

BEEFSTEAK AND BURGUNDY CLUB CONVENTION **SHANGHAI CHINA OCTOBER 16-18 2015**

SOWING THE SEED

At the Darwin Convention in 2012 it was mentioned that a Club from China might be interested in hosting a convention. China had never been on our “radar” but after an eloquent outline of China’s attractions by Adelaide former President, Phil Kleinig we were instant converts. Subsequently it appeared that a convention in China would be unlikely as so many members are part of the floating population and it was felt that they could not commit to a distant time. Fortunately for the 160 delegates from 47 clubs who were able to attend this 32nd convention and the 23rd consecutive convention Jill and I have attended these difficulties were overcome and we were treated to an extraordinary experience in a foreign land. Shanghai is an amazing city with a population larger than that of Australia. The traffic and pollution are beyond anything you will see in The Antipodes as Shanghailanders Club Secretary Howard Bennett so quaintly describes this part of the world.

REGISTRATION 1pm to 4pm Radison Blu Plaza Xing Guo hotel

The hotel is located within seven hectares of historical gardens and we were welcomed outdoors in warm sunshine by our hosts. Our name badges were collected along with bags containing:

- Apron with the distinctive convention logo of the drinking bull sharing his beverage with a dragon.
- Convention cap also with the logo
- Welcoming booklet including messages from Bruce Perks, President of the Adelaide Club, the Shanghailanders Club committee, the programme of events, a short history of Shanghai, a condensed history of Beefsteak and Burgundy, helpful hints on taxi travel, personal safety, scams and emergency contact numbers.
- Tourism and entertainment map of Shanghai.
- Tourism “Flyers” Nightlife in Shanghai, Gourmet in old garden villas, Ancient Towns, Celebrity’s footsteps, Dim Sum and what later proved to be the most useful for us, Metro trains guide and map.
- Scenic jogging map. (We did not use this one, too busy eating and drinking.)
- Taxi reference cards for three main hotels
- Greeting card from committee signed by Shanghai President, Hans Michel and Secretary, Howard Bennett

A local wine, People’s Chardonnay 2012 was a welcoming tippie as we met delegates whom we have known for many years in addition to those we were meeting for the first time. As I often say, registration is so much like a country wedding and the venue was soon buzzing with conversation.



Peoples Chardonnay welcoming registration refreshment

WELCOMING DINNER FAIRMONT PEACE HOTEL

The Peace hotel is a glamorous Art Deco hotel popular with the rich and famous in former years. I believe Noel Coward wrote one of his plays, (Private Lives?) here and it was visited by many Hollywood stars. After welcoming sparkling wine, served on the outdoor area with commanding views of the Bund area, the River Huangpu and the lights of the skyscrapers on the other side of the river, we adjourned to the historic Peace Hall ballroom for dinner. I should mention that at this Convention all wines were served masked. It probably seemed like a good idea at the time but in a group so large and with so much conversation there was really not a lot of time given to pondering over their merits. At the meal's end they were revealed, however it was not until we arrived home that I was able to get more details of the wines from the Shanghai Club website. On reflection, as all the wines proved to be none that we had ever enjoyed before it would have been good to view the labels as they were served. We were treated to an outstanding dinner which even included a touch of home as I had just picked the last of my home grown parsnips and we had soup from parsnips grown in the nearby Yarra Valley. In addition to the fine food and wine we had a lively group at our table and it was a thoroughly enjoyable dinner. We also listened to welcoming speeches from Shanghailanders Hans Michel and Howard Bennett and Adelaide President Bruce Perks, plus the local Chamber of Commerce President.



All dressed up for Friday dinner.



Dykes and Kleinigs ,Adelaide, Pearsons Toowoomba Kellys Townsville Freebairns Nital



Wines:

McWilliams Inheritance Brut NV Sparkling Hunter Valley, Australia

Chateau Ste. Michelle Chardonnay, Columbia Valley USA 2012

Castello D'Albola-Abola Chianti DOCG 2013 Tuscany Italy

Grace Vineyards, Tasya Reserve Aglianico 2012 Shanxi, China (This was the wine of the night, far superior to any Chinese red we had tried previously.)

