

# LAITHWAITES

THE SUNDAY TIMES  
Wine Club  
Celebrating 50 Years

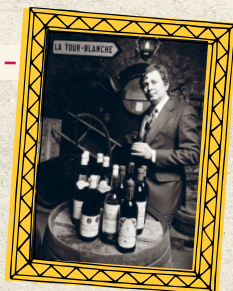
## LONDON VINTAGE WINE FESTIVAL INNOVATIONS THROUGH THE YEARS

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 consommateurs" – 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.



# 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.



# 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.



# 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.



# 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.



# 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.

# 2025

A glorious return to our spiritual home at the **RHS, Westminster**.



*RHS, Westminster*



*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.

