

Whitewater Valley Wine Society

Tasting Report: October 2015

The Society's Fine Wine Evening

Presented by Mimi Avery, Averys of Bristol

Report by Keith Cooper

The Jubilee Halls in Hartley Wintney was our venue for this year's Fine Wine Evening and over 40 members and guests gathered on a Friday evening in October.

Averys can trace its history back to 1793, making it one of the oldest established wine merchants in the world. In the 1920s Ronald Avery was at the helm and the business sailed to success. The mantle has been passed down through the generations, with Ronald's son John Avery taking over in 1960s, thus becoming the face of Averys for several decades

Today, Averys appetite for wine excitement is embraced by a team of wine buyers and John's daughter Mimi. She started in the business in customer services, progressing to shop manager, corporate sales and wine buyer. From 2012 she has succeeded her father as Brand Ambassador for Averys. We knew that she loves to meet wine enthusiasts from around the country, so we were indeed privileged to be able to welcome her as guest speaker for our fine wine evening.

Mimi's started by saying that her selection reflected those wines which her father had introduced to the UK market during his 40 years at the helm, some of which are now well known names in the UK wine market.

We started our evening of fine wines with a champagne, Averys Champagne Brut Special Cuvee [£26.99]. The same producer has made this champagne for Averys for 63 years; a blend of pinot noir, pinot meunier and chardonnay, it was dry, biscuity and elegant, a great way to start the evening.

Our first white was from Germany, Donnhoff Norheimer Kirschheck Riesling Spatlese 2013 [£27.00]. At just 8.5% alcohol, this had a lemony appearance and had a slight sweetish palate. It went well with the stilton and it will keep for 10 years.

We then moved on to Bordeaux in France, tasting Blanc de Valandraud No 2 St Emilion Blanc 2007 [£29.99]. Ami described this as a traditional white Bordeaux, a blend of sauvignon blanc and Semillon. It was quite different to white Bordeaux that most of us tasted previously, with a rich palate and a hint of hand cream about the nose. Clearly a wine for the connoisseur, this could last 20 years.

Our first New World wine was from Australia, Mount Pleasant Semillon McWilliams 2007 [£26.00]. This was grassy and rich, and has a slight

spritz; interesting to taste, but not popular with members.

Our final white wine was from South Africa, Hamilton Russell Chardonnay 2013 [£21.00]. The Hamilton Russell family have been top winemakers in South Africa for over 30 years and this rich, buttery chardonnay was a real treat.

Our first red was from the USA, Joseph Swan Zinfandel Stellwagen 2008 [£29.00]. Zinfandel is a "marmite" wine, you either love it or dislike it. Reflecting the vintage, there was a hint of ageing around the edges, the palate was of blackberries, chewy and soft.

We then returned to France for J P Moueix Generic Pomerol 2011 [£22.00]. Popular with our members, this was very dry and soft, its 80% merlot content typical of Bordeaux's right bank. It had a long finish, and was a great accompaniment for our nibbles.

Back to Australia for our penultimate red, Yalumba The Menzies Cabernet Sauvignon Coonawarra 2010 [£32.99]. An excellent wine, this was dry and inky, smooth with a long finish. Its complexity showed leather and liquorice, no surprise it was popular with our members!

Our last red was from Lebanon, Chateau Musar 2008 [£28.99]. Owner and winemaker Serge Hochar was one of the nicest guys in winemaking, such a shame that he died in a swimming accident off the coast of Mexico last new year's eve. With a character all of its own, this was dusty and earthy, with flavours of damson and plum. Mimi surprised us all by saying that it's best decanted at least two days before drinking.

Finally, we tasted a sweetie from New Zealand, Alpha Domus Pilot Leonarda L H Semillon 2010 [£15.99 for a half-bottle]. Bright and gold in colour, not as sweet as Sauternes, fresh and lively.

Our evening was over all too soon. Our thanks to Mimi, who presented an interesting selection of wines, enthusiastically delivered with good knowledge and showing a great respect for her father John's lifetime of service to the wine industry. Mimi is an excellent ambassador to follow in his footsteps and we look forward to welcoming her back again in the future.