

Professional wine storage in the UK

11 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

This background article, part of our extensive free Instant expert section, has been substantially updated from its 2005 original to take account of costs and conditions applicable in Aug 2010 but we would welcome any comments from those with experiences of these operators sent via the Comment box at the bottom of this article.

As you can see below, there is considerable variation in the amounts charged by different merchants and professional warehouse operations. Merchants in general quote lower rates than the professionals, presumably in an attempt to lure customers to buy wine through them - or perhaps because they don't know quite as well as the professionals exactly what is involved in providing this service.

The following is an updated version [Aug 2010] of the UK part of an international survey of professional wine storage services which I published in 2003. Rates include VAT (except for Corney & Barrow, see the note with their entry) and are for a conventional case of a dozen bottles of wine per year. No-one has increased them outrageously. (Bear in mind that Smith & Taylor offer a very different tailor-made service from anyone else, involving lockers of specific sizes and lots of personal add-ons, so is not directly comparable.)

You can see that online access has become much more the norm, that newcomer Fine+Rare looks determined to provide some competition to the establishment, The Wine Society still offers very good prices if only for wines bought through the Society (a marked tendency in most merchants, mind you) and that overall Seckford still offers the best value in their Suffolk warehouse.

Name	Location	Rate per case*
John Armit	Octavian, Wilts and Vinothèque, Staffs	£11.74 (a) and £9.99
Berry Bros	Basingstoke, Hants	£10.80 (b)
The Big Yellow Self Storage Company	Fulham, London	£20.80 (c)
Bordeaux Index	Vinothèque, Burton-on-Trent	£8.81
Corney & Barrow	Octavian, Wilts and Corney & Barrow Cellars, Ayr, Scotland	£10.34 (d)
Farr Vintners	Octavian, Corsham, Wilts	£9.99
Fine+Rare	London City Bond, Tilbury	£7.20
Justerini & Brooks	Octavian, Corsham, Wilts	£11 (e)
Lay & Wheeler	Vinothèque, Burton-on-Trent	£12 (f)
Locke-King Vaults	EHD London No 1 Bond, Weybridge	£12.00 (g)
London City Bond	Vinothèque, Burton-on-Trent	£14.38 (h)
Nexus	Octavian, Wilts and Vinothèque, Staffs	£14.10 (i)
Octavian	Corsham, Wilts	£15.87 (j)
Private Reserves	Octavian, Corsham, Wilts	£9.50 (k)
Seckford	Suffolk	£6.99 (l)
Smith & Taylor	London and Manchester	£34.37 (m)
The Wine Society	Stevenage, Herts	£8.40 (n)

***Rate per case** - Maximum charges calculated as a VAT-inclusive sum for 12 bottles stored for 12 months, assuming full take up of the minimum quantity accepted - although costs may fall dramatically for larger quantities.

I/D/O - Insurance included/Free delivery/Online access

(a) Armit: price is quoted for 0-99 cases or 0-899 litres after which the rate falls the more wine is stored. The Vinothèque price of £9.99 is a flat rate.

(b) Berry Bros: £9 per case for Cellar Plan customers.

(c) Big Yellow: This price is a calculation based on price per week for a 15-case private storage unit. Big Yellow charge by rental unit rather than case.

(d) Corney & Barrow: In 2010 prices are quoted ex VAT due to fluctuating VAT rates. The prevailing rate as of June 2011 (end of storage year) will be charged.

(e) Justerinis: Wines bought from other merchants are stored at the same rate but do incur an initial admin fee of £4.27 ex-VAT per case.

(f) Lay & Wheeler: This goes down to £8.40 if you are paying by direct debit

(g) Locke-King Vaults: Rates are reduced for larger quantities. This is the price for less than 50 cases.

(h) London City Bond: At this standard rate, the insurance replacement value is capped at £7,500 per 9-litre case. If you want to avoid this cap, the 'enhanced' monthly rate is £21.57. And discounted rates are available to customers of selected merchants who also store with London City Bond (approx 20%).

(i) Nexus: Discounts start at 50 cases and/or after two years as a member. Clients receive a pro-rata credit for rental already paid when withdrawing the stock.

(j) Octavian Vaults: price is quoted for 1-30 cases; £14.87 for 31-99 cases and £13.67 for 100+ cases. There's a minimum annual charge of £98. Services such as photography, bottle picking, content checking and repacking are provided and charged separately.

(k) Private Reserves: £4.75 for a case of six.

(l) Seckford: There is a minimum charge of £25 + VAT per annum

(m) Smith & Taylor: let out space in units, I have assumed take-up of a unit which can hold 8 cases but rates fall substantially for larger amounts.

(n) The Wine Society: £7.92 for members paying by direct debit.

