

# Whitewater Valley Wine Society

**Tasting Report: April 2015**

## **Rhone reds**

**Presented by Gilbert Winfield, Wine & Spirit Education Trust**

Report by Barbara Jones

We were delighted to welcome Gilbert Winfield, who is an Educator with both the Wine & Spirit Education Trust and the Association of Wine Educators. Gilbert has been working in wine for many years, and has found that what he enjoys most, and therefore is best at, is talking about it in an approachable, humorous and irreverent style. He started his 'wine career' with Steven Spurrier in his wine empire in Paris, thinking he would stay a few months and then go home and get a proper job. He ended up staying with Steven for seven years, during which where he learned about French wine, food, and spending more than you earn, and progressed to teaching at l'Académie du Vin. Fully sated with all things French, he did a year's winemaking at Castello di Uzzano in Chianti, where he came to realise that it isn't only the French who make good wine. Back in England since 1987, a combination of the Wine and Spirit Education Trust and selling wine for various wine merchants, has taught him about the rest of the world's wines. He's passed the WSET Diploma and their Certified Educator qualification. He does serious stuff like judging at the International Wine Challenge and other less well-known ones, and guiding consumer tours around European vineyards, which he says is great fun. This was an all-reds evening featuring Gilbert's pick of some of his favourites from the Rhone.

Our first batch of red wines came from the Northern Rhone area – our first of four Syrah - a **Syrah 2010 Cave Saint Desirat, Vdp D'ardeche** [12%, £8.25] came from a cooperative. It had medium characteristics with regard to colour, intensity, tannins and finish. On the palate there were black fruits, aniseed and a hint of spice. The Aleofane **Saint Joseph 2012, Natasha Chave** [13%, £20.75] was bolder all round with more intense colour, body and concentrated fruits – hints of violets, black cherries, graphite and complexity. The **Crozes Hermitage Les Gravieres 2013, Jean-Luc Columbo** [13%, £13.95] is produced from 40 year-old vines using new oak to add chocolaty richness to the grape resulted in a wine that seemed lighter and sweeter on the palate. Less intense than the previous wine this was for easy drinking without food. The fourth Syrah was the most expensive wine of the evening – **Cote Rotie Ampodium 2011, Domaine Rostaing** [13%, £ 56.00] was made with wild yeast. This wine was medium red in colour with some brown edges and a slight veggie nose. Here there were complex fruit, savoury and leathery flavours and excellent balance - a wonderful accompaniment to Easter lamb but at a price!

The second half of the evening was devoted to the blended wines of the Southern Rhone where Syrah is not dominant and blended from a combination

of Grenache, Carignan, Syrah, Mouvedre and Cinsault. The first – a **Cotes Du Rhone Rouge 2013 'Cinq Cepages' Vignerons Laudun Chusclan** [13% £7.50] was another cooperative wine that was very well made blended from Grenache for red fruit sweetness and Syrah for spice and structure; an everyday red, but 'nice with it' and at a good price! The final two reds were tasted side-by-side. They were a **Cotes Du Rhone Cairanne Las Travers 2012, Domaine Brusset** [13.5%, £13.95] and a **Chateauneuf Du Pape 2012 Domaine Chante Cigale** [15%, £25.00]. The former had a clear cherry red colour and was a good everyday medium style wine, concentrated with spicy complexity and smooth tannins. The latter made from hand-picked lower yields with the help of heat retaining Galets [river pebbles] provided more concentration, was more rounded and had better balanced fruit and alcohol.

And then we had a surprise – a **Muscat De Beaumes De Venise Carte D'or** [15%, £7.79, half bottle] that had a very pale colour and light sweetness on the nose. This was a light and not too sweet or cloying dessert wine that would be ideal for those who normally avoid a sweet accompaniment at the end of a meal and a most pleasant way of ending an evening getting to know better some of the wines of the Rhone area.

Our thanks go to Gilbert for his personal selection of Rhone wines and for sharing his knowledge in a down to earth, approachable manner. The Society's thanks go as well to the WSET for subsidising the tasting this month enabling us to taste wines otherwise beyond our budget!