Le Grand Courtage Grand Cuvee Brut Rose NV, Burgundy, France

SATURDAY MORNING BUSINESS SESSION

I always say that if you eat well and drink fine wine and retire before midnight facing the following day is (comparatively) easy. It certainly seemed so as there was pretty much a full attendance at the 9am Business session held at Radison Blu. As Adelaide's Peter Johnston was taking minutes I will not go into detail. As usual there were the Administrative matters concerning generic emails, website, handbook (disappointing that so many clubs neglect to provide their details following their AGM), new members and privacy issues. Ron Boxall from John Bowen Club Hobart made a presentation for their convention 20- 22 May 2016. It promises to be another memorable convention and we are already looking forward to it. There is also some interest from Black Swans-Penola-Coonawarra to bid for a convention in 2018. Accommodation is one of their issues but they are only 50 odd ks from Mt. Gambier where accommodation is plentiful and so this might be an option.

There was some time for General Business. I raised the issue of the Handbook, which as we were in China I prefer to call The Little Red Book. Jill and I use it as a source to visit other clubs when we are travelling. So many clubs have welcomed us with open arms, whether they are all men, all women or mixed but there can be an occasional club that has closed meetings. To us this is not in the spirit of B&B. Our Club, Nital, has never had a closed meeting and we are in our 59th year. Guests are always welcome. The response was underwhelming. I don't think I achieved much other than to take up ten minutes of time so we could finish by 10.30. We concluded with tea/coffee and delicious biscuits for morning tea.



Adelaide President Bruce Perks chairing Business Session.

MASTER CLASS

Following the Business Session some 150 of us including our friends from Sheoak Hill who asked us to join them, were treated to an introduction to China's most interesting wine producers. The tasting was hosted by the lively Fongyee Walker, the co-founder of Dragon Phoenix Fine Wine Consulting. She is a member of the Institute of Wines and Spirits and China's only Master of Wine exam candidate. She has written articles for various magazines and contributed to the award winning documentary "Red Obsession". She has been visiting wine maker at Brown Bros. winery and judged at many wine competitions and shows.

The nine wines we tasted and learnt about their location and vineyard management were:

- Tiansai Skyline of Gobi, Reserve Chardonnay 2014 Bazhou Xinjiang
- Nine Peaks Chardonnay 2013 Qingdao Shandong
- Chandon NV Helan Mountain Ningxia
- Leirenshou Lux Regis Series R2 Rosé 2012 Yongning Ningxia
- Zhongfei Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Bazhou Xinjiang
- Domaine Franco-Chioise Reserve Red 2012 Huailai Hebei
- Silver Heights Family Reserve Red 2013 Helen Mountain District Ningxia
- Grace Vineyard Tasya's Reserve Marselan 2012 Taigu Shanxi
- Canaan Reserve Syrah 2012 Huailai Hebei

We were impressed by the last three wines but one of the problems with fine Chinese wines is lack of availability. However, the biggest problem facing wine production is that in a country a little bigger than Australia no part has a Mediterranean climate, the ideal place to

grow vines! There are parts of the country that are so cold and dry that the vines are literally buried to preserve them during winter months. Labour to do this work in a country experiencing huge change is a great challenge. Fongyee's comment that she preferred wines with a future rather than those with a past struck a chord with her audience. Personally, I like wines with a past that also have a future! What a wonderfully educational and enjoyable session it was and the applause for Fongyee was well deserved. A past Adelaide Club President Michael Madigan thanked her on behalf of us all.



With Sheoak Hill delegates Masterclass



An attentive audience for Fongyee Walker



Fongyee Walker

SATURDAY GALA DINNER in the grounds of the Intercontinental Shanghai Rujin

Built by the founder of North China Daily News H.E. Morris in 1917 The Intercontinental provides visitors with an air of unmatched nostalgia in the former Concession area of Shanghai. Chairman Mao, General Chen Yi and Chiang Kai-Shek have resided at the property.

We were greeted with sparkling wine and canapés. The lighting was a bit dark and as the wine was poured unmasked I forgot that we were not supposed to see it and hunted around for an empty bottle and took a snap. Mat Rousse, the Winemaster was standing nearby. Being a gentleman he did not admonish me but just asked that I did not disclose its name.

Before heading for the dining area we were treated to a welcoming dragon dance. It was most energetic and impressive.

There is usually set seating at Saturday night's dinner but this night there was free seating. It did not concern us as we just found a group and had a good old talk with members including those from Holdfast and Sydney, sorry, they like to be called Sydney No.7. However for those clubs represented by several members fixed seating does give them an opportunity to mix with others rather than continually with their own group and I think for Saturday night fixed seating is preferable. A host club member at as many tables as possible is also a good idea. Mercifully, we were spared a noisy band and screeching vocalist as has happened occasionally in the past.

