



La Plume De
Probus Pontivy is
the official magazine
for
Probus Club de
Pontivy.
Association No:
0562004811

ISSUE 6



AUGUST 2010

From

The President

The late Spring and most of the Summer this year have proved to be very pleasant for us all here in Morbihan, if a little hot on occasions. This has been reflected in the general ambience of our monthly meetings, when there has to my mind been an underlying feeling of good humour and “togetherness” which I had not really discerned during the dismal dark and cold days of last winter.

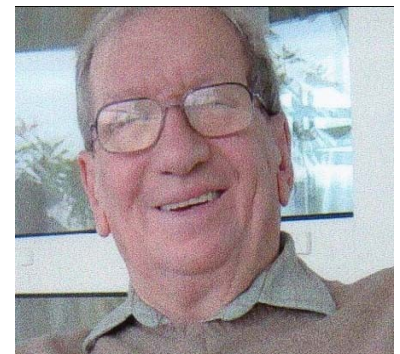
There has also been innovation. We were all agreed that the fact that we members all lived so far away from each other precluded many of the excursions and activities which most of the other clubs in France tend to take for granted. This realisation resulted in our accepting with alacrity Nick Dent’s selfless (!) offer to take on the burden of Social Secretary, and by doing so relieve Val of the arduous business of coming up with new ideas to keep us unimaginative folk amused.

The results of this “fresh look” by Nick have already been tried and

tested. For a start, our revered andfeared.... treasurer John entered into the spirit of things by inviting members to a barbecue at his home (and this in return for a ridiculously low contribution towards costs) where Chris and he entertained us unstintingly. This proved a high point for those who could attend, and we thank our hosts wholeheartedly.

Meanwhile Nick had suggested that a debate on the motion of how future generations would rate the relative influence of French and English social development on their position on the world stage. Stuart Parnell made an impassioned argument in favour of the French while Nick forcefully argued the English case. What was most encouraging was the audience participation with a large majority making pertinent contributions to the debate.....but the English side won, of course!

This new initiative was followed on August 10th by another very interesting departure from the usual pattern, that of a five minute thumb-nail account of an item of personal interest by each member present. Despite the difficulty for the more garrulous of us to stick to



the five-minute rule, there were nevertheless eleven very interesting and amusing gobbets in the space of an hour. Quite an achievement in itself and one which had the pleasant effect of drawing us all closer together as club members.

And so we are willy-nilly (volente nolente) widening our terms of reference, and thus going a long way to compensating for the difficulty in organising excursions and outdoor activities. Thank you, Nick, for your imaginative approach to your new job !

Tony Dyson

AUTUMN RECIPES

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Thank you to all who have contributed to the following delicious recipes using seasonal Brittany produce, acknowledgement is given to the sender of the recipe and if a published recipe also to the originator.

Committee 2010

President: Anthony Dyson

Past President: Geoffrey Baldock

Vice President: Stuart Parnell

Treasurer: John Harris

Secretary: Val Davenport

Social Secretary: Nick Dent

LEMON PARADISE

Can of condensed milk
3 large eggs
Sponge cakes cubed
Grate the rind and extract the juice of 3 lemons

Pour condensed milk into a large bowl and stir in rind, juice and egg yolks. Whisk whites until stiff and fold in lemon mixture as it begins to thicken. Layer in a glass bowl with sponge cake and refrigerate. Serves 8 -12 as it is quite rich. Enjoy!

Suzanne Rayfield



EDITED & PUBLISHED BY

STUART PARNELL

TEL:

0297 609411

EMAIL:

stuartparnell@sfr.fr

Barbecue Dressing and Marinade à la Jamie Oliver

Dressing for Shellfish

Parsley, Fennel tops and Mint, chopped with half a long red Chilli and zest of a Lime.
Add the juice of the Lime, and three times the volume of Olive Oil
Toss the warm Shellfish in the dressing.

Marinade for Lamb, Chicken or Pork (Quantity for one joint)

Grind together 4 or 5 Cloves, 1 tsp of Cumin, 2 tblsp of Fennel seeds, Salt & Pepper
Add 4 tblsp of smoked Paprika and 10 or 12 whole Bay leaves
Chop together leaves from a bunch of Rosemary (keep one or two whole sprigs for basting), leaves from a bunch of Thyme, zest of an Orange, whole Garlic bulb
Mix with dry ingredients, and add
Juice of the orange, 6 tblsp Balsamic Vinegar, 8 tblsp Olive Oil, and 150 ml of Ketchup
(*can use Passata or Chopped Tomatoes, but not so gooey and sticky*).

Make 0.5 cm slits in the meat, rub marinade well in, and roast in a covered pan
at 180° for an hour and a quarter.

Place on the Barbecue for 20 minutes to brown the meat, turning regularly, and basting with the cooking liquid, using the rosemary sprigs.

Serve the remaining cooking juices separately, having warmed it again.

CHILLI JAM

For about 6 jars

INGREDIENTS

500g very ripe tomatoes
4 garlic cloves, peeled
4 large red chillies (seeds left in, if you want your jam hot!)
6-7cm piece of ginger root, sliced
300g golden caster sugar
2 tbsp Thai fish sauce
100ml red wine vinegar

METHOD

Blitz half the tomatoes with all the garlic, chillies and ginger in a food processor. Pour into a heavy-based saucepan. Add the sugar, fish sauce and vinegar, and bring to the boil, stirring slowly. Reduce to a simmer.

