

## Rhône etc 2000

24 Nov 2004 by JR

Lots of good signs about this vintage in the south of France (see wine of the week for [20 December](#) for instance) and the prices are extremely fair. One of the first retailers off the block with a serious offer of fine wines is The Wine Society of Stevenage. Included in it is Sotatum 2000, a fascinating new red (new in every sense) made by the impressive North Rhône trio of Gaillard, Villard and Cuilleron whose Condrieus and St Josephs are exceptionally good. Sotatum is made from a vineyard not unlike those of Côte Rôtie but on the opposite bank of the river towards Vienne. The 1999 was extremely impressive and quite drinkable last October even though it will clearly improve. The Wine Society is offering it at £110 for six bottles in bond. (It has also been offered by [John Armit Wines](#) of London W11 ([www.armit.co.uk](http://www.armit.co.uk)), and Goedhuis & Co of London SW8 (email [sales@goedhuis.com](mailto:sales@goedhuis.com)), at about £200 a dozen.) This is a wine to watch whose price will surely escalate.

The Wine Society managers put up the cost of buying a share in this historic wine-buying cooperative (with top-quality buyers and a wariness of excess profitability) from £25 to £40 a year ago. This, strangely, was less because they wanted to make more money but because they were fed up with sending out reams of paper to godsons who'd been bought membership of the Wine Society but who would never buy a bottle from them. The theory is that a higher entrance fee may mean that a higher proportion of their members are active. Forty pounds seems like a lot but the Wine Society has built up some extremely worthwhile relationships with top producers over the years (especially useful in Burgundy and the Rhône) and has been surprisingly nimble at keeping abreast with new areas. They have a useful outlet near the Channel coast for those who want to avoid paying UK excise duty and are good at releasing small quantities of mature and sometimes rare wines (Hermitage La Chapelle 1978 is currently on offer at £225 a bottle) and perhaps their key attribute is some of the best and cheapest wine storage on offer - for wines bought from the Society. Definitely worth a punt. For more details see [www.thewinesociety.com](http://www.thewinesociety.com). (However, see comments in [purple pages 28 Feb 2002](#).)

Seckford Wines are combining their rather more limited 2000 Rhône offer with their 2000 Burgundy offer and have prices just slightly lower than the The Wine Society's in some instances (email [sales@seckfordwines.co.uk](mailto:sales@seckfordwines.co.uk)).