body in the house was Priorat's, represented by president Salustià Álvarez. The Catalan region is the only Spanish appellation to have established a territorial division with the creation of *vi de la vila* (village wines) and *vi de finca* (estate wines).



Organiser of the Club Matador event, Telmo Rodríguez. Photo courtesy of Vinos Telmo Rodríguez.

The average price of Spanish wine in August 2015 was €1.02, the lowest in exporting countries, according to data published by the OEMV (Spanish Wine Market Watchdog Foundation).

It is mandatory "to bring some dignity into Spanish wine and boost our wine heritage," insisted Daniel G. Landi. For Pepe Raventós, "the future lies not in competing against emerging markets and the New World but to follow the French model" and he favours working with local varieties, yield reduction, higher minimum grape prices and compulsory vintage indication.

A majority of participants agreed that it is urgent and necessary to set up a classification along the lines of the most prestigious French regions, with village wines, estate wines and single vineyard wines.

With or without the regulatory bodies

"People love to set themselves apart in terms of the wines they drink," reckoned Catalán distributor Joan Valencia who also warned that "any classification must come after a thorough study of soils." From the audience, Peter Sisseck, the Danish winemaker for Pingus confirmed that Ribera del Duero has set up an investigation commission as a first step to determine soil qualities in the area. In a second stage, yields and specific areas would be determined in terms of the style of the wines such grapes would be destined for, such as young and oak-aged wines or wines for longer ageing.

Wine critic and Manchuela producer Víctor de la Serna explained that Rioja brands are very detached from their source vineyards and encouraged the DOCa Rioja, which has traditionally been a model for other wine regions in Spain, to set the wheels in motion towards a division of the land in terms of quality. "We need a system to identify zones and a quality seal that allows producers to include a specific origin on the label."

Distributor and importer Paco Berciano (Alma Vinos) wondered if this initiative should be carried out "with" or "against regulatory bodies; they represent the reality of the business, which is focused on producers instead

of *vignerons*; the more we restrain the space, the more expensive grapes will be". Berciano argued in favour of a private model such as Germany's VDP, which includes around 200 wine producers.

Meanwhile, Telmo Rodríguez said the change should be positive for everyone. "This is not about going against anyone; we shouldn't forget that Romanée-Conti drives sales of cheap Burgundy."

Priorat's model

The DOQ Priorat is proof that wine regions can be subdivided in Spain. Its president, Salustià Álvarez, said "wine is the territory's greatest ambassador. The region can survive with people who make a decent living with their small vineyard and who feel proud about it".

Priorat's land division model is based on the classic French pyramid: "country or table wines are at the bottom; a step above is reserved for wines with DO followed by DOC wines, village wines, single vineyard wines and finally wines coming from singular plots".

The average price per kilo of grapes in Priorat from the 2014 vintage was €1.60 and average bottle prices reached €20, the highest in Spain. In addition, Salustià valued the fact that production is widely spread: "It's much better to have 100 small wineries than two big brands".

A great deal of the ideas heard at Club Matador were echoed in Rioja during the conference Denomination of Origin – Identity and Differentiation organised by Juan Carlos López de Lacalle in Laguardia. The conference included some of those present in Madrid, along with other high-profile speakers including Álvaro Palacios. The man behind Priorat's L'Ermita called for a pyramid of quality, "because the top will seep through and will benefit everyone involved," as well as bringing "freedom for producers to use sub-area labels... That would be a first step... The second step should be the recognition of village wines... before the creation of a single vineyard category. Later on it will be the turn of *grands crus*, although that will be something for our grandchildren or great-grandchildren to implement. But for this step to occur, we must start the work right now".

Rioja'n'Roll

In the midst of demands for change and recognition of the region's singularities springs Rioja'n'Roll, a maverick group of young growers and winemakers spread across the three Rioja sub-zones. The group wants to draw attention to a common work ethic based on the vineyard and a style of wines that goes beyond geographical or administrative rigidities.

Its aim is 'to defend wines made by actual people; wines made in specific villages and vineyards; wines that are free and are not boxed into a category, wines which reflect our personality and the vineyards that we work in Rioja.'

"It is much more what unites us than divides us," explain Roberto Oliván (Tentenublo Wines), Frenchman Olivier Rivière (Olivier Rivière Vinos), Tom Puyaubert (Exopto), Arturo and Kike de Miguel (Artuke), Sandra Bravo (Sierra de Toloño), Bárbara Palacios (Barbarot), Óscar Alegre and Eva Valgañón (Alegre & Valgañón) and South African Bryan MacRobert (Laventura). They are aware of the tradition and recognition of the Rioja brand, but believe it is time to recognize the region's heritage. 'Rioja vineyards have tremendous potential, but it has often been neglected. We must defend wines with personality.'

According to a local newspaper report in mid-December, some Rioja producers' associations are working on several proposals to identify zones in the appellation, but on further investigation everything seems very vague for the time being. The issue may be discussed at a meeting at the Regulatory Board in January.

Undoubtedly, there are increasing numbers of people within Spain's wine sector pulling in the same direction;



The young wine growers who form the new Rioja'n'Roll group. Photo by James Sturcke.

it remains to be seen if the country's DOs will take steps to respond to the calls of the many small but renowned winegrowers who demand differentiation and authenticity.

As we were going to press, Amaya reported that as a result of Club Matador's round table, a manifesto in defence of Spanish terroir was published on 8th January. It has been signed by almost 150 wine professionals including producers, journalists and merchants. For more details, see www.spanishwine.com.

Rioja graffiti, spotted by this issue's featured photographer, Jon Wyand.





Cathrine Todd attends the seminar in New York –
Austrian Riesling: Faces & Facets of a Global Classic.
Photographs by David Plakke.

Austrian Riesling is the easiest conversation

Paul Grieco was convinced: “If we have to talk dry [Riesling wines], and I hate having that specific conversation, then glory to Austria. The easiest conversation I have. Alsace – no one wants to talk about it... Germany – love it but hard as shit. Those are the hard conversations.”

The above statement from Paul Grieco was from just one of the many interesting discussions that were led by the panellists of the Austrian Riesling: Faces & Facets of a Global Classic seminar that took place in New York City (NYC) at Le Bernardin Privé on 21st October.

Grieco is best known for helping to create a niche following for Riesling in NYC with his Terroir wine bars, and also, previously, at the restaurant Hearth, with which he is no longer associated. He was pivotal in getting the NYC restaurant scene to talk about Riesling and it seems to be his mission to enlighten the world on the extraordinary quality and diversity of this noble grape variety.

During the summer of 2008, Grieco decided to list only Rieslings at his first location of Terroir, in NYC’s East Village. Many thought he had gone mad and that Terroir would be going out of business within a matter of months, but the opposite happened. Terroir became a wine nerd favourite and ultimately a mecca for wine nerds around the world. At the time many in the NYC wine trade would consider it

as the only authentic wine bar that was worthy enough for knowledgeable wine drinkers.

The greatness of Riesling

Grieco explained that initially he created the wine list at Hearth (a well-known NYC Italian restaurant) with 40% Riesling wines to match the very well-balanced food made by his ex-partner, current chef and owner Marco Canora. And, in his mind the great diversity of Riesling justified taking up such a large share of the list, even though it created problems with their guests, and ultimately broke up the partnership, causing Grieco to leave Hearth. He later admitted that it was probably not the best decision to have such a Riesling dominated wine list at an Italian restaurant, but he still defended its importance on most restaurant wine lists.

He thought, in general, that the culinary scene in the US had become more well-balanced and evolved and hence it was the right time for Riesling to take its rightful place being showcased on American’s top restaurant wine lists. As he said:

“Is this not the time for Riesling? Why is this still so goddamn hard?”

Also, he expressed his frustration with the dreaded

s-word (sweet) and that it was about whether a customer liked the wine or not. Last summer he started an experiment at the Terroir wine bars in Tribeca and the High Line. He had his servers give small tasting portions of white wines made from different grape varieties to those guests who were undecided, and half of the time they picked the Riesling. They did not discuss the sugar level – they simply picked what they liked.

But he is still struggling to create a broader demand for Riesling, since wine nerds alone cannot sustain his empire, which has been evident with two of his Terroir locations closing (his original East Village spot being one of them).

CWW member Anne Krebiehl MW, attending the seminar as contributing editor on Austrian wines for *Wine Enthusiast*, already brought up the previous notion that it was annoying to talk about the sugar issue with Riesling. She said that Riesling’s acidity was perfect for “acid hounds” – a term she saw during one of the Summer of Riesling campaigns in London.

An historical perspective came from Peter Moser, editor-in-chief of *Falstaff*, one of the leading wine and gourmet magazines published in Austria. He explained that it was the sweet wines which brought high esteem to Riesling. In

As Rieslings are poured, intense concentration from Cathrine Todd (right).



1804, Kaiser von Österreich considered sweet wines to be the highest of quality. Most of the wines that were drunk by the Kaiser and his royal court were the sweet Tokaji wines, but some *trockenbeereauslese* and *beereauslese* Riesling wines were highly prized by the court as well. Moser said the traits of Riesling, being high in acidity, a late ripener and prone to botrytis, made it ideal for the stylistic needs of the court, even though many producers would consider these traits part of the problem with producing Riesling.

Due to its historical importance with nobility, German speaking countries have always held Riesling in high esteem. But Moser noted that the quality of Riesling wines started to decline drastically after World War II, when there was a huge demand for quantity over quality, and hence the wine markets were flooded with mediocre sweet Riesling – unfortunately an image that is still conjured in many Americans' minds.

The trouble with Riesling

John Winthrop Haeger, a US-based writer and educator with a new book called *Riesling Rediscovered: Bold, Bright, and Dry*, addressed this point early on in the seminar, even though he was hesitant to say that there was anything wrong with Riesling. He thought the best way to address the issue was to quote part of the previous wine list at Hearth: "Because the glory of Riesling is in its multiplicity of styles... and the problem of Riesling is in its multiplicity of styles."

As he continued in his own words: "There is no other grape variety that comes into the 21st century with as much stylistic baggage as Riesling." According to his research, sweet wine drinkers flock to it and dry white wine drinkers miss out on the great experience which is Riesling.

But as Paul Grieco pointed out, if there are so many people drinking sweet Moscato, then why are there not more Riesling drinkers? Well, again, because of its multiplicity of styles, Riesling is not so easy to pigeonhole. It seems that it is not enough to say that a wine is high quality or well-balanced or seemingly dry.

Even though some may argue that brands such as Gallo's Apothic red blend, which has over 16 g/l of residual

sugar, have no problem with consumers buying on the pure notion that it is a good red wine. Most consumers don't even talk about the sugar in Apothic. Alternatively, one could argue that these wines are typically priced below \$15 and so it is more about brand, price and key distribution placement than what is in the bottle.

Again, Riesling has its baggage, and since it can make some of the most quaffable wines, as well as some of the greatest, most complex wines in the world, it is not such an easy variety to brand.

The argument for Austrian Riesling

Willi Klinger, head of the Austrian Wine Board, said in his introduction, "Austrian Riesling is always dry, or nearly..." Of course there was a slight reference to wanting to avoid any connection to the wines that were involved with the diethylene glycol wine scandal during the 1980s, which helped to start the Austrian trend towards dry wines, but today few people know of that incident.

So why is it still so important to emphasise that Austrian Riesling wines are dry?

There seems to be a hard divide in the premium wine sector above \$30) between those great wines that are sweet and those that are dry, and hence there is very little demand for off-dry or medium sweet. Riesling may only take up a small percentage of the vineyards in Austria, around 4% according to Willi Klinger, but it is a huge proportion of these high quality wines. So, emphasising that most wines are dry is important when it comes to gaining market share in the premium wine category.

In the context of the premium, dry wine world, Grieco offered the most down-to-earth argument coming from his many years in the

restaurant business saying that Austrian Riesling was "the easiest conversation he had".

No one wants to talk about Alsace – no matter the grape variety; nowhere in the New World yet has the legitimacy to call Riesling their own; and Germany, even though worshiped by a small group of wine nerds in NYC, is too difficult to explain – especially for restaurant staff – with its complicated classification system.

