



## Chairmans Annual Report

Yes, I'm still here!!!! What a year 2021 has been. Having hoped we had light at the end of the tunnel we were suddenly forced to look for a new way of continuing with the Academy in 2021. We had some high hopes and many challenges but we stuck it out and managed to pull together to have 3 events towards the end of the year.

Welcome to our AGM for 2021/22 where once again I must firstly thank every single Academician, Shipper and House for their support of the Academy. Having had initially confirmed the Course last June we were then forced to postpone it once again due to increased restrictions which would have meant we would have to had a Course very different than before. For those of you who have attended the Course you will agree that robbing a candidate of the full experience would have been unforgivable.

Yet again the Committee have gone above and beyond with everything asked of them and their support to both the Academy and I, has been incredible. We have continued to develop our online presence via development of our website, social media interaction and of course our Newsletter. These initiatives will grow and strengthen as we go forward and will remain our key methods of communication for the Academy.

We had 3 amazing events that were very oversubscribed as the excitement of a return to normal came through. Initiating our return, we had our Annual Scottish Dinner in the Signet Library in Edinburgh. When we knew that we couldn't have a full calendar of events due to the cancellation of the Course we agreed with the Houses to host something different from normal to allow us to return to event based activity. At each of the two dinners that we agreed upon running we used all 16 Houses with equal representation at both dinners. In Scotland we used the first 8 Houses for the predinner tasting and the second 8 Houses for the meal with the reverse carried out in the Midlands. The Scottish Dinner was an incredible event and was this year managed by Craig Bonner our new Scottish Dinner Organiser. The room was superbly set up with videos showing information of each of the Houses. A much more relaxed style of event but a lot of fun and a great success.

The Midlands Dinner followed a few weeks later and was held in Coombe Abbey. As always Kevin Skeet had a seamlessly organised event which brought together a superb group of Academicians, Shippers and guests who revelled in the menu and the different more relaxed format we held.

At the beginning of November the Vintage tasting took place in the Institute of Directors and was the first time we held the Vintage Tasting as a stand alone event. Having discussed this event within the Committee, Houses and Shippers it has been agreed that the Vintage Tasting will become our Halo event every year and deserves to be a stand alone so as to give it the prestige it deserves.

Our Course unfortunately did not happen in 2021 but with the support of the Houses we have decided to roll over everything into 2022 so Taittinger will still be the Presidential House and I will continue as Chairman (sorry!). This year the Course will happen between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June and we have the majority of the original 16 Candidates attending this year. The support of our events to date by these Candidates and their commitment to the Academy so far has been extremely encouraging and they will make a great addition to our Alumni.

This year we will have a full event calendar (found on our website).



We have a lot still to do in 2022 to continue to develop our communication, educational resources and engagement plans and we will continue to update you via our website and newsletter. We will continue our support of The Drinks Trust as our chosen charity and our partnership with Riedel who have also supported us this year through some educational work and promotional support. We aim to engage these partners along with some further guests to begin a Masterclass programme for our members at certain events to regain our position within Champagne Education in the UK & Ireland. Further information will be forwarded when dates and speakers are confirmed.

I would like to give a huge thanks to everyone on the Committee as they really have supported me through this year and worked towards our shared vision of reaffirming our position within the Champagne world. Every single member has given their time and expertise to help make the Academy relevant in this vastly different landscape and I look forward to working with them this year. I would also like to single out Val who has taken on this year's challenge with gusto and we appreciate her support as we know it has been very different than what has come before. Paul Walker has been a huge help again this year and has probably had more to do than any other Vice Chair in our past. Our decision that we would work towards a shared vision has worked very well and he has been a massive support to everyone on the Committee and has led the development of our digital redesign. I would also like to thank David Ramsey for his years of service as the Scottish Dinner Organiser as he has now decided to pass the baton to Craig Bonner. All members deserve a personal thank you which I will do in person.

We would love for all our members to have a say in the future of the Academy, to support our work going forward and to contribute where possible to the website and newsletter.

I look forward to seeing you all at one of our events and I thank you all for your support!

**Andrew Fullerton**

**Chairman**