

Whitewater Valley Wine Society

Tasting Report: April 2016

Beaujolais Crus

Presented by Stephanie Barlow of Berry Bros. & Rudd

Report by Barbara Jones

Berry Brothers range of Beaujolais consists almost entirely of the Aladdin's trove of gloriously satisfying village crus that occupy the prized 15-mile strip of granite hills to the north. Cru Beaujolais is the highest classification of the region and the term is limited to ten prestigious villages in the foothills of the Beaujolais mountains. The name Beaujolais doesn't usually appear on the label in an attempt to separate these fine wines from the mass produced Nouveau. Made from the Gamay grape, the maximum yield for the cru wines is 48 hectolitres per hectare. The wines are often full bodied, dark in colour and quite long lived. Cru villages you might be familiar with include Morgon, Brouilly, Fleurie and Moulin a Vent. Berry Bros. & Rudd is Britain's oldest wine and spirit merchant, having traded in the same shop since 1698. They have supported our Society since its creation back in 1987 and many of our members regularly visit their Warehouse Shop in Basingstoke. Steph Barlow's face will be familiar to some of our members as she is Manager of BBR's Warehouse Shop at Basingstoke, a role she took on just over a year ago. Prior to that, she was one of their Wine Advisors. Steph's also an Associate Judge at the International Wine Challenge.

According to DNA analysis, Gamay is a member of the vast family of Burgundian grapes spawned by [Pinot Noir](#) and obscure white grape variety [Gouais Blanc](#), doubtless centuries ago. True Gamay, known as Gamay Noir à Jus Blanc has been grown in Burgundy at least from the 14th century. In the Beaujolais region, with Burgundy to the north and Rhone to the south the area benefits from exposure to warm sun from the Soane Valley, protection from cold north-west winds from mountains to the north. A range of granite-based soils with some schist and magnesium help to account for the particular characteristics of the wines produced in the different cru villages from this single grape. Gamay produces a cherry red coloured wine that varies from light to dense. The nose is usually delicate and lightly perfumed with faint hints of raspberry or strawberry fruits. Tannins are usually light.

The first wine of the evening was a **2014 Regnie, Domaine Julien Sunier** [12%, £18.50] and was probably the least popular of the tasting being light in colour with hints of spice and bitter cherries on the palate – best drunk young. The second wine – a 2013 **Chiroubles, La Scandaleuse, Domaine Bernard Metrat** [13%, £14.50] was cleaner in the mouth with a concentration of fruit and light tannins – far better value for money. This was followed by a **2014 Brouilly, Alain Michaud** [13%,

£15.50] and it had a more subtle fruity nose and soft fruits and tannins on the palate. The first part of the tasting ended with a **2103 Cote de Brouilly, Les Sept Vignes, Chateau Thivin** [13%, £17.50] that had a denser colour, a hint of oak and more complexity though tannins were again smooth.

After the break we tasted a **2014 Fleurie, Domaine Julien Sunier** [12%, £19.95] that was the lightest in colour yet. On the nose it was ultra-delicate and floral, though in the mouth it was elegant and silky and most pleasant. The **2013 Morgon, Javernieres, Domaine Louise Claude Desvignes** [13%, £19.50] that followed had a garnet hue and a nose of subtle fruits and was again light and pleasant on the palate. The next Morgon – a **2013 Morgon, Cote du Py, Jean-Marc Burgard** [13%, £15.50] was denser in colour with a more distinct cherry-fruit nose and sharper tannins suggesting that the wine needed more time to develop. Our evening ended with a **2011 Moulin-a-Vent, Vieilles Vignes, Thibault Liger-Belair** [13%, £23.50] that had the densest cherry-red colour of all the evening's wines. It also had the most distinctive fruity nose and was more full-bodied than other wines with cherry and violet flavours with a hint of spice – probably the night's favourite? Being lighter in body, Gamay could be described as more of a lunchtime wine suitable for a range of dishes such as roast chicken/turkey, cheese plates and salad, lamb tagine and even grilled fish – eg. salmon and fennel.

Our grateful thanks go to Steph for a most interesting and informative evening tasting a single grape variety from some of the best French producers.