

# *“A Journey Down the Rhine”*

*9<sup>th</sup> April 2026*

*by Ormond Smith*

Over the years a number of Goustevin Scotland members have visited Germany, to attend Chapters organised by our Goustevin Mosel friends and extensions to these trips have included a memorable visit to Franconia in Bavaria in the south of Germany. But there are other wine producing areas which few of us have either visited or sampled the wines thereof and so with that in mind, the subject of our latest Tasting would be “A Journey Down the Rhine” looking at some of the excellent wines produced along this great river and also its tributaries.

Having decided on the subject matter, it was then a case of identifying wines which represented the area to its best but at reasonable cost as the selection within the UK is not overly extensive and the wines generally command commensurate prices. However, Caroline Duncan took on the task and through her contacts in the retail wine trade, she managed to procure a selection of wines showcasing both the Rhine area and different wine varietals. The wines to be tasted represented the Rheingau, Rheinhessen and Pfalz (otherwise known in English as Palatinate) regions.....with a “wee surprise” to end the meal following the tasting.

The Kingsmills Hotel was the setting for the tasting and the evening kicked off with a **2021 Riesling Brut Sekt** from **Weingut Künstler** in the Rheingau region, from vineyards along the River Main not far south of Wiesbaden. This most appealing “sparkler” is 100% Riesling and spends 30 months on lees prior to release. There were brioche and yeasty notes which complimented the white peach and citrus core.....a perfect introduction to the evening. Weingut Künstler own some of the best vineyards in the region and the quality of the grapes was obvious. Staying with this producer we moved into the tasting “proper” and our first white was a **2024 Exhibition Rheingau Riesling** produced exclusively for The Wine Society. The grapes are hand harvested and destalked before cooling and slow fermentation. Classic notes of white flowers, citrus and red apples are supported with plenty of zesty acidity and structure. A refreshing wine with a lingering flavour on the palate.



We then “moved upstream” on the Rhine to the town of Nierstein to sample a **2024 Pinot Gris Trocken** from the historic (1909) family owned vineyards of Louis Guntrum. For those with a penchant for history, you may be interested to learn that during WW2 in 1945 US General George S. Patton, occupied the family mansion having crossed the Rhine at that very point. Anyway, back to the present and described as Germany’s answer to Italy’s Pinot Grigio, this wine sits somewhere between the light Italian style and the rich, aromatic offerings from Alsace. Pleasantly aromatic and on the dry side, the wine is full flavoured with a gentle acidity and indeed, could equally be enjoyed as an aperitif.

Our third white wine came from the Bingen vineyards. about 50kms north-west of Nierstein in the north-western most corner of Rheinhessen, at the confluence of the rivers Rhine and Nahe and where the Rhine swings north. The quartzite soils of the area certainly benefit the vineyards, absorbing the heat of the sun during the day and radiating warmth to the vines until late into the evenings. Furthermore, the stored heat creates thermal winds, which in turn promote quick drying of the grapes. The berries can then hang for longer, remaining healthy up to harvest time. **Weingut Riffel** are

rightly proud of their 100% Chardonnay wines but their **2020 Binger Weissburgunder/Chardonnay Trocken** certainly found favour at the Tasting. Aged in old barrels for three years or more, this opulent wine exudes aromas of white flowers and jasmine while the palate showed notes of melon, peach and spiced stone fruits, with a rich and succulent finish.....very moreish! With supper imminent, we finished the Tasting with a red wine from the Pfalz region in south-western Germany, close to the French border and



this was a **2021 Weingut Hanewald-Schwerdt Spätburgunder** from vineyards around Bad Dürkheim. Intense and medium bodied, the wine had bright strawberry and cherry notes with a subtle earthy character and gentle tannins, benefitting from ageing in oak barrels. The members were encouraged to retain some of this wine in their glass to compare with the Pinot Noir being served with the supper. The repast was a traditional dish from this part of Germany, a **Rheinischer Sauerbraten Shoulder of Beef**, in a sour marinade cooked overnight and served with new potatoes, sprinkled with dill and Savoy cabbage and to accompany this very tasty dish was a **2024 Palataia Pinot Noir** from **Weingut Gerd Stepp** in Bad Dürkheim. This wine compared most favourably with the Spätburgunder, exhibiting flavours of ripe summer berries, warm spice and with a hint of smoke/toast.



To complete the meal, the dessert was **Black Forest Gateau**, a traditional German dessert also known as Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte. The “wee surprise” mentioned earlier and accompanying the Gateau was a glass of **Specht Kirschwasser**, an Eau de Vie distilled from Morello Cherries and certainly in Germany, an essential part of the Gateau. Certainly very acceptable, it was perhaps not to everyone’s taste and at the writers table, encouragement was offered to liberally douse the Gateau as an alternative to quaffing the somewhat dry Eau de Vie.....that indeed made for a very satisfying way to end the supper!

Member David McAllister from Glasgow spoke appreciably of the efforts in organising this Tasting and for members yet to experience the pleasures of these themed supper evenings, you are certainly encouraged to participate in future events. The next “get together” will be the annual summer Barbecue chez the Connetable in Inverness on August 16<sup>th</sup> and in the meantime preparations are well in hand for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner on September 18<sup>th</sup>, celebrating the creation of the Inverness Embassy – this is to be held at the prestigious Ness Walk Hotel.

