

Whitewater Valley Wine Society

Tasting Report: July 2021

Visit to Greysfriars Vineyard

Report by Barbara Jones

Our Wine Society had been 'dry' since March 2020 so when Keith, our current Chair, managed to secure a booking for Greysfriars Vineyard, members and guests were queuing to join the merry band of the 30 permitted to attend by Covid rules. Greysfriars is located on the sunny, south-facing chalk slopes of the Hog's Back at Puttenham, just outside Guildford. The original vineyard was planted in 1989 and taken over by the Wagstaff Family in 2010. The current 50 acres on three sites, now focus on producing stunning English Sparkling Wines with the owners extending its range to include some still wines. The main grape varieties grown are Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier with small plots of Pinot Gris and Sauvignon Blanc added more recently. Our Guide for the tasting was Aaron Gilling.

Our 'stand up' tasting outside the offices, started with the **Classic Cuvee 2014** – a blend of the classic Champagne grapes Chardonnay/Pinot Noir/Pinot Meunier 56/22/22% [12%, £24.00] that was an elegant and complex wine, with layers of citrusy fruits and a vibrant mineral finish and recommended to go well with Thai inspired dishes, fish and scallops. This was a most pleasant start with a sparkling wine that would rival most Champagnes. Aaron then led us to see the early planted vines of 1989 and gave us a brief background history of the original and current vineyard owners.

We strolled back to our starting point and were taken into the 'processing section' to view the array of expensive equipment essential for sparkling wine production. After some detailed and entertaining information, we moved to our next tasting venue. It was good to walk again, this time up-hill to a covered viewing platform with benches onto which some of us sank with great relief for legs, hips and backs! There were another two treats in store, the first was a **Rose Reserve 2014** [Late Disgorged], [11%, £28.99] that was a 90/10% blend of Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier - a 2019 IWC Trophy and Gold Medal-winning sparkling rose. This boasted a lovely delicate pink colour with fragrant red-berry aromas and a touch of spice. It was fresh and fruity but with a wonderfully rounded and complex toasty palate. This was followed by the **Cuvee Royal 2015**, 50% Chardonnay/50% Pinot Noir [12%, £32.00]; the first limited edition 'prestige cuvee' release from the best fruit of the 2015 harvest. The result is an exquisite sparkling wine with vibrant citrus and red apple notes balanced by a round, elegant palate that offers a hint of biscuit on the finish.

Slowly, we made our way back downhill through some of the more recently planted vineyards where we were able to taste our fourth wine of the evening – a **Still Pinot Gris 2019** [12%, £13.50] that had a subtle bouquet of summer stone fruits and sweet citrus. It was dry on the palate and the light and soft body matched its very pale colour; it was probably the least appreciated wine of the evening. We ended the tasting with a **Still Pinot Noir Rose 2020** [12%, £13.50] a 92/8% blend of Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier and produced during an outstanding year for English wines – an early season, lots of sunshine and dry weather throughout the summer. The yields were small but the fruits were ripe and resulted in some excellent still wines. This wine had a very light pink colour that was balanced and 'perfectly poised'. It had subtle red berry flavours and a zesty finish.

Aaron was the perfect host – interesting, informative and entertaining and our thanks go to him for our Tasting Tour on what proved to be a warm and dry evening. It was a most enjoyable occasion to be able to taste good English wine in familiar company.