Dice the remaining tomatoes finely and add them to the pan. Simmer for 30-40 minutes, stirring from time to time. The mixture will turn slightly darker and sticky.

Store in warm, dry sterilised jars and seal while the mixture is still warm. The longer you keep this jam the hotter it gets. It keeps for about 3 months in the fridge.

Chris Harris from Sarah Raven's Garden cookbook.

MESSAGE DU PRESIDENT

Depuis la remise de notre Charte au mois de février dernier, nous n'avons pas eu énormément de contact avec nos amis au B N L ni avec nos « confrères » ailleurs en France, mais je ressens dans mon for intérieur que nos liens avec les autres clubs en France vont se serrer davantage. Pour nous c'est un but louable.

Un des moyens de faire avancer notre intégration au sein de l'ensemble des clubs français est évidemment par le biais de notre bulletin trimestriel. Jusqu'à présent, celui-ci a été rédigé pour la plupart en anglais, mais dorénavant on y trouvera beaucoup plus d'articles susceptibles d'intéresser nos amis français car écrits dans la langue de Molière !

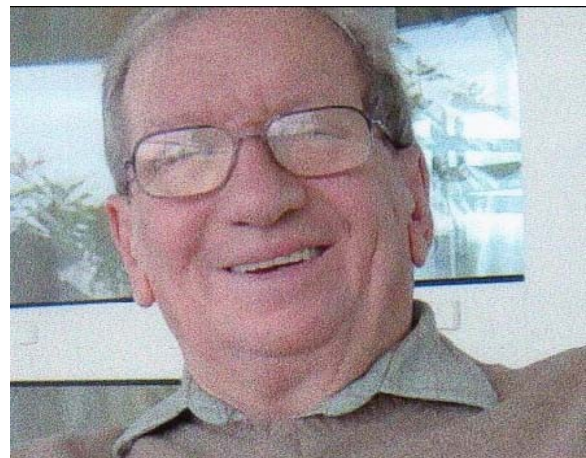
L'évolution de notre club dans sa troisième année d'existence se poursuit avec enthousiasme de la part de tous les membres. Compte tenu des problèmes engendrés par les distances séparant les domiciles de nos membres, il a bien fallu que l'on trouve d'autres moyens que des excursions pour resserrer les liens d'amitié au sein du club. Cette besogne a été prise en main par notre Proto (Social Secretary) Nick Dent, qui s'est penché sans tarder sur le problème dont la solution s'avère assez simple. Il ne faut plus se borner à des présentations, aussi intéressantes et fascinantes qu'elles puissent être, mais au moyen de sujets soigneusement choisis, de faire participer tous les membres dans des débats ou colloques. Cette formule a été mise à l'épreuve à deux reprises récemment, et s'est montrée très réussie. Les présentations se poursuivront bien entendu, mais on peut d'ores et déjà sentir s'accroître une certaine intimité qui n'existait pas avant. A priori donc, une réussite.

Je ne pourrais pas terminer cet éditorial sans remercier notre trésorier, John Harris, ainsi que son épouse, Chris, de leur gentillesse en invitant nos membres à participer à un barbecue chez eux. Ce fut un régal, bien arrosé de surcroît !

Mes remerciements aussi vont à notre vice-Président, Stuart, d'avoir si bien réussi sa première tentative de rédacteur de ce bulletin. Cependant, je ne peux pas trop insister sur la nécessité primordiale qui incombe à tous les membres de contribuer des articles, des recettes, et que sais-je encore, pour rendre notre bulletin encore plus intéressant.

En avant et de l'audace, le Probus Club de Pontivy !!

Tony DYSON



BOOK REVIEWS

Clear & Present Danger” by Tom Clancy

Reviewed by John Harris.

There was a period of silence in our household. For over a week I could hardly get more than a monosyllabic response to my questions. Eventually the silence ended; but only briefly because then I picked up the book which had captivated Chris all those days and I too became entrapped in the drama superbly created by Tom Clancy. They say the old ones are the best and this one certainly is not new. First published in outside the USA in 1990 it is a mighty tome of some over 800 pages and yet I found it absolutely gripping from cover to cover. By the end I was exhausted because once I get engrossed in an outstanding book I read until the early hours every night until it is finished.

Columbian drug lords, tired of being harassed by US law enforcement agents, decide to fight back and have assassinated the American Ambassador and the visiting head of the FBI. But they have pushed to far, The decision is made to send undercover teams into Columbia. Back in the USA men armed with the most sophisticated tools that their country can devise prepare to take the fight to the enemy. But does anyone know who the real enemy is ?

There are many major characters in this enthralling drama. Up front or perhaps more accurately, out in the front is staff sergeant Chavez. A battle hardened soldier, generally known as Ding who leads a team of special forces all hand picked for there specialist skills and all of Hispanic origin and fluent Spanish speakers. His adversary is Cortez one of the leaders of major a drug force who thirst for more power and brutal revenge. Then there is Jack Ryan who is initially embroiled in the politics back in Washington but becomes very much part of the front line action. Alongside him is John Clark, or at least that is the name that he is currently using, who is the man of many parts and whose experience and cunning are so vital to success if it is to be achieved.

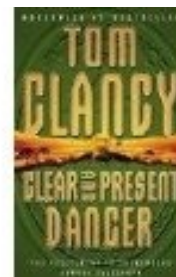
Early on Red Wegener captain of a Coast Guard cutter is instrumental in starting the action rolling and later returns to play a key part in the late ac-

tion.

