



NEXT MEETING IS ON:

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September**

7:30pm for 8:00pm start

**West Surrey Wine Society**

<http://www.westsurreywinesociety.org.uk>

**September 2010 edition**

**Small independent wine producers from Bordeaux – Tony Hill  
(Bordeaux & Beyond)**

The September tasting is brought to us by Tony Hill – one of 3 directors (and owners) of Bordeaux & Beyond – B&B ([www.bordeauxetbeyond.co.uk](http://www.bordeauxetbeyond.co.uk)). The company was formed 4 years ago when 3 guys decided to turn their shared passion for wine into a niche business. Year on year growth in excess of 25% suggests something must be working right.

The wines planned for the evening tasting are all from Bordeaux, but are from small independent growers. This often means they are unavailable in the UK via the large outlets and this makes B&B an ideal source. Having said that, the web site comments that on average B&B hold a range of just 25 wines – so our tasting of 8 represents a whopping 30% of the range.

1. Sainte-Foy Bordeaux Chateau des Trielles vin passion blanc 2008
2. Bordeaux Clairet Chateau de Fentenille 2009
3. St. Emillion Chateau les Cabannes 2007
4. Lalande-de-Pomerol Chateau Jean Gue 2008
5. Margaux Chateau des Graviers 2004
6. Haut Medoc Chateau Micalet 2001
7. Pauillac Chateau Behere 2007
8. St. Julien Sarget de Graudaud Larose 2004

## *Diary notes*

Make a note in your diaries of the forthcoming meetings – remember, WSWS always meets on the third Monday of the month unless otherwise stated.	
<b>Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>Small independent wine producers from Bordeaux – Tony Hill (Bordeaux &amp; Beyond)</b>
<b>Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October</b>	<b>Cool climate v classic Australia – Sarah Ahmed</b>
<b>Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November</b>	<b>What is quality in wine – Richard Bamfield</b>
<b>Monday 13<sup>th</sup> December</b> <b>(Note – second Monday)</b>	<b>Christmas party!</b>
<b>Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011</b>	<b>Rhone wines – Alun Griffiths Berry Brothers &amp; Rudd (Decanter World Wine Awards 2010 innovation of the year)</b>

## October meeting – advanced notice

Our speaker on 18 October will be Sarah Ahmed, an independent wine writer, competition judge, and excellent communicator, having been short-listed for the International Wine and Spirit Competition's Wine Communicator of the Year in both 2009 and 2010.

For the October meeting, Sarah is being sponsored by Wine Australia, an agency of the Australian Government. She has chosen an impressive selection of interesting and relatively expensive wines from producers who we suspect will not be well known to our members. A list of the wines will be provided in the next newsletter.

She will be away on wine travels from 17 September to 10 October in Victoria and New South Wales. If you are interested, there will be a blog on her website [www.thewinedetective.co.uk](http://www.thewinedetective.co.uk).

We hope for a good turnout for what promises to be excellent meeting.

### Who's who in the Committee?

Graham - The money man

Peter - Events co-ordinator

Sallie - Committee Chair

Geoff – New Committee member!

Geoffrey - Secretary & all things snail

### Tasting notes

In early September, Kim & I hosted the meeting of the Northampton Wine Society, (where John Green from Bordeaux & Beyond is also a member). NWS only has a dozen or so members, so meetings are held in members homes. Our planning for the evening was meticulous – until about 10 minutes before the wines were due to arrive, when we realised we had mislaid our cork screw.

Fortunately a neighbour came to the rescue, followed swiftly by another when we also realised we didn't have a bread knife with which to cut the specially baked bread for the evening (provided by another member).

That is what happens when you have 2 bases to live from.

Thank heavens that WSWS no longer needs to rely on our planning abilities.



