

u3a ST AUSTELL WINE APPRECIATION GROUP

SEPTEMBER 2026 NEWSLETTER



Dear Wine Group Member

Firstly, and with extreme sadness, I have to tell you that a long term member of this group, and personal friend, Pete Tombs passed away last Friday following a tragic accident. This has shocked and devastated everyone who knew Pete, and of course our heartfelt sympathies go now to Nicky and their family at this unbearable time.

Pete and Nicky joined the Wine Group very shortly after its inception, and were loyal attendees of the majority of events, with Pete keen to learn more about wine. However, and as he often told me, he had no sense of smell whatsoever and so was baffled when everyone came up with “scent of elderflower, or scent of cigar boxes etc”. Despite this, he still remained a keen supporter of the group and always offered a helping hand. Pete was a true gentleman and always had a kind word of encouragement, or compliment, and made it his business to talk to as many members as possible, with his very own unique sense of humour shining through. He will be very much missed by everyone who knew him, and I know amongst members here in the group. The shock of this is still hard to accept. Rest in Peace.

Wine Group News

A change of picture above, to reflect the French wine tasting given in August by Wine with Carol, who talked of her trip along the Canal du Midi, see review below.

For anyone who still wishes to come to our **September Majestic tasting**, (see below) please book before 1st September as we have to confirm numbers to them then.

I am meeting with the **Cornwall hotel** next week to confirm numbers for our Christmas event, all we need at the moment is your £10pp deposit, so if you would like to attend please let Sue know by the 1st.

I am finding it hard to believe its nearly September, and time for me to think again about next year's programme. As I have said a couple of times already, I think there are certain months of the year where we have had very small numbers wanting to book an event, which in the end I have had to cancel. Additionally due to the increased cost in transport very few members are willing to pay that cost on top of a tasting, which is all understandable and therefore I am trying to get as many tastings in the Arts Centre as possible. I will book a visit to the Atlantic Vineyard where some of us visited last year, so that we can see the progress and enjoy a lovely afternoon enjoying their enthusiasm and hospitality. By then they should then have production of their own wines coming in to taste.

I will also endeavour to take a look at the Saints Way Wines (on the way to Fowey) to see if that is worth a trip, where we could all drive ourselves (or taxi share).

Otherwise I shall start with booking tastings for some months where we have had good numbers booking in, so there will not be 11 months of events. Let's see how that works out.

Review of August tasting, Wines with Carol along the Canal du Midi tasting wines from the South of France.



Fabulous setting for the tasting

On a hot balmy summer's evening, but with the benefit of a breeze, 23 members enjoyed sitting outside the Yacht Club Pentewan, under a marquee to listen to Carol regale everyone with anecdotes and wines from her cruise along the Canal du Midi.

A blind tasting to establish flavours got everyone sipping and thinking, and a selection of 12 sample bottles had everyone's olfactory senses on overdrive to find the "fragrance" in the bottle. Suffice to say, I think everyone found this slightly challenging, so more homework required!



Shirley helping with the fragrance bottles to smell

Roquefort Papillon is a renowned artisan French blue cheese made from unpasteurized ewe's milk, produced in Roquefort-sur-Soulzon, France, since 1906. It costs roughly £9 to £15 for small wedges (170g–250g), and is famous for its rich, creamy texture and sharp, tangy flavour.

Tomme de Normandie is an artisanal French pressed cow's milk cheese from the Normandy region, typically aged for 3 to 6 months on wooden boards in local cellars. It features a natural, rustic rind, an ivory-coloured interior, and a buttery, fruity flavour with subtle nutty and earthy depths.

French goat cheese (*chèvre*) flavoured with garlic and herbs (*ail et fines herbes*) is a creamy, tangy soft cheese typically rolled in or blended with parsley, chives, and garlic.

French Camembert cheese is a soft, creamy, cow's milk cheese featuring a velvety white rind and an earthy flavour that originates from Normandy, France. First made in the late 18th century in the village of Camembert in Normandy, France.

French Brie is a soft cow's milk cheese from France with a white, edible mold rind and a creamy, buttery centre.

