

**PRESS REPORT**  
**10 July 2018**

**WEST SURREY WINE SOCIETY 30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

30 years ago on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1988 a small group of friends were enjoying a glass of wine in the late Tony Green's Sevens Wine Bar (now Prezzo) in the Borough in Farnham when the idea was hatched of forming a local wine society. Tony offered them a room for meetings, the small group formed the first committee, and the rest, as they say, is history. Last month in June, 30 years, later 44 members of the West Surrey Wine Society celebrated the Society's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a very special event – a 'sparkling' reception- with a Cremant de Bourgogne, a tasting of fine Burgundy wines by Alun Griffiths MW and a light meal. The Society had planned the event around Alun, an acknowledged expert on Burgundies and one of their top speakers. Formerly the wine buying director at the well known wine merchants Berry Bros & Rudd (BBR) and now consulting in China, he had chosen a representative selection of quality Burgundies to demonstrate the character and complexity of what is regarded as the world's most prestigious wine region.

He started his presentation – informal, succinct and full of information and interest – with a brief introduction to Burgundy. Burgundy is a region made up of very many small growers and fragmented holdings, for example one 50 hectare block is owned and farmed by 84 owners – a far cry from the grand chateaux of Bordeaux – and the wines are all about finesse and delicacy rather than power. The prices however are anything but delicate; Alun warned members that there are no entry level wines under £10 and the wines are prohibitively expensive thanks to insatiable demand from south east Asia and elsewhere. The classification system was set up in 1935 and is based on location – generic regional appellations, Village wines, Premier Crus and Grand Crus.

The key grape variety for white wines is Chardonnay. The four white wines ranged from £17 up to £50 for the Premier Cru and included a Macon, which was fuller bodied than expected, a clean and fresh St Aubin and then on to two big names – a Chassagne Montrachet Village and a Mersault Premier Cru, both 2013 and intense with lovely structure and though drinking well now most people thought will benefit from more time in bottle. Unfortunately there was no Grand Cru - as one bottle would have blown most of the Society's budget! Good advice from Alun on serving white Burgundy is not to chill them too much as it suppresses the flavour.

The white wines were followed by supper – a very tasty selection of hearty canapes with a Burgundian theme provided by Doramy at Chaumeton and accompanied by what Alun described as two drinking Burgundies. During the meal founder member Martin Smith who was the Society's first secretary reminisced about the lead-up to its inception on 23 February 1988 and how with the help of free publicity in *Decanter* magazine they held the first wine tasting on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1988 on wines from the South-West of France by Sookias & Bertaut in Sevens Wine Bar which remained the venue until the Green family sold it.

With supper finished and everyone now in party spirit Alun called members back for the red wines which, he reminded them, are all based on the Pinot Noir grape. He described the light, cherry fruited 2013 Santenay, a Cote de Beaune Village, as entry level – but it was still £23. At £10 more the 2011 Beaune Premier Cru had more body and intensity and at the same price a 2012 Gevrey Chambertin Village was very good value as it is still not well known and was a step up from the Beaune. The final wine, a Premier Cru Nuits St George 2013 was surprisingly very reasonably priced at £28 – about half the price of most Premier Crus.

This was certainly a most memorable evening and members and guests only finally went home when the venue started locking up!

For more information on West Surrey Wine Society please visit [www.westsurreywinesociety.org.uk](http://www.westsurreywinesociety.org.uk)

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