GENERAL COMMENTS & CONTACT DETAILS

THE MERCHANTS

Armit - Dedicated, professional operation, [taken over in 2008](#) by a Dutch company, taken very seriously with good experience of shipping internationally. Storage charges, unusually, by the litre rather than the case but the price shown above is the 9-litre case equivalent. £15 flat delivery charge to mainland UK addresses. Also offer a client wine-broking service, valuations and suggested drinking dates. Very user-friendly but not cheap, hence the introduction of the Vinothèque option at the beginning of 2010, about which they say, 'is not because we are unhappy with Corsham but there has long been a demand for a less expensive solution.' Willing to store wine bought from other merchants. Very good individual feedback on wine collections, both value and maturity.

5 Royalty Studios
105 Lancaster Road

London W11 1QF
tel +44 (0)20 7908 0600
fax +44 (0)20 7908 0601
info@armit.co.uk
www.armit.co.uk

Berry Bros - Own expanding warehouses in Basingstoke with temperature controlled at 10-12°C and 75 per cent relative humidity. Reasonably but not brilliantly useful stock reports. They do give maturity guidance on individual wines although it may sometimes be better to look up individual wines on their website.

Houndmills
Basingstoke
Hampshire RG21 2YH
tel +44 (0)1256 323566
fax +44 (0)1256 479558
orders@bbr.com
www.bbr.com

Bordeaux Index - Competitive rates and no extra charge for wine bought from other merchants. They'll store your wine even if you have never bought from them. Average storage temperature at Vinothèque is 13°C, 60-65% humidity. Reduced rate for 6-bottle cases (£3.75 + VAT). Customers are invoiced twice a year and receive information on drinking dates and investment potential, plus Robert Parker scores - also available on request at other times, free of charge. There's a minimum charge of six months. For wines bought from them, they'll provide free condition reports with digital photographs (otherwise £2.50 per case).

10 Hatton Garden
London EC1N 8AH
tel +44 (0)20 7269 0703
fax +44 (0)20 7269 0701
sales@bordeauxindex.com
www.bordeauxindex.com/storage.php

Corney & Barrow - Six-bottle cases are charged at half of a full case. They also charge in arrears, and will store wines bought elsewhere for a relatively modest admin charge on booking them in. Drinking dates are given for the wines on the C&B list; for further drinking dates customers can speak to the sales person specifically allocated to their account.

No 1 Thomas More Street
London E1W 1YZ
tel +44 (0)20 7265 2400
sales@corneyandbarrow.com
www.corneyandbarrow.com

Farr Vintners - This fine wine trader is Octavian's biggest single customer and nearly 20 Octavian staff are dedicated to Farr Vintners exclusively. There are admin charges for such things as change of ownership and few frills but you can store both in bond and duty paid and Farr's logistics staff seem particularly on the ball. This is a no-frills service without specific advice on when to drink particular wines. Three months' free storage for wines bought through them.

220 Queenstown Road
London SW8 4LP
tel +44 (0)20 7821 2000
fax +44 (0)20 7821 2020
sales@farr-vintners.com
www.farr-vintners.com

Fine+Rare - F+R tells me that 'The Chamber is FINE+RARE's storage solution, based within London City Bond, Tilbury. The Chamber is a self-contained, secure, solid walled 'chamber' sitting within the LCB warehouse with its own dedicated cellar team. This facility has been on offer since October 2009 providing a complete storage solution charging pro rata, accepting cases, bottles, bonded and duty paid wines as well as wines bought from other merchants. There is no minimum fee and the storage charging period runs from 1 Apr to 31 Mar. Condition reports are available at £3.80 ex VAT. On-line access is being developed.'

16-18 Pall Mall Deposit

124-128 Barlby Road
London W10 6BL
tel +44 (0)208 960 1995
wine@frw.co.uk
www.frw.co.uk

Justerini & Brooks - Operates under the name of a subsidiary company, Cellarers (Wines) Ltd. Wines purchased from suppliers other than Justerini & Brooks may be stored at their discretion, and the good news is that Justerini's have revised their previous policy of charging a premium for non-Justerini wines, and now only charge a small one-off admin fee of £4.27 ex-VAT per case. There's bonded and duty-paid storage. This is the safe-as-houses fine wine subsidiary of Diageo. Six bottles charged as 12. Delivery is charged at £17.63 incl VAT. The website gives access to view your reserves, get a valuation and place for sale 'broking wines' (about 600 wines in this category). Each year clients receive a statement of their wines, listing their holdings by region, as well as a vintage guide offering general advice as to whether to drink or keep. Clients are also encouraged to contact Justerini's for more specific and personal advice on their stored wines if they require it.

