



# WSWS

NEXT MEETING IS ON:

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April**  
7:30pm for 8:00pm start

West Surrey Wine Society  
<http://www.westsurreywinesociety.org.uk>

March 2010 edition

## MARCH MEETING CANCELLED

Our average normal attendance for a meeting is approximately 30 members. However, our February meeting attracted only 17 members, and with an already known “guaranteed absence” of at least 12 regularly attending members due to other commitments, the prospects for attendances for March appear bleak to say the least.

Our planned March speaker carries a significant cost, and so the Committee had little choice but to carefully consider the prospects of low attendance, and whether it was appropriate to hold a meeting with potentially less than 10 attendees. It is therefore with deep regret that we have to announce that the March 2010 meeting is **cancelled**.

We hope to be able to rearrange the planned topic (Wines from Washington & Oregon – Andrew Williams Arblaster & Clarke) for later in the year.

### *Diary notes*

<b>Make a note of the following dates, (WSWS <b>always</b> meets on 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month unless stated) mystery pre-meeting wine at 7:30 onward; meeting commences at 8pm</b>	
<b>Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010</b>	<b>Meeting cancelled due to low anticipated numbers</b>
<b>Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2010</b>	<b>Massaya wines from Lebanon – Mark Bedford (Caviste)</b>
<b>Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2010</b>	<b>Alsace wines - Christopher Fielden</b>
<b>Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2010</b>	<b>AGM and mystery speaker</b>
<b>July</b>	<b>No meeting</b>

### April meeting – advanced notice

We’ve tasted wines from the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon at previous WSWS meetings, so the April tasting gives us an opportunity to see what other gems exist in this historically important land (other than chateau Musar), and to learn more about the development of wines and viticulture in a land that up to 30 years ago was ravaged by war.

### May meeting – advanced notice

Our May meeting will concentrate on wines from the Alsace region of France, and our expectation is for more expensive wines than normal. In order that we can better estimate bottles, it would be helpful if members could indicate in advance whether they plan to attend the meeting. We’ll be including a column on the attendance sheets for the next few meetings, and it would be great if members could indicate their intentions.

## February Meeting Report by Sallie, Geoffrey and David

### Exploring wine styles – Anne Linder (Laithwaites)

With our resident reporter savouring the wines of South Africa, Sallie, Geoffrey and David attempted to put together the following report of the February meeting. (Yes Peter, it took 3 of us to get nowhere close to your skills – but at least we tried).

We were delighted to welcome Anne Linder, General Manager - Production & Development at Laithwaites, who gave us a real insight into the Laithwaite methodology. Wine buying and selling is not, for Laithwaite, a passive process of accepting vineyards offerings and retailing via a list. Laithwaite has evolved a system whereby he establishes a close, enduring relationship (very important this) with small growers who, perhaps, had previously sold the annual output to a local co-op where it became absorbed into an anonymous co-op producer pool. Under Laithwaite's direction the grower's wine can be given the Laithwaite boost, and able to be shown independently. Mind you, with the growing reputation of Laithwaite's on the line, there will be supervision of all the grower does.

Part of Anne's job is to direct the choice and husbandry of the grapes. This work involves serious viticulture, leaf canopy management (as necessary), picking, cooperage, bottling, the lot. Anne places great emphasis on the importance of cleanliness. When she started in 1986, Anne found dreadful conditions were tolerated; filthy barrels and wineries were commonplace. Nowadays a Laithwaite wine is blended to sell with consistent characteristics that are known and appreciated, mostly by UK buyers, although some wines are now sold in Germany & Switzerland amongst other locations. Not yet in China but who can doubt that will come?

By way of her excellent illustrated presentation, members gained a real insight into the Laithwaite philosophy and wine making methodology (a factor not often explained to or understood by wine drinking public), and in addition, we were able to taste (or should we say quaff) some truly excellent wines.

We started the evening comparing two 2009 Sauvignon Blanc wines. The first wine was from Laithwaites own vineyard in the Cotes de Castillon area. This was classic white Bordeaux – pale yellow in colour, crisp and well balanced. The second, a Chilean Alta Tierra from Elqui Valley. This wine was very different due to hot daytime climate and terroir - aromatic, creamy with a longish finish.

