

Drymen Wine Club

January 2010

Ah, January. The month when we are all feeling the excesses, consumptive and financial, of Christmas. And, this January, we are feeling an excess of cold weather with temperatures below zero for three weeks. It was too late to solve the problems of overeating and the weather is always beyond our control but we could look at cash flow when buying this month's wines. The brief was to buy the cheapest wines that appeared not to be rebranded vinegar! And I hoped that this was not too off-putting for the two new faces – Christine Smullen and Edward (call me Ed) Hirst. Christine is an author of children's books and Ed works with Strathclyde Fire & Rescue. Welcome to you both.

The venue was Alistair Mills' refurbished farmhouse on the periphery of the village. The property had lain empty for over 20 years before Alistair dug into his pockets, picked up the building for a pittance and spent a fortune renovating the shell. The result: he is now the proud owner of a classic four bed farmhouse with fantastic views over three points of the compass.

Vince likes his wine; vintage, aged, oaked, at the peak of its taste curve. So, to ask him to seek out a bottle priced under a fiver could have been tempting mutiny. Vince didn't let it bother him; he ignored the price limit and bought Tesco's André Carpentier at £9.49 per bottle. Served chilled, it was fresh and bubbly, everything you would expect from a champagne.

Being authors, admittedly of completely different genres, it was difficult to prise Eric away from Christine so that he could present his choice. No doubt they were comparing rejection slips and royalty cheques. Eric had been to Majestic Wines and picked up a case of a peachy, lemony chardonnay. La Galine Chardonnay was on special offer at £3.99 per bottle.

My congratulations to Cynthia for hunting down a beautifully smooth and light, white zinfandel from Sainsburys. This wine reminded us of summer, fresh and floral, orange blossom and nectarines, the sort of wine you could drink all afternoon. At £4.79 per bottle it would be light on the pocket too.

One of Alistair's clients is a bistro and delicatessen in Bridge of Allan. So while we were scraping the barrel on wines, Alistair had spared no expense on the eats.

Vince was concerned that the hotel was tempting the fates of the gods by maintaining Christmas decorations long after Twelfth Night. No one else seemed particularly bothered. The main hotel gripe was the relative temperatures of the pool, the showers and the changing rooms. The showers took the biggest criticism with calls for a boycott till their scalding settings were recalibrated.

Alistair wanted to know if anyone could identify the UFO which passed over Drymen last week. A white sphere which came from the direction of the Loch / Balmaha and followed a curving path over Drymen and towards Killearn.

Alistair watched it for about three minutes at 6.15am. Vince suggested a Continental Airways jet bound for Edinburgh Airport. Not unless it was perfectly circular and had neither wings nor engines (there was no sound). We decided to have a few more drinks as that would be the best way to summon up UFO theories, aliens and demons.

Sally (minus Paul tonight) admitted to being a one-time Lambrini girl. A rather unfair, disapproving silence fell on the gathering. Sally recovered by saying that her offering bore no resemblance to her teenage tipple. Calloway Crossing was a smooth red wine with a fruity, oakey taste. From Tesco.

Gretchen is always full of surprises. I'm always surprised that the Brueckners don't fly the Germanic flag and introduce us to wines from their homeland! She, too, had shopped at Tesco and brought us a very plummy and berry smooth red from Australia. Lindeman's Sydney Cove Merlot worked out at less than £4 per bottle on a bulk-buy. And there would be Tesco Clubcard points.

This was the first time that Marcia had chosen the closer. Over the years I've found that this is a decent predictor of future tastes. Of course, the £5 per bottle did not apply to the closer as we needed something to lift our spirits for the journey home. Marcia thankfully avoided Canada's national drink which is a cocktail of vodka, hot sauce, Worcester and clam juice, although I'm sure that would have heated us up for the walk home. Instead she mixed a cocktail of Canadian rye whisky, cherry brandy, gingerale and lemon juice. Wow!! O Canada, we sure went home with glowing hearts!