In that sense, Austrian Riesling really is the easiest conversation. There is no doubt that German Rieslings will always be highly prized by Riesling connoisseurs, but when it comes to growing the potential premium and fine wine consumer base for Riesling, Austria may be able to open some new doors in certain key markets.

And the great Riesling hope is that any success for Austria will then trickle down to all the other great Riesling wine producing countries around the world.

Speakers (L-R): Paul Grieco, Peter Moser, Ann Kriebehl MW, Aldo Sohm, John Winthrop Haeger and Willi Klinger.





Richard Bampfield MW (left) returned from last October's Institute of Masters of Wine (IMW) tour of Australia enthused about the diversity in the country's wines, but worried about its profitability.

OPINION: The future for Australia's premium wine market

mouth-watering Chardonnays, often at just 12.5% alcohol. We tasted Pinot Noir from the Yarra Valley (Mount Mary, Gemtree Hill, Mac Forbes and others) and Mornington (Yabby Lake, Montalto and Moorooduc in particular) that I would happily put up against Pinot from anywhere else in the world – and which would certainly give wines from across the Tasman Sea a run for their money. On our first tasting, hosted at the Sydney Opera House (yes, we were spoilt rotten), we tasted sparkling wines from Luke Lambert (Yarra), Courabyra 503 (Tumbarumba) and Hardy's/Ed Carr's House of Arras (Tasmania) that were outstanding.

For those who think that Australia is a hot country, producing nothing but big, alcoholic blockbusters, I can tell you that times have really changed.

On a similar theme, we tasted high quality Riesling, most particularly in the Clare and Eden Valleys. At ten years old or so, the Rieslings from top sites such as Jacob's Creek's dramatic, steep and rocky Steingarten and Jim Barry's Florita vineyard show fabulous balance, depth and complexity. Best not to mention petrol or kerosene characters though: in Australia these are associated with compounds produced by the grape to protect itself against direct sunlight, and steps are being taken to manage the canopy in such a way as to reduce their impact in future. In the

Hunter Valley, Tyrrells and McWilliams showed a range of Semillons that were every bit as fresh, brisk and dry as we have come to expect from this distinctive, low alcohol wine style. Even the Hunter Valley Shirazes shown by Tyrrells had a Syrah-like peppery freshness and a cool climate swagger that would have been unthinkable 20 years ago. And then there were the crisp, dry Fianos and Vermentinos from McLaren Vale and the highly appetising Sauvignon

The Masters of Wine group in front of the Sydney Opera House. Photo by Richard Bampfield MW.



Australia is a country that I used to travel to regularly so I was excited about my return after 16 years on the IMW tour that took in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. I delight in Australia's uniqueness, a home to flora, fauna and a landscape that are distinctively, beautifully, and sometimes dangerously, Australian.

Since my last visit, there have been periods of extreme drought and widespread flooding (the 2011 vintage was tricky) and, while we were revelling in a superb tasting in Yarra Valley on the hottest October day on record, we heard that a 'controlled burn' had been fanned by the wind and was causing havoc just a little to the north west. On this visit, we tasted a diversity of styles that I don't believe any other country can match; at least not at the same quality level as Australia.

Stylistically, the most notable change since my last visit has been the sourcing of fruit from vineyards planted in cooler areas: Mornington Peninsula, Yarra Valley, Adelaide Hills and, above all, Tasmania have all taken centre stage. This has had a significant effect on wine styles, notably sparkling wines, along with still Pinot Noir and even fine,

Blanc from Shaw & Smith in the Adelaide Hills ... Australia is certainly ensuring that it is well supplied with crisp, light aromatic whites, no doubt in part to stem the tide of Sauvignon Blanc from New Zealand.

Europe expects...

However, there were occasional discordant voices amid this diet of zest, freshness and minerality. Some of the Chardonnays leant so heavily on reduction and acidity for their character that they were lean in body and light in actual flavour. This style may find favour in Australia and in wine competitions where winemakers' peer groups evidently appreciate these characteristics. But there was a definite feeling amongst some in the group, which was fully international with most coming from Europe, that this approach may be too far removed from what people expect from Australia to achieve commercial success in export markets.

That opinion is based on the premise that most wine lovers and drinkers associate Australia with wines of flavour. Fortunately this is still in abundance. Visits to the classic, well-established wineries such as Penfolds, Jacob's Creek, Yalumba, De Bortoli, Taylors (known as Wakefield on many export markets), D'Arenberg and Brown Brothers yielded a host of wines that combined traditional styles and flavours with the extra freshness and purity of fruit that we have come to expect from modern winemaking. As well as wonderful wines made from the top international varieties, we tasted exciting Grenache from Yangarra, Bekkers and Drew Noon MW among many others. McLaren Vale and Barossa producers kindly gathered to show us Savagnin, Durif, Tempranillo, Grüner Veltliner, Touriga Nacional and Verdejo, along with a myriad of different blends. Australia is alive with innovation, led by the hands-off approach of many smaller winemakers, the fruity wine styles and new varietal crosses from Brown Brothers, and the range of Jacob's Creek wines aged in whisk(e)y casks. These are exciting times for Australia. And yet...

The elephant in the room is that a minority of Australian wine producers are actually making money. Sadly there was

not time during the trip to debate this issue, so my thoughts below are largely speculative. We were shown many of Australia's greatest wines, often made from old vines and therefore from pitifully low yields. Superb, world-class wines such as Penfolds Grange, Henschke Mount Edelstone and Hill of Grace, Campbell Rare Rutherglen Muscat, Seppeltsfield Para and Chateau Tahbilk 1860 Vines Shiraz have earned their reputation and super-premium price over many decades.

Occasionally a standout wine such as Giaconda Chardonnay or Torbreck RunRig might gain stardom more rapidly but, for the main part, hard work and patience are the order of the day. Consequently it is a little disturbing to see some producers setting extremely high prices (hundreds of AUS\$) on wines that have no track record. Admittedly the cost of living has risen significantly in Australia since I was last there, but it still seems to me that any wine selling for over, say, AUS\$80 (approximately €50) should have to work its way to the top. The push for profitability is critical but pricing still needs to have some logic.

Since Australia's last hugely successful export drive in the 80s and 90s, export markets have of course become more competitive and pressure on margins has grown. It is significant that economic viability is at the heart of the

*An old Shiraz vine in Henschke's Hill of Grace vineyard. Photo by **Richard Bampffield MW**.*



Sustainable Australia Winegrowing programme being followed in McLaren Vale.

My impression during the trip was that, from a quality point of view, most of Australia's wine is better than ever and ideally suited to modern tastes; so I do wonder if those making dramatic changes to their wines are going to an extreme that risks alienating customers. If Australian wine is struggling to be profitable, it strikes me as a marketing issue rather than a winemaking one. I am not the first to say it but, as the major supermarkets cut back on ranges, the key will be to identify and supply the routes to market that are opening up for more profitable (and not necessarily super-expensive) wines.

In 1996, the Australia Wine Industry published its seminal Strategy 2025 document which stated:

"The vision is that by the year 2025 the Australian wine industry will achieve AUS\$4.5 billion in annual sales by being the world's most influential and profitable supplier of branded wines, pioneering wine as a universal first choice lifestyle beverage."

Remarkably, Australia had achieved its value targets within ten years and its longer term influence in driving wine's position as a lifestyle beverage around the world is indisputable. The emphasis has now turned towards the production and profitable marketing of higher value, regional wines.

Another point made in that Strategy 2025 document was that Australia is a leader both in terms of strong brands and market mind-set. The evidence suggests that Australia still leads in both areas, but producers need to constantly question how they run a profitable business. If that entails wine quality and business acumen going hand in hand, I certainly wouldn't be betting against the Aussies achieving ongoing international success.

My thanks to Australia's First Families of Wine, Wine Australia, Treasury Wine Estates, Jackson Family Wines, Jacob's Creek, Seppeltsfield, Shaw & Smith and the winemaking communities of the Mornington Peninsula, Yarra Valley, McLaren Vale and the Barossa – the trip of a lifetime.



Peter Hallgarten pays homage to the Basque town of Hondarribia and to the entrepreneurs reviving its wine traditions. Photos by Peter.

A tale of Txakoli

The delightful Txakoli, whose production by 28 domaines is limited to a small area of the Spanish Basque region, is mainly based on the Hondarrabi variety (above), which took its name from the small town where it was first grown some nine centuries ago. Church documents from the 12th century mention vineyards and 400 years later the town's coat of arms clearly incorporates grapes. In 1581, 13 Txakoli vintners were recorded, but regrettably production declined and came to an end with the siege of the town in 1638.

Today, Hondarribia is a thriving small seaside town, across the river from Hendaye and other small towns of the French Atlantic coast. Beautiful beaches, a few good restaurants and many excellent tapas bars are perfect for holidaymakers. Its close proximity to San Sebastian gives it an added attraction for visitors.

The wine produced is white, light and slightly spritzig. Its popularity, particularly as partner to the myriad of local tapas offerings, is in increasing demand. There are vineyards along the coastal stretch but surprisingly, until very recently, there were none in its original home, Hondarribia.

Fortunately there are entrepreneurs willing to invest in their locality, in order to recreate their ancient vineyard history. The construction company owned by the Rekalde family, father Asensio and two sons Txarli and Angel, found sites near the coast where they were able to lease the land for vineyards from local farmers. They built a winery on their own land and installed the very latest equipment, ideal for their style of wine. The winery, named Hiruzta (Hiru – three owners, utza – harvest) is very welcoming for guests, with

informative cellar tours, an opportunity to taste a couple of vintages and a restaurant attached, which is open during the summer season.

The ten hectares of vineyards were planted in 2007 with the first vintage in 2010 and an aim to harvest only very high quality grapes, with good yields. Vintages are variable as to be expected from coastal plantings; normal harvest dates are late-September, sometimes early-October. The 2013 vintage produced 90,000 bottles, no-thanks to bad weather, but in 2014 there were 140,000 and 2015 gave 150,000 bottles with good quality, equal to 2014.

At Hiruzta, Hondarrabi Zuri makes up 95% of white plantings, where regulations stipulate an 80% minimum of the grape; Gros Manseng, Chardonnay and Riesling are also permitted, plus Hondarabbi Beltz, the only variety for reds.

Currently Hiruzta does not produce any red wines and only small quantities of Gorria Rosé are produced at 12% alcohol. Three thousand bottles of Brut Nature were produced in 2014, but only 600 bottles in 2015.

The whole operation from grape to bottle is in stainless steel. Keeping this style of wine fresh is essential, in particular retaining the CO₂, which is essential for the style. After harvesting, the grapes are normally cold-stored for 1-2 days (minimum 12 hours), before de-stemming and pressing. Fermentation with selected yeasts and regular racking follow the standard procedures for making quality whites. The wine is usually 12% alcohol.

The winery also produces a second non-spritzig wine

from a final late-harvest. The grapes with a higher sugar content often remain on their original lees for four months and no effort is made to retain the CO₂. This wine, named Hirutza Berezia, has more structure and complexity than the simple Txakoli, as well as more alcohol at 13.5%.

Txakoli is a unique wine and serving it correctly is a 'performance'. Traditionally the wine is poured from a height, through a small plastic spout, which aerates but still retains its spritz. In the past, when the wines tended to be more acidic than current production, pouring like cider was very effective, but the current recommendation, still not followed by all tapas bars, is to pour from only 10cm above the rim of the glass. In effect Txakoli is a serious yet fun wine.

Hirutza winery and vineyards.



In South Africa, a new grape is born. **Peter May** tells the creator's tale. Photos courtesy of Jerry Rodrigues.

The curiously named Cabernet Labrusco

Jerry Rodrigues celebrated with a glass of ruby red wine. It had been 20 years in the making and he was toasting the birth of a completely new wine. He was the first in the world to taste it. In his glass was Cabernet Labrusco, a new grape variety that he had created.

In 1994 Jerry was a lecturer in the molecular and cell biology department of the University of Cape Town. One day he took pollen from a vine in his father's garden to fertilise the flowers of a Cabernet Sauvignon vine also growing there. His father lived in Plumstead, a suburb of Cape Town, where he grew grapes to make home-made wine.

