

WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF
MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS



WCoMC Wine Club

invites you to join a
Virtual Wine Tasting – Friday 13th November 2020

The Judgement of Dorset

Given the continuing climate change across France and England
are English vineyards now challenging their French counterparts?

background notes
and
suggestions for food pairing

with thanks to

Patrick McHugh, Ann Chapman
and
John Blackburn

A bit of background

Following in the footsteps of our "Chablis to Savour" evening, the WCoMC Wine Club has found an English vineyard that could soon be challenging the French producers of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, not to mention the producers of sparkling wines in the Champagne region. Back in 1976 there was a famous wine tasting experiment, subsequently called *The Judgement of Paris*: the best of French wines were pitched against Californian wines; nine of the best wine tasters in France were involved. We are following in their footsteps by tasting two Dorset wines and comparing them to their traditional French counterparts.

Chardonnay was born from a cross between Pinot Noir and Gouais (a white grape variety) and enjoys a special position in Burgundy. It is nearly the only grape variety found in Burgundy white wines and has conquered the world thanks to its ability to adapt to all soils and climates, making it the most widely planted quality white grape variety in the world. Similarly, Pinot Noir grapes are chiefly associated with the Burgundy region, although also grown around the world, mostly in cooler climates, making red as well as sparkling wines (including Champagne).

The Bride Valley Vineyard is located in West Dorset, and is owned and run by Steven and Bella Spurrier. Steven is well known in wine circles for organising *The Judgement of Paris* and is now a respected critic, retailer, teacher and (wine!) consultant. If you are interested, check out the 2008 film *Bottle Shock* starring a relatively young Alan Rickman as Steven!

Back in 2008 Steven and Bella decided that vines could replace some of the pasture on her 200 acre sheep farm, as shown to the right; they purchased Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier root stocks from Burgundy's famous Pépinières Guillaume vine nursery.

The vineyard comprises 42,000 vines, 55% Chardonnay, 25% Pinot Noir and 20% Pinot Meunier which are close planted on predominately south facing slopes close to the West Dorset Jurassic Coast. They are now producing seven different wines from ten hectares under cultivation, making good use of the chalky Kimmeridgian soil that West Dorset offers. (We believe this is a hybrid of the soil types famous in the Burgundy and Champagne regions.)



The 2018 summer was exceptionally warm and dry and the harvest began some two weeks earlier than usual in late September, finishing late on October 20th, due to the large crop. On the first day a large block of Pinot Noir looked and tasted so good that Steven could not resist vinifying it as his first still red wine. A small portion was aged in new American oak and blended in before bottling to add a touch of roundness to the vibrantly pure fruit. The end result was some 3,300 bottles of Dorset Pinot Noir.

On the final day of the 2018 harvest Steven decided to keep the last rows of Chardonnay to make his first still white wine. Vinified in stainless steel and kept on the fine lees until bottling in early March. They produced some 3,300 bottles of Dorset Chardonnay. These two 'unexpected' wines are a memory of a fine English Summer.

At our virtual tasting on 17th June 2020 we drank Sébastien Damp's delicious **2018 Côte de Léchet Premier Cru Chablis**. Sébastien commented: *'I believe in the next 50 years we will make a move to somewhere like Dorset. I did some research into Dorset and would love to make a visit there and taste their wines. Are they growing good Chardonnay?'*

Now is your chance to answer Sébastien's question and to undertake *The Judgement of Dorset*. We have decided to pitch the **2018 Bride Valley Chardonnay** against Sébastien's **Premier Cru Chablis** and the **2018 Meursault, Le Miex Sous Le Château, Aegerter Père et Fils**. Similarly, we are pitching the **2018 Bride Valley Pinot Noir** against the **2017 Santenay Premier Cru Maladière Domaine Lucien Muzard** (*one of our recommended Christmas wines*) and the **2017 Chassagne-Montrachet Domaine Bertrand Bachelet**.

These are two huge challenges. Will the results be as surprising as those in Paris in 1976?

As before, we have added some food pairing suggestions. We are not asking you to select the best wines from a large selection but to enjoy drinking the two Dorset wines and to evaluate their potential. We believe wines should always be tasted with food and therefore, as before, we are suggesting that you make some delicious gougères. [Click here to access the recipes](#) we included at the end of the July tasting notes.

