

# Brentwood Wine Society

## *The Wine Press*

Winter Edition

Nov 2025

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Wine Press.

All contributions for the Spring edition are welcome please send them to Philip Knowles at [knowlespj@btinternet.com](mailto:knowlespj@btinternet.com)



### UPDATE ON BRENTWOOD VINES

Amanda and John recently led a walk for our U3A walking group and we visited the vineyard near Brentwood (see Summer Newsletter). The grape appears to be Sauvignon Soyhieres which is a hybrid produced in Switzerland by Valentin Blatter. It is a crossing of Sauvignon Blanc and an unknown *Vitis Amurensis* a species of vine native to the Asian Continent.

The hybrid has strong disease resistance particularly against damp induced diseases. As John and Amanda pointed out the small vineyard is very professionally set up and we are wondering if it is a trial for more vineyards in the surrounding fields.



# NEWS IN BRIEF

## The Great Grape Robbery

German police in the Rheinhessen wine region were hunting for clues as to the whereabouts of stolen grapes after two producers reported harvest theft in the Gundheim district.

Nearly all of the ripe Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc grapes across an 8,000-square-metre area encompassing two vineyards have gone missing and are presumed to have been stolen by thieves.

Two independent winemakers have suffered economic losses of several thousand euros, said police for the German city of Worms, in the Rhineland-Palatinate region.

Picking teams discovered the grapes were missing when they arrived to begin their work, as was also the case in a high-profile theft in France's Jura region last year. French news media also reported several cases of missing grapes, and complaints of theft, in Burgundy and Champagne in recent weeks.

France's TF1 Info said some growers in Champagne have formed a group to guard vines at night, in addition to the regular vineyard patrols by the local Gendarmerie. Earlier in September, two winemakers in Burgundy's Meursault appellation said small portions of their 2025 vintage were missing,



Domaine Vincent Latour was one of those affected, posting photos on Facebook at the end of August alongside the comment, 'When you arrive to harvest your parcel [of vines] and it's already harvested'.

Cécile Latour, of the Domaine, told France 3 that around 2.8 tonnes of Chardonnay went missing, equivalent to 1,200 bottles, and that the team had initially thought it was an accident but now believe the grapes were stolen.

## What the Other Half Drink

A luxurious state banquet for US president Donald Trump and first lady Melania was hosted by King Charles III and Queen Camilla at Windsor Castle on 17th September, with a menu seemingly designed to honour both countries.



Menus and wine lists for such occasions are usually created with meticulous attention to detail.

UK officials offered up a lavish menu to mark Trump's official visit to the country.

Vintage English sparkling wine featured during the banquet at St George's Hall, with Wiston Estate, Cuvée [Brut] 2016 poured for the 160-strong guest list, according to widespread media reports of the menu.

California's legendary Ridge Vineyards also made an appearance via its Monte Bello 2000 vintage, 25 years on from harvest.

Trump reportedly doesn't drink alcohol, and so the contents of the bottles were likely only enjoyed by other banquet guests.

Other wines served included 2018-vintage Corton-Charlemagne grand cru Burgundy from Domaine Bonneau du Martray, which is owned by US businessman Stan Kroenke, plus Pol Roger 'Extra Cuvée de Reserve' 1998 Champagne; Pol Roger was a favourite of Sir Winston Churchill.



A special US-UK cocktail was mixed to mark the occasion, 'blending smoky whisky with the bright citrus of marmalade'. Crowned with a pecan foam and garnished with a toasted marshmallow set on a star-shaped biscuit, the cocktail aims to evoke the warmth of a fireside.

After dinner, spirits and fortified wine were served. There was a 1912 Hennessy Grande Champagne Cognac, reportedly representing the birth year of Trump's Scottish-born mother.

Warre's 1945 vintage Port was also offered, possibly reflecting Trump becoming the 45th US president back in 2017 but also potentially marking the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

Meanwhile, there was a rare Scotch whisky on the table after officials brought out a bottle of Bowmore Queen's Cask 1980.

## Vineyard 'boosting' vines with UV light technology



A Shropshire vineyard is the first in the UK to use artificial ultraviolet light on the vines.

While the use of UV light is common in greenhouses, and even where football turf is stored, the technology has never really been robust enough for outdoor use on a farm.

Smallish tanning beds are driven up and down rows of vines at the Veenow Vineyard near Telford.

The UV light is so strong that staff have to stay at least 25m (82ft) away for safety's sake but the impact on the plants is, at least according to the growers, already noticeable.

