



President's Report - February 2020

It was pleasing to visit a new location for our February lunch and we were not disappointed. The historic Thistle Inn provided a very convivial private room for a slightly smaller number and that proved very comfortable for us. We were joined by Richard Culley as a guest of Joe Pope and he proved a most entertaining visitor. Regrettably he lives in the UK. We also observed a moments silence in respect of a long-time host to the Club in a former life, Father Sir Des Britten who had just passed away.

Our aperitif wine was widely liked and provided much comment. It was 2017 Clos Henri Sauvignon Blanc from Marlborough. The French influence certainly made for a very appealing style with 15% barrel fermented and eight months of lees stirring. I was fortunate to visit the home cellars in Sancerre where Monsieur Bourgeois proudly offers this wine alongside his local wines. While not everyone saw it as sauvignon blanc many did correctly identify it.

Seated we were treated to a first course of scallops, black pudding mash and jus with some of us thinking that would probably have sufficed for lunch! We were immediately impressed by this carefully crafted and plated dish which was quite delicious. Geoff chose to partner this with another well received white – 2018 Odyssey Reserve Illiad Chardonnay from Gisborne. Dry but creamy it worked very well with the dish and although it did fool a number, others correctly focussed on the region and the variety. We were off to a very good start.

The main dish was again visually appealing – each course being served on different crockery. Wakanui short rib, butternut, black garlic, charred leek and jus – a perfect Beefsteak dish. The long slow cooked rib was not even seared initially, chef told us, and the accompaniments were equally delicious. A big red was called for and a big red we got. 2017 Finca Bacara Time Waits for No One Monastrell from Jumilla Spain.

While remote it is a fascinating area to visit with huge vineyards of low growing unirrigated bush vines. This indigenous variety has increasingly been handled with greater care from winemakers wanting to show off some very old vine material from an area which has never had phylloxera. We recently had a visitor from Yecla in this region and the wines, as this one demonstrated, are smooth, full bodied and great buying. No one succeeded in identifying it, which really didn't matter as it was so much enjoyed.

We were agreeably surprised for dessert by a beautifully crafted lemon & lime tart with limoncello gelato which was a fine finish. Chef confided he has a very good pastry chef who obviously ably complements his skills. Service throughout had been professional and we left feeling we had enjoyed an excellent lunch and been very well treated in this new location.

I look forward to seeing you at one of our regular, but always popular sites this month, Ortega Fish Shack.

Best regards.

Brett.