I found the plot intriguing and the tempo terrific. The narrative is extremely well written and I believe most realistic of the conditions which pertain in covert operations of this sort, The actions at times is brutal but that is how it is when you are fighting an utterly ruthless enemy.

I highly commend this large tome to those who have not already experienced the riveting style of Tom Clancy.

John Harris



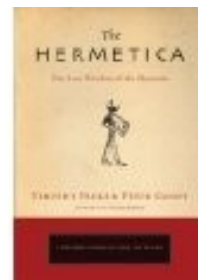
BOOK REVIEW by Horus

THE HERMETICA – The Lost wisdom of the Pharaohs

by

Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy

ISBN: 0 7499 1735 0 £8 from Amazon.



The Hermetica are a body of theological-philosophical texts written in late antiquity, but long believed to be much older. Their supposed author, Hermes Trismegistus, was thought to be a contemporary of Moses, and the Hermetic philosophy was regarded as an ancient theology, parallel to the received wisdom of the Bible. Hermes Trismegistus or to the ancient Egyptians Thoth, was a mythical Egyptian sage who was venerated in Egypt from at least 3000 BCE and is said to have invented hieroglyphs. Moreover, he is also supposed to have revealed to the Egyptians all knowledge on astronomy, architecture, geometry, medicine and religion. The Greeks were in awe of the knowledge and spirituality of the Egyptians and identified Thoth with their own Hermes – hence the name Hermetica.

Largely unknown today the Hermetica is important in the history of western thought. Rediscovered in C15 Florence, and initially regarded as fraudulent, they helped inspire the Renaissance. This debt has been acknowledged by many artists and scientists – da Vinci, Shakespeare, Thomas More, William Blake, Copernicus, Isaac Newton etc. In subsequent years they have been lost under the dead weight of academic translations, occult obscurities and Christian prejudice. St Augustine's views seem pertinent today:

'That which is called the Christian religion existed even among the ancients, and never did not exist from the beginning of the human race until Christ came in the flesh, at which time the true religion

which already existed began to be called Christianity.' The hieroglyphs that decorate each page are simply that – decoration – this might suggest a shallow approach but although not a scholarly tract, this book offers an interesting introduction to the Hermes/Thoth legend. Any reader who is intrigued by the material can go on and discover for themselves the story of Hermes and make their own judgement. This introductory volume is worth consideration by anyone interested in ancient literature and spirituality and some of the poetry strikes a chord with me:

“So, listen men of clay.
If you do not pay keen attention,
my words will fly past you,
and wing their way back to the source
from whence they came.”

The book is dedicated to Giordano Bruno (Gordon Brown!?) who was burnt at the stake for his strange beliefs in the C15!

MEET THE MEMBERS

Suzanne Rayfield



Who or what made you move to Brittany?

Wonderful countryside and a relaxed atmosphere

Had you looked at other countries

Germany but only vaguely.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced since moving to Brittany?

The Language

When you moved to Brittany, was it straight forward?

Yes but with the experience of 33 other moves.

What type of property did you buy? i.e. One that needed a lot of renovation or one with only cosmetic changes required?

Neo Breton that needed mainly cosmetic changes

Who or what was the biggest influence on your life/career?

My Dad

What did you want to be when you grew up?

A Journalist.

What is the best (or worst) advice you have ever had?

'Marry me!' and that 'That looks good on you!'

Do you speak any other languages?

German .

What is your pet hate?

Lies, badly behaved children and macho men.

What do you like best about your life now?

Relaxed lifestyle.

Who would you most like to be for the day?

Judy Dench.

What is your favourite music/film/book/tv programme?

Music - Gypsy Kings & Michael Buble. Films - Alien, As good as it gets. Books – any of Kathy Reichs, crosswords & puzzles. TV – detective series, drama, any documentaries on the Services, Eggheads, Mastermind, & University Challenge.

Where would you spend your ideal holiday?

Germany or the USA

What one wish would you like to have granted?

It would be pleasant to be slightly wealthier.

What would you do if you won the lottery?

A lot! Buy an apartment in London, New York and Munich

What is your favourite gadget?

Sewing Machine.

Do you have an unfulfilled ambition?

To run a business in interior design or catering.

What are your interests?

Entertaining, reading, interior design and travelling.

The Burgundy Wines by Sam Melier

Burgundy wines as the name suggests are wines made in the Burgundy region in eastern France, in the valleys and slopes west of the Saône River, a tributary of the Rhône. The most famous wines produced here - those commonly referred to as "Burgundies" - are red wines made from Pinot Noir grapes or white wines made from Chardonnay grapes. Red and white wines are also made from other grape varieties, such as Gamay and Aligoté respectively. Small amounts of rosé and sparkling wine are also produced in the region. Chardonnay-dominated Chablis (we will return to Chablis at a future date) and Gamay-dominated Beaujolais (see previous article) are formally part of Burgundy wine region, but wines from those sub regions are usually referred to by their own names rather than as "Burgundy wines".

Burgundy has a higher number of appellations d'origine contrôlée (AOCs) than any other French region, and is often seen as the most terroir-conscious of the French wine regions. The various Burgundy AOCs are classified from carefully delineated Grand Cru vineyards down to more non-specific regional appellations.

