



Chairman's report September 30 2021 to August 31 2022

David Fulton

Introduction

Another year has passed, and for the Wine Club, it has been successful. I say this for a number of reasons. Year's 2020 and 2021 were difficult. There were various unknowns likely to affect the Club, not least of which was to keep the Club going. But we did, thanks to the efforts of a hard working committee and an enthusiastic and supportive response from members.

The Covid aftermath brought changes. In September 2021, we transferred our meetings from the Harrison Room to the more spacious and better equipped Old Barn Hall. Not all members were comfortable with this change, but it was necessary; it has worked well, and most if not all members are now happy with the arrangements. Our subscription year has also changed to run from January - December, in line with our programme of monthly meetings.

The transfer to The Old Barn Hall has provided more space, and the new table and seating arrangements are working better now. Members, particularly our new ones, appreciate the opportunity to sit, and socialise with different members each month.

Membership

At the turn of the year, membership dropped to 62, but as a result of a concentrated recruitment drive (in 2020/2021) in local media, posters around the village, the Club website, and recommendations to friends from existing members, our membership now stands at 87 with a waiting list. Roger Stafford, our Membership Secretary has played a significant part in this, and I thank him for his commitment and enthusiasm.

It is important to have a strong membership. It gives the Club flexibility, enables us to cope with rising costs, invest in our monthly meetings and plan events. It also helps us to contribute to our community with donations to the BCA (Bookham Community Association) and to the Ukraine Appeal, earlier this year.

Financials

We are fortunate to have Kevin Forder as Treasurer. He keeps the Club on 'an even keel' as you will see from his financial report. His input is much appreciated - our online banking and payment system is working well for everyone, and Kevin manages our relationship with HSBC with remarkable patience.

I would also like to thank Paul Sanders for acting as our 'auditor' again, scrutinising, questioning and approving our accounts for 2021/22. His 'eagle eye' even found a rogue Euro in our cash box!



The Monthly Raffle

The monthly raffles managed by Patricia Robinson continue to help the Club's finances. Sometimes providing a small surplus, and on occasions helping to balance a shortfall. Patricia's enthusiasm and commitment is appreciated.

This year, apart from the increasing cost of our overheads, we have not experienced any unexpected rises in organising monthly meetings. Presenter fees have remained the same, small increases in wine costs have been absorbed, and supply issues resolved.

Meetings and Tastings

Club President, Heather Dougherty gives the Club excellent and much appreciated support ...advising on all wine related matters, choosing the good, avoiding the bad; always willing to share her knowledge and experience on all things wine, giving our meeting and events an extra 'edge.'

In December, we were able to celebrate Christmas again with a festive supper and wine tasting. In 2022 we repeated our popular garden meetings in May, June and August. Members volunteered to host, so a 'big thank you' to those that did; and the selections of rare and lesser known grape varieties proved popular. And of course, we enjoyed a special Spanish evening at the end of July, involving tapas, paella, wines, music and flamenco.

These occasions require a great deal of planning. The work involved to ensure success should not be underestimated. We have Ian Robinson to thank for the events we have enjoyed, together with the help of 'stalwart' volunteers, including Sally Fulton, Chrissie Chem, Lesley Stafford, Pauline Nayler, Christine Martin, Vivienne Varley and Ruth Blood. Apologies to anyone I have failed to mention, but whose help is very much appreciated.

During the year, and at our Christmas event Vivienne and Eric Martin co-chaired the evening in my absence. Vivienne has also managed the 'financials' when Kevin has been unable to do so, and Eric has managed our pourers and VoT thanks also go to our volunteers who pour the wine.

All the details of our meetings are to be found on the Club's website, which I hope you visit regularly!

The AGM

During the AGM, you will be asked to vote for the Committee to stand for the next year, and with the exception of Ruth Blood, the remaining members are willing to stand again. It is my hope you will support them, including myself.



Ruth has been a loyal and very long standing member of the committee, and she has seen many changes since the 'early days.' As Membership Secretary for a long period she welcomed many new members to the Club, including my wife Sally and myself. Famous for her starter course recipe for salmon mousse, Ruth has designed and printed our lanyards, tickets and event menus, adding an extra 'attraction' to our table settings. A 'big 'thank you' Ruth for all your hard work.

Programme 2023

During the evening I will show you our new programme for 2023, including themes and subjects members have suggested. For example, we'll learn more about wine and food matching with Nina Cerullo in March, explore the 'delights' of sherry with Deborah Zbinden in October; and in September we will welcome Professor Charles Spence when we explore the relationship between 'Wine and Music.'

What will follow in 2024?

Some worrying and uncomfortable facts.

With our plans for 2023 in place, I have been considering the shape we will be in for 2024, and this causes me great concern.

During many recent meetings and at our AGM last year I have made repeated requests for members to volunteer for committee. Progress has been limited to say the least. Please remember, it is committee members and key officers that drive the Club, and make all we do possible.

Without a committee we have no Club, and I have to tell you this is the real risk we face unless things change and members volunteer.

We urgently need members to step forward NOW and offer their time, so by May we can be confident of having a committee ready to manage the Club's affairs in October. It is vital to ensure we have a full team of officers in the key roles. Next October, a number of existing committee members will be considering their positions, including myself, so progress must be made in the meantime.

Please note 'stepping forward to volunteer does not mean committing to a role for life!'

If we do not make solid progress, then in May 2023, when I begin the programme planning process for 2024, I will be unable to do so. Without the knowledge and certainty that a new committee will be in place to manage the Club, I will be unable to 'book' presenters, and the Club will not incur the costs of essentials e.g. renewing insurances, hall bookings and so on.



If we can use this window to make progress, we can then use the time to familiarise volunteers with committee matters and routines, so they are up to speed by October 2023.

Joining the committee is not onerous. It is enjoyable, sociable, interesting and totally worthwhile.

The Club has been giving members over sixty years of uninterrupted enjoyment. we have fought our way through Covid, increased our membership by almost 50%; we have a waiting list, and yet we are failing to refresh our committee. How sad is that?

If you would like to know more about the committee roles, please talk to a committee member, or email me direct on my email address below.

On a Happier Note

For now, we have an exciting programme of monthly events and tastings organised for 2023 to look forward to. I hope by this time next year we will have new committee members ready and able to take the Wine Club successfully forward into 2024, and beyond.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Best wishes
David Fulton
Chairman
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