=== o O o ===

The Chardonnay Challenge

2018 Dorset Chardonnay Bride Valley Vineyard (£19.47 12%)

Produced by the excellent wine maker Ian Edwards (of Furleigh Estate) for Steven Spurrier, this is an excellent wine, 100% Chardonnay grown on the chalk soils of the Bride Valley Vineyard and picked when perfectly ripe then lightly matured in French oak casks.

The total harvest at Bride Valley Vineyard in 2018 was an extraordinary 55,000 bottles of wine from ten hectares, more than all the seven previous vintages put together. The harvest lasted over 3 weeks and nearing the end they noticed that the Chardonnay was being attacked by a little botrytis (a form of rot). Having filled every tank at Furleigh for potential sparkling wine, Ian said he had just one small tank free which could take up to 2,500 litres. So on the very last day, the slightly botrytis affected Chardonnay was vinified at 11.5 degrees as a still wine. In fact, the botrytis has added a touch of richness

It is a Dorset "White Burgundy", ripe and fruity with a luxurious texture balanced by citrus acidity. It is very full and fruity in the mouth with a hint of oak and a long finish. Fine bright yellow with green tints, nose showing some florally and white summer fruits and more depth of fruit than expected. On the palate it is ripe, fruity, crisp, surprisingly broad and attractively open for a very cool climate. The 'Granny Smith' acidity lifts the length and the finish, definitely "Burgundian" with a good year or two in front of it.

Serve at 11-12°C having taken the wine from your refrigerator/wine cooler and opened at least 30 minutes before drinking.

This wine would accompany fish dishes in many variants, from simply grilled fish with butter and parsley or poached fish with a creamy sauce, through the British summer staple of cold poached salmon with mayonnaise to fish pies and stews. Local Dorset caught flat fish such as megrim sole or plaice would be excellent, or try lemon sole with thyme butter. As an alternative, you could consider seafood or a spring vegetable risotto.



2018 Chablis Premier Cru, Côte de Léchet, Sébastien Dampit (£27.50 13%)

The town of Chablis lies in an island of vines amid the rather northern-feeling forests and pastures of the Yonne near Auxerre. The rock beneath these modest hills is limestone and in the heart of Chablis, clayey limestone (marl) of a special sort – Kimmeridgian. Chablis is a long way north and its vintages therefore vary markedly in ripeness. The wine is made from Chardonnay grapes which, when grown in a cool climate like Chablis, produce steely, stony, appley wine with good acidity.

Sébastien Dampit's 2018 Côte de Léchet is a lovely classic Chablis with a nose of crushed oyster shell and lemon fruit. The palate is tangy, with a surprising structure and grip, while remaining fine and elegant. The old vines suffer from Black Knot, giving lots of very small grapes which results in plenty of concentration and phenolic grip. Lemony and saline, this is textbook Chablis with a punch.

Serve at 10-11°C having taken the wine from your refrigerator/wine cooler and opened at least 30 minutes before drinking.

Chardonnay is a truly versatile food wine. Like the Dorset Chardonnay it matches well with fish, poultry, cheeses and salads. Light, austere, cool-climate wines like Chablis go with unadorned simply cooked white fish.



2018 Meursault, Le Meix Sous Le Château, Aegerter Père et Fils (£40.11 13%)

The Aegerter Domaine is located in Nuit-St-Georges on Burgundy's Côte-d'Or. Jean-Luc and Paul his son own and run their 22 year old, 7 hectare, family estate producing 20,000 bottles a year. It is interesting that they also own a small parcel of vines in Chablis on the Côte de Léchet. The terroir imbues itself dramatically in the wine glass and the grape variety produces absolutely remarkable, elegant and light fine wines with a delicate aroma of lime blossom and toasted almond flavours.

100% Chardonnay with the colour of pale gold this ample, smoky dry white wine on the nose has an aroma of white peaches and notes of brioches. This wine brings back memories of a fine summer. Well balanced with the right acidity, the young, soft tannins and ripe red fruits burst with energy and vivacity. On the palate there is a round balanced freshness and a long final finish.

Serve at 12-14°C having taken the wine from your refrigerator/wine cooler and opened at least 30 minutes before drinking.

