

LAITHWAITES

THE SUNDAY TIMES
Wine Club
Celebrating 50 Years

LONDON VINTAGE WINE FESTIVAL INNOVATIONS THROUGH THE YEARS

AN EXTRACT FROM TONY LAITHWAITE'S NEWLY PUBLISHED MEMOIRS: ONE 'LIGHT-BULB' MORNING...

"I thought wouldn't it impress customers – and be fun for us all – to get our wine producers together in London, to meet and chat and show off their wines to customers. "Du producteur aux consommateur" – you couldn't get any direct-er than this.' So the London Vintage Festival was born.

THE BEGINNING



1973

Following a letter in 1972 to Sunday Times editor, Sir Harold Evans and Tony Laithwaite launch The Sunday Times Wine Club. Their wine columnist, Hugh Johnson, becomes President.



Tony and Sir Harold Evans



1980

The first **Vintage Festival** is held at Kensington Town Hall. Just a dozen or more producers. Too small a venue, so we move the following year to the Royal Horticultural Halls.



1986

Ernie Hunter from New Zealand makes history – his Sauvignon wins Wine of the Show. So starts the meteoric rise of Marlborough Sauvignon. Hunter's still attends every year.



1982

First Growers' Dinner – our annual 'thank you' supper to growers for giving up their time to come over. They love meeting all their customers.



1994

Taste Tunnel launch. It brings wine descriptors to life – Chardonnay compared to melon and peach, oaked Cabernet to blackcurrants and pencil lead, Sauvignon and asparagus.



1993

Tutored Tastings introduced upstairs for a nominal extra fee. Champagne's Bruno Paillard, Peter Vinding-Diers, Georg Riedel and many more hold the floor.



Ernie Hunter



2003

In 2003, we trial two Vintage Festivals – one for Old World, one for New, to suit growers' calendars. It's one too many, even for organiser John Kemp.



2013

We move to **Old Billingsgate**. Customers are as delighted as we are by our new venue – beautifully designed, airy and with lots more space.



Old Billingsgate

2018

Sunday Times wine columnist, **Will Lyons**, becomes our Vice President.



2023

Back after 4 years away in our new home of **Olympia, London**.



Vintage Festival Team

2012

Our last Vintage Festival at the **RHS**.

2016

The Vintage Festival **wins Consumer Drinks Event of the Year**, awarded by Drinks Business.



2019

Our **40th Vintage Festival**. We bring back the concept of the Annual Dozen with a shiny new name – the **Wine Awards**. This year's winning wines are all listed in this year's festival wine list along with special winning case offers.



Olympia, London