61 St James's Street
London SW1A 1LZ
tel +44 (0)20 7484 6400
fax +44 (0)20 7484 6499
www.justerinis.com

Lay & Wheeler - Family-owned Colchester wine merchant with over 30 years' experience of storing fine wines was taken over by the Majestic wine warehouse chain in 2009. At one stage they owned the Vinothèque bonded warehouse but sold it to LCB. They provide quarterly market valuations and a regular review of drinking dates. No minimum charges. They have also wisely abolished the annual £35 charge which is good news for all their customers. Wines purchased elsewhere can be stored without additional admin charges.

Holton Park
Holton St Mary
Suffolk CO7 6NN
tel +44 (0)845 330 1855
fax +44 (0)845 330 4095
sales@laywheeler.com
www.laywheeler.com

Seckford Wines - An unusual, and very good-value service operated from a private bond in Suffolk owned by wine merchants Seckford which means that customers have to buy a case of wine (any wine) from Seckford's wine merchant arm before they may take advantage of this bonded warehouse built as recently as 1997. Managing collections is a speciality with them charging a 10% commission on subsequent sales. Their online access to individual customers' accounts offers detailed advice on individual wines and electronic images of individual bottles. They will store wine bought elsewhere and have some duty-paid storage too. Delivery to London is next day and costs at least £10. Temperature varies between 8 and 15°C and relative humidity is around 60%.

Dock Lane
Melton, Ipswich
Suffolk IP12 1PE
tel +44 (0)1394 446622
fax +44 (0)1394 446633
marcus@seckfordwines.co.uk
www.seckfordwines.co.uk

The Wine Society - This wine-buying cooperative offers some of the best value and is certainly wine-minded but you have to be a member and the wines have to have been bought from them. However they do deliver for free, you can store mixed dozens, and there is no minimum charge - the latter an unusual advantage particularly for those just starting to build up their collection of fine wine. Relative humidity just 50% but no ill effects have been known. Constant average temperature of 13°C, humidity 65%. All storage is duty paid. Suggested drinking dates for individual wines provided annually and on request.

Gunnels Wood Road
Stevenage, Herts SG1 2BT
tel +44 (0)1438 741177

fax +44 (0)1438 741392

memberservices@thewinesociety.com

www.thewinesociety.com

THE PROFESSIONALS

The Big Yellow Self Storage Company - started two years ago and based in in what used to be the Fulham power station (classy looking, I am informed, and not yellow). The wine storage is two stories underground in fully climate-controlled conditions maintained at 10 to 13°C and at 50-70% humidity. Customers rent out private self-contained units - BYO racking, although they are working with a company to sell pre-racked units at a small premium) and pay weekly, monthly or annually. The smallest unit is 3 sq ft and stores 15 cases (12 x75cl) at £6 a week, with a 15% discount if paying annually in advance. I saw a photograph of this unit with racking in and worked out one could store about 100 bottles. The largest unit is 100 sq ft (about 500 cases, I worked out) and is £86.75 a week or £9 per case per year. Customers have full access to their wine seven days' a week from 5am to 11pm. The gated car park has PIN-code entry and security guards, and customers will use their personal PIN another three times before they can enter their own storage space. The dedicated wine manager receives deliveries from wine merchants or international shippers and will keep wine in the underground holding room until customers are able to get there and rack it away. Big Yellow is also able to provide automatically generated storage-condition reports detailing temperature changes, humidity, date of entry etc for customers wishing to sell their wines on. They have a specially designed tasting room, and welcome customers and wine merchants to use it for events and tastings.

71 Townmead Road, Fulham

London, SW6 2ST

tel +44 (0) 20 7736 5020

fax +44 (0) 20 7610 8239

wine@bigyellow.co.uk

www.bigyellow.co.uk

Locke-King Vaults - is the fine-wine storage facility of the HM Revenue & Customs approved bonded warehouse EHD London No 1 Bond, established by brothers Michael and Stuart Phelps in 2000. The Vaults are located 30 minutes from Central London in a series of 17 interconnecting underground tunnels, formerly Second World War air-raid shelters. They provide constant temperatures of 12 °C and a humidity range of 60-70%. Rates are applied annually from 1 Jan with fees per month charged before then. Exact rates vary according to the quantity and value of cases (see table above). Comprehensive conditioning reports are available upon request and the company also offers a national and international delivery service.

c/o EHD London No 1 Bond Limited

Unit A, Vickers Drive North

Brooklands Industrial Park

Weybridge

Surrey

KT13 0YU

tel +44 1932 334300

lkv@ehdlondon.com

www.ehdlondon.com

London City Bond (LCB) - This large warehousing company operates many sites around London but the ones dedicated to individuals' fine wine are at Tilbury and Burton-on-Trent. Temperatures at Vinothèque, by far their best facility, range from 11 to 15 °C (but with no sudden changes due to the thickness of the walls) and humidity is in the range 61-67%. They allow private customers to visit the site and offer online monitoring of the account, including providing images of specific wines to assist with sales to third parties. Annual rates apply from 1 Jan with fees per month charged before then. A discount is offered to private customers making their purchases through selected wine merchants who also store with LCB. No advice on when to drink or sell though.