This is a wine which goes well with all fish, shellfish, poultry, mushrooms and cheese. It is particularly recommended with a plate of oysters, salmon en papillote or Gorgonzola. The wine's intensity would also stand up to a dish of fettuccine in a simple sauce of cream and parmesan, finished with fresh winter truffle shavings.



The Pinot Noir Challenge

2018 Dorset Pinot Noir Bride Valley Vineyard (£21.50 12%)

This wine received a Silver Medal at the illustrious WineGB Awards 2020, judged by Oz Clarke, Susie Barrie MW, and Rebecca Palmer MW. Interestingly, for still wine, you need enough sugar to give at least 11% of alcohol by volume in the finished wine and for English vineyards this is not something to be expected and certainly not every year. However, as the 2018 harvest opened in late September, a good two weeks earlier than usual, the Pinot Noir grapes looked so perfect and tasted so good that the first morning's work went over to Ian at Furleigh Estate with instructions to vinify it as a red. The natural alcohol was 11.5% and it was chaptalised up to 12.5%, by the addition of sugar to the unfermented grape must, prolonging the fermentation and ensuring a longer extraction of colour. The wine is a light, bright red with violet tints. About one fifth of it spent a few months in new American oak barrels to add roundness, before it was bottled in September 2019.



We recommend that you should open at least three hours before serving at a temperature of 14-16°C or else you may get a strange farmyard nose. Fresh carmine red, not deep but light in texture with fine clarity, lovely expression of red summer fruits with Pinot Noir precision and purity on the palate. It delivers ripe cherries and raspberries on the palate. With fruit dominant, smoothness and more depth to come, there is a hint of new American oak well blended in, which adds to the light tannins in the structure and the salty finish.

Pinot Noir is a remarkably versatile grape and any Pinot Noir will partner with meats, cheeses and some fish. With this wine, we suggest antipasti including salami and goat's cheese or seared tuna. It will also partner Chinese dishes or even a pizza.

Santenay Premier Cru Maladière Domaine Lucien Muzard (£21.49 13%)

An extremely fine smoky Pinot Noir from one of Santenay's most respected producers. This is an elegant, bright red, yet richly aromatic Burgundy, with dark berry fruit flavours. Whilst not a Pommard, Savigny, Volnay, Gevry-Chambertin or Vosne-Romanée, this Santenay Pinot Noir avoids their astronomical prices and yet presents the best of Burgundy.

We recommend that you open at least an hour before serving at a temperature of 14-16°C. This polished, young Santenay with light, silky tannins comes from an excellent vintage. The light minerality allows the purity of the aromatic red-berry fruit to predominate at the front of the mouth and to be matched to a subtly smoky, meaty, savoury and toasty, cedarwood palate. More than drinkable already, but you could let it develop over the next seven or eight years.

This classic Pinot Noir with smoky berry fruit flavours would go well with roast or pan-fried duck with cherry sauce or smoked breast slices. It can also accompany your Christmas turkey or goose with all the trimmings, or any vegetarian option based on mushrooms or nuts.



2017 Chassagne-Montrachet Domaine Bertrand Bachelet (£30.03 14%)

Made from 100% Pinot Noir grown on clay soil with ferric inclusions, this classic deep red Chassagne-Montrachet demonstrates great elegance. It has a warm nose that subtly blends red fruits and spices. It is tasty and soft on the palate and has a wonderful aromatic palette. The wine is aged in wood for 30 months (30% new barrels), extended by a period of three to six months in stainless steel vats before settling. It has a ruby colour with garnet reflections, aromas of blackcurrant and cherries with spicy notes, a fresh soft attack in the mouth which is slightly fatty with notes of liquorice, pepper and smooth tannins, with a lovely, soft mineral finish. The wine should keep until at least 2030. You must open at least two hours before serving at a temperature of 14-16°C.

It is ideally accompanied by a rare sirloin of beef, perhaps a beef Wellington or pink Magret de Canard. Recommended also to partner with Chicken in Basque (tomato and peppers) Sauce, or Tomme de Savoie or Comté cheese.



Wine Tasting – the BLICK guide

And there is just space to remind you of the aficionados' method for describing the five qualities that separate the pleasantly *ordinaire* from the *prestigieuse*:

Balance – Length – Intensity – Complexity – Keepability