Rob Greenow of Veenow Vineyards says: "On UV vines the chlorophyll is stronger. So that the green area on the leaf is just darker." In theory those healthier leaves and plants mean a better harvest, better grapes and better wine.

In fact Rob has already reduced the amount of fungicide on the vines being treated with light.

The team has also used the lights to give plants a boost when frost is forecast and help them fight off cold weather.

At £60,000 the system isn't cheap but if the savings pan out it could well pay for itself in three years. The technology is still quite delicate, and you can't use it in rain for example.

The French company behind the system is helping to track all the data from this year's plants and harvest to get a sense of how useful the system will be for English growers.

# World OF WINE

## A Look at Lusca

Nowadays we hear a great deal about English wines but what about the rest of the British Isles?

I thought I would start with Irish wine. Despite being officially recognized by the European Commission as a wine region I could find evidence of only one vineyard commercially producing wine.



The Lusca Vineyard located in Lusk Co.Dublin. The wine is called Lusca which is Gaelic for Lusk appropriately meaning 'vault' or 'cave'.

The vineyard is owned by David Llewellyn and was established in 1999, and from these vines the first wine for sale was produced in 2005.



From 2013 David concentrated on red wine production. However, a test batch of sparkling wine made from some of the 2018 vintage was received so well by customers, that sparkling wine now accounts for more than three quarters of the wine produced at Lusca Vineyard.



At just 350 bottles total annual production, Lusca is a true micro-boutique winery, though there are plans to increase production to 1,000 bottles annually.

Production is labour intensive, and the challenges of the Irish climate must be overcome with skill and attention to detail, in order to produce serious, award-winning wines which regularly receive glowing reviews by both customers and wine writers alike.



Lusca currently has two red wines on release, and two sparkling wines, with one or two others in the pipeline. All wine is made exclusively from grapes grown at Lusca Vineyard, where the vines are grown with maximum sustainability and minimal intervention in mind. Similarly, Lusca wines are created from those grapes, with minimal intervention, no addition of finings, and no filtration.

Given the tiny production don't expect to find any cheap Lusca wines. The four currently on sale are:

### Lusca Sparkling Rose

On sale for €420.00 for a six bottle case.

A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, with some Shiraz and Cabernet Franc. The wine is a blend of vintages 2019 to 2021, and was aged on lees in bottle for 24 months before disgorging.



### Lusca Cabernet Merlot

€360.00 for a six bottle case.

Described as a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot with a smattering of Cabernet Franc, Shiraz and Dunkelfeder. The wine is aged 24 months in French Oak Barriques with good ageing potential. Currently the 2018 vintage is on offer for sale.



### Lusca Sparkling Blanc de Noir Brut

€420.00 for a six bottle case.

A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, with some Shiraz and Cabernet Franc. This wine is Lusca's 2022 vintage, their first true 'blanc' sparkling wine. It was aged 15 months on lees in bottle, before disgorging.



### Lusca Rondo

€360.00 for a six bottle case.

Gold Medal winner at the PIWI international Wine awards 2024.

The Rondo grape is a relatively new variety which thrives in Northern wine regions.

This vintage was aged for 24 months in American oak and bottled without fining or filtration and will age well.



The Luca vineyard covers a mere 0.15 hectares and is clearly a labour of love.

There is an interesting youtube about David Llewellyn and the Lusca vineyard and can be found at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JR9n4a8U-jY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JR9n4a8U-jY)



# WINE TIMES

## MOMENTS IN HISTORY

### What Have The Romans Ever Done For Us?

While there is evidence that wine was consumed in Britain prior to the Roman invasion in 43CE it is now agreed that the first vines grown for wine production were planted by the Romans.

Until recently the earliest confirmed Roman vineyard and still the most famous is at Wollastan in Northamptonshire. Discovered by archaeologists in 1999 it is thought to date from the 2nd century CE. The archaeologists found rows of parallel trenches with stake holes, a layout consistent with classical descriptions of continental Roman vineyards. Pollen analysis of the soil samples confirmed the presence of grapevine pollen (*vitis*).

The vineyard covered about 27 acres and is estimated to have contained 4,000 vines and have produced disease resistance particularly 10,000 litres of wine annually, far more than would be required for local consumption.

Since the discovery of Wollastan the research team have identified six more vineyards, three more in Northamptonshire, one in Cambridge, one in Lincolnshire and one in Buckinghamshire. It is now thought that up to 250 square miles of Roman Britain were involved in grape and wine production.