Camembert and Brie are very similar cousin cheeses. Both are soft-ripened, made from cow's milk, and wrapped in a white, edible bloomy rind. However, Camembert is smaller, has a lower fat content, and tastes earthier and stronger, while Brie is larger, milder, and creamier.

Shirley had excelled with an excellent cheese selection and provided a “cheese menu” giving fuller details on each one. Ann Ford, Anne Smith and Judith were also a great help in getting everything set up, and Rachel and Eileen and others helped in the huge job of washing and clearing up afterwards. This is why we ask members not to rush off after tastings, as there is always much to help clear away, always leave a margin for your taxis.



Carol started with a deeper look at a well known grape in a fizz version, and then a delicious rose from the heart of The Canal du Midi. That was followed by a red wine from an historic chateau and then followed a comparison between two more full bodied reds (a Reserve and a Grande Reserve) both from vieilles vines which are unusual to find

produced as a single grape variety. The finale was a dessert wine from the Minervois.

The wines tasted were:

1. **Pique & Mixe Sparkling Picopoul** Terret Blanc de Blancs France 11.5% Old Chapel Cellars £13.99
2. **Bijou de Sophie Valorise** Coteau de Beziers 2025 12% Waitrose £11.50
3. **Chateau Parazza Minervois** Grand Vin de Languedoc Cuvee speciale 2021 imported by Jackson Nugeent Vintners Horsham, obtained from Cheers. 13.5% £20.48
4. **Alain Grignon Carignan Reserve 2024** 12.5 % Majestic £ 12.50
5. **Alain Grignon Grand Reserve Vielle Vignes**, Carignan 2024 14.5 % Majestic £16
6. **D'Astruc Appellation Muscat** St Jean de Minervois 15% (375 ml) 2019 Ellis Wharton £11.50



As ever, Carol had put her heart and soul into the evening, and we should not forget this is just one person doing everything, with the kind help from her husband on the night. Her enthusiasm for wines and travel always gives our group a truly interesting and wonderful evening, so thank you again Carol. Some members told me the following day they thought it one of the best tastings they had been to!! Accolade indeed.

How has this Summer affected British Wines?

Quite obviously this intense prolonged heat must be affecting our UK vineyards and especially here in the South West. The following article I found is interesting and only time will tell how the winemakers will cope going forwards if this is going to be our norm.

“Winemakers have said the sustained period of hot dry weather has left them in "uncharted territory."

Sam Lindo from Camel Valley, near Bodmin, said he may not be able to match the flavours of the company's normal crisp wines because the heat had made the grapes riper and more flavoursome.

Alina Stankus, co-owner of Venn Valley Vineyard, near Barnstaple, said there were signs of heat stress in her vines. Without rain, the grapes would be smaller and not as good as they could be, she added.

Lindo, said: "This hot dry weather is very good, but for us it's very much uncharted territory."

He said Camel Valley made "really good wines that are slender, crisp, light in flavour, and this sunshine is going to be new territory".

"We're going to have more flavour, we're not sure what's going to happen to the acidity, it's very much unknown," he added.

Camel Valley has 24,000 vines which produce on average 150,000 bottles of wine a year. Lindo said the weight of the grapes this year may be slightly lower because of the lack of rain. "The grapes have less juice in them, so although you have the same number of bunches you will get less juice out of them," he added.

Drought was declared in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in July and the Met Office said extreme weather was becoming the new normal for the UK.

Lindo said with hotter drier summers predicted, change would be necessary. He said: "Everybody in the world has currently got the wrong variety of vines in the ground that they will need for 20 years time." He said vineyards in Bordeaux and the Champagne region were already replacing vines with varieties which could manage the heat and the same would have to happen in Devon and Cornwall.

Lindo said: "Luckily for us it is well chartered territory, we only have to look further south to see what we need to do next. The future is already here, it's somewhere else."

Venn Valley Vineyard, just outside Barnstaple, produces about 5,000 bottles of wine a year. Alina Stankus, who owns the vineyard with her husband, said: "The leaves will turn sunlight into carbohydrates for the grapes, but those grapes need to swell with water."

Without rain she said the grapes would be smaller and not as good as they could be. She said Seyval Blanc vines were the backbone of the vineyard but because of the heat they were over-cropping.

