

## COSTA BLANCA WINE SOCIETY

### Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026

#### Las Rotes Hotel, Denia

**56 Members were present at the second call.**

#### 1. Apologies

- Paul and Helen Nicholls, Netty Sayers and Pam and Alan Linger, Joan and Fergus Fitzpatrick

#### 2. Approval of Minutes of AGM January 2025 and any matters arising

- No Matters arising from the minutes of AGM January 2025.
- Minutes approved as published on the website.

#### 3. Membership Report 2025 Helen Granville

- At the beginning of the new fiscal year the Society has, 144 paid up members.
- Attendance to tastings, on average, has risen from 50 individuals in 2023 to 60 in 2025.

##### Memberships 2025

- 20 new members joined. (40% (8) came via Facebook and 60% (12) via fellow members.)
- 15 members decided not to renew. 6 have until the end of January to renew.
- 15 pending members were admitted. 2 pending members now on waitlist.

##### Website and Facebook

- Thanks to John Sloggie and Sara Richardson for all their hard work on those two platforms during the year. Our social media presence has risen in popularity. Facebook now has 374 members. The website has enjoyed increased visitors and ranks well on Google. "Wine tasting Costa Blanca" has returned as number 1 on Google for the past several months.

#### 4. Financial Report 2025 & Approval of the 2025 accounts & Business Model Mike Granville

- Miscellaneous income and expenses were much less in 2025 than they were in 2024, because in that year we bought and sold audio equipment.
- The society is in a strong financial position, with free assets of €2851. ("free assets" = what we have in the bank less payments of 2026 subscriptions paid in 2025, and payments for the first 2026 tasting paid in 2025.) Plan in 2025 was to reduce the balance of the free assets. However, a surplus of 128 euros was generated.
- 2025 Accounts approved as presented.

##### Description of Business Model

- The plan is to run tastings at a loss (the amounts members pay for the meals less the cost of food and wine. This loss is countered by the membership fees, resulting in a break-even amount.
- Members questions were answered to everyone's satisfaction.

#### 5. President's Report 2025 Neville Richardson

- This was Neville's last year as President. He summarized the excellent progress which the Society has made in recent years, including the increased number and diversity of members, the strong financial position of the Society and the higher levels of attendance at monthly events. He also extended his appreciation for everyone's hard work over the past year. His full report is attached.

### Increasing Membership

- Neville explained that there will be a motion to increase membership from 150 to 160. Demographics are changing, travel situations are changing, and he urged people to vote to increase members numbers from 150 to 160.

## 6. Election of President

- Helen Granville has volunteered for the position of President.
- Voted to accept Helen Granville as President for 2026, with no objections.

### Thanks to past President and Sara Richardson

- Helen proceeded to then thank Neville Richardson and present him with a gift for his work and dedication as President.
- She also presented Sara Richardson with flowers for management of the registration desk and table allocations.

## 7. Election of Treasurer and confirmation of committee members

### Treasurer

- Stewart Cusden volunteered to be treasurer 2026.
- Voted to accept Stewart as Treasurer, no objections.

### Committee Members

- Paul Smithard (Secretary) and Sue Blewett (Venues and Menus) remain on the committee.
- Voted to accept the following people as co-opted committee members with no objections.
  - Fergus Fitzpatrick    Webmaster
  - Sylvie Vande Pitte    Membership
  - Valerie Peachey    Member-at-large no portfolio

## 8. Plans for 2026 Helen Granville

- Full programme in place for 2026.
- Includes a May wine trip bodegas DO Madrid – May 5-8
- October wine trip Oct 6-7, location not yet released.

### Planned Tastings this year 2026

- Feb. Tim and Sandy Fawle - Bodega Presentation Acustic Wines/Los Amigos, Javea
- Mar. Fergus and Joan Fitzpatrick - Exploring Garnacha/Javea Golf Club, Javea
- Apr. Tony and Gro Salter - My Favourite Wines /Denia Yacht Club, Denia
- May. Sara and Neville Richardson- What's in a Label/Maxims, Moraira

- Jun. Val Peachey and Terry Baylis – It's All About the Bubbles/ La Senia, Denia
- Jul./Aug. Possible Sipping in the Summer
- Sept. John and Shirley Sloggie - Bodegas Altanza/Las Rotes Hotel, Denia
- Oct. Paul and Helen Nicholls- Regional Grape Variety Challenge/Costa Marco, Benimarco
- Nov. Tony and Cherry Cabban - Combatting climate change in the wine industry/ Cala Laia, Moraira
- Dec. Helen and Mike Granville - President's Choice/ Javea Yacht Club, Javea
- All 2026 events are now listed on the website.
- For 2027, the tasting team and interested members can put forth suggestions.