*I finally remembered—red with hunter, white with fisherman.*

David

### **June Meeting Report - Wines of Washington and Oregon**

**Presented by Andrew Williams**

For those not familiar with the wines of the NW States, and many are not because they are not widely available in the UK, this was a real eye opener. Andrew Williams started visiting the area 25 years ago – when it was really in its infancy – and it remains one of his favourites because of the high quality of the wines and because the growers you meet are the people who established the vineyards. As a speaker/presenter he was by far the most professional I have heard, mixing an easy relaxed style with detailed knowledge of viticulture, wine making and wine regions and growers. This was a really excellent

meeting with high quality in both the wines and the speaker.

The popular image of these two states is forest, mountain, Boeing aircraft in Seattle and loads of rain – hardly wine country. Yes, the Washington coast is very wet and pretty cool, but the Cascade Mountains are such an effective rain barrier that the river valleys of the Snake and Columbia are so dry they are technically deserts – the arid sage bush country of cowboy films – but their alluvial soils, deposited at the end of the ice age, are among the most fertile in the USA (provided they are irrigated). Hot summers but cool nights provide ideal conditions for quality wine though the bitter winters can destroy vineyards.

We tasted just three wines from Washington – 2 whites and a red. The first white, a floral Sauvignon Blanc from the Precept Washington Hills Coop was a really nice easy drinking wine that at £8 proved Andrew's point that their wines under £10 are often very good – unlike those from California which I would agree are often pretty strange. Still a fraction under £10, the Chardonnay from the biggest producer in the state, Ch St Micelle Columbia Valley, was also very palatable – nice fruit but slightly buttery from 50% barrel fermentation.

Only one red but a blockbuster - the Hedges Red Mountain Columbia Valley Merlot/Cab Sauv and Franc Blend ( 2007 from one of the hottest parts of the state– silky feel, loads of fruit and an intensity that goes on and on. My wife gave it 5 stars which I shall have to ignore as it's a whopping £56. But it showed the high quality that this remote and physically unusual area can produce – parallels with Central Otago in New Zealand.

The wine growing areas of the Willamette Valley in Oregon lie between the Coastal Range and the Cascades. They have the same alluvial soils as the Columbia Valley but are less protected from the rains and growers often struggle to ripen their grapes in the cooler and damper climate. Andrew describes it as the Burgundy of the US with many small growers producing lots of Pinot Noir in small quantities of just a few thousand cases each – much smaller scale than Washington where there are far fewer growers producing 10 or 20 times that amount – but often at higher prices.

The wines were generally lighter, perhaps reflecting the less ripe fruit. The Pinot Gris from Sokol Blossom in the Dundee Hills was really light though did develop in the mouth. We then looked at another Chardonnay, the Cuvee Arthur from Domaine Drouhin. This a joint USA/France venture and the wines in Andrew's words are a French take on Oregon and they focus on keeping yields very low. 100% barrel fermented, this was still less rich than the Chardonnay from Washington but more intense and has been rated in blind tastings as better than some Premier Cru Burgundy. The three Pinot Noirs provided a comparison opportunity. Firesteed is an Oregon label you do see on the shelves quite often and their entry level Pinot Noir was OK but unremarkable. Drouhin's 2007 was a big improvement – concentrated with a slight sweetness but spoilt by a detectable bitter finish. More interesting was Sokol Blossom's 2007 – loads of fruit, spice and new oak – and probably the most popular wine of the evening though as Andrew said it needs more time to meld. Again highly rated by my wife – and this time success as we found a magnum at half price at Cave de Pyrene's bin end sale.

Despite his love of the wines, Andrew finds the USA home market rather sad and strange - many buyers selecting a wine solely on its Parker rating, drinking their wines very young and regarding anything over 2 years old as past it - a view shared by Camille Seghesio when she was with us last year. Even weirder to us Brits is the attitude to alcohol in many restaurants who do not like diners to have a bottle of wine on view on the table– they hide it away! Maybe if they didn't speak the same language we wouldn't think them so strange!

Andrew Williams has worked a wine guide tour guide for Arblaster & Clarke for 18 years, nicely blended with grape growing, wine making and wine journalism. He has recently launched his own wine company 'dedicated to making the wines discovered on A&C available in the UK' – [www.andrewwilliamswine.co.uk](http://www.andrewwilliamswine.co.uk)

Peter Smith