English wine in the pink

19 Jun 2010 by Richard Hemming

It is awards season in the UK wine trade. Last week saw three different competition results announced, all focusing on English and Welsh wines, and with a particular emphasis on the fortunes of rosé.

First, the English & Welsh Wine of the Year competition, run by the United Kingdom Vineyards Association and judged by a panel of five MWs. Six gold medals were awarded to still rosés in 2010, up from none in the previous year. Particular kudos goes to Cornwall-based **Camel Valley's Fortnum & Mason Rosé 2009**, which won the Waitrose Rosé Trophy, and **Wickham Vineyard's Row Ash Rosé NV** from Hampshire, which took the specialist trophy for non-chaptalised wine.

Pink wine was the sole focus of another blind-tasting contest, this time between Devon and the Loire Valley. The brainchild of another MW, Alistair Peebles, it took place as part of Devon Wine Week and saw a final medal tally of six to Devon (including the only two silvers given) and four to the Loire. The full line-up, including some pretty respectable Loire names, is viewable at their web page.

Meanwhile in the opposite corner of southern England, the South-East Vineyards Association were trumpeting English sparklers as their victors. Two of the three golds given went to my sometime employer **Gusbourne Estate**, including the best wine in show award for their **Classic Blend 2006**, which Jancis reviewed recently here. Pictured below is Gusbourne owner Andrew Weeber on the left, alongside Kevin Sutherland of Bluebell Vineyards, who was runner-up.

The value of such wine competitions as these is much wrangled over. It does sometimes seem that there are enough blind-tasting contests around the world to prove anything, but from all the evidence I have seen, the spirit and integrity of the judging is nothing but steadfast. So congratulations, then, to the winners mentioned above!