The Burgundy region runs from Auxerre in the north down to Mâcon in the south. Some way south of Chablis is the Côte d'Or, where Burgundy's most famous and most expensive wines originate, and where all Grand Cru vineyards of Burgundy (except for Chablis Grand Cru) are situated. The Côte d'Or itself is split into two parts: the Côte de Nuits which starts just south of Dijon and runs till Corgoloin, a few kilometers south of the town of Nuits-Saint-Georges, and the Côte de Beaune which starts at Ladoix and ends at Dezize-les-Maranges. The wine-growing part of this area in the heart of Burgundy is just 40 kms long, and in most places less than 2 kms wide. The area is made up of tiny villages surrounded by a combination of flat and sloped vineyards on the eastern side of a hilly region, providing some rain and weather shelter from the prevailing westerly winds. The best wines - from "Grand Cru" vineyards - of this region are usually grown from the middle and higher part of the slopes, where the vineyards have the most exposure to sunshine and the best drainage, while the "Premier Cru" comes from a little less favourably exposed slopes. The relatively ordinary "Village" wines are produced



from the flat territory nearer the villages. The Côte de Nuits contains 24 out of the 25 red Grand Cru appellations in Burgundy, while all of the region's white Grand Crus are in the Côte de Beaune. This is explained by the presence of different soils, which favour Pinot Noir and Chardonnay respectively.

Further south is the Côte Chalonnaise, where again a mix of mostly red and white wines are produced, although the appellations found here such as Mercurey, Rully and Givry are less well known than their counterparts in the Côte d'Or. Below the Côte Chalonnaise is the Mâconnais region, known for producing large quantities of easy-drinking and more affordable white wine.

Burgundy experiences a continental climate characterized by very cold winters and hot summers. The weather is very unpredictable with rains, hail, and frost all possible around harvest time. Because of this climate, there is a lot of variation between vintages from Burgundy.

There is archaeological evidence of viticulture in Burgundy being established in the 2nd century AD, although it has been speculated that Celts may have been growing vines in the region already when the Romans conquered Gaul (in 51 BC). Monks and monasteries of the Roman Catholic Church have had an important influence on the history of Burgundy wine. The Benedictines, through their Abbey of Cluny founded in 910, became the first truly big Burgundy vineyard owner over the following centuries. Another order which exerted influence was

the Cistercians, founded in 1098 and named after Cîteaux their first monastery, situated in Burgundy. The Cistercians created Burgundy's largest wall-surrounded vineyard, the Clos de Vougeot, in 1336. More importantly, the Cistercians, extensive vineyard owners as they were, were the first to notice that different vineyard plots gave consistently different wines. They therefore laid the earliest foundation for the naming of Burgundy crus and the region's terroir thinking. After Burgundy became incorporated in the Kingdom of France, and the power of the church decreased, many vineyards which had been in the church's hands were sold to the bourgeoisie from the

17th century. After the French revolution of 1789, the church's remaining vineyards were broken up and from 1791 sold off. The Napoleonic inheritance laws then resulted in the continued subdivision of the most precious vineyard holdings, so that some growers hold only a row or two of vines. This led to the emergence of *négociants* who aggregate the produce of many growers to produce a single wine.

The awareness of the difference of quality and style of Burgundy wines produced from different vineyards goes back to medieval times, with certain climates being more highly rated than others.



Burgundy wine has experienced much change over the past seventy-five years. Economic depression during the 1930s was followed by the devastation caused by World War II. After the War, the *vignerons* returned home to their unkempt vineyards. The soils and vines had suffered and were sorely in need of nurturing. The growers began to fertilize, bringing their vineyards back to health. Those who could afford it added potassium, a mineral fertilizer that contributes to vigorous growth. By the mid-1950s, the soils were balanced, yields were reasonably low and the vineyards produced some of the most stunning wines in the 20th century. Understandably, the farmers had no inclination to fix what wasn't broken. So for the next 30 years, they followed the advice of renowned *viticultural* experts, who advised them to keep spraying their vineyards with chemical fertilizers, including potassium. While a certain amount of potassium is natural in the soil and beneficial for healthy growth, too much is harmful because it leads to low acidity levels, which adversely affect the quality of the wine. As the concentration of chemicals in the soil increased, so did the yields. In the past 30 years, yields have risen by two-thirds in the appellations *contrôlées* vineyards of the Côte d'Or, from 29 hectoliters per hectare (yearly average from 1951 to 1960) to almost 48 hectoliters per hectare (1982-91), according to a study by the Institut National des Appellations d'Origine. With higher yields came wines of less flavor and concentration. Within 30 years, the soils had been significantly depleted of their natural nutrients.

The period between 1985 and 1995 was a turning point in Burgundy. During this time many Burgundian domaines renewed efforts in the vineyards and gradually set a new course in winemaking. All this led to deeper, more complex wines. Today, the Burgundy wine industry is reaping the rewards of those efforts.

Burgundy is in some ways the most *terroir*-oriented region in France; immense attention is paid to the area of origin, and in which of the region's 400 types of soil a wine's grapes are grown. As opposed to Bordeaux, where classifications are producer-driven and awarded to individual chateaux, Burgundy classifications are geographically-focused. A specific vineyard or region will bear a given classification, regardless of the wine's producer. This focus is reflected on the wine's labels where appellations are most prominent and producer's names often appear at the bottom in much smaller text.

The main levels in the Burgundy classifications, in descending order of quality, are: Grand crus, Premier crus, village appellations, and finally regional appellations:

Grand Cru wines are produced from the small number of the best vineyard sites in the Côte d'Or, as strictly defined by the AOC laws. Grand Cru wines make up 2% of the production at 35 hectolitres per hectare. These wines are generally produced in a style meant for cellaring, and typically need to be aged a minimum of 5–7 years. The best examples can be kept for more than 15 years. Grand Cru wines will only list the name of the vineyard as the appellation - such as Corton or Montrachet - on the wine label, plus the Grand Cru term, but not the village name.

