

West Leicestershire u3a

Wine Appreciation Group Meeting Wed 22 April 2026

Tonight was designed for us to appreciate the difference between 'cheap' – say sub £5 a bottle and 'expensive', (relatively) wines. We are, after all, the Wine Appreciation Group.

The evening started off with the obligatory half hour dedicated to health matters. It was a pleasure to welcome Pat's return. We had an update of Bob's woes, who is ensuring he gets his money's worth from the NHS, we wish him well. Catherine and Maureen also cried off for health reasons, we hope they get better soon. Perhaps we should instigate a rolling 'Health Woes Group'. Our demographic indicates a good turnout, albeit probably remotely.



We moved swiftly to our first 'cheap' wine – a non-specific Malbec from Chile. It could only be described as having a high wince factor! It really was rank, prompting a call for a spittoon. Fortunately the accompanying Malbec from just down the road in Patagonia was a lot better, even 'quite palatable'. For the record £4.50 played £9.00 a bottle.

The next pairing – a Villa Maria Sauvignon Blanc was adjudged 'very nice, crisp and flowery' and much better than the slightly cheaper Orvieto. The pattern continued with a £5 Malbec from Argentina (really not good – a bit rough) verses a £13 Spanish Oba Maestra – very dark and deemed excellent, indeed the highest scoring of the evening.

Later we tried the cheapest wine of the evening – a Zinfandel at £3.85 – very sweet against a Chianti labelled an Italian table wine. Notwithstanding having paid duty from its £8.75 to the Mafia, possibly, this was felt to have not a lot of body for a 13% wine.

So, what did we learn? There really was a difference in our appreciation of the slightly more expensive wine against what we could describe as the budget wines on the night. We also identified, again, the imbalance between red and white or rose wine brought for our consideration. So much so that Joyce hotfooted it to our local wine merchant – aka Coop – to buy some more whites to even the numbers somewhat.

We resolved therefore to designate a 'Red Group' and a 'White Group' where named members agreed the bring one or the other. I have the list and will be checking you all bring the right ones. We will see if this works.

This all sounds as though we concentrated on the wines to the exclusion of all else, which could not really be further from the truth. We had a further theme for the night – 'Joke Night' when each member was tasked with telling a joke as we usually rely on Margaret to entertain us.

In excess of 30 jokes were aired varying from one liners to Christmas fables. A good number did reference the clergy, some referenced wines and some both.

Guinea Pigs, mice and frogs at school featured hilarious tales but not, I think, meant as jokes. We should not have been surprised they were all in good taste. Perhaps next meeting we should see how many we could remember?

More serious subjects were discussed such as the finer points of sewing your own knickers and exactly where the gusset should go. We even had an animated discussion about the knickers worn at school. One of our ladies even had a pocket in hers – that's posh. Some had designated 'games knickers' into which skirts could be tucked, several others did not! Least said...

How do you get rid of the little flies in the conservatory? Get rid of the conservatory.

Why don't we sleep through the night? What do we do to drop off again, apparently reading the Racing Post is quite efficacious.

The Other Bennett Sister was critiqued as were a number of other shows and presenters, often rather critically, although Wheeltappers and Shunters came out quite well.

Next meeting: Wednesday 27th May at Allans Way. It was suggested we choose a wine from a country not having been visited by Pat but apparently there are no vineyards on Antarctica, so we agreed on wine from Burgandy.

If that proves more difficult perhaps anything with a 'B' in the name?

John Dexter April 2026