We then compared two Chardonnays. The first Chardonnay La Voute 2008 was also made in Laithwaites own vineyard at Le Chai au Quai in Castillon la Bataille. It was a lightly oaked table wine, barrel fermented in 2/3<sup>rd</sup> French oak and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> stainless steel tanks. The other Chardonnay was from Domaine Dupre 2007 in Southern Burgundy which Laithwaites describe as 'aspiring to be a petit Meursault'! It was light gold in colour, not too oaky and full bodied with good acidity.

Next we moved to the reds. We tasted two Merlot/Cabernet blends from France and then South Africa. – a Prince Noir 2006, classic Bordeaux Superieur with 60% merlot and 40% cabernet sauvignon. This wine had soft tannins with hints of tobacco. The Dansford South African 55/65 merlot/cab blend 2008 from Klein Constantia in Stellenbosch was fruity with a softer texture.

The penultimate wines were two syrah based blends. The first - Le Prestige a Roux 2007 from Southern Rhone being a 55/65% grenache/syrah blend. The grapes are fermented in open top barrels for 2 to 3 weeks – (the fermentation is described by Anne as a wine folie!) before being placed in sealed barrels for a year. This was a complex wine with subtle tannins, spicy and with a long finish. The comparison was a Redheads Adam's Cut 2004 70/30 shiraz/ cabernet blend. The wine is made in McLaren Vale, Australia and the grapes are aged in American and French oak for 4 years - dark red in colour, toasty, spicy with lots of blackberry fruit and aging well.

Anne certainly saved the best till last – a 1969 Domaine Mas Mouraine Maury and what a treat. The grape is 100% Grenache and the 1969 was bottled in honour of Laithwaites' 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Aromas of cherry and blackcurrant with lovely complex dried fruit flavours. We all agreed this wine would be perfect accompanied by chocolate preferably dark and always with good company!

## **Postscript from February**

We received the following e-mail from Ann Linder, and thought we should share it with members:

“Just to drop you a line to say thank you for having us last night at your monthly tasting. What a lovely group of people you have; who seem to enjoy wine and also have a keen interest to hear and learn more. It’s good to come out and meet with people, lest we should ever forget to whom we are really there for!

Mike (Laithwaites at Binfield) was very genuine in his {discount} offer for anyone wishing to purchase any of the wines tasted during the evening, and should any of your members who weren’t able to attend wish to purchase he will extend the offer to them as well. As some people are already customers of Laithwaites, if they introduce a new customer to who purchases a case of wine they would both receive a voucher for use on future purchases. Laithwaites are also opening a store in Vinopolis.”

**Contact details for Mike: Tel: 01344 427004; fax 01344 456842; e: [binfield@laithwaiteswine.com](mailto:binfield@laithwaiteswine.com)**  
Binfield Shop, John Nike Way, Binfield, RG12 8TN

## **Urgent request for committee members**

The February newsletter contained a polite plea for members to volunteer to join the Committee. Regrettably, nobody has (to date) put themselves forward to assist in the workload. The opportunity has not been lost, so if anyone out there is willing, but nervous about increasing their investment in WSWS, they are encouraged to talk to any of the existing Committee. Go on, give it a try.

## **Christmas feedback form**

The January WSWS newsletter contained a small feedback form. The objective was to illicit members’ views on the Christmas meeting, and whether members wanted to continue with the same type of theme in 2010, or whether an alternative approach was desired.

We requested the feedback in January while our party was fresh in everyone’s minds. Regrettably, with the exception of the Committee, we received only one response. Our conclusion therefore is that the feedback request was not sufficiently obvious, hence this follow up request.

On the last page of this newsletter, you’ll find a repeat of the feedback request form.

The form is structured so there are differing options on each line (like an “either / or” choice). All we need members to do is to put one cross (X) on each line – against either the left hand, or right hand choice. We will then be able to collate the views of members, and use this in our deliberations for Christmas 2010.

Clearly we will not be able to fulfil every member’s exact preference, but we hope to be able to offer something that is in keeping with the vast majority of wishes.

Simply complete the form and hand it to a committee member at the next meeting you attend (whether that is March, April, or even May). Your thoughts are valuable – make them count – please fill in the feedback form.