We had another enjoyable dinner. We were lucky as we had a generous serving of the main course. It seems that others were not so lucky. It appears that they carved the early steaks too thickly and did not have enough to go round. The last to be served got very little meat. We felt so sorry for Howard and his team but these things are beyond the host club's control. The name Changhailanders has a certain Scottish ring about it and the words of Robby Burns came to mind, "The best laid plans o' mice an' men gang oft a-gley".

There was some clever entertainment from Beijing President Steve Meadows who had prepared a video of the history of Beefsteak and Burgundy starting with Adelaide in 1954 represented by an ocker Ausie in slouch hat and shorts clutching a can of VB beer. It was so funny that we forgave him for the inaccuracy. Beer cans had not been invented in 1954 and no South Ausie would have been drinking VB! Southwark or West End longnecks were more likely.

In keeping with our club's tradition of getting autographs I was able to use the cheeseboard to record them. The cheese itself had been most welcome as the Chinese are not great consumers and it was only available at large department stores. At the dinner the varieties of Tomme, Camembert and Beijing Blue were very welcome. Alexander, the cheese specialist spoke about introducing cheese in to China. There were ample reserves and he gave us a quantity to take back to our accommodation.

The highlight of the dinner was the presentation of Life Membership to Howard Bennett. He was completely taken by surprise by the well deserved award, a fitting gesture to a man who has done so much for B&B over many years culminating in the contribution to the planning and success of this convention. As the lone representative of Shanghailanders at last year's Convention in Adelaide he was the only member of the committee who had practical experience of the enormity of the task.



Angelina Sparkling Chardonnay



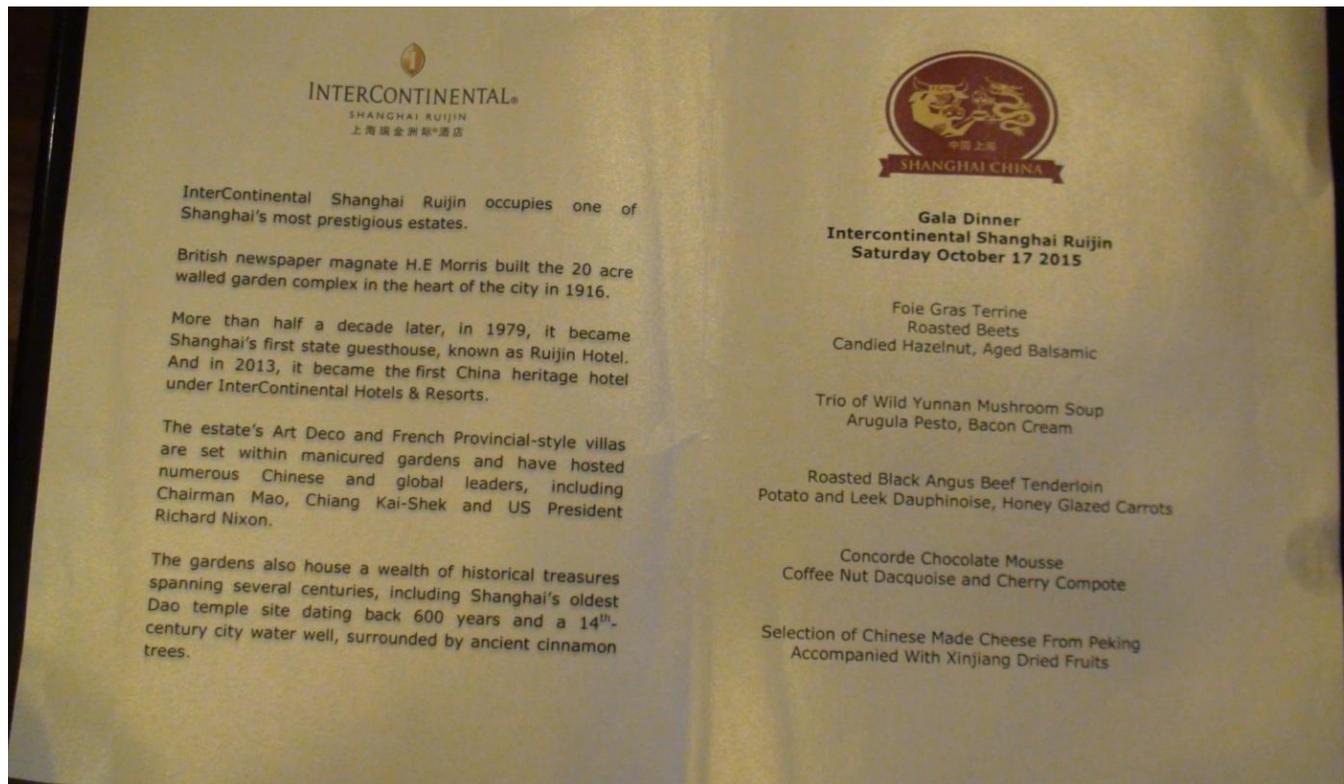
The main course (note the generous serving)



