

Chairman's report 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025

Introduction

In 2025 we are celebrating the Wine Club's 60th Anniversary. The Bookham Wine Club was formed in 1965 as a club for a small group of dedicated amateur wine makers. At some point, early in its history, the club changed its focus from homemade wines to tasting and appreciating commercially produced wines from all over the World. Over the years many people have volunteered their time and worked hard to create the successful club that we all enjoy today. It is a great story and a very difficult act to follow each year.

But that said, I am pleased to report that 2024/25 was another very successful year with a full and varied programme of presentations and events and, most importantly, members have had the opportunity to taste, and hopefully enjoy, a wide selection of wines chosen by our expert presenters.

Meetings and Membership

We have been entertained and informed by many of our favourite presenters over the course of the year plus one or two new ones. Presentations during the year included a range of topics and themes and covered both lesser known grape varieties and lesser known regions, as well as some classic wines from famous wine producing areas.

Attendance at monthly meetings remains high, averaging 61 over 12 months. The highest monthly attendance was 70 and the lowest attendance (during the peak holiday season) was 55.

In January, 12 new members joined, replacing leavers and bringing the total membership to 88. The reputation of the club goes from strength to strength, and consequently we now have 21 people on the waiting list who would like to join the club.

Events

In December, we enjoyed a Christmas supper prepared and served by local caterer, Elizabeth, accompanied by a very nice selection of wines chosen by the Committee. Our summer event was a South African Braai prepared by the London BBQ Co served with South African wines and preceded by a wine tasting of 12 wines supplied by Laithwaites. Both events were sold out and members have told us how much they enjoyed both events. My thanks to David Read for taking the lead in organising the two events, and the rest of the Committee for all their hard work – both ahead of each event as well as on the night.

Also, at last year's AGM, we enjoyed a fun "Call My Buff" night hosted by Tim Collis and supported by six very talented volunteer bluffers. It was a very enjoyable evening, and Roger Stafford did a great job in planning and organising the entertainment and doing his very best to keep score!

Finally, on the social side, the club entered a team in June 2025 for the annual village week quiz. Our team were far too clever and, inadvertently, managed to win the event - which was not the intended outcome. Consequently, we are now obliged to set the questions for next year's quiz.

Update to the Constitution

The committee is recommending two updates to the constitution:

- a) rewording of the financial section to recognise that, with the advent of online banking, payments are now approved by only one authorised bank signatory, and secondly to give both the Treasurer and the Chairman authority to approve small payments of less than £100 (this is a practical measure to cover the rare situation where a small, but urgent, payment is required and only one authorised signatory is available to give approval).

- b) requiring members to vote at the AGM on donations and other ad hoc payments.

The reasons for making these amendments were explained in a note I circulated to members back in July 2025. So far I have not received any objections to these proposed changes and therefore I am hoping that these amendments will be approved at the AGM without further debate.

Financial Performance

The club generated a loss of only £1 during 2024/25. This was after making donations to the BCA of £450 (of which £150 was in respect of the previous year) and spending £299 on champagne flutes, drop-stoppers and bottle covers. The Christmas and summer events together generated £400 - all of which was used to fund the BCA donation. We begin the new financial year with reserves of £2,319, which is £319 higher than the contingency that the committee believes is necessary to cover the club's main financial exposures.

Fees

I am pleased to say that the committee recommends that the annual membership fee for 2026 should remain unchanged at £20 per person for the 5th year in succession. Also, we aim to hold the monthly meeting fee at around £10 per person but, given current economic uncertainties, this may have to change during the year depending on inflationary and other cost pressures.

BCA Donation

At the AGM members will be asked to vote on how much the club should donate to the BCA in 2026. Last year members voted and approved a donation of £300 for 2025. The voting options proposed by the committee for this year are £300 or £150 or £0. Members will be asked to choose from these three options, and any remaining surplus will be reinvested in the club and/or used to absorb future cost increases. ***To save time at the AGM, my request to all members is to decide in advance of the AGM which option you support and how you intend to cast your vote.***

Committee Changes

This year, Roger Stafford will be stepping down having completed seven years on the committee, five years as membership secretary and two as programme secretary. Roger has made a huge contribution to the club, not only by performing these two important roles, but also by his many ideas and suggestions on how to improve the running of the club.

Also, I will be stepping down after five years on the committee, three years as treasurer and two years as chairman. I want to thank both current and past committee members for their support – they made my job a lot easier, and it has been a pleasure to be part of a successful team. As we do not currently have a candidate to replace me as chairman, the role will be shared by the rest of the committee on a “rotating basis” with each committee member taking their turn to act as chairman.

I am very pleased to announce that Brian Strutton and Tim Carroll have volunteered (no arm twisting required) to be numerical replacements for Roger and myself. Brian will take over from Roger as programme secretary and Tim has volunteered to help with organising next year's summer event. Frances Sanders will replace David Read as the club's secretary, leaving David to concentrate on organising the 2025 Christmas event.

In summary, the new committee will be as follows:

Chairman – “Rotating Basis”
Treasurer – Derek Buck
Secretary – Frances Sanders
Programme Secretary – Brian Strutton
Membership Secretary – Sandra Holland
Events Coordinator (Christmas 2025) – David Read
Committee Member – Philip Spooner
Committee Member – Liz Albon
Committee Member – Tim Carroll

The club only exists because people are willing to go on the committee and work hard to make sure that club nights and the annual events are enjoyed by all members. I would like to congratulate David, Derek, Frances, Sandra, Philip, and Liz for their contributions during the last 12 months and thank them for agreeing to continue to serve on the committee for (at least) another 12 months.

Other Important People

I would like to start by thanking our President, Heather Dougherty for all the support she gives to the club. Heather helps the committee develop the programme for each year and provides ideas and suggestions on how the club can continue to be successful.

I also want to thank Kate and Claudio Ramponi who take care of all IT matters and communications to members using Mailchimp. As I said last year, I am not sure what we would do without them!

Also, I want to thank Paul Sanders for continuing in the very important role of “Examiner to the Accounts”. Paul acts on behalf of the membership and has responsibility for checking the accounts and then signing them off each year.

And finally, on behalf of all the committee, I would like to thank all the people who volunteer on club nights to help with checking-in, or pouring wine or washing glasses, and all the people who help with preparations for the summer and Christmas events. The committee is usually very busy at these times, and we very much appreciate all the help we get.

In conclusion, I hope you have enjoyed the club’s activities during the last 12 months and that you are able to attend the AGM (and Quiz Night) on 13 October. I look forward to seeing you there.

With Best Wishes,

Kevin Forder
Chairman