#### 8. Presentation & Approval of 2026 Budget Stewart Cusden

- Objective to break even for year.
- A few questions on the budget.
- Voted to approve Budget for 2026 as presented.

#### 9. Proposal to increase Membership to a maximum of 160

- Discussion ensued with respect to increasing membership.
- Various points of view pros and cons.
- Among those mentioned friendship, equality, lack of egos, common interests want to continue to build the society and not lose those core values.
- Voted on motion to increase the membership to 160. Motion carried.

#### 10. Other business

- No other business had been notified, However, as time permitted members were asked for any comments. Helen and Steve Houssart have offered to arrange a taxi or minibus to the tastings, for members in the Jalon, Calpe and Benissa areas.
- The official meeting closed at 7:28

Signed

February 9, 2026

Paul Smithard

CBWS Secretary

#### Attachments

Final 10/02/2

- President's Report
- Treasurer's Report
- Membership Report

## President's Report

Good evening members

Delighted to see so many of you here for the AGM and thank you for your support and enthusiasm during my 2 years in office as your President.

Start by thanking your extremely hard-working committee members. Those of you who have carried out these roles in the past will be very aware of the commitment and many hours of hard work contributed to the excellent functioning of your Society. The individuals;

Helen Granville, Vice President and membership secretary. Her work over the last two years has significantly improved our understanding of our membership dynamics in terms of tenure, attendance and diversity of nationality and location. Helen also organized a survey of all of our members in the early part of the year. This was invaluable in improving our understanding of what our members as a whole were really expecting from your committee. The outcome was very positive, and we have implemented many of your helpful suggestions.

Mike Granville, our treasurer, keeps our finances (which for an organization of 150 members is not insignificant) under constant control. Mike stands down at this AGM. Thank you for your work over the last two years and earlier and here is a small present to recognize your contribution to the Society.

Paul Smithard, secretary - recording meetings and communicating with members from (it seems) anywhere in the world. Paul and Carolyn have only been able to attend a few events this year for the excellent reason that they have been enjoying themselves travelling. That hasn't stopped Paul from always being available to contribute to CBWS matters.

Sue Blewett, venues and menus - negotiating, booking and communicating with our venues with incredible efficiency. This is such a difficult job, and we are very lucky to have Sue doing this for us. Again, even though Sue is very often travelling elsewhere in the world, her contribution is invaluable.

John Sloggie, ex officio member and web master. Our web site is in great shape. John steps down at this AGM. Thank you for your help over the last two years, particularly on sourcing our new sound system. Your contribution in terms of the history and procedures of the Society have been invaluable. Here is a small gift to recognize that contribution.

Also, thanks to

Patrick Harrild for transporting and organizing our sound system at our events.

Sara for seating plans and wine scoring, for the Facebook admin and development (over the last two years our Facebook membership has grown from under 50 to over 350. Also, for her communication with multiple organizations across the Costa Blanca, Moraira, Javea, Calpe, Denia, etc. We can now say with confidence that people do know who we are. Mostly, of course, thanks from me to Sara for her support and putting up with me in my role as your President.

Our Tasting Team, who shoulder a significant amount of the burden of organizing our events.

Our Wine Trip team (John and Shirley, Tim and Sandy) for their research and organization of tremendous trips; in 2025 to Rioja and DO Valencia. Just a quick word on these trips, they are very popular so are frequently oversubscribed. Places have to be allocated on what hopefully members will accept is a fair

Final 10/02/2

basis, which is contribution to and loyalty to the Society, so if you are a committee member, an active Tasting Team member or a regular attendee at Monthly Tastings then you will be higher up the priority list. The message if you wish to participate in these trips then is to take part in organizing your Society and attend as many Tastings as possible.

2025 was a record year in recent times;

Our finances continue to be in a really strong position, even after investing a significantly higher amount in better quality wines and events, particularly later in the year. Membership numbers were capped at 150, a limit which we achieved early in the year. I will talk more about this later. The new members have benefited us with increased diversity of nationality, age and home location in Spain.

Our average attendance at individual Tastings was 60 which is the highest since 2018 and higher than the average monthly attendance for the last 19 years.

Every year we lose a number of members for different reasons, usually due to health or relocation reasons, or sometimes because they wish to pursue different interests. On average we lose about 20 - 25 per year, so clearly, we need to continue our recruitment to avoid the Society slowly dwindling and dying out.