When the resulting bunch of grapes had fully ripened early the following year, Jerry gathered the seeds. He planted them in pots in his own garden later that year in September, the southern hemisphere's spring of 1995.

Jerry tells me: "I actually planted 44 seeds. This represented all the berries that I obtained from the single bunch of grapes that I manually pollinated."

The resulting new seedling vines were left to their own devices in plastic pots. As the years progressed, many seedlings died.

"This is how natural selection operates," says Jerry. "When just ten were left I personally grafted them onto resistant rootstocks, but 19 years after propagation only two vigorous seedlings survived, that I'd numbered 2 and 7.

"Seedling 7 showed leaf characteristics identical to those of the seed parent Cabernet Sauvignon, so it was probably self-pollinated, however it died in the 20th year. Seedling 2

survived as a result of its perfect adaptation to the climate of the Western Cape and its vigour was apparent at an early stage of its propagation."

One parent was Cabernet Sauvignon, but the other's name has been lost. Jerry's father died in 1988 and his property was sold to new owners, who pulled up the vines.

Jerry analysed his new vine's DNA and found it had a disease-resistant gene also found in Italian Lambrusco, as well as in some American *Vitis labrusca* varieties, including Catawba and Concord. However, he was no closer to identifying the variety he had taken pollen from. Then he had a breakthrough when browsing in an antiquarian bookshop. "I found a 1960s catalogue from Pickstone's Nurseries which was in Cape Town," he says. "I reasoned that my father would have bought his half a dozen or so grapevine varieties, which he planted in his backyard in 1960, from such a well-known nursery. The characteristics of the old grapevine very closely matched the description of the Barbarossa grapevine in that 1960s fruit catalogue."

Moving the research to Italy

But he was still not convinced. Because of similarities with Lambrusco he contacted an agricultural institute in Turin, Italy. He explains: "They agreed to collaborate with me in order to positively identify the pollen parent of my new grapevine offspring by analysing the DNA of my new vine. To my surprise the data fitted perfectly with the French variety Danugue Noir [an old table grape variety, probably



Cabernet Labrusco mother vine and showing its curved growing tip.

originating in Spain, but once grown in England and France]. It was really a stroke of luck, when you realise that there are still literally hundreds of *Vitis vinifera* cultivars whose DNA details have yet to be uploaded onto databases around the world."

Another old book, *A Treatise on Viticulture*, written in 1927 by Stellenbosch University Professor Abraham Perold, identified the table grape Barbarossa as being a synonym of Danugue. "Now I knew for sure that my father had actually bought a Barbarossa grapevine, probably from Pickstone's Nurseries, and that it was the pollen from that grapevine that I had used in my grapevine crossing experiment," he recalls.

Jerry registered the new variety under the name Cabernet Labrusco in 2013 with South Africa's Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. I ask him about the name which sits confusingly between Lambrusco, the northern Italian variety cultivated in Emilia-Romagna that enjoys little favour with wine lovers, and the American species *labrusca* that enjoys none. Jerry says that because the ruby red wine looks like Lambrusco and it has a disease-resistance gene found in *labrusca*, "I decided to use a similar-sounding, and appealing, name for my new variety – Labrusco."

"One of the main reasons why I decided to do the experiment at that time was precisely because I knew that my father's grapevine, which I now know is Danugue Noir, was very old and so it followed that it ought to have had

some inherent disease resistance for it to have survived so long. Another reason was that its grape bunches were very, very large. Since I knew that Cabernet Sauvignon is a shy bearer of grapes in the Western Cape's climatic conditions and its bunches are very much smaller than they are in Europe, it made some sense to try out a cross-pollination experiment."

I ask Jerry what type of wine his new variety produces.

"What I have tasted in my wine so far, and I am not an expert, is that this deep ruby red wine is full of red berry flavours," he says. "My laboratory tests showed a sugar content of 23 degrees Brix and a TA (Titratable acidity) of approximately 8.3g per litre. The TA is slightly higher than most ordinary wine musts, so it seems that it is a good wine to mature in oak, for a short while." Dr Jerry Rodrigues retired from the department of molecular

and cell biology in 2013 and now concentrates on learning more about his new variety. He has been experimenting with wood ageing using oak chips and found after five months the red berry flavours were slightly more noticeable as the acidity had declined.

Jerry is hoping his appealing ruby red wine variety will be adopted by commercial wineries looking for a productive grape with good disease resistance.

Michael Fridjhon reflects with gravitas on a tasting of ten vintages from seven classic Cape estates. This article was originally published in Business Day.

South Africa's wines of provenance

The Cape wine industry divides into three broad divisions: the big (often bulk) wine producers, the estate (or at least site-specific) growers and the rock star guerrillas. The major wholesalers, the converted co-ops and the (often premium) high volume cellars fall into the first category. The smaller – generally long established wineries – are in the second and the so-called young guns/Young Turks buying in fruit and renting cellar space make up the third.

Each has its own unique selling proposition: the large wineries manage their production processes so well that they can pretty much guarantee qualities and quantities across vintages. They achieve this less by defaulting to bland ordinariness than by focusing on a wide range of fruit sources. The young guns are unashamedly edgy: they chase down small blocks of (usually) old vines and hand-craft tiny volumes which both reflect site as well as their own idiosyncratic production methods. The middle category, the real estates, usually own or at least control their own vineyards, and have been producing wines from them for several decades. Their business depends on consistency and dedication, from viticulture and long-term investment to the infrastructure necessary to manage mid-volume brands.

Warwick's Mike Ratcliffe chose to showcase several of

the key members of this grouping at the recent Cape Wine expo in Cape Town, setting up a tasting at which each of the selected producers had to present ten vintages of the same wine. The line-up included Warwick and Vilafonte (both properties in the Ratcliffe stable), Hamilton Russell Vineyards, Hartenberg, Kanonkop, Sadie Family Vineyards and Klein Constantia. All players, whose commitment to what they are doing outweigh the smoke-and-mirrors of brand, they share a real sense of substance. With seven such players in the room (and there could easily have been another five or ten), it was impossible not to be impressed by the gravitas of the occasion.

When it comes to reporting on the wines, it's important not to regard scores as compelling preferences. For example, of the ten vintages of Hartenberg Gravel Hill I sampled, I scored the 2005 and the 2011 highest but I would happily have had almost any of them with my dinner. The Vilafonte Series C array was in many ways the most striking statement: the purest reflection of the intentions of Zelma Long and Phil Freese in setting up the site and making the wines they envisaged it would yield. My scores acknowledge the polish of their performance as well as the relative lack of vintage variation.

The Hamilton Russell Pinots were the most affected by the more extreme weather conditions of their site, as well as the perennial virus problems of Pinot vineyards. That said, there were several charming older wines and the latest releases (2012 and 2013) were among my highlights of the tasting. I confess to always having been ambivalent about Eben Sadie's Columella, so his line-up was possibly my most important learning opportunity of the evening. At the end of that particular vertical I felt I was (in the words of Lord Birkenhead) "no wiser but at least better informed". The striking quality of the oldest of them – the 2004 – suggests that the younger ones still have plenty of evolution ahead of them.

The Kanonkops confirmed for me the property's claim to First Growth status, with the 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 amazingly even in quality. The Warwick Trilogy (where the vertical went back to 1989) tracked the coming of age of the property, and the Cape wine industry. The oldest was still very elegant, the 2010 was just as pure. Finally the Vin de Constance wines stood their ground as South African icons, even though the oldest (the 1987) had the highest score: the 2004 and the 2012 weren't far behind. More importantly, every bottle spoke of the site, the style and the value of custodianship – exactly what distinguishes wines of provenance from their industrial counterparts.

For Michael's complete tasting notes see:

www.winewizard.co.za/article/sa-greats-sighted-tasting/

The mist clears for Liz Sagues, as she grapples with confusing appellations and unusual grape varieties during a press trip to Veneto. Photos are by Liz.

Seeking romance in the Venetian hills

Understandably, it's easy to have a romantic view of wine, a feeling that the finest comes from beautiful, hilly places with pristine soil, not from vines grown on boring plains or grubby, overworked land. Reality, though, isn't that simple – I remember my own disillusionment when I first saw the vast stretch of flat vineyards in Bordeaux and the rubbish-flecked soil of Champagne.

That flat feeling was back as our Veneto Promozione group drove north east from Venice across the basin of the River Piave, but it didn't last. Here, height is relative. At our first stop, Renato Genovese emphasised the privileged position of his Mazzolada estate. The 125 hectares sit just a metre or two above much of the surrounding land, but that, plus carefully positioned drainage channels, is enough to ensure the vines escape the frequent flooding most neighbours suffer.

But there's more landscape variety on this plain than that seen between Mazzolada's vineyards and those nearby, as Carlo Favero, oenologist of the Consorzio Vini Venezia, explained in a tasting to show off the region's wines. From the sea up towards the start of the hills the limestone content

of the alluvial soil increases, as does the diurnal temperature range. The result: 'bassa' wines are more structured, 'alta' ones (though again the height difference is slim) are fresher and fruitier.

While that makes sense, confusion can reign all too easily when you read the bottle labels. There are three DOCs and two DOCGs within the consorzio's boundaries, and one of each features the grape once known as Tocai (technically Sauvignonasse), but now officially titled Tai Bianco in Veneto and Friulano in Friuli. In DOC Lison Pramaggiore, an appellation for both white and red wines encompassing a host of permitted varieties, the bianco blends must be at least 50% Tai; DOCG Lison is white only and must have a minimum of 85% Tai. Sometimes, Lison is used as a synonym for Tai...

The 2014 Lison DOCGs we tried, from Mazzolada and a second producer, Braida Comugne, were likeable wines, though quite different – the first very Italian, with a lightly bitter lemon-peel-and-nuts edge to the finish, the second more floral and herbal. But 2014 is a vintage that's perhaps not the best argument for DOCG status.

The other DOCG (as Lison, a DOCG created in 2010) is red, Malanotte del Piave, from two variants of Raboso – Piave and Veronese – with between 15% and 30% of the grapes partly dried before pressing and a minimum of 36 months ageing (at least 12 in *botti*) before release. The example Carlo poured, Bonati Le Rive 2010, was a smart, serious, interesting wine with attractive acidity.

Before that, we'd all particularly liked the DOC Piave Manzoni Bianco 2014 from Casa Rosa, with a lovely hint of crystallised citrus peel and herbs on the nose, immediate and lingering appeal on the palate, with great acidity and elegance. Manzoni Bianco is a crossing of Pinot Bianco and Riesling, developed by plant geneticist Luigi Manzoni, long-time principal of the Conegliano wine college (he developed Manzoni Rosso, too – a cross of Cabernet Sauvignon/Glera).

These less-familiar grapes are being submerged in an ever-swelling tide of Glera – for the 250 million bottles of Prosecco produced annually from these provinces of Venice and Treviso alone – and efforts to make them the 'symbol of the territory' seem doomed to failure, much to Carlo's regret. "Through drinking these wines you can find out about our culture, our traditions, our history," he argued.

Despite the gloom, they're not going to disappear just yet. We sampled another Lison with lunch at Tenuta Polvaro, a smart, US-oriented estate where wine tourism is high on the development agenda, and met a second excellent Manzoni Bianco, aromatic and layered, plus two fine pink spumantes, one rich in Manzoni Rosso and the other pure Raboso, at the day's final stop, Corvezzo.

This organic estate is fascinating, from its 'time machine' vineyards demonstrating previous traditions of trellising and pruning to the modern visitor centre with a panoramic view over the vineyards; and from the initiatives reducing its carbon footprint to the painstaking restoration of the traditional *casone* where once agricultural workers lived. The wines are impressive, too. Casanova, a traditional-method Raboso spumante, 36 to 48 months on the lees and sold

View of the plain, from Corvezzo.



only in magnum, was the star, but the pear-scented organic Prosecco was delicious, the unfiltered version intriguing and apple-aromatic, and the still wines very drinkable indeed.

We all know Soave, or do we?