Premier Cru wines are produced from specific vineyard sites that are still considered to be of high quality, but not as well regarded as the Grand Cru sites. Premier Cru wines make up 12% of production at 45 hectolitres/hectare. These wines often should be aged 3–5 years, and again the best wines can keep for much longer. Premier Cru wines are labelled with the name of the village of origin, the Premier cru status, and usually the vineyard name, for example, "Volnay 1er Cru Les Caillerets". Some Premier Cru wines are produced from several Premier Cru vineyards in the same village, and do not carry the name of an individual vineyard.

Village appellation wines are produced from a blend of wines from supposedly lesser vineyard sites within the boundaries of one of 42 villages, or from one individual but non-classified vineyard. Wines from each different village are considered to have their own specific qualities and characteristics, and not all Burgundy communes have a village appellation. Village wines make up 36% of production at 50 hectolitres/hectare. "

These wines can be consumed 2–4 years after the release date, although again some examples will keep for longer. Village wines will show the village name on the wine label, such as "Pommard", and sometimes - if applicable - the name of the single vineyard or climate where it was sourced. Several villages in Burgundy have appended the names of their Grand Cru vineyards to the original village name - hence village names such as "Puligny-Montrachet" and "Aloxe-Corton

Regional appellation wines are wines which are allowed to be produced over the entire region, or over an area significantly larger than that of an individual village. At the village, Premier Cru and Grand Cru level, only red and white wines are found, but some of the regional appellations also allow the production of rosé and sparkling wines as well as wines dominated by other grape varieties than Pinot Noir or Chardonnay. These appellations can be divided into three groups: **AOC Bourgogne**, the standard or "generic" appellation for red or white wines made anywhere throughout the region, and represent simpler wines which are still similar to the village. These wines may be produced at 55 hectolitres/hectare. These wines are typically intended for immediate consumption, within 3 years after the vintage date.

Subregional (sous-régional) appellations cover a part of Burgundy larger than a village. Examples are Bourgogne Hautes-Côtes de Beaune, Bourgogne Hautes-Côtes de Nuits and Mâcon-Villages. Typically, those communes which do not have a village appellation, do have access to at least one subregional appellation. This level is sometimes described as intermediate between AOC Bourgogne and the village level. Wines of specific styles or other grape varieties include white Bourgogne Aligoté (which is primarily made with the Aligoté grape), red Bourgogne Passe-Tout-Grains (which can contain up to two thirds Gamay) and sparkling Crémant de Bourgogne.



For the white grapes, Chardonnay is the most common. Another grape found in the region is Aligote, which tends to produce cheaper wines which are higher in acidity. Aligote from Burgundy is the wine traditionally used for the Kir drink, where it is mixed with blackcurrant liqueur. For the red grapes, all production in the Cote D'Or is focused on the Pinot Noir grape while the Gamay grape is grown in Beaujolais. In the Cote de Nuits region, 90% of the production is red grapes. Burgundy is home to some of the most expensive wines in the world, including those of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Domaine Leroy, Henri Jaye Emmanuel Rouget, Domaine Dugat-Py, Domaine Leflaive and Domaine Armand Rousseau. However, some top vintage first growth Bordeaux wines and a few iconic wines from the New World are more expensive than some Grand Cru class Burgundies.

The British wine critic Jancis Robinson emphasizes that "price is an extremely unreliable guide" and that "what a wine sells for often has more to do with advertising hype and marketing decisions than the quality contained in the bottle". This is sound advice for all wines and not just those from Burgundy, the only way to really know the worth is to drink it, so as always keep tasting!



Habitat: La vie du mond.

by Tony Rickards.

No, not that one, not IKEA or John Lewis this is about where we live: planet earth.

We all know about changing climates, destruction of rain forests, ocean pollution and the decline of the great animal populations.

We all know about it all, and probably more, but can only look sadly on and ask, "What can I do, it's all beyond us individuals, leave it to the politicians and their experts."

At that point we probably make a mental note to drop a handful of loose change into a W.W.F. collecting box next time we see one.

Those of us who spent our lives around industry will have witnessed the general impact of the interaction of industry in its many shades on the countryside.

The effect of the 'The Industrial Revolution' was almost irretrievably catastrophic in UK alone.

Rivers became open sewers for every kind of waste. The

From that day onwards more distant landscape emerged from the Victorian legacy. By the end of the decade all the landscape of the Cheshire plain across to North Wales became visible on most days. The dark satanic mills, along with most of 'Trafford Park', had gone.

Following the rapid decline of heavy industry and mining in the nineteen eighties UK rivers lost their inherited role of open sewers. Fish returned and in 1990 I saw a kingfisher flying along the river Irwell which separates the cities of Salford and Manchester. The Pennines are now green again and all this after the effects of two hundred years of industrial destruction. Fish, birds, insects, grasses and all the other fauna and flora can return when conditions imposed by human abuse are removed. We humans also benefit. Industrial diseases are diminished and community health has improved, sadly to be replaced with a different set of difficulties. Overall life expectancy is extended.

Habitat is where all flora and fauna live, including ourselves, and the habitat itself is a product of the interaction of the lives of the flora and fauna. Consequently pressure on the natural balance will cause changes.



atmosphere was altered beyond belief.

Not just by smoke but by chemical fumes and gases.

When the sun shone in winter temperature inversions caused the infamous industrial fogs and smogs. Local climates were altered.