Stankus said she was having to carry out a green harvest, which meant taking off any bunches which did not stand a chance of ripening so they did not overstress the vine.

She said the Pinot Noir vines were starting to show signs of heat stress with leaves turning yellow very early in the season.

Obviously not just our lawns suffering in the drought conditions, and such a lot for our British winemakers to think about now.

2026 Wine Appreciation meetings

Events now open to book:

Final chance:

September 18th Majestic Wines, after requests to have him back, Peter May returns to the Arts Centre. Start 6.45pm finish for taxis at 10pm. **Cost £20pp** to include food and room hire.

Peter's tastings are always well received, with his casual manner but excellent knowledge of the wines and makers. Great to have him back again.

“Good/Better/Best tasting!” ~Taste a selection of standard, premier cru and grand cru styles to see what you

really get for your extra £££. We will taste one white, one rose and one red with two quality levels of each – 6 wines.

A topic we have not so far covered, and I think a really good idea to see exactly what the differences are.

Book ref xxxxWGSEPT26 by end of August.

Thank to Chris and Chrissie for offering to provide the food, and Elaine Nelson for offering to take home the items requiring washing. 2 jobs that are taken for granted as being done.

October 16 Jenny and Mick are running a **Members' favourite Winter Reds** tasting at the Arts Centre. 6.45pm start, finish after clearing for taxis at 10pm please. **Cost £20pp** to include 5 wines, food and the room hire.

In preparation for long Autumnal and Winter evenings, Jenny and fellow members will be presenting a favourite red wine, 5 wines in total ranging both in alcohol percentage, country of origin and cost. Let's see who likes what type of winter warmer!

Book by September 16 ref xxxxWGOCT26

November 20 at the Arts Centre, **Andrew and Christine are giving us a Murder Mystery Wine Evening..."An evening at the Chateau Cludeau".**

Arts Centre 6.45pm start, taxis for 10pm. **Cost £20pp** for 5 wines and the opportunity to do some detective work!

The heady combination of wine tasting whilst solving a murder mystery sounds fabulous, with lots of fun along the way. Well done Andrew and Christine!

Book by end October, ref WGN OV26

Volunteer for food please, plus someone to take cloths, knives and boards home to wash

Thursday December 10 Wine Group Christmas meal at the Cornwall Hotel. Arrival 6.30pm for sit down at 7.30pm (time for a welcome drink and raffle ticket purchases). Finish 10pm/10.30pm.

We will once again enjoy our own private room, a 3 course Christmas meal and time to socialise.

Hannah at the hotel has very kindly held last year's prices for us **£38pp**.

To reserve a space you need to pay **£10pp deposit by the end of August**, so that we can pay the hotel first week in September, ref xxxxWGDECdep.

Then menu choices and **final payment by October 20th**. **Same ref as before minus dep.**

Once the menu has been decided (later in year) it will be sent to you for your choice.

If you wish to stay overnight at the hotel, we have again been given a special discount rate of £99 per double room to include a full breakfast and use of their leisure facilities. When booking, call hotel direct and quote our u3a event date, payment will be taken at the time of booking.

To remind you, here is the menu choice:

STARTERS

Roasted Tomato & Basil Soup
(DFO, GFO) with homemade
foccacia

Prawn Cocktail with Grapefruit
(DFO, GFO) avocado puree and
Bloody Mary dressing

Chicken Liver Parfait (GFO)
red onion marmalade, crisp
toasts

MAINS

West Country Turkey
Medium-Rare Roast West Country
Topside Beef
Mushroom and Nut Roast (GFO, DFO)

all served with pigs in blankets, homemade sage and onion
stuffing, roast potatoes, roasted roots, buttered sprouts,
cauliflower cheese

DESSERTS

Baileys Crème Brûlée
cranberry & pistacio biscotti
(GFO)

Blood Orange Custard Tart
(GFO) mojito sorbet and white rum
& orange salsa

West Country Cheese Plate
(GFO) chutney, celery, artisan
crackers

REMEMBER

ALL PAYMENTS TO THE WINE GROUP ACCOUNT PAY
INTO

ACCOUNT NO 23132587 (Barclays)

SORT CODE 20-30-47 (U3a St Austell)

Regards

Amanda