Flewellen's Oxford rides again

30 Jan 2012 by Richard Hemming

Last week's Australia Day tasting witnessed the final of the University Wine Champions at the Saatchi Gallery in London. An initiative dreamt up by the reinvigorated UK branch of generic body Wine Australia, the competition involved eight teams, with Oxford and Edinburgh Universities reaching the final.

Following the format of the television quiz show *University Challenge*, a series of questions were asked, some based on blind tasting and others on viticulture and vinification. I was one of a large throng milling near the free beer at the back of the room, and the level of knowledge was indeed impressive. Some of the questions were understandably skewed to promote something or other about one of the many sponsors of this event, and thus were perhaps too trivial for a truly academic contest, but that is not to undermine the achievements of both teams.

Oxford eventually won out, under the captaincy of James Flewellen (the tallest chap in the photograph below, pictured with his team mates Ren Lim and George Scratcherd, quizmaster Sarah Ahmed, Wine Australia's UK supremo Yvonne May and the cannily placed logo of the Oxford team's sponsor). James is no stranger to these pages. He was last cited in March 2011 in Jancis' article The trickiest blind tasting ever, describing his many achievements to date and his interest in developing a vinous career. Things are evidently going to plan, not least because he and his team have won a two-week tour of Australia's wine regions, which will no doubt test their tasting (and indeed drinking) capabilities to their fullest extent.

Congratulations to them, and commiserations to the valiant runners-up, Edinburgh.