When I returned to Manchester at the end of the nineteen sixties the Pennines were blighted with a hundred years or more of smoke and fume deposits. No grass grew on the moors. After UK smoke control and the introduction of 'North Sea Gas' winter fogs disappeared. One summer in mid nineteen seventies from where we lived, north of Manchester, following a heavy rain and thunder storm there was the first glimpse of the hills of North Wales. The first glimpse probably for two hundred years at that location.

We have returned to where we started: it's all very interesting and we all know about it but there is nothing we can do, we all have to live!

That is not so, is it? We can all do many things other than handing out loose change.

First has to be an awareness that small things matter. Local Authorities cut down established trees because of some petty officials' interpretation of potential liability. An established hundred year old tree is a microcosm of flora and fauna with species possibly extending back the entire life of the tree. The urban environment needs trees and as much flora as it can get to enhance the overall appearance and to encourage appropriate fauna.

Residential barren suburban wastelands can be changed. Grass verges and planted trees change the dread of rows

of suburban houses planted onto a concrete and tarmac-adam road system. It all helps to regain the natural balance of a disturbed habitat.

The urban planners during the nineteen twenties and thirties of a town I knew expanded their Victorian and Edwardian inheritance by creating grass verges planted with early flowering prunus and hawthorns. That I see as a nice example of planned urban habitat: residents enjoy the trees and early blossom. Insects relish the early flowers and birds have their autumn bonanza. The irregular lines of the trees break the austere lines of linear brick houses.

Floral traffic roundabouts now seem to be a norm where once they were, well, just roundabouts.

Small examples of where ordinary tax payers can make simple demands of their local representatives.

Next we can think about gardens. We all enjoy gardens and most enjoy gardening in some way or the other.

Within the urban environment perhaps it no longer matters what is planted. We should perhaps attempt to keep wild patches and plant species which insects and birds approve of and which provide berries and fruit for autumn. Scruffy gardening as a buddy once defined this style: tortoiseshell butterflies breed on common nettles. Chemical sprays: all a bit dodgy and much of the modern proprietary chemistry can be potent even when used as directed. Who never adds a bit more, "Just to make sure?"

We should remember that pesky aphids live at the bottom of a long food chain.

Also perhaps we ought to consider whether birds need to be fed with nuts and other goodies through the summer when they normally feed themselves and their offspring with their natural diet which is usually based upon those pests that we try to destroy with chemical spray.

Are their fast rules? Probably not and the only dogma is to think about what is being done and how best it could be done and that individual actions do matter.

Those of us who live in rural places have particular issues to address. If we are lucky we still have indigenous species around us. If we blunder in and introduce alien species we may well alter balance and the natural selection process. Grey squirrels in UK have caused irretrievable



harm. Mink and other creatures across western Europe. Victorian rhododendrons and Japanese Knot weed are notorious examples of plants introduced innocently and are now dreaded invaders of the countryside. There are many others.

Living for the last three years in rural Brittany, I have found indigenous bluebells and daffodils.

In UK many bluebells are interbred with Spanish hybrids and spreading. There are numerous daffodil hybrids, in fact commercial acres of them. Those of us who have lived with hay fever know well that pollen travels large distances.

We will all have remarked upon the impressive drifts of cornflowers and field poppies intermixed with other once wild flowers which have been appearing in towns across France and I expect parts of Britain. They make a profound impact. However, should we be spreading their pollen and seeds around the rural environment? We will have been tempted and probably seduced.

Birds, insects and everything else are part of the self balancing habitat. Big creatures feed on smaller ones and then down the line. Some are dependent on plants others on insects. All are part of the natural selection chain and its self regulating oscillation. Modern farming has had a profound impact upon this natural system, even before the advent of modern chemistry based pest control and crop enhancement. Most of picturesque Britain south of the Cairngorms is considered to be man-made progressing steadily since the last ice age. The advent of 'chemical farming' is profound across the entire planet. The natural habitat is hugely threatened consequently where it survives we should all be thinking about how to encourage it. The road verges and patches of 'scruffy woodland' are precious refuges. One of my patches of daffodils was on a roadside verge previously protected by an overgrown hedge. True to form, before they had finished flowering some local had cut most of them. The hedge of course had been cut back and the associated gorse burned to open a field boundary.



My son considers that our own 'patch' in rural Brittany with a neglected copse and small grassy paddock despite being surrounded by large modern fields is a venue for most of the butterflies found in Brittany. How long they will remain will depend very much upon what we ourselves do.

Others might contribute to their demise but we can contribute to their survival.

The saga is unending. The world's population expands and pressures increase all round to threaten the natural habitat everywhere. Species will become extinct: Darwin's evolution predicts that. As with the removal of the Victorian industrial legacy, habitats can bounce back and with recovered habitat once lost species can reappear. Other habitats will disappear for ever as the global climate shifts: the Sahara was once not desert.

None know the answers and it is foolish to believe so despite all the computer models. As mature adults, and particularly this audience, we can encourage discussion, debate and simple conversations from which attitudes might change. For a number of years there has been concern

about the lack of interaction between the tax paying public and the scientific community.

The scientific community in general has been charged with improving its popular connection by no less than The Royal Society. Open informal conversation is probably the best way to achieve meaningful connection. Simple actions taken by individuals just might give a lead to others

Future Presentations and Events

The following meetings will be held at
L'Aiglon Restaurant, Pontivy

14 September

Presentation by Judy Mansfield of First Rate FX entitled "Making Your Money Work Harder"

12 October

AGM details to be advised, followed by presentation by Chris Evers entitled "Please Sir, may I go to places?"