Day two, and it was off to the hills and an introduction to the best of Soave and – new to us all – the sparkling wines of Monti Lessini. The latter were close to vanishing into vinous history 25 years ago, but in the last decade there has been a renaissance, with production now at 700,000 bottles (150,000 traditional method, the rest Charmat). There's potential, suggested Giovanni Ponchia, technologist of the Soave and Lessini consorzio, for production to rise to 4 million bottles. Here, again, the Italian ability to confuse appears. While the wines of Monti Lessini are called Durello, the grape is Durella, which comes in large, loose bunches with tough skins and a huge level of acidity and needs skilful handling if that acidity isn't to turn too astringent.

The traditional-method sparklers can be very good, though as one producer, Antonio Fattori, made clear “they need people well educated in wine – they're not for the Prosecco palate”. The Fattori Roncà Metodo Classico 2010 (magnum) made a lovely lunch aperitif, with its acidity softening attractively on the palate. Later, we tried both Charmat and traditional-method Lessini Durello from Corte Moschina, another respected producer. The traditional won hands down: the vintage 2011 had classy concentration and length; the 2009 Riserva, from a great vintage and 60 months on the lees, was tasty, clean and crisp.



But Soave: of course, we all knew Soave. How much more understanding, though, comes after an explanation of the soils – mostly black basalt, a legacy from the area's volcanic past, plus calcareous patches to the west – and of the potential *grand cru* sites, followed by a tortuous drive among the steep, sometimes terraced vineyards from which the best wines come (here, there is a big difference between plain and hill). Giovanni's argument that the landscape betters the Douro Valley is an exaggeration, but even on a misty December day it was hugely impressive. As are the wines.

Our first stop, at the hill of Roccolo del Durlo, set the benchmark: the Dal Bosco family's Le Battistelle Soave Classico wines were superb (as was the home-made *sopresa salami*, a succulent example of our hosts' frequent and happy habit of offering something to nibble as we tasted). The climax came with the wine from the place itself, Roccolo del Durlo 2013, minerally, tasty, full yet elegant, from the 9ha plot below the wooden chalet where we sat. Wine writers travelling light don't often buy wine, but they did here.

The only technology in the winery is a chiller, son Andrea told us. What matters is the place and the old vines – some are ungrafted survivors from pre-*phylloxera* times, producing a miniscule yield but grapes of the finest quality. While organic growing is impractical – without one application of herbicide in spring “there would be forest here” – sustainability rules. As does the traditional pergola training, which protects Garganega's delicate aromas from destructive sunburn (summer 2015 frequently saw the

*From left: Pre-*phylloxera* Garganega vine at Roccolo del Durlo; Soave soil samples; the Soave landscape.*



mercury top 38 degrees celsius). Guyot simply wouldn't work here, Andrea insisted.

But as we wound our way back down to the valley floor, it was clear not all growers are so restrained in their use of chemicals – some vineyards were bare, barren earth.

Antonio Fattori had a hard act to follow after the fine, mineral purity of Le Battistelle's wines. But his Daniele Soave includes a small proportion of late-harvest grapes and is part (maximum 10%) fermented in large casks and spends six months minimum on the lees – a different, richer style of wine, interesting and good. It needs time – as Antonio lamented: “I need to live another 40 years to teach people not to drink these wines too young.” Unusually for this largely pure-Garganega area, he's also tempted to blend – to very enjoyable effect in Roncà Bianco del Veneto IGT (50% Garganega with Pinot Grigio, Trebbiano di Soave and Durella).

Another blend – but with no Garganega – was in the glasses we raised to an intriguing, informative and enjoyable day at our final stop, Dal Cero, again a family operation with good Soave, particularly the pure, fresh Corte Giacobbe 2014. Cuvée Augusto 2010 was something special, a zero-dosage traditional-method spumante, 75% Chardonnay/25% Durella, 50 months on the lees, matured in large Austrian oak casks. Stylish and impressive, a serious challenger to the big C fizz, it properly evoked the romance of the hills.

Liz visited the Veneto from 14th to 17th December 2015 with Veneto Promozione. A happy trip, with a big thank-you due to all the hosts. A second Update article will follow in April, on the Chiaretto 'rosé revolution'.



Last September a group of CWW members joined fellow member Michèle Shah and other journalists on a three-day press trip to Trentino.

From the Dolomite Mountains to the Rotaliano plains

Vineyards in Verla di Giova in the Cembra Valley, with the snowy Dolomites in the background. Photo by Quentin Sadler.

Michèle Shah, who organised the trip, and Stephen Quinn introduce the region

The majestic range of Alpine mountains, situated in north-eastern Italy and accessed from north of the city of Trento in the region of Trentino Alto Adige, are among those wonders of the world not to be missed. The Dolomites, one of UNESCO's World Heritage sites, is a range of 18 peaks which rise to above 3,000 metres, featuring breathtaking vertical walls, sheer cliffs and a high density of narrow, deep and long valleys. This is where you will find some outstanding mountain viticulture.

In order to put the region's current issues into perspective, one needs to glance back at Trentino's socio-historical past, which over the last century gave rise to one of the most evolved and structured co-operative systems not only in Italy but also worldwide. Co-operative farming in Trentino, as far back as the Hapsburg Empire, has played a fundamental

role in all sectors of its agriculture, including apple and dairy farming. Its success stems from the necessity to create an effective economic system for the region's fragmented farming industry, including that of viticulture. Thanks to the economic sustainability and stability of selling grapes over the years to the co-operative sector, some farmers have more recently opted to break away and branch out by establishing their own wineries.

Competition in the wine industry, especially in Italy, is rife and at the same time very fragmented. This fragmentation is exacerbated in Trentino: many of the co-operative grape growers own little more than 1 hectare (ha) of vineyard. The majority of farmers (48%) own a mere 0.5ha of vineyard with only 0.8% of farmers owning more than 10ha of vineyard. For this reason, up until the 1950s, most wine in Trentino was sold locally in bulk.

Cavit, Trentino's giant co-operative group, was one of

the first to be established in 1950. By 1965 Trentino had established 14 co-operatives producing 90% of the region's wine. In that respect things have not changed significantly. Today there are three main co-operative players: Cavit with 11 affiliated co-operatives, Mezzacorona with one affiliated co-operative and La Vis which is affiliated to the Cembra co-operative. Together they produce 85% of the region's wine.

Over the past few years these larger co-operatives have been accused of overshadowing smaller producers in Trentino, while at the same time upholding the tradition of co-operative farming, which very much remains an important economic resource within the territory. Cavit's production currently represents 4,500 winegrowers and associate members working for its 11 affiliated co-operatives, which together form the force of Cavit's 6 million bottle production, from 5,700 hectares of vineyards, equal to 65% of Trentino's total wine production.

Three-quarters of the grapes grown in Trentino's 10,500ha of vines are white. Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio are the main white varieties; Teroldego is the main red grape, followed by Merlot and Marzemino.

History tells us that Giulio Ferrari, born in 1902, established Trentino's reputation for sparkling wine almost single-handed. During study trips to France, he noted similarities between the soils of Champagne and Trentino. Over time he developed what became known in Italy as the *metodo classico*. The production of Trentodoc, Trentino's traditional method sparkling wine, is controlled by strict regulations, including secondary fermentation in the bottle, prolonged yeast contact and subsequent ageing. During secondary fermentation, non-vintage Trentodoc must spend 15 months on the lees, while the period is extended to 24 months for Millesimato (vintage) and 36 months for Riserva.

Trentino's main export markets are the US, Germany and the UK.

Day One: Robert Smyth finds Müller-Thurgau and more growing in the porphyry in the Cembra Valley

Our first port of call was the Valle di Cembra (Cembra Valley), where we checked out the picturesque terraced vineyards which are noted for vibrant Müller-Thurgau, before heading off to Villa Corniole, in the village of Verla di Giovo, for a tasting. We were greeted with Salisa, a pleasant Blanc de Blancs traditional method Trentodoc, which had spent three years on the lees. It originates from calcareous soils lying 500 metres above sea level.

The cellar is hewn out of porphyry rock, which is the bedrock of the Cembra Valley and provides a strong influence on its wines. It's dubbed the 'red gold of Cembra Valley'. Villa Corniole is a private winery run by the Pellegrini family, who took the decision a decade ago to opt out of the co-operative system and make wine themselves. The family has cultivated vines for generations. Our hosts were

Villa Corniole winemaker Mattia Clementi and Magdalena Nardin, wife of Onorio Pellegrini.

Clementi explained that Müller-Thurgau arrived in the Cembra Valley 25-30 years ago and before that there was a lot more Sciava (or Vernatsch). That grape is to be found these days on the lower slopes, with the likes of Chardonnay, Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc grown at the middle level, and Müller-Thurgau at 500 metres and above. Müller-Thurgau can handle low temperatures in winter and ripens well in a cool climate like in the Valle di Cembra, added Clementi. "Müller-Thurgau has found its home here with the high diurnal temperature variation bringing perfumed aromas and the porphyry soil with its high quartz content brings a salty taste," he said.

Clementi also mentioned typical notes of the grape in the Cembra Valley include sage, pepper, green fruits and grapefruit. Villa Corniole's Müller-Thurgau comes from eight vineyards with different soil compositions and several training systems including pergola and Guyot. Villa Corniole chooses not to bottle wines from the single vineyards but rather makes a blend for the complexity it brings, according to Clementi.

The 2014 Müller-Thurgau spent up to nine months on the lees in temperature-controlled tanks and had intense aromas and flavours of lime, green herbs, white flowers, gooseberry and lychee. It was medium bodied with crisp acidity and a zesty finish. To get a feel for the differing vineyards, we sampled fledgling and still very murky wines from the 2015 vintage, and the differences were indeed pronounced.

Villa Corniole also has vineyards on the warmer plain, the Piana Rotaliana, where the soils are alluvial and home to Trentino's most widely planted red wine grape, Teroldego. It is also noted for Lagrein and Pinot Grigio. Corniole's Teroldego 2011 still had a youthful purple colour and vibrant fruit (blackcurrant, sour cherry) plus dark chocolate and spice notes with good acidity and restrained tannins. Even the 2009 had retained a purple touch and picked up nice complexity. In all, Villa Corniole has 10ha of vineyards, which also include plots of Chardonnay on the Avisiane hills.



Clockwise from left: Marzemino grapes; yes, we like Müller-Thurgau in the Cembra Valley; the village of Verla di Giovo; Villa Corniole's cellar. Top two photos by Panos Kakaviatos; bottom two by Robert Smyth.



Day Two: Chaim Helfgott selects the best from a regional tasting

In the morning of our first full day in Trento we walked over to Palazzo Thun for a regional tasting. The palace was built in the 15th century and was originally owned by the Thun family. Following restoration, it was purchased by the municipality of Trento to become its town hall. The front of the palace, which includes a beautiful balcony, is decorated with the Thun family coat of arms. The palace consists of a chapel, a tower and several buildings organised around courts. Our tasting took place in the inner courtyard.

We were presented with 44 wines for tasting. In general, the wines had the characteristics of cool-climate wines with high acidity and alcohol levels of around 13%. It was nice to discover that with only a few exceptions the wines did not suffer from over-oaking or over-extraction. On the contrary, more concentration may have been the single factor that distinguished the best wines.

The following are my top 25% of wines at that morning's tasting:

Sparkling wines

The Trentodoc sparkling wines were the major revelation of the trip for me. They are made by the traditional method and from the Champagne varieties (Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier), plus Pinot Blanc. Due to the sparkling wine production volumes, Chardonnay is the most planted variety in Trentino, accounting for over 30% of white grapes. My favourites are as follows:

Trentodoc Tannai Millesimato 2011 Brut, Borgo Dei Posseri-Ala (Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, 38 months on the lees): This wine is of Champagne quality with intense aromas of brioche, yeast and minerality. The palate reveals a wine with a creamy mousse, good structure, excellent acidity and fresh fruit with a long finish. It is well balanced. Chapeau!

Trento DOC Salisa Millesimato 2011 Brut, Villa Corniole (Blanc de Blancs, 30 months on the lees): This has ripe, fruity aromas of apples and minerality, and a note of lime and honey, as well as toast. The palate reveals persistent

bubbles and a creamy mousse with ripe, fruit flavours. Quite charming.