Most of the wine produced was probably fruity, sweet and brownish in colour. It is thought that the grapes would have been harvested early before they were fully ripe. After treading, large amounts of honey would have been added for sweetness and to produce an alcohol content of about 10% to 12%.



*Brentwood Wine Society Meeting 200CE?*

The wine would be put in large amphorae, which were lined with beeswax. The amphorae would then be buried in the ground up to the neck of the amphora and left unstoppered.

The wine would need to be drunk within six months, so a winter or spring drink. Apparently the Romans mixed their wine with all sorts of additives, more honey, spices, even sea water, which must say something about its inherent quality.

However, recent re-analysis of finds from the Brockley Hill dig of 1947 has demonstrated that the first Roman vineyard was established very soon after the conquest of 43CE probably within 30 or 40 years.



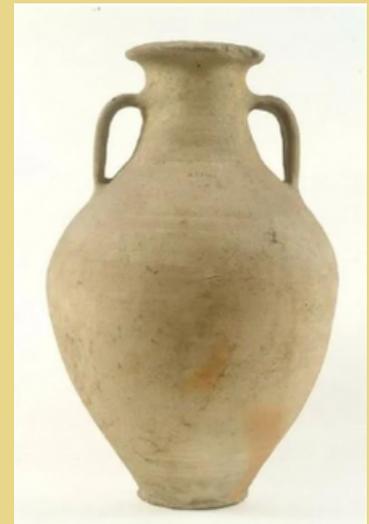
*The Brockley Hill dig, 1947*

***Romans mixed their wine with honey, spices, even sea water, which must say something about its quality***

The claim is based on the many amphorae found during the dig. Analysis shows they were made in the 1st Century CE of local clay some are of a type used in the making and storage of wine, not in its transportation. They are called Dressel 2-4 Amphorae and stood one metre tall and held 20 to 25 litres of wine. Also found were locally made Salloniacaee Gauloise type used in the transportation of wine.



*Dressel 2-4 Amphorae*



*Salloniacaee Gauloise type amphora made in Brockley Hill*

So we are fast approaching the 2000th anniversary of wine making in Britain and it started on the borders on modern day Barnet and Harrow.

# The Corkscrew Corner

## Fake News

Who would believe that there is a fake corkscrew industry, but there is.

Below are a couple of recent examples. Fortunately there are eagle-eyed collectors who normally spot fakes posted on eBay or other sites



This corkscrew was offered on eBay by a seller from Belarus.

The description was "Rare Badge Emblem Royal Club Corkscrew, Very gorgeous corkscrew. It looks old but it's in a great condition. The Royal Club emblem is very clear and without defects. Mechanism is working good but may be it needs to be oiling."

It sold for over £1,500.



The description of this corkscrew was "Ultra Rapide Rare Mechanical Corkscrew Great working condition. Two markings."



The corkscrew sold for £886.



More common are copies of corkscrews which are sold using words such as 'like', 'replica', 'old style' etc. I have bought one or two of these knowing them to be copies.

The top one of these two fish corkscrews was made exclusively for Macy's of New York.

Over the years I have only seen two others for sale, both in the U.S.A.



The bottom one is clearly a poor copy which I bought for a few pounds. I think it is made in India and was simply described as 'rare fish corkscrew'. They are quite common.

Recently I saw one for sale on a reputable on-line corkscrew retail site described as German and offered for £45 !!

Another example I have is this intriguing 'whistle' corkscrew.



It was described as 'trench art'. However, before the seller despatched it he had second thoughts about its provenance and sent a replacement corkscrew to the same value and didn't want this one back.

After hours of research I established that the cartridge shell was WW2 issue, the badge and bottom of the corkscrew were made from a WW2 RAF coat button and surprisingly the top cover is a shell case from a 1961 Israeli Army small calibre pistol. Not trench art but still a great corkscrew.

Finally, a rather odd pairing.



The one on the left is an original James Heeley 'Lazy tongs' dated on the corkscrew as September 1884.

The one on the right is a copy made for the Guild of Sommeliers in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, as a corporate gift.

The original sells for around £100 the 'copy' for more! One is currently retailing at £130 and one recently sold at Christies for over £200.

Caveat emptor!

Don't get cork-screwed.

## A BARREL OF LAUGHS

*I couldn't find a good wine joke this time around so here is one of my favourite TIM VINE one liners....*

*www. Conjunctivitis - a site for sore eyes.*

**The editor accepts no responsibility for gramatical,,, speling, factual errors or the quality of any wine mentioned**