9 November

Presentation by Gordon Rayfield entitled "Operation Catechism— the sinking of the Tirpitz"

14 December

Christmas Dinner and Grand Draw
For further details and any donations to the draw, please contact The Secretary.



More Recipes

CHILLI PLUM CHUTNEY

INGREDIENTS

3½lbs plums, chopped
2 onions, finely chopped
1½ cups brown sugar
½ cup dried sultanas
½ cup cider vinegar
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp salt
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
½ tsp red chilli flakes (omit if preferred or add more to taste!)
(4 pint or 8 half pint jars and lids)

METHOD

Put all ingredients in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to the boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook, stirring occasionally until reduced by one third, about 30-40 mins.

Meanwhile, sterilise jars and lids.

Transfer chutney into jars and seal. Store in a cool, dark place for at least 6 weeks and up to 6 months before opening. Refrigerate after opening.

Kim Parnell from cuisine Bourgerel

CHOCOLATE AND COURGETTE CAKE

Serves 10

INGREDIENTS

350g self raising flour
50g cocoa powder
1 tsp mixed spice
175ml extra virgin olive oil
375g golden caster sugar
3 eggs
2 tsp vanilla extract
500ml grated courgettes
(measure by volume in a measuring jug, but it's about 2 medium courgettes;
if using 1 overgrown one, peel first and take out the seeds)
140g toasted hazelnuts, roughly chopped

METHOD

Heat the oven to 180C/160C/gas 4. In a large bowl, combine the flour, cocoa powder, mixed spice and 1 tsp salt. In another bowl, combine the olive oil, sugar, eggs, vanilla essence and grated courgette. Mix the dry and wet mixture until just combined, then fold in the toasted hazelnuts. Line a 24cm cake tin with greaseproof paper, then pour in your mixture. Bake for about 40-50 mins, or until a knife inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool in the tin for 10 mins, then turn out onto a wire rack and leave to cool.

Kim Parnell From Good Food Magazine

Book Review 2

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

by Richard Townshend BICKERS

(first published in 1987)

Almost three years ago to the day, an old friend of mine died within touching distance of his ninetieth birthday. His name was Dick Bickers and I had met him for the first time in 1964, when, having returned from an overseas posting, I was based at the Hull HQ of Reckitt & Colman for whom I worked as an foreign legal dogsbody. All I knew about Dick at that time was that after a long career in the RAF, he was then heading up the international operation of a major Reckitt manufacturing subsidiary. As we became close friends over a year or two, despite the age difference, I became aware of how interesting he was. He told me about his having volunteered for the RAF shortly before the outbreak of World War II and that he had served, with a Permanent Commission, for eighteen years, seeing action in Fighter Command during the famous air battles of 1940, followed by a stint with Coastal Command and protracted service in North Africa and Italy with Desert Air Force and Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force. To round off his Air Force career, he did a tour in Hong Kong and Malaya after the war.

It is therefore entirely appropriate that, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, I should review his authoritative work on the subject, more of which below; but first a word about Dick's literary career. As the end of his RAF career hove in sight, he realised that his pension even at Group Captain rank could not remotely fund the fees for his two sons at the same prestigious prep and public schools which he had had the good fortune to attend; and so he decided to earn the money through writing. Even before leaving the Service, he rapidly produced four novels which were good enough to be published but fell short of "cutting the mustard". Undeterred, he continued to write and a number of his short stories and newspaper articles were published and indeed broadcast at this time.

Our paths overseas occasionally crossed and we spent some very enjoyable times together in various European countries. Dick was multi-lingual having a natural ability rapidly to absorb the essence of a language, and I well remember when we were doing some colourful local background research in the sleazier parts of the Genoese docklands, being chased by local pimps brandishing knives, intent on removing some vital parts of our bodies ! We rapidly sought the refuge of a bar in a more salubrious part of the city, therein to down a couple of restorative Negronis. He also introduced me to some fine restaurants across Europe for he was a gourmet of Escoffier level.

Dick's true literary worth was recognised after the publication of his biography of his friend Sergeant J.H. "Ginger" Lacey under the title of "Ginger Lacey – Sergeant Pilot", which Dick told me he had written to highlight the injustice then customary of not according proper recognition to non-commissioned pilots flying alongside their officer companions. "Ginger" Lacey was among the very top of the "scorers" during the Battle of Britain, with a total of 28 kills confirmed. He later received his commission and retired with the rank of Squadron Leader, continuing to serve for some time after the war, but recognition came late and grudgingly.

This successful foray into historical biography stimulated Dick's interest in the evolution of combatant air forces generally, and the RFC and its successor the RAF in particular. His painstaking research in British and foreign archives and interviews and correspondence in several languages led to a vast output of books about the RAF and the RFC, more than any author past or present.

Richard Townshend Bickers has produced in his "Battle of Britain" a meticulous account of the events leading up to the conflict, and a detailed appraisal of all the friendly and enemy air forces, in the former case the state of readiness of allied and (then) neutral units. He analyses the disposition and conduct of the French, Belgian, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Polish and other air forces in the face of a Luftwaffe, battle-hardened and refined through military action during the Spanish Civil War against the Russian air onslaught in support of the Republican side.