White wines

In the 7th edition of *The World Atlas of Wine*, Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson MW wrote that, 'some of the world's few interesting Müller-Thurgaus are produced here'. The wines are clean and dry with aromas of white flowers and citrus fruit. These are simple, pleasurable wines produced from grapes mostly grown in the Valle di Cembra.

A good example is **Trentino DOC Müller-Thurgau 2014 Cantina Di Montagna-Cembra**. It expresses complex aromas characterised by white flowers and notes of lemon. The wine is almost full bodied with a slightly bitter but pleasant aftertaste.

We also sampled some very good Pinot Bianco. The following two are my best finds:

Trentino DOC Pinot Bianco, 2013 Cantina Sociale Di Avio: This wine has complex aromas of minerality, apples, white flowers and a note of honey. It is elegant, well-balanced with a long finish. Very good.

Vigneti delle Dolomiti IGT Bianco 708 Km Cembrani 2013, Cembrani

This is an excellent wine with lots of complexity of spices, white flowers and fresh stone fruit. The wine has good acidity and fresh fruit flavours, as well as being balanced and vibrant. Good work!

Red wines

Marzemino thrives on the low slopes of Vallagarina and especially in the sub-region of Isera. Massimo Tarter, the winemaker of Cantina d'Isera, asked us not to expect the variety to produce a Cabernet Sauvignon type of wine. It produces straightforward wines with red fruit flavours and low tannins. Marzemino is pleasant to drink slightly chilled

on hot summer days. Cantina d'Isera produces a range of excellent Marzeminos, as follows:

Trentino DOC Marzemino, 2013 Cantina d'Isera: This wine expresses aromas of sour cherries, blueberries and sweet cherries. It has good structure, concentration and is balanced. A very nice wine.

Trentino Superiore DOC Marzemino d'Isera, Eticheta Verde 2012, Cantina d'Isera: A clean wine with both good structure and concentration. Its aromas and flavours are of fresh cherries. Not too complex but enjoyable.

Trentino Superiore DOC Marzemino D'Isera, Ziresi 2013, Salizzoni: This wine is impressive due to both its intense, complex aromas and flavours of blackberries, as well as black and red cherries. It has a round and soft texture, with a long finish. A substantial wine which must be the one referred to by Mozart in Don Giovanni...

The Lagrein grape was represented by **Trentino DOC Lagrein Petramontis 2012, Villa Corniole**: This is another excellent wine. The wine expresses mineral, earthy aromas and flavours of fresh black fruit. It has both good acidity and structure. It is balanced, fresh and vibrant.

Pinot Nero was represented by two good wines. I had a preference towards **Trentino Superiore DOC Pinot Nero, 2012 Cantina Sociale di Avio**, which is perfumed with



An invitation to taste Marzemino and metodo classico wines in Trento.

Photo by Panos Kakaviatos.

aromas and flavours of mulberries and strawberries, as well as gamey notes. The tannins are ripe and soft and the palate expresses sweet red fruit.

Although I would personally prefer to see Trentino develop and seek to excel with wines produced from their local varieties rather than planting international grapes, I must admit that the **Trentino DOC Rosso Navesel 2012, Simoncelli Armando** is a very good example of a Bordeaux blend (Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot). The wine expresses the red spectrum of fruits, such as raspberries on a delicate herbaceous background. It has noticeable, ripe and soft tannins. It is balanced and elegant with a long finish.

A journey to the Piana Rotaliana leaves **Quentin Sadler** wanting more

The scenery was stunning and I was in a place that I had long wanted to see – Trentino. What's more we were heading to the Piana Rotaliana, the only place in the world where the elusive Teroldego grape seems to thrive.

We were guests of the famous Mezzacorona co-operative, which produces a wide range of Trentino wines and markets them under several different labels, including Feudi Arancio and Rotari, as well as Mezzacorona itself. Founded by 20 growers in 1904, when the area was still in Austria-Hungary, Mezzacorona has gone from strength to strength and now has 1,600 members and claims to be the largest producer of Pinot Grigio in the world.

The winery was rather swanky and impressive looking, complete with a grass-roofed tasting room, but we did not go inside. Instead we headed up into the vineyards.

It was quite a ride, winding up the eastern side of the valley wall. Eventually the roads petered out and we had to carry on by foot until we came to a vantage point overlooking the beautiful vine covered plain spread out below us.

Wine has been produced here since ancient times and it is easy to see why. It is the only piece of flat land around and in times past it must have been the easiest place to work as well as being the only useful thoroughfare in the region.

The main grape grown here is of course the Teroldego,

which is used to make the famous local speciality Teroldego Rotaliano, which has its own DOC. There are two possible sources for the name Teroldego, either from the *tirelle* trellis system on which the vines are grown. Or, and this is my favourite, from a dialect phrase for 'gold of the Tyrol'. Certainly the grape has been here a very long time with records showing that *vinum teroldegum* was in use by 1383.

The Piano Rotaliano is a triangular alluvial plain surrounded by high mountains and although it is the lowest point of Trentino, at 200-220 metres above sea level, our host told us that it is still higher than the hills of Franciacorta. The mountains protect the Piano Rotaliano from the cold mountain winds and temper the heat of summer and the cold of winter, so creating an excellent site for ripening quality grapes.

Most of the plain is sandwiched between the River Adige to the east and the River Noce to the west and sits some 30 kilometres (km) north of Lake Garda and around 10km north of Trento, the handsome local capital. Until Hapsburg rule the plain was liable to flooding and so it was not until the reclamation projects of the 1840s that the landscape came to look as it does now, with the River Adige being moved a little to the south. Of course this process changed the soil and made the land more workable. The stony, gravel and pebbly riverbed formed of granite and alpine limestone covered by layers of fine, fertile silt makes a soil that is dry and warms up quickly. Being so well drained it acts much like vineyards do on slopes, despite being on a flat valley floor.

Standing out in the sun, Lucio Matricardi, Mezzacorona's chief winemaker, treated us to a very long and animated lecture about how the valley worked and the rock formations of the mountains. It was all done with great charm and good humour, but I would have learned so much more if the lecture



Left: The Piano Rotaliano, photo by **Quentin Sadler**. Far left: Lucio Matricardi of Mezzacorona, photo by **Robert Smyth**.

had been in a room where I could hear it all, with visual aids and wines to taste in order to illustrate the points.

Eventually we all headed off to one of Mezzacorona's estates and were able to taste some wine, a sparkling Trentodoc that was sound if not exciting and a Teroldego Rotaliano Riserva. Unfortunately, those two wines were all we tasted, so I have not really been able to get a proper understanding of this fascinating appellation. For me that remains work in progress.

Day Three: Robert Smyth picks out a few gems from an 80-strong line-up

Bright and early on Saturday morning, we headed over to the ornate Palazzo Roccabruna for another regional tasting – this time of 80 Trentino wines. Most of the standouts were to be found among the long line of Trentodocs. It was no surprise that Ferrari, which was recently named as Wine Enthusiast's European Winery of the Year for 2015 (see p. XX), showed why it is the benchmark to which all other Trentodocs are compared. Ferrari's Trentodoc Perlé Millesimato 2008 Brut was intense with great balance between fruit (stone and tropical – especially juicy pineapple) and waxy, yeasty notes with the vibrant acidity bringing freshness as well as serious length. Other very good Trentodocs came from Revi (Aldeno), Rotari (Mezzacorona) and Abate Nero.

It was surprising given the Pinot Grigio grape's vast presence in Trentino, though not entirely unwelcome, to only taste one Pinot Grigio on the trip. Thankfully, the said wine was a good one. Pinot Grigio Vigna L'omeri 2013 from Cantina Roveré della Luna Aicholz was a nicely vibrant example of this all too often dullard of a grape, with both lively green fruit and a nutty touch. Meanwhile, the best Riesling I encountered on the trip was Moser Francesco's delle Venezie IGT Riesling 2013, which was cool, crispy and oozing varietal character.

Marzemino is Cantina d'Isera's speciality. Photo by Panos Kakaviatos, pictured on right under a pergola-trained vine. Photo by Quentin Sadler.

A visit to the Isera Valley provides Stephen Quinn with sounds as well as sights

The Marzemino grape grows well on the basalt soils in the Isera sub-zone of Trentino, at the southern end of the region. And, it seems to flourish at Cantina d'Isera, the traditional estate that was our last stop of the tour.

Mozart literally sang the praises of the grape in his opera Don Giovanni: "Versa il vino! Eccellente Marzemino [sic]!" Wine made from this grape tastes and smells of plums. Elsewhere in northern Italy Marzemino is blended with Barbera, Merlot or Sangiovese, but in Isera the grape performs solo.

The Dolomite Mountains that soar majestically throughout Trentino are just as impressive in this part of the region. As in Switzerland, the mountains occupy a vast area, which means only about a quarter of the province is arable.

Those Dolomites are similar in mineral composition to the land around Champagne in France and exert a similar influence on flavours. Sparkling wines are of high quality, though only 7 million bottles are made a year.

The mountains control temperatures and mellow the influence of strong winds that barrel down the valleys. In many places in the Isera Valley the church bells from the

tiny villages echo into the evening to herald the end of the day.

A canopy style of grape growing is employed on the steep slopes to catch all available sun. Massimo Tarter is the chief winemaker at Cantina d'Isera. During a tour of the vineyard, he described how he works hard to ripen Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio, as well as Marzemino, which requires a long growing season and ripens late.

A tasting afterwards in the evening sun in the gardens of the ramshackle winery (belonging to one of Isera co-operative's members) was one of the most pleasant and relaxed of the trip. Pomegranates grow in sunny spots of the garden and those church bells sounded as the sun set. A delightful range of local breads, cheeses and salamis was served.

Cantina d'Isera produces a range of reputable reds from Marzemino, and the version made from an organically grown plot was especially impressive with its fresh fruit, smooth tannins and a touch of minerality. These wines are approachable young and seem to taste better when served slightly chilled.

The highlight of the evening was a sparkling, made to mark Cantina d'Isera's centenary in 2007, which Massimo Tarter had recently disgorged.





Beer is also served; Doss24 spumante with cubed potatoes and dried beef; chanterelle mushrooms with beef carpaccio and spumante. Pictures by Panos.

Panos Kakaviatos explains that Trentino can be a culinary delight

As the early autumn sun set, Cantina d'Isera's Massimo Tarter served tasty local charcuterie and cheeses. Following our tour of his company's vineyard, we washed them down easily with some of the best Marzemino enjoyed over our trip to Trentino. Casual elegance, charming owners, delicious food and wine all fit into that positive image any wine lover would have of Italy.

Yet Trentino reflects a blend of Germanic and Italian. As we had discovered, nearly 75% of planted vines in this north-eastern Italian wine region are of white grapes, increasingly featuring the Müller-Thurgau variety.

By the same token, most menus include Germanic foods from Knödel – similar to gnocchi – to apple Strüdel, made from the region's ubiquitous apples. Take for example beer, also big in Trentino. One common feature here is the brewery restaurant with comfort foods like hearty pizza.

This cultural blend of cuisine exists as well with more high-brow dining. Such was exemplified at our first group

dinner, at the lovely La Locanda del Passator, where we enjoyed one of the best Müller Thurgau wines of the entire trip: the 2014 vintage made by the cooperative Zanotelli. While pronounced aromatics do not come to mind when thinking of Müller-Thurgau, this wine exuded appealing pear, iodine and floral notes. It was enjoyed with delectable *mezzemaniche con formaggio caprino*: firm and tasty short sleeve pasta, with goat cheese and basil and tomato. The match of a crisp Germanic varietal white matched the Italian pasta very well.

That same evening, we enjoyed what may well have been my favourite *spumante* of all that we tried that trip – Doss24 Cantina La Vis e Valle di Cembra – a smooth and fresh blend of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. It paired very well with a savoury and elegantly presented – in cube form – mix of stewed potatoes and smoked beef from quality producer Salumificio di Casa Largher in Cembra. A tasty main course of pork tenderloin roasted with a Calvados-based sauce matched well with the Villa Corniole Cimbri Rosso 2011, a blend of Teroldego and Lagrein with Merlot.

