

NYWS History

Written by Ken Stephens

The Yorkshire branch of the Guild of Sommeliers UK was formed in 1965 based in Harrogate with area sub-divisions; Brian Taylor being the chair of the North Riding division. An advert placed in the Stockton and Darlington Times in 1972 to attend a meeting at the Scotch Corner Hotel resulted in three people turning up namely Joyce Ellwood, Barbara Gardiner and Fyfe Angus, sadly Barbara and Angus are no longer with us. An introductory meeting was held at the Scotch Corner Hotel in February 1972 attended by 15 people and continued for approximately 13 years on an irregular basis, subscriptions were minimal but annual dinners were held as far apart as Osmotherly, Middleton Tyas and East Cowton: attendance grew! In 1983, Bryan Taylor launched a "break-away" group called the North Yorkshire Wine Society (NYWS) and meetings continued at the Scotch Corner Hotel until 1985 when the venue changed to the Croft Spa Hotel. In 1986 Brian announced his retirement which meant a new Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer were required as he had been fulfilling all 3 roles! Peter Blunt arranged a meeting at Pepper Arden and a new committee formed with David McNeil (Chair), Viv Winter (Treasurer) and Peter Blunt (Secretary); Jonathon Gatty and Frank Nono acted as committee members. On February 2nd 1987 the Society was re-launched in its present form, 27 members attending. In 1990 enthusiasm was dropping off and Peter resigned as secretary due to ill health and at the 1991 AGM a new committee was elected and the venue changed to the Tudor Rose with Peter (Chair), Brian Stapley (Secretary) and Viv Winter (Treasurer). By 1993 membership subscriptions were encouraging and the quality and frequency of meetings had improved to include presentations by Master of Wines and reinstatement of the Annual Dinner at Joyce Ellwood's Friars Head and it is from this point that the Society evolved into its present form. Peter Blunt was replaced as Chair by Bryan Stapley then Maggie Blunt and the 25th anniversary was celebrated in 1997 at the bishop's palace in Bishop Auckland. In 1998 Eric Hauxwell and Ken Stephens stepped down and Mike Wherrett took over for the first of his three times and the constitution was amended to its present form. In 2002 Bryan Taylor stepped down as President and Peter Blunt was elected in the 30th anniversary year. In 2004 we moved to the Kings Head which coincided with Maggie Blunt and Viv Winter announcing their retirement so Nancy Stephens (Chair) and Mike Wherrett had to co-opt new committee members namely Margaret Reay (Secretary) and Steve Crampton (Treasurer). In 2007 Tim Bush became chairman but retired shortly afterwards and Christine Anderson took over followed by Ray Sheahan. In 2011 Peter Blunt offered his resignation as President due to bad health after 21 years in all three roles and was replaced by Ken Stephens. The Society celebrated its 40th Anniversary in 2012.