Schooner House

Tilbury Freeport

Tilbury

Essex RM18 7NN

tel +44 (0)1375 853 700

fax +44 (0)1375 487 110

info@lcb.co.uk
www.lcb.co.uk

Nexus - Founded by Mark Bevan (ex Armit), Nexus makes it much easier for those who buy their wines from more than one merchant but want to store it all in one place and have one source of information on their wines - including the option of tracking the wine's progress from the producer to the bonded warehouse. You just give Nexus the details of your purchase and they liaise with the merchant. The receiving charge of £3.75 + VAT per case is reduced to £2.75 + VAT if you are buying wine from one of a number of 'affiliated' companies - currently Haynes Hanson & Clark, HS Liquid Assets, Clarion Wines, MARC Fine Wines and Oliver Wines but the list is likely to grow. Merchants' assessments of maturity etc are passed on via Nexus, though they can provide independent information for a small fee. There's plenty of flexibility in terms of delivery, if you are willing to pay a little more. They are unique (they say) in offering a pro-rata credit for rental already paid when withdrawing the stock.

NB: In 2010 they are currently taking new customers only by referral from an existing member or from one of their merchant partners (list available); this will be reviewed in 2011.

The Studio
63 Hemstal Road
London NW6 2AD
tel +44 (0)20 7625 9800
fax +44 (0)20 7625 9802
www.nexuswine.co.uk

Octavian - Hyper-efficient, particularly good at the nitpicking detail required by H M Customs & Excise but for private individuals the paperwork is cumbersome and the fees are very high. You are charged at every turn and there's the same initial fee to set up an account whether you have one or five cases. Since this is basically a disused limestone quarry, anyone visiting the cellars has to wear special equipment. (See [long article about Octavian](#)) The place is certainly very secure and expandable (the size of 18 football pitches in total, I think). Temperature (constant 13 °C) and humidity are computer controlled. You can store in bond or duty paid and Octavian offer next-day delivery within the M25 as well as collection from any location in the UK. Free valuations and drinking dates on request. However, it's cheaper and easier to store with a merchant who uses Octavian, the most bureaucratic of the warehouses (and probably therefore the one with the least problems with HM Customs & Excise).

Eastlays, Gastard
Corsham, Wiltshire SN13 9PP
tel +44 (0)1225 810735
fax +44 (0)1225 811369
www.octavian.co.uk

Private Reserves (London office: c/o [Goedhuis & Co](#)) - Run by Laura Goedhuis, wife of London wine merchant Johnny Goedhuis, with great dedication to a wine collector's needs, including an online service. Delivery is charged at cost from Octavian where the wines are stored. They will store wines bought elsewhere for an admin charge of up to £3.50 a case and offer half-price for six-bottle cases. First-class individual feedback on each wine giving independent assessments of quality and monitoring of maturity that will include emailing customers to tell them it's time to drink something.

Three-monthly update on wine valuations (via Liv-ex). Bravo!

Grange Farm, Holdenby
Northants NN6 8DJ
tel +44 (0)1604 770759
fax +44 (0)1604 770793
info@privatereservesltd.com

Smith & Taylor - Very personal service for duty-paid reserves on the American locker model. They offer volumes of either 8, 15, 30 or 60 cases. In-bond storage offered courtesy of Brandfords in Manchester. Their six-monthly reports come in unparalleled detail on extremely thick paper, detailing exactly from whom the wine was bought. Owner Sebastian Riley-Smith is particularly proud of sealing all wooden cases with a steel band, and of labelling each with the name of the owner. I had visions of this being a little winery nest in Battersea which Sloanes could raid in the middle of a dinner party but it is open only 9-5, Monday to Friday. But if you want a long talk about wine while picking some up, this is your place. The annual per case rate, which is calculated on the basis of full lockers and looks very high for eight cases, comes down to around £25 if 60 cases are stored. They don't charge when wine comes goes out (unless it is in bond) so their charges are not as high as at first they appear. Their more expensive and extensive 'value appraised' service is charged on the basis of a valuation of the wine and includes suggested drinking dates. They also design and build beautiful

made-to-measure hardwood wine storage in private homes. And they even offer 'Nursery' cellarage for that one case awaiting its owner's coming of age.

1c Broughton Street

London SW8 3QJ

tel +44 (0)20 7627 5070

fax +44 (0)20 7622 8235

cellar@smithandtaylor.com

www.smithandtaylor.com