### **Who’s who in the Committee?**

**Graham C - The money man**

**Peter - Events co-ordinator**

**Sallie - Committee Chair**

**Kim & David - Editors (retiring from Committee at AGM)**

**Geoffrey - Secretary & all things snail**

**2 (or more) Vacancies - go on, fill these gaps!**

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## Tasting notes.....

There are times when we think we hear something (and take action based on that presumption) only to later find out it was a misinterpretation. So it is with the February newsletter, when we noted John Hemsley to tutor us on a champagne tasting. In reality, John is unable to attend the June meeting due to prior engagements.... A case of "1 plus 1 making 53". So the executive editor (Kim) gave the "editor in training" (David) a "performance review". Ouch.

My lines were written out 100 times: - My sincere apologies to John and all members who I have disappointed.

The Committees decision to cancel the March meeting was unique. Having been a member of WSWS for some 17 years, I cannot remember a previous occasion when such a decision had to be made. It graphically highlights the problems encountered when we have a relatively small membership, inconsistent attendance outside a core, and relatively high fixed costs.

We would therefore encourage members to make the effort and attend the April and May WSWS meetings, for which advanced details are included in this newsletter.

## Thinking of a holiday in Gascony? Read on.....

WSWS recently received an e-mail from a grower in this region of France, who had read with interest several of our recent newsletters and tasting notes. They wrote:

"We are a small, family-owned vineyard in Gascony, SW France - producers of Cotes de Gascogne, Floc de Gascogne and Bas-Armagnac. I wonder if you would mind keeping our details on file in case anyone within your group is interested in visiting this area, and specifically, our vineyard. We regularly welcome groups for tours / tastings and lunches and would be delighted to welcome your members to Lauroux.

Our website - [www.lauroux.com](http://www.lauroux.com) gives lots of information about the vineyard and what we do here."

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# La Madelene Rhone Wine Holidays

It's no exaggeration to say the wines of the southern Rhone are on a roll. Mr.Parker has recently declared the 2007 vintage to be "the vintage of a lifetime" following on the heels of a string of successful vintages. Furthermore, the Rhone is undergoing unprecedented change - a new generation of winemakers is challenging the practice of their parents whilst acknowledging their debt to the legacy, modernists and even postmodernists(!) are defying wine making tradition with a new ripe fruit focus, experimentation in the cave and new luxury cuvees are everywhere.

La Madelene Rhone Wine Holidays (MRWH) is a small residential wine tour specialist - the only one operating in the English language in the region. We offer superb accommodation (see gallery space at [www.rhonewineholidays.com](http://www.rhonewineholidays.com) ) and private visits and tastings to many of the region's top domaines such as Beaucastel, Pegau, Vatican, Solitude, La Nerthe, Clos du Caillou, Saint Cosme, Mordoree, Goubert, Montirius and many more. Groups are small – maximum 8 – and the tours are in English. Your host is Rhone enthusiast and WSET approved wine educator Philip Reddaway. You will walk in the vineyards, including the famous Le Crau plateau at Chateauneuf, talk to the principal winemaker as he or she talks with passion about their terroir and their wine making philosophy, as you taste. Around 50 wines will be sampled over our Selected Domaines 3 night tour.

Contact MRWH at [rhonewineholidays@googlemail.com](mailto:rhonewineholidays@googlemail.com) or phone 00 33 (0) 490 62 1933 or mobile 00 33 (0) 490 62 1933. Standard tour dates are to be found on our web site or we may be able to organize something around your preferred travel dates.

[www.rhonewineholidays.com](http://www.rhonewineholidays.com) ; [www.bighouseinprovence.com](http://www.bighouseinprovence.com)

## **CHRISTMAS FEEDBACK FORM**

		X			X
<b>Location:</b>	We love Blacknest; keep it there			Time for a venue change.	
<b>Style</b>	A meal is great			Let's do something different	
<b>Speaker</b>	Great idea – please repeat			Rather not have a speaker	
<b>Quiz</b>	Bring it back			Let it rest in peace	
<b>Raffle</b>	A bit stale – let's drop it for next year			Excellent idea – helping others	
<b>Wines</b>	We like the easy and affordable style			More exclusive wines please	
<b>Cost</b>	£30 / £35 is about right			Too expensive – no more than £25	
Other comments? Add them in here.					

Please complete, and hand to a committee member at the next meeting you attend.

Thank you.