In his Foreword to the book, Air Marshal Sir Denis Crowley-Milling, KCB, CBE, DSO, DFC, AE paints a vivid picture of the likely future of Great Britain and indeed the whole of Europe and beyond. Had Goering succeeded in destroying the much smaller Royal Air Force, an indispensable necessity if the German invasion of our island was to be achieved. The outlook was very sombre indeed, if the German invasion had successfully taken place. For a start, there would have been no American intervention and support in arms, materiel or men, no massive bombing offensive against Germany, and no base from which to launch a second front. Hitler would doubtless have committed his war machine to the defeat of Russia and in all likelihood would have succeeded. The Nazi regime would have had the untrammelled opportunity to further its nuclear research resulting in their having the atomic bomb after a few years. Britain could well have remained an occupied country even seventy years later. Not an edifying thought !

"The Battle of Britain" is really a textbook, and because of its wealth of detail not only of the battle itself but also of all the pertinent factors leading to and surrounding the prosecution of these events, may be considered by some to be a tad heavy-going; but it is not really. The reader finds him (or her) self drawn inexorably into the detail which is so essential for a circumspect understanding of what was at stake. Dick Bickers leads us through this labyrinthine terrain by describing with clarity the prelude to the battle, including the political and strategic pressures to which the RAF was subject.

Then follows a wide-ranging review of the Service and its aircraft and a similar fascinating analysis of the Luftwaffe and its aircraft and arms. There is also a very necessary but often overlooked examination of the role of the support teams.

Air Vice-Marshal J.E (Johnnie) Johnson, CB, CBE, DSO, DFC, DL has contributed a fascinating overview of the Battle Tactics used. Starting with the formation tactics learned during the First World War, he describes how combat experience gained by the Condor Legion (German Air Force) during the Spanish Civil War caused a radical rethink of fighter formation flying which forsook the idea of the open abreast style with a spacing of 45 to 55 metres in favour of the far less vulnerable Rotte element of two fighters 180 m apart and the Schwarm consisting of 2 X 2 pairs spaced at 275 m, the turning radius of a Messerschmitt 109. By deploying 3 Schwarms, a Messerschmitt squadron of 12 fighters could be flown at staggered heights, giving cross-cover in all directions and making the fighters far less conspicuous in the sky.

Franco's victory allowed the Condor Legion to return to Germany, where its air warfare experiences were carefully studied. This resulted in radical changes in armament, and the definition by experienced German fighter pilots of the ideal fighter as being (in order of precedence) : a high speed and a good climb to engage, manoeuvrability to get out of trouble, fire power rapidly to knock down an opponent, and a good radius of action. (Messerschmitts were fitted with drop tanks as a result)

Faced with the startling evidence of the success of the Luftwaffe's tactics, RAF Fighter Command had to modify its old-fashioned "tactical thinking" in order to have some chance of holding its own, and indeed beating the Germans at their own game. How they did this is explained in detail by A V-M Johnson, and this leads neatly and logically into the period of just 114 days, the period officially known as the Battle of Britain which despite considerable overlap fell into four distinct phases, the first one consisting of probing attacks with the aim of testing and weakening the defences allowing the Luftwaffe to deploy into position to mount an all-out attack. The second phase involved heavy bombing attacks on airfields and radar stations in the south of England with the intention of destroying RAF Fighter Command as an effective force, and the third when the main weight of the German assault was switched to London, and finally the fourth when the German invasion plan codenamed Operation Sealion had been cancelled towards the end of September and the offensive extended to the night bombing not only of London but also of major ports and industrial areas across the country.

The outcome is well-known, and it is clear that the Battle of Britain was won by Fighter Command because, quite simply put, it defeated the Luftwaffe in the battle to control the air over southern England.

The book goes on to explore the very diverse backgrounds and education, not only of the British pilots involved in the conflict, but also those of their opposite numbers in the Luftwaffe. There is an intriguing insight into a typical battle day of the RAF and Luftwaffe fighter pilots, which aptly illustrates the formidable stress to which they were subject, and brings home to the reader the atmosphere which prevailed throughout the battle and beyond.

Group Captain Sir Hugh Dundas, CBE, DSO, DFC, DL provides a masterly summary of the battle, and this is followed by a "Battle Diary" and thumb-nail biographies of many of the RAF heroes involved.

This book is a must for all the many admirers of the Royal Air Force, and Dick Bickers is to be commended for his meticulous scholarship. He was incidentally a close friend of Sir Douglas Bader, whose step-daughter married Dick's elder son David who now is responsible for the Douglas Bader Trust. Dick and Douglas knew each other during the time covered by this book, and thereafter spent many hours reminiscing.

I shall miss him.

Tony Dyson



Puzzle Corner

SUDOKU

A medium level Sudoku to while away a few minutes of your time.

			8					
	3		6			9		
4	8	7	3					
	1	3	4				6	5
5	2				8	4	1	
					3	6	4	1
		4			1		5	
					9			

Sudoku Puzzle no2. Medium

MUSIC QUIZ

Just for fun—complete the quiz below :

1. Who was the lead singer of Talking Heads?
2. What artist were “The Attractions” the backing group for?
3. Which British artist released the album Atlantic Crossing in 1975?
4. Which Manchester group were “Holding Back the Years” in 1986?
5. Who composed the opera “Don Giovanni”?
6. Who had a hit with “Purple Haze” in 1967?
7. Which supermodel appeared in the video for the Billy Joel hit “Uptown Girl”?
8. In which film did Robert Carlyle strip to the sound of Hot Chocolate’s “You Sexy Thing”?
9. Cerys Matthews led which Welsh band?
10. Which 1986 hit for Diana Ross was written by the Bee Gees?