Another memorable dining experience was lunch at the Osteria a Le Due Spade in Trento. Apparently records for this Two Swords restaurant date back to the mid-14th

century when it offered hospitality to pilgrims, travellers and dignitaries attending the Council of Trent. Today the Peterlana family carry on the tradition of hospitality with excellent service and cuisine such as homemade gnocchi with creamy cheese from Trentino, even if the Rotari 28+ sparkler was not as vivacious as others we had sampled. The main course of pheasant with lard, chestnut purée with a grape sauce of Marzemino went very well with the Marco Donati Nosiola 2014.

As almost anywhere in Italy, you can find simpler and just as appetizing concoctions in Trentino. Before joining our group, I lunched at Ristorante Antica Trattoria Duo Mori, a charming restaurant that served a typical

Italian dish of mushroom-stuffed ravioli with fresh tomatoes and basil. Even though you can find fine handmade pasta anywhere in the world, this hearty dish was so flavourful, the pasta so pleasingly textured and the mushrooms so fresh. A copious salad proved excellent accompaniment, but let's put it this way: carb free in Italy is not done easily. Topped off with a super smooth and flavourful cappuccino, the total price was friendly at €21.

We went back to more high-brow eating for our final dinner at the gorgeous Casa del Vino restaurant in the charming village of Isera. One highlight was a contentious discussion about the merits of an expensive wine called San Leonardo, a Bordeaux blend made in nearby Avio. While some participants, like myself, were not impressed, others said it was amazing.

At this final dinner, we enjoyed a delicately delicious starter of chanterelle mushrooms and beef carpaccio, marinated in herbs – the dish had fine texture and equally excellent flavour and was matched well by a local sparkler. Another part of the meal included yet more sumptuous homemade pasta, in this case ravioli stuffed with polenta.

All in all, culinary delights made our Trentino trip very pleasurable.

News briefs...

Deaths

We were sorry to learn that **Arnold Tasker MW OBE**, who was the 21st person to become an MW, died aged 89 on 27th November. Arnold's first introduction to wine was while serving in the army with the Cameroon Highlanders. In 1947, promoted to temporary captain, he became the wine buyer for the Regimental Mess and never looked back. What followed was a rich, varied and often pioneering journey through the wine industry including a period as chairman of the Institute of Masters of Wine. He was awarded an OBE following work with the UK government on the Alcohol Education Trust & Research Council. The Masters of Wine newsletter records Arnold's remarkable and colourful life here:

www.mastersofwine.org/en/news/newsletters/january-2016-newsletter.cfm

A memorial service will be held in Thame, Oxfordshire on 23rd January.

Also in November, on the 29th, **Brian Wheaton MW**, died following a long illness. When asked by the institute itself what was the most important thing he had learned since becoming an MW, he quipped: "Becoming painfully aware of how much I still don't know about wine!" A global traveller and avid sailor, he worked in both Guernsey and The Bahamas as a wine buyer and later in the UK as a wine educator, before taking to the high seas on the cruise ship lecture circuit.

Among the winemaking fraternity, Loire winemaker **Charly (Jean-Louis) Foucault** (born 1947) from Clos Rougeard died on 29th December. For a touching tribute that recalls, among other things, his excellent wine made by traditional



Late lamented winemakers: on left, Charly Foucault, photo by Jim Budd from 2010; right, Jean Meyer, photo by Nigel Blythe/Cephas.com from 2006.

methods and his great sense of humour, read Jim Budd's post about Charly on his blog: <http://goo.gl/HbT7MR>

Jean Meyer of Domaine Josp Meyer in Alsace died after a long illness, aged 71, on 3rd January. Jean transformed Domaine Josp Meyer from a negociant to an estate using only its own grapes, brilliantly combining winemaking prowess with a flair for marketing.

Bob Oatley, the founder of Rosemount Estate, who did much to help Australia's early export drive, died on 10th January, aged 87. *Decanter* has this report: <http://goo.gl/eH0SvW>

Other select news

A sparkling year for Ferrari: Last November, Italy's Ferrari capped a very good year by being named European Winery of the Year by *Wine Enthusiast* in the 2015 Wine Star Awards, 'in recognition of all the firm has achieved for Italian wine'. *Wine Enthusiast* commended Ferrari, for among other things, helping put Italian sparkling wine on the world's radar.

"Guided by the third generation of the Lunelli family, Ferrari embodies the very best of *metodo classico* sparkling winemaking... No brand has reached the luxury status and prestige of Ferrari," said *Wine Enthusiast*. The US wine magazine also observed that Ferrari dominates the Trento DOC with 40% of the market share. "This is a region on the rise, and Ferrari's exquisite line-up of wines are a principal reason why," it said. See also our report on Trentino on page 32. Two months earlier, Ferrari scooped the Sparkling Wine Producer of the Year gong at the 2015 edition of the Champagne and Sparkling Wine World Championships, chaired by Tom Stevenson.

Success keeps on coming for English wine: It seems that English sparkling wine is forever in the news. The much-decorated Sussex-based Ridgeview Wine Estates was awarded the UK Wine Guild's highest achievement award, 'in recognition of their setting and maintaining the highest international standards of quality and tradition in winemaking.'

Speaking at the Wine Guild's winter banquet at Vintner's Hall in late November, Tamara Roberts – who received the award with her mother Chris – paid tribute to her late father Mike Roberts OBE for his pioneering role in introducing Chardonnay grapes in Ditchling, Sussex. "For dad to have had the foresight to risk it all, and to see where we are now, it is really a privilege to have been a part of that journey... Our wines have always had a sense of place and provenance, however the world of wine drinkers was yet to see the full potential of what England was able to produce," she is quoted as saying by *Harpers*.

The UK's WSTA puts the case for Europe: In a letter to its members regarding the UK's upcoming in/out referendum on EU membership, dated 2nd December 2015, the Wine and Spirit Trade Association (WSTA) said that, "while it is minded to support staying in the EU, the WSTA should conduct a survey of members to glean their views and inform the WSTA's public position." The WSTA also observed that,

“the UK’s decision on EU membership will have a significant impact on the wine and spirit trade in the UK, and on WSTA members, chiefly because of the potential ramifications of the UK leaving the largest single market in the world and foregoing a role in decisions affecting its rules of operation and trade agreements with the rest of the world.” For the full text of the letter contact info@wsta.co.uk.

UK drinking guidelines: The WSTA also reacted to the UK’s Chief Medical Officer’s strict new guidelines on the consumption of alcohol, which state that both men and women are safest not drinking more than 14 units per week on a regular basis, in order to reduce health risks. “The WSTA and other trade associations were not consulted ahead of the change and the Department of Health has not provided any information over the immediate implications of the new guidance or details of any transition period,” said the WSTA. In response, the WSTA said it had written to the Minister of State for Health to, “seek clarity over these issues and to outline the significant uncertainty that has been created with their approach.”

EU planting rights: In France, some producers expressed concern over the relaxing of EU rules on vine planting rights, which came into effect on 1st January 2016. In theory, vines can now be planted on any plot of land and be sold commercially. Those against the change fear that the liberalisation could represent a threat to existing appellations.

New plantings are strictly limited and in one year cannot exceed one per cent of an EU member state’s existing vineyard area, which for France would be about 8,000 hectares. Member states have also been given powers to limit expansion in certain areas.

What this means in practice is that the Jura wine region, for example, with less than 25% of its potential AOC areas planted, can expand more quickly than before. It also means that wine made from a vineyard planted on a slag heap near Béthune, just south of Calais in northern France (yes, it does exist), could one day be commercialised legally.



Georgia on our minds: Circle member Carla Capalbo alerted members to the tragedy that had befallen Georgian-based winemaker John Wurdeman, well known as the producer of Pheasant’s Tears wines, and a leading mover and shaker in the new Georgian wine movement. His was one of three houses that were destroyed completely by fire in December (see photograph above, obtained from the fundraising website).

Carla wrote: “His house was like a museum, with collected artefacts, wines, carpets, musical instruments and the many paintings he (as a fine artist) painted. His children and wife are safe, but there is little effective insurance in Georgia.” American-born John has lived in Georgia since 1996. Friends in the US have set up an online fund-raising page (www.gofundme.com/m2ej8rb2) to help John re-build his house.

The Georgian winemaking community has clubbed together to raise money via a wine auction. The winemakers raised around 20,000 Georgian Lari (approx. €7,650), mostly from an auction of rare Georgian natural wines, held on 27th December. The Georgian Wine Club described the auction as the first example of Georgian wines fetching such high prices. A full report from the local press is at: <http://agenda.ge/news/49746/eng>

Napa Valley name secured: In the US, the Napa Valley Vintners (NVV) non-profit trade association announced on 12th December that it had obtained a Certification Mark from the United States Patent and Trademark Office for the name ‘Napa Valley’. The NVV said: “This achievement marks another milestone in the NVV’s ongoing efforts to protect the integrity of the Napa Valley name and prevent consumer deception. It is the first time an American Viticultural Area (AVA) has been registered as a Certification Mark in the US.”

Stop press: California’s Premier Cru goes bust *Report by Jim Budd*

Embattled Premier Cru, a wine retailer based in Berkeley, California, filed for bankruptcy on 8th January 2016.

The company has assets of only \$7 million, which is mainly wine, while its current debts are just over \$70 million. Money owed to unsecured creditors, who are mostly customers who ordered wine that they never received, totals \$69 million.

Partial details of the creditors reveal they currently number almost 10,000. Sums owed range from \$6.99 to over \$800,000. A William Koch is listed amongst the creditors with no details of what he is owed.

Premier Cru was set up in 1980 by John Fox and Hector Ortega, with Fox Ortega Enterprises as its corporate name. Initially a retail operation, Premier Cru later started to import wine – mainly high-end wines. These were often ordered *en primeur* or as pre-arrival wines (futures), usually at very keen prices. The company became infamous for delays in delivering wine with customers waiting four or five years for a delivery of pre-arrival wines.

Facing mounting debts and an increasing number of court cases over the non-delivery of wines, Premier Cru suddenly closed its fancy retail outlet in Berkeley on 10th December 2015.

On 29th December 2015, Universal Card Inc, one of Premier Cru’s credit card processors, filed a claim for at least \$228,500 against the company. Its claim also alleges fraud. This may well have been the final blow.

Echoes here of 1855.com?

Book news and reviews

News by Wink Lorch

With the obvious exception of Jancis and Julia's OWC4, the book that seems to have been most reviewed and mentioned in the lead up to last Christmas was Suzanne Mustacich's *Thirsty Dragon* (see also my interview with Suzanne on page 19).

Rather than review *Thirsty Dragon* myself, I have chosen to extract a few choice comments from reviews already published by CWW members. This follows on from David Copp's review of deputy editor Robert Smyth's book on Hungary. We also include two reviews of books by non-members that I believe will be of interest. Reviews follow on the next page.

Below is news from Tom Stevenson about his recently published books, plus insider information from members on the very few titles that are due to be published in the first part of 2016.

Members, please don't forget to keep me informed of your forthcoming book publications. In our July issue we will include a list of books to be published in the autumn.

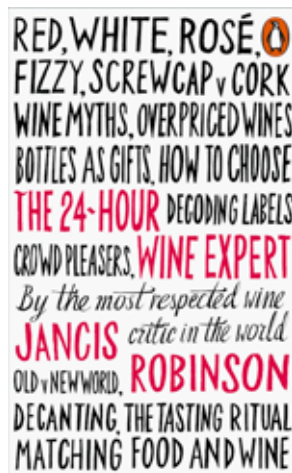
Tom Stevenson advises us about his latest two books that we failed to mention in previous editions of *Update*.

Spit & Scribble was published on 1st January 2016 (£19.99, Price-Sinclair Publishing). Described in the blurb as 'The wine taster's essential, non-digital companion!' Tom says that *Spit & Scribble* is more than a wine tasting notebook, it's an invaluable wine and vineyard visiting tool that he has been using in a gradually evolving form since 1989. "Having been asked by friends and colleagues for copies over the years and dished out a fair few in response, I have now made it available worldwide." Apart from being able to record 500 tasting notes it includes the International Wine Taster's Rescue Package with all the

most basic tasting terms in French, German, Italian and Spanish (complete with phonetic pronunciations) and vital conversion tables (ever wanted to convert tons per acre into hectolitres or vice-versa?).

