

**WHITWATER VALLEY WINE SOCIETY**  
**May 2026 Tasting**  
**The Wines of Rioja, Spain**  
**Presented by Robert Bouflower, Director, Tanners Wine Merchant**

It's been four years since we last welcomed Robert Bouflower to present to us. We had a great time on that occasion, so we had no hesitation in giving him the opportunity to talk to us again. Robert is a Director at Tanners Wine Merchants, a long established retailer, well known to many of our members. The business can trace its roots in Shrewsbury back to the mid 19th century. This time, Robert presented his selection of wines from Rioja. Nestled in the heart of North Central Spain, not far from the vibrant city of Bilbao, lies the renowned La Rioja wine region. Despite being Spain's second smallest region, spanning a mere 5,000 km<sup>2</sup>, La Rioja holds the esteemed title as the country's most distinguished wine-producing area. This region is a wine lover's paradise, producing some of Spain's finest wines.

It cannot be often in a Wine Society presentation that the presenter, and one just about to be promoted to Chief Buyer, spends the first 10 minutes criticising the main grape of a wine producing region as 'dull, dull, dull'! But that is how this tasting began with reference to Rioja's white wine grape - Viura. In its place he wanted our members to taste a creation of a young wine-maker to display what the region can produce - a **Bagordi Blanco Rioja 2025 [Organic]** [12%, £12.70] which is made from 50/50% Sauvignon Blanc and Granacha grapes. This very pale coloured wine, made of grapes harvested at the coolest time of the day to maintain freshness, had ripe fruit and floral notes on the nose and was fresh, vibrant and crisp in the mouth with a clean, elegant finish.

The second wine, though was a Viura, but one with barrel fermentation - a **CVNE Blanco Barrel Fermented Rioja 2023** [12.5%, £13.50] that had a pale lemon colour after 8 months in barrel. There were hints of nuts on the nose of this more complex and well-balanced wine.

Our third wine was a **Castillo de Monjardin Rosado 2025** [13%, £12.70] a rose wine from neighbouring Navarre, had a bright strawberry colour far darker than a Provençal rose [another 'pet hate' of our presenter]. This wine made by lightly bleeding red Tempranillo grapes was clean and precise in the mouth accompanied by an underlying lush and ripe strawberry richness. Yes, it definitely had more flavour and personality than pale French rose wine!

And then there were five red wines. The first of which was a **Rioja Vega Tinto Rioja 2024** [13.5%, £11.70], a 'run of the mill' un-oaked wine. This medium/dark cherry red coloured wine, made of 90% Tempranillo, had aromas of red berries with a hint of spice and leather. Best served slightly cool it was a vibrant and juicy easy drinking and pleasant wine.

It was followed by an **Aldonia 100 Rioja 2021** [14.5%, £22.00] made from 100% Granacha grapes. This had a darker cherry red colour and it had a delicate fruity nose with hints of herbs and ripe strawberries. The full-mouth feel was supple and smooth with a fresh and long finish that had a hint of spice. According to Robert it was more Rhône-like in style and considerably cheaper! For some members it was the best wine yet!

The next two wines were examples of what young wine-makers are developing in the region to show off the areas' potential, moving away from traditional styles. The first was a **Senderos de Ukan Rioja 2021** [14.5%, £25.00] that had a similar dense colour to the previous wine and made from 100% high-altitude-grown Tempranillo grapes vinified in small-batch oak and concrete tanks. This was a warm, smooth, velvety-rich fruity wine that was still young, with time to develop further. Compared with the previous wine it was lighter on the palate though pleasant and easy to drink.

The next wine, an **Alto del Obre Réserve Rioja 2017** [13.5%, £18.50] was a blend with 90/10% Tempranillo/Manzuelo grapes and similar in colour and consistency to its partner-wine. Having spent three years in barrel and 'swirled' at regular intervals, this wine tasted older; it was full of ripe blackberry and blueberry fruit with a hint of spice and a good bite of tannins on the finish; it was generally preferred.

We returned to an 'old style' wine to end - a **Vina Arana Gran Réserve Rioja La Rioja Alta 2017** [14%, £47.00] made of the same blend as the previous wine. It had a nose of sweet, black fruit and spice developing on the palate to intense notes of plums and prunes with hints of clove spice and vanilla. After three years in American oak it had smooth and silky tannins, a fine structure and a polished and long finish. A lovely and appropriate end to a fascinating evening of wine-tasting.

Members would like to thank Robert for his easy-going, spontaneous, knowledgeable and 'different' presentation of a most interesting selection of regional Spanish wines!