

Budd v the claret web: a sordid tale

13 Dec 2001 by JR

As reported in [Beware Dodgy Hawkers of Fine Wine](#), my colleague British wine writer Jim Budd has been doing a sterling job fighting what he calls 'the claret web', a burgeoning number of companies who are trying to flog fine wine at ludicrously inflated prices to would-be but ignorant private 'investors'. He has been helped by a number of fine wine traders who have co-operated to the extent of refusing to supply suspicious companies (though not, alas, Farr Vintners or Bordeaux Index). He has not been helped particularly by the Wine and Spirit Association, the British trade body, and he has had to suffer outrageous dirty tricks.

Here's the good news from Jim Budd:

'Four claret web companies are in the process of being closed down by the DTI [Department of Trade and Industry] - Boington & Fredericks, City Vintners, Goldman Williams and Liquid Acquisitions. On 30th November the DTI moved against City and Goldman, much the two biggest companies with combined sales of close on £19 million, but it is only now getting into the public domain because the companies appealed (fortunately unsuccessfully) against the petition to close them down and the appointment of a provisional liquidator.'

Here's his bad news:

'There do seem to be some drawbacks to looking into drinks investment scams which you can see if you visit www.jamesbudd.com. You will have to be quick as I shall be trying to get this smear site closed down tomorrow as the site accuses me of being a paedophile. I can assure you that the accusations are entirely false. In particular the editor of Update [I] was not arrested in 1998 in Lewisham nor in LA [in] 1989 - indeed I have never been to LA and have no wish to go there [sorry about this xenophobia, you Angelenos].

I first became aware of this site while away in Sicily in November. On my return I contact[ed] the ISP in South Africa and the site was immediately withdrawn. It has now reappeared in the same ISP but in Lusaka. The pictures of me were obtained in late November when two people turned up at my door. One tried to deliver a bottle of wine while his friend held a video camera. I refused to accept the bottle (wine hack refuses free sample!) and reported the incident to the local police. I shall be visiting them again tomorrow.'

Poor old Jim, but congratulations on his good work. [British visitors may detect some resemblance to Private Eye's St Albion's Parish News here.] ;

Jim's latest report, 19 Dec:

'This morning I was down at Catford police station (Sarf london) seeing the CID guy who is investigating the sites that smear me. He was friendly and clearly willing to help but was faced with one insurmountable obstacle - Catford police station has no access to the internet. So the case has had to be referred on.'

Ah me.

22 Dec:

I received a sheet of foul slurs on Jim's reputation in my mail this morning, in a handwritten envelope mailed in the unfortunately- named town of Slough. I've sent it to Jim so that he can hand it on to the police.