"In November 2015 I also released *Tom Stevenson's Champagne & Sparkling Wine Guide 2016* (£25.99, Price-Sinclair Publishing, 248 pages), which can be used by novices as a simple, annual guide to the best fizz on the planet (full notes of all gold and silver medal winning wines from the 2015 edition of the Champagne and Sparkling World Wine Competition). For the geekiest of fizz geeks the introductory chapters and micropedia contain everything they could possibly want to know about the technology, science and other technical aspects of sparkling wine production (honestly, a lot of this stuff just cannot be found anywhere else)."

Jancis Robinson MW tells us that her new book, *The 24-hour Wine Expert* is to be published on 4th February.



"[It's] for people who wouldn't dream of buying a wine reference book but want to learn all the most important practical stuff in 24 hours," says Jancis. She describes the new book, which was inspired by her 24-year-old daughter Rose and her friends, as "one of the most difficult books to write because I've had to keep answering complete novice's questions!" More information on the book, which is being

published by Penguin Books in the UK at £4.99 and later by Abram Books in the US (due out in September), can be found at: <http://24hourwineexpert.com>.

The second edition of *Wine Production and Quality* by **Keith Grainger** and **Hazel Tattersall** will be published by Wiley Blackwell in March. "This is a totally updated and expanded edition of the previous works. I believe it to be unique, in comprising in one combined volume a detailed consideration of wine production, and a discussion as to how quality in wine may be achieved and assessed," says Keith. He and his co-author hope that, like the first edition, it will become recommended reading for wine study programmes in several countries. It will be published in hardback at £58.50.

Caroline Henry's *Terroir Champagne: The Luxury of Sustainable, Organic and Biodynamic Cuvées* is planned for release in early March. Her book is a collection of stories about winemakers who all share a passion for their terroir and want to protect it, and this is translated in their soil management, explains Caroline. "All the wines in this book originate from vineyards where herbicides have been eliminated. Herbicides, more than any other chemical wine growing product, kill the soil by compacting and eroding it." She likens herbicides to chemotherapy, which is hardly the best treatment for minor ailments. "And just as we do not use chemotherapy to treat a common cold, it makes no sense to use chemical herbicides when alternatives are available," she asserts.

Caroline used crowdfunding to self-publish the book, which is available for advance purchase at €25. For more details see: www.terroirchampagne.com.

Liz Palmer's first book, a 400-plus page extravaganza titled *The Ultimate Guide to Champagne*, will be published in March by her own publishing company, with launches planned in London, New York, Toronto and other cities. Liz also has two other Champagne-related books in the pipeline: *The Most Powerful Women in Champagne* and *The Champagne Cookbook – Traditional and Modern Recipes*.

*Reviews of recently published books***Robert Smyth: Hungary: A Tasting Trip to the New Old World**Review by **David Copp**

Blue Guides, £12.95, 300 pages, softback

Disclaimer from David Copp:

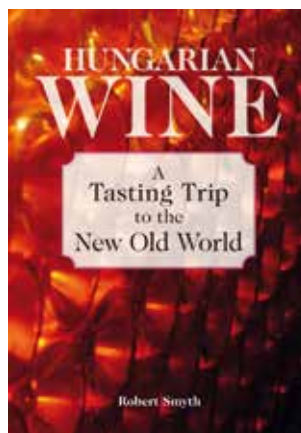
Robert edited my first wine book – Hungary: Its Fine Wines and Winemakers. We worked together at the Budapest Business Journal and on other projects and we share a passion for cricket.

I liked everything about this book: its size, shape, feel, layout and illustration. The writing is sharp, succinct, and as good an account as you will get about what is happening in Hungary today.

Robert was endowed with an enquiring nose for wines, but practice has given him an extremely discerning palate. What he really gets across very well is that Hungary's world-class winemakers have inspired a younger generation to make very good, even great wine. These are young winemakers ready to try new approaches to old, established, indigenous varieties rather than ape the well-known international varieties, which can be produced on a much larger scale elsewhere. Hence the New Old World of the title.

Robert is as keen to identify the established greats as he is to direct us to these gifted younger winemakers, who are learning how to handle and develop indigenous varieties. In many cases they are the sons or daughters of successful winemaking fathers. But others from a variety of backgrounds have been enticed into the trade by the prospect of learning to tease interesting wines from their native landscape. The author makes the point that the new breed of winemakers is bold, fearless and confident. Their seniors keep an eye on them and I can vouch that most of them remain modest and keen to learn more.

Starting with Furmint, those of us lucky enough to taste István Szepsy's 2000 Úrágya, made for Királyudvar, realised



at once that the master had shown the future for Tokaj was as much in great dry wines as sweet. Over the years Szepsy has attracted enough disciples to fill a bible, but one of the newest and most successful is Károly Barta, who took note that it all starts with the land. His quiet and patient approach to finding the best available site paid off, not least because he found a talented young winemaker able to express it so subtly. Attila Homonna works his own land, as well as making wine for Barta, and is just one of a dozen or more, not just good, but brilliant young winemakers getting the best out of Furmint and Hárslevelű, the latter which until now has played second fiddle to the orchestral leader of the former.

Anyone seriously interested in wine who has not yet visited Tokaj is like the person who claims to love Scotland but has only been to Edinburgh and Glasgow. As a lovely old Scots lady pointed out to me when I admitted I hadn't been to the Highlands, "your education's bin neglected".

Olaszrizling is the most widely planted white grape in Hungary and until recently, it was considered a workhorse variety useful for quenching the thirst on a warm summer's day. Now, the author informs us, several producers are making extremely attractive, if not classy, Olaszrizling. He introduces us to Philipp Oser, the Swiss owner of Villa Tolnay, to Pannonhalma Abbey, István Jásdi, Ottó Légli and to other experienced winemakers such as Hilltop, Huba Szeremley, János and Dániel Konyári, Vencel Garamvári and their younger protégés.

Moving region to Sopron, Robert sets out to show how and why it has become such a good producer of top quality Kékfrankos. When I first went there in 1993 I found the wines thin, acetic and decidedly sharp; the very type of potion Falstaff advised Englishmen to forswear. Then, the Weninger family came over the border from Austria to lead

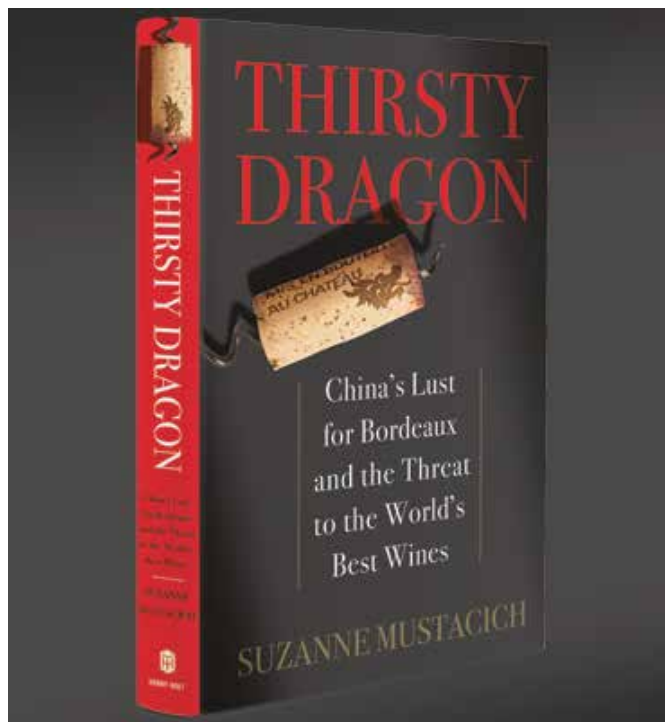
the way and now there are a host of good growers aiming for the top. Robert shows how progress has come from better (often biodynamic) farming, higher quality grapes, the use of wood to soften tannins and unremitting care in the cellar.

Michael Broadbent MW first alerted me to the potential of Cabernet Franc in Villány, and Caroline Gilby MW, a true expert on Hungarian wine, has consistently expressed her enthusiasm for the performance of this variety in Villány. Robert now confirms that Franc's share of vineyard is up to 15% and rising. Attila Gere and József Bock have been the pacemakers with Csaba Malatinsky quietly making the point that he too has a lot to offer. However, the author puts his nose into many new glasses – not least those of Sauska – a relative newcomer, who has helped expand the reputation of the region.

The author is also good on Szekszárd, the other established southern region, which is refining its own highly approachable style with Bordeaux varieties. However, Robert pinpoints the likes of Takler and Heimann, who are developing Kékfrankos and the delightful Kadarka, a Balkan variety introduced by Serbs fleeing in advance of the Ottoman armies at the turn of the 16th century.

He then takes us up north, to Eger and the Mátra. Eger, synonymous with Bikavér, has a problem trying to shake off the mass market image created by inexpensive Bull's Blood, which is Bikavér's English translation. The best producers try to avoid using the name Bikavér because there are so many producers with yields of 100hl/ha wanting to take advantage of it. But while there are such superb winemakers as the softly spoken ampelographer Tamás Pók, as well as István Tóth and György Lőrincz at St. Andrea, there is hope that the wines, if not the labels, will continue to get better. Robert is just as excited about Mátra because 'bubbling below the mass production surface is a band of dynamic and daring winemakers prepared to push the limits... proving how good their terroir really is.'

This is a timely book to remind those in the trade that although the international marketing of Hungarian wines leaves a lot to be desired, there is a huge body of exciting talent working in Hungarian wine regions which deserves our attention.



Suzanne Mustacich: *Thirsty Dragon* (subtitle: *China's Lust for Bordeaux and the Threat to the World's Best Wines*)

Henry Holt/Macmillan, £20, 352 pages, hardback

The Financial Times named Suzanne's book as one of its books of the year for 2015. Described by the paper as a business book, the original review was written by Jancis Robinson MW and a longer version appeared on her website.

Near the start of the review, the book is described as 'riveting', while Jancis explains how qualified Suzanne was to write this book.

My favourite part, which really reminds me to buy this book now, is this:

'She [Suzanne] is also drily observant about the legion of Chinese "interpreters" who flooded in to Bordeaux to

negotiate between the two factions. "As a whole the women spurned the staid, local style – a Hermès scarf and driving moccasins – preferring a tiny miniskirt paired with six-inch stiletto heels" (improbable vineyard wear). Their translations always took far longer than what they were translating, apparently. "More and more, the translators were adopting the role of gatekeeper to Chinese buyers and demanding a sales commission, often from both sides."

Access the full review here: www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/china-v-bordeaux-games-people-play.

On *Palate Press* Simon Woolf describes the book as, 'an exhaustive study of what happens when two bullish trading cultures meet head on for the first time'.

He writes that 'Mustacich is to be credited as it's very rare indeed to read in such detail about the inner workings of "La Place", Bordeaux's extraordinarily self-protective, closed ecosystem of châteaux, négociants and courtiers.' Perhaps to temper his praise, he writes:

'If there is a criticism with the book, it is that the vast array of personalities and detail sometimes threatens to overbalance the narrative thrust. One could not accuse Mustacich of glossing over any detail or angle, however slight.' See full review at:

<http://palatepress.com/2015/09/wine/thirsty-dragon-deftly-tackles-chinas-effect-on-bordeaux>

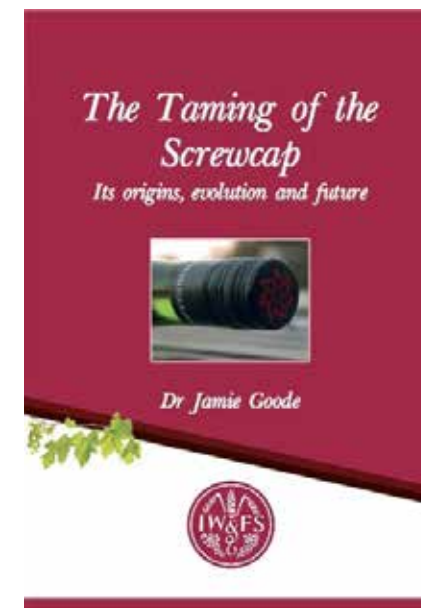
Bordeaux-based member Jane Anson reviewed the book for *Decanter* and was also full of praise in the main, writing that parts were, 'a cross between a detective story and a darkly comic tragedy'.

