

My report September 30 2020 to August 31 2021

David Fulton, Chairman, Bookham Wine Club.

My previous report of September 2020 was written at a time of continuing uncertainty as to how the months following would play out, but your committee committed to proceeding with confidence and with a 'can do' attitude planned positively for better times, both in the short and long term.

From September 2020 our activities were limited by government restrictions. Even so, we arranged a small number of 'at home' meetings for groups of six in November and December, and members who were comfortable with this arrangement, met together and enjoyed both occasions and the wines that accompanied them.

Before the year end, and with the knowledge that the BCA was suffering from a severe reduction of income for the upkeep of The Old Barn Hall, we donated £250.00 to help their cause; a gesture that was much appreciated by the BCA.

Progressing into the New Year, Zoom technology helped deliver an entertaining quiz in February, and 'tutored tastings' in March, when Lits Philippou guided members along the amazing Loire, and in April Heather Dougherty presented the delightful wines of the northern Rhone. Appropriate wines were recommended by the presenters for members to buy ahead of the meetings.

Zoom didn't prove popular with *all* members, but a good number supported the events, making the initiatives viable and worthwhile.

With the arrival of spring and summer, and with the experience of last year's garden meetings, we embarked on a new series from June to September.

With holidays and European travel on 'hold,' traditional holiday 'hot spots' were chosen for our garden meetings. We 'travelled' to France, Italy, Spain and Portugal with appropriate, interesting and enjoyable sets of wines to match each country; commencing with a glass or two of fizz - Cremant, Prosecco, Cava and Espumante, appropriate to the country.

Average attendance hovered around 32 with members offering their gardens and facilities, so the meetings could take place. I make no reference to the weather, other than to say it could have been friendlier!

The host volunteers should be applauded, because without their support and help, our plans would have been stymied.

The key objective and intention during this time was to keep members involved and connected to the Club. The feedback from those that attended was certainly positive, with many commenting that the opportunity to meet different members was a bonus.

All credit and thanks then to the hosts and members who supported and enjoyed the Zoom events and the garden meetings that followed.

The planning, admin, logistics and cash collection for these events can be quite daunting, so full marks and 'thanks' to the committee team led largely by Ian Robinson, Roger Stafford and Kevin Forder. Together, they made it all happen.

My knowledge of other wine clubs, and 'social' clubs during this prolonged and difficult period was very different to ours. They simply closed their doors and 'shut up shop,' to the detriment, I feel, of their members.

I'm actually quite proud of what we have all achieved, ensuring members, as far as possible, have been able to continue to enjoy their membership. Regular monthly newsletters have also helped to keep members in touch with the Clubs plans, as they progressed.

During this period we were also planning for when we could return to 'normality' and meet in a safe and comfortable environment; a situation we achieved by negotiating a move from the 'cramped' Harrison Room into The Old Barn Hall, at the same time, maintaining our second Monday of the month for monthly meetings, commencing in September.

Another concern experienced in the early months of 2021, was a worrying fall in membership - a concern that needed addressing urgently. Even though the Club's finances have been, and continue to be, healthy, a reduction in membership means a loss of income, and this would restrict our programme; and with the increased costs that a move into the OBH would bring, keeping our membership at the right level became a priority.

At an early stage, and with the setting up of a marketing group, the committee determined two key priorities:

First, a complete refresh of our website, including the re-design of our logo. This important work would not have been possible without the help and patience of our good friends Kate and Claudio Ramponi. We are indebted to the specialist IT help and advice they both provided.

And second, a more concerted and planned approach to the recruitment of new members, building on the success achieved by our editorials in Look Local magazine and Bookham's Bulletin.

In addition, the use of social media has been assessed - with due caution - and while this is ongoing, our 'first toe in the water' with 'I Live in Bookham' has already produced interest from the community.

A low point at the end of our year was the sad news that Richard Bost - a most popular, respected and regular presenter and friend, has passed away after a prolonged period of

illness. We will certainly miss his presentations on 'all things wine' and of course his sense of humour.

A high point, I'm pleased to report and conclude on, is the good news that Heather Dougherty agreed to be our first President. Heather is a highly respected wine educator with an impressive depth of experience and knowledge of her subject and she will be an important asset to our Club, helping us to achieve our objectives.

Already, we have an exciting programme of monthly events and tastings organised for 2022 which will be announced shortly. We look forward to sharing these with you, and to carrying them out, hopefully in a world where we can all feel safe, secure and confident.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Best wishes
David Fulton
Chairman, Bookham Wine Club