Life Member Howard Bennett



Wine Master Matthew Rouse



The cheeseboard handy for autographs

The wines:

Grace Vineyards Angelina Sparkling Chardonnay NV Shanxi China

Kruger-Rumpf Riesling "Quarzit" Dry 2013 Naha Germany

Ortas-Cave de Rasteau "Tradition" Rasteau 2012 Cotes du Rhône AOC France

Grace Vineyards Tasya Reserve Marselan, a cross between Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache first bred in 1961 near the French town of Marseillan 2012 Shanxi China (This was wine No. 8 at the morning's tasting and was really good with the roasted Black Angus Tenderloin)

St. Michael Eppen Alto Adige Gewurztraminer 2014 Chile

Graham's Six Grapes reserve Port Portugal

SUNDAY excursion to Zhujiajiao water village

Located on the outskirts of Shanghai, Zhujiajiao is an ancient water town with a history of more than 1700 years. It was a step back in time with distinctive bridges over streams and gondolas plying their trade. There were many shops, mostly serving food of various kinds, most unknown to us. We had a pleasant walk before returning to our buses and heading for the much anticipated Sunday lunch.



FAREWELL BRUNCH Le Meridien She Shan Shanghai

The Meridien She Shan is a weekend getaway for many Shanghai residents. The She Shan hills surround the property and they give a pleasant rural impression in a city so often appearing breathlessly busy. It was very peaceful and an ideal setting for our barbecue based luncheon. The much prized local crabs were in season and we were all allocated a male and female crab for our enjoyment. Both Sheoakhill and Townsville delegates invited us to join them and we had a most enjoyable time. The hosts were very generous with their wines with bottles available to bring to our tables.

All too soon the farewell speeches were happening and the formal part of the convention at an end. As we were about to leave Wine Master Mat gave us a bottle of Rosé so we now had a supply of wine and cheese.



The Wines:

McWilliams Inheritance Brut NV Sparkling Hunter Valley Australia

MAN Vintners Tormentoso Bush Vine Pinotage 2011 Paal South Africa

AIX Rosé Coteaux d Aix en Provence AOP Non Vintage Provence, Maison Saint Aix France

People's Chardonnay Grace Vineyards 2012 Shanxi Province China

Rapaura Springs (Cotterell's 1843) Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2012 Marlborough New Zealand

Local beer was also served.

SUNDAY NIGHT

Seldom is a formal function arranged for Sunday night. It just seems to take care of itself. We met up with the Sheoak Hill delegates in their past President Alan and Kath Porter's room and enjoyed Veuve Clicquot champagne and club sandwiches with chips. We took along some nibbles and Great Wall of China Cabernet Sauvignon (a bit of a come down from the wines we had been drinking but I do like to buy local when away from home.) It was another enjoyable evening and as they were heading for home the following day they gave us their left over fresh fruit so we now had cheese, wine and fruit, needing just some biscuits for a couple of night's meals in between fine dining over the remaining few days of our stay in Shanghai. At dinner at Radison Blu on the Monday night we happened to find Peter and Jan Johnston also dining there and they joined us for a delicious buffet dinner. Later in the week we enjoyed some unexpected but much appreciated hospitality from Howard Bennett.

CONCLUSION

It had been another outstanding convention and very well organized. Buses took delegates to each activity from the main accommodation hotels. The cost of the Convention was \$US750 per head net after Bank Fees. That is about A\$1,100 when we sent our remittance. Accommodation at the three major hotels was between about A\$300 to \$400 per night. We managed to find a satisfactory but certainly not flash roomy apartment suite accommodation for under \$100 per night just 10 minutes walk from the Radison Blu.

In recent times we have seen host clubs fall away after hosting a Convention. Wellington New Zealand are still regulars as are Launceston, Townsville, Sydney No 7 and West Coast but Orange had no attendees after their convention and Darwin and Yarrowonga/Mulwala were not represented. We do hope that we will see some Shanghighlanders in Hobart next year. The pressure will be off and they are sure to enjoy a visit to the apple isle.



Will ye no come back again?

Jim Freebairn

