

Drymen Wine Club

October 2008

For October's complete lack of abstinence meeting, we convened at No. 7 Lottery Lane – Walter and Margaret's palatial spread with views across Loch Lomond to the twinkling lights on the road to Luss. Walter suggested we have our party outside on the terrace. As it boasts a ten foot drop into his piranha stocked goldfish pond, and as we don't all end the evening in judicial sobriety, we graciously accepted his offer for the first sampling and then retired indoors for the remainder of the evening. The midges were getting a bit tetchy after all and his Midgeater had run out of gas.

It was Hans' turn to choose the opening wine and, uncharacteristically given his past Teutonic table-thumping patriotism towards all things Germanic, he had picked a sparkling Italian Prosecco. More suited to Christmas than Halloween, Alessandro Gallici Prosecco Brut has gentle bubbles and apricot flavoured petals. It was under £8 a bottle and a surprisingly good competitor for our usual champagne or blankety-blank start.

Lindsay bailed in heavily with her choice, a New Zealand Pinot Noir which she picked up on a shopping trip to Edinburgh. This was a heavy hitting red which could have been sold by the slice. Not that I'm complaining. A bowl of deep red fruit with a fine outer pastry of oak barrel which would go well with a slice of game pie. The Delta Vineyard Pinot Noir is just under £10 and probably not available in Asda.

Two drinks and we were hungry. Merry but hungry. Cynthia had started to giggle. Even for her it was early in the evening to be losing her work-life balance. The high heels were unceremoniously kicked off; one narrowly missed cremation in the open fire; the other striking Roger above the left knee. A few inches higher and he would have been singing stiletto.

We had a few pieces of French bread. Margaret had knitted this in her new bread-making machine which was clearly faulty. She should send it back for a refund or perhaps read the instructions before her next attempt. Too scathing? French bread is not meant to taste of burnt toast. It did, however, have an offsetting effect for our third wine.

Again, no doubt with Christmas on her mind – well, everyone thinks of Christmas in October these days – Gretchen had chosen a smooth, easy-drinking red reminiscent of a rich Bordeaux. We were fooled when the cover was dropped to reveal a Spanish label. The Monasterio was strong on aroma and flavour, lingering plums and brambles, the sort of depth you get from a wine with a biased Tempranillo base.

We needed a palate freshener before the lighter wines. Margaret had a platter of honey-dew melon and cucumber slices. Very inventive, cool and refreshing.

There has been a movement towards trialling organic wines. As a concession, and one which may become a feature of our soirees, we wanted to test if there was any appreciable difference when the grapes are grown with no recourse to fertilizers and pesticides and, indeed, the whole process can be truly labelled “organic”. Sainsbury produce an organic Pinot Grigio. It was good, clean drinking, sensibly priced but ... we agreed, wasn't going to win any prizes. It was too thin on flavour. Having said that, and perhaps this is the organic contribution, the flavour was pure with no hints of anything chemical. Or did we imagine that? Jury's out.

We destroyed the cork on one of our next bottles. It cracked across the top, and then two pieces, half the length of the whole cork, dropped to the floor. That's the last time Roger gets to open the bottles – unless they're screwtops! The remaining half-cork squeaked out of the neck and we were lucky to have no residue in the wine. The delay allowed Vince to give us his opinion on the state of the economy. I'm glad we'd all had a few drinks.

While Roger had struggled manfully with the cork, Lindsay regaled us with the latest episode in the long-running saga of garden wars down on the estate. Why do hairdressers always have all the gossip? After Sheila had lopped the overhanging branches of the Timpsons' ornamental cherry tree and thrown them over the fence into the Timpsons' garden, Alan had had a word with Dave down the pub. His idea was to settle it all calmly, like men of the world. How calm he will remain when he eventually and inevitably discovers that Dave is sleeping with his wife, is debatable. Meanwhile, the cherry tree is suffering some sort of infestation at its severed limbs. The local tree surgeon has examined it and expects to return once winter has set in to cut the limbs back a bit further. That should suit Sheila although it will take a few years for the tree to regain its former glory. Not unlike the Timpsons' marriage!

The first taste was a fresh green salad with hints of orange citrus. Then came a pink pomegranate tone. As assistant with the cork, I already knew what was in the bottle. The others were quick to spot a Sauvignon Blanc, and Eric came close with his guess of Pouilly Fuisse. Les Chains de la Grange is a Pouilly Fume which, at £6 from Oddbins, hits the spot without hitting the pocket.

To finish off the evening, and some of the imbibers, was a dessert wine. As we would have to stagger between the potholes of Lottery Lane on our way home, we elected for only a thimbleful. Nectar, syrupy honey, and an apricot aftertone, Clos L'Abeilley is a super Sauternes which Eric picked up at Majestic for £8 (37.5cl). I would have preferred a big glass and a seat at the picture window, looking out over the loch. I guess that is what Margaret and Walter did when we had all gone