She finishes the review with this:

'The overall feeling at the end of reading is one of unease for the future, even as the Chinese market continues to grow and opportunities multiply. Mustacich wisely doesn't try to wrap things up too neatly, choosing instead to point out that, 'China challenges the rules of the game, but the game will still be played'.

Click here for her full review:

<http://www.decanter.com/wine-news/opinion/news-blogs-anson/china-wine-book-makes-tough-reading-for-bordeaux-chateaux-272282>



Dr Jamie Goode: *The Taming of the Screwcap* (subtitle: *Its origins, evolution and future*)

Review by **Wink Lorch**

The International Wine & Food Society, £10, 62 pages, softback

For the society's 16th monograph it turned to a subject that remains, on a world scale, both topical and controversial. The commissioning editor was none other than our CWW administrator, Andrea Warren, who is also administrator for the society and the person to contact to buy a copy of the monograph. The tightly-structured work was deftly edited by CWW member Susanna Forbes.

Jamie Goode has written widely on the subject of closures, so he was certainly the obvious choice of author to commission for this monograph. After an introduction come six chapters starting with 'A brief history of wine closures' and ending with 'Final perspective', followed by a short glossary of essential terms, and a bibliography and reference section.

What Jamie decided to include and exclude in the history chapter surprised me a little. There's a rightful mention of Switzerland's early adoption of screwcaps and a brief mention of Penfolds' customer trial on Bin 2 in 1996, but no discussion at all about the once widely distributed magnums of cheap wines closed with screwcap. Two-litre bottles closed with screwcap of Soave and Valpolicella (or *Valpolystripper* as it was known by some people), in particular, were prevalent right up to the 1990s and in my view led to the initial public reluctance to buy wines under screwcap.

Otherwise, it's an extremely good overview, in particular of the technical side of screwcaps, including much detail on the trials conducted in Australia and New Zealand. The technical chapter covers a quarter of the booklet, though the subject returns again with force when the topic of reduction is covered in the chapter 'The arguments for and against the screwcap'. Although a necessary discussion, this part went a little too in-depth and off the point of screwcaps.

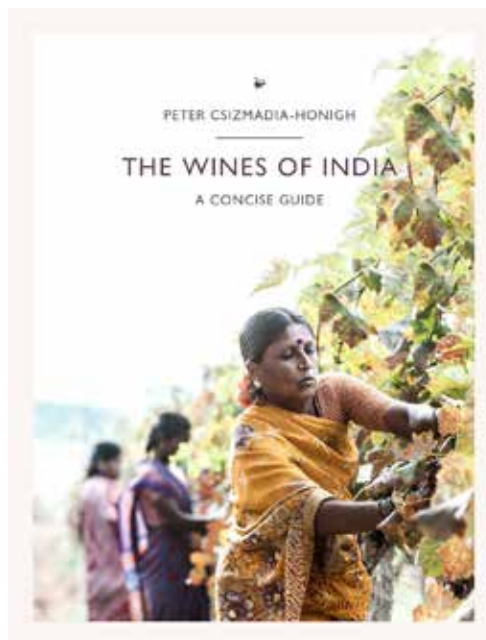
The chapter on the pros and cons, followed by one on the future cover most aspects in an objective way. One glaring omission though was no proper discussion about the environmental impact of different closures.

My small gripes aside, this booklet is perfect for any wine lover or professional who has not read much literature before on the subject – particularly someone who wants to be able to put across some solid points in either an educational situation or hold their own during an argument on the best wine bottle closures. Oh yes, and congratulations to whoever thought up the monograph title.

Peter Csizmadia-Honigh: *The Wines of India, A Concise Guide*
Review by **Brett Jones**

The Press Publishing, £25, 452 pages, softback

The Geoffrey Roberts Award is an international wine-related bursary of £4,000, given each year to someone who can demonstrate to the judging panel a genuine commitment to New World wines. Peter Csizmadia-Honigh was a worthy



winner of the award in 2014, enabling him to publish this interesting book about a country that has started to produce wine as recently as the early 1980s.

Named 'A Concise Guide', it is actually a lengthy, but worthy tome, which starts with detailed information about the history of contemporary Indian wine, subtropical winegrowing, grape varieties and wine styles. Modern winemaking began with Indians who had enjoyed wine on their travels abroad, in particular successful entrepreneurs and businessmen. There were already established vineyards in India, but for table grapes, so some realised growing grapes for wine wouldn't present a problem.

However, the subtropical climate is more difficult for wine grapes. Although many better vineyards now have *vinifera* varieties planted on phylloxera-resistant rootstocks, the delightfully named 'local' hybrid varieties Bangalore Blue and Bangalore Purple, with their foxy and musky notes, are still used for cheap, sub-standard wines for the local market.

Following this scene-setting is a detailed explanation of how the author reaches his conclusions as to the wine

quality and ratings in the context of Indian wines, leading into a classification of the country's producers.

Peter classifies 36 wine producers: two with five stars – KRSMA Estates and SDU Winery, 12 with four stars, 16 with three stars and six with two stars – 'wineries that produce modest wines... but often in styles palatable to the rural Indian consumer only'. Further lists follow in the next chapter with his highly recommended wines, divided up by grape variety.

The bulk of the book, in fact three-quarters, with more than 300 pages, is where the author really gets into his stride! He travels through eight regions in five states from landlocked Madhya Pradesh, where Ambi Vineyards reaches to just short of the Tropic of Cancer, via Maharashtra, which accounts for two-thirds of the national production, to Tamil Nadu 1,500 kilometres south, where the, possibly unfortunately named, Cumbum Valley Winery is the only producer in this state.

There are good descriptions of each area with details of geography, soils, grape varieties, as well as the all-important climatic conditions. These are followed by pithy descriptions of the individual wineries with, if they are good enough, a couple of wines singled out for praise in Peter's Picks.

Fifty wineries are profiled – however the author only actually classifies 36 of them. By writing about wineries that he didn't classify, he shows the Indian wine business, warts and all, justly damning the sub-standard businesses. And, making this book a complete overview.

I was pleased to see this book is well endowed with photos, but too many of them are textbook-like and some are downright ordinary. Some of the photos are captioned, but many are not, which is an oversight as I would love to know who or where we are looking at. The maps are attractive, but a tad vague with no key, apart from distance.

But, these are minor quibbles as Peter has written a well-researched, thorough and honest book about a wine producing country, which is entirely new to most of us. The book is imbued by his innate enthusiasm as well as an exacting personal criticism – it has inspired me with yet another reason to visit India.

Forthcoming wine events

Below, we include only major generic tastings and events. Nearly all trade tastings and other events in the UK can be found on the Wine & Spirit Trade Association (WSTA) website at <http://www.wsta.co.uk/resources/trade-diary> or by downloading their app for iPhone/Android at <http://www.wsta.co.uk/download-app>. There is also a useful diary with events for the UK on-trade that may be of interest at <http://imbibe.com/events>.

In the first table below and continuing overleaf you will find key London tastings, mainly generic, up to the end of May 2016. This should be of help even to those travelling in from outside. These are tastings that, as members of CWW, you should be able to attend easily, even at the last minute. Also included, in bold, are any CWW-organised tastings or events. On the next page you will also find major international conferences and trade fairs up to the end of 2016.

London tastings January - April 2016

DATE	Event/description	Contact name/email OR website for details and registration
18th January	New Zealand Annual Trade Tasting	www.nzwine.com
19th January	French Wine Discoveries	Anne-Catherine Vigoroux london@wine4trade.fr
21st January	Borsa Vini Italiani	Antonietta Kelly, i.kelly@ice.it
21st January	Loire Benchmark Tasting	Charles Sydney charles.sydney@gmail.com
26th January	Australia Day Tasting	Emma Symington emma.symington@wineaustralia.com
2nd February	Koshu of Japan	www.koshuofjapan.co.uk
2nd February	Decanter's Discoveries of Greece, Italy and Bulgaria	www.amiando.com/gibtrade2016

8th February	Annual Tasting of Austrian Wine	Caroline Lloyd London@advantageaustria.org
9th February	French Independent Winegrowers Tasting linked with France Under One Roof	pandora.mistry@businessfrance.fr www.franceunderoneroof.co.uk
22nd February	In Pursuit of Balance (California)	Kate Sweet or Annie Limm info@limmpr.com
24th February	Specialist Importers Trade Tasting (SITT) Spring 2016	Lisa Bullen, lisa.bullen@wrbm.com
2nd March	Wines of Portugal Annual Tasting	www.winesofportugal.com/en/
9th March	Champagne Annual Tasting	champagneannualtasting@peretti.com
10th March	Go West! Annual Tasting of California, Oregon and Washington State	Venla Freeman info@calwine.co.uk
17th March	The New Bulgaria: Annual Trade Tasting	Ivo Varbanov ivo@baiw.org
4th April	Wine Australia Alternative Varieties Tasting	Emma Symington emma.symington@wineaustralia.com
6th April	Vinho Verde Trade Tasting	Laura Ward laura@cubecom.co.uk
13th April	Sud de France Annual Tasting	http://suddefrance.co.uk/annualtasting2016
14th April	Wines from Spain Trade Tasting	Marianne Rodriguez bwines@comercio.mineco.es

Continued on next page

London tastings April - May 2016

21st April	Wine Tasmania Master Class	Kirsty Savory kirsty.savory@wineaustralia.com
22nd April	The Big Fortified Tasting	Ben Campbell-Johnston ben@campbell-johnston.com
28th April	Bordeaux Grands Crus 2012-2015	Sue Glasgow sue@spearcommunications.co.uk
9th May	English Wine Producers Annual Tasting	Julia Trustram-Eve julia@englishwineproducers.com
16th May	Great Riesling Tasting	Karen Sutton karensutton@wiseinc.co.uk

CWW AGM 2016

6th May	CWW AGM and Cyril Ray lunch	Andrea Warren andrea.warren@btinternet.com
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In the Corton Les Grandes Lolières vineyard. This photo appears in the photo book Une Année en Corton by this issue's featured photographer, Jon Wyand.

Erratum: In the last issue of *Circle Update* (Issue 124), some people received the pdf with a mistake on the cover, where it stated 'Trip: CWW in Hungary' when, of course, it should have stated Bulgaria. If anyone who received the version with the mistake wishes to receive a corrected copy for their collection, then please contact Andrea Warren.

International conferences and trade (or part-trade) fairs 2016

DATE	Event/description	Location	Contact name/email OR website for details and registration
25th-27th January	Millésime Bio, organic wine fair	Montpellier, France	www.millesime-bio.com
1st-3rd February	Salon des Vins de Loire	Angers, France	www.salondesvinsdeloire.com
15th-17th February	Vinisud, trade fair for wines from the Mediterranean	Montpellier, France	www.vinisud.com
13th-15th March	ProWein	Düsseldorf, Germany	www.prowein.com
10th-13th April	Vinitaly	Verona, Italy	www.vinitaly.com/EN
12th-15th April	ProWine Asia	Singapore	www.prowineasia.com
17th-18th April	The Real Wine Fair	London, UK	www.therealwinefair.com
3rd-5th May	London Wine Fair	London, UK	www.londonwinefair.com
15th-16th May	RAW Wine Fair	London, UK	www.rawfair.com
24th-26th May	Vinexpo	Hong Kong	www.vinexpohongkong.com
26th-28th May	Cool Climate Wine Symposium	Brighton, UK	www.iccws2016.com
7th-9th November	ProWine China	Shanghai, China	www.prowinechina.com
15th-16th November	Vinexpo	Tokyo, Japan	www.vinexpotokyo.com

Possible Circle event at Prowein, 13th-15th March 2016

We are considering the viability of running a Circle tasting at Prowein, which will hopefully appeal to a number of members who are unable to attend those in London. Please email Andrea Warren at administrator@circleofwinewriters.org if you plan to attend Prowein and would be interested in attending a Circle tasting. We will then collate the numbers and discuss this with Caroline Henry, who is researching the event.