The review of our activities in 2025 is on our website so no need to bore you now with a month by month run through.

In summary, we tasted nearly 100 different wines, usually Spanish, though who can forget Vicki and Neil's fantastic selection of wines from around the world.

We held events across the North Costa Blanca, 3 in Javea, 3 in Denia, 3 in (and around Moraira) and 1 in Calpe. This reflects the changing dynamics of our membership, in 2023 43% of our membership were from Javea, that percentage has fallen to 38% as we have increased our membership in other parts of our region.

I said that I would come back to the topic of maximum number of members. Later in the agenda, after I have stepped down as your President, your committee will unanimously propose that the maximum number of members be increased from 150 to 160. I urge you to support the unanimous view of your committee as I myself will. A few words about that proposal.

Firstly, is there a magic 'correct' number of members? Of course not, neither 150 or 160 is a perfect answer, so why propose an increase?

(1) After resignations and pending members joining, we will have 144 members, plus 6 members who haven't yet confirmed their intentions and two pending members. This would potentially leave no space for new members in the whole of 2026, if we didn't make this increase.

(2) Over the last two years the new members have brought many benefits to your Society. including diversity, a fantastic depth of knowledge about wine, many are true wine enthusiasts or professionals, they are the future of the Society. I would encourage any of the longer standing members to introduce themselves to the newer members and I am sure that you will share this view.

(3) Attendance at our monthly events has changed over recent years, I don't know whether it is a post Brexit effect, a post Covid effect or just a general increase in our travelling. At each Tasting event, about 40% of our members attend, usually the non-attendees are simply not in the country or not available for other reasons. We therefore need a larger maximum number of members to make our events sustainable.

(4) So out of our 150 members, our average attendance is 60, which we can accommodate very comfortably - our maximum attendance is usually 72 per event. Over the past two years virtually no members wishing to attend a monthly Tasting event have been declined.

(5) There is no discernible pattern of attendance between newer and longer standing members. In 2025, the only members to attend every event were Anne Bentley, a longer standing member, and Rose Aghdami, a brand-new member in 2025.

(6) Finally, only 51 of our members have been with the Society for more than 5 years. On the basis that 40% of our members attend each event, if it were not for the newer members, we would be holding events now for 20 people, which is not sustainable.

I am asking you to support your committee in its proposal for an increase in membership and support the continued progress of the Society.

I will sum up by using similar words to those which I used at last year's AGM. We have had a great 2025 and previous years and need to build on that and move on. The history of this Society has involved development, change and evolution. (The website, Facebook page, booking and paying online.)

The heart and soul of any Society or organization is not the current group of members, it is the purpose and values which endure across multiple eras of membership. Our core purpose, as stated on the home page of our website is that we 'meet monthly to taste, learn about and enjoy wines in a friendly sociable environment'. I believe that we are achieving this and have created the conditions where this will endure into the future.

Ted Barnett our longest standing member will tell you that when he joined this was not a society of diverse nationalities. It was German speaking and the names of the Presidents in the first 10 or so years demonstrate that. Although now English speaking we have many nationalities represented in the membership (approximately a third of the membership is not British). Whilst respecting our heritage, we have an opportunity to develop our Society further by embracing the different cultures styles and approaches of the membership as a whole reflecting the changing demographics of the Costa Blanca Region.

Helen, you will receive the full support of Sara and myself in taking this Society forwards.

Good luck and thank you again to all of the members for your support during my two years as your President

## **Treasurer 's Report**

"Mike Granville opened his presentation by assuring members that their society is in a strong financial position, with free assets of €2851. By "free assets" we mean what we have in the bank less payments of 2026 subscriptions paid in 2025, and payments for the first 2026 tasting paid in 2025. Arguably we do not need to hold as much free assets, and the plan was to reduce the balance in 2025. In the event we made a profit of €128 so the free assets increased.

He said our business model was that we plan to make losses on the tastings, in other words the amounts members pay for the meals less what we spend on meals and wine, but when we add back in the subscriptions and remove the other expenses then usually, we should more or less break even.

Miscellaneous income and expenses were much less in 2025 than they were in 2024, because in that year we bought and sold audio equipment."

## **Membership Report**

Last year was a good year for membership. Attendance has continued to rise steadily. In 2023, our average attendance per tasting was 50 and is now 60.

Sara & John have continued to look after our social media presence with our Facebook activity and website respectively. Thanks to Sara's continued good work, our Facebook group has continued to grow and is now 374.

John has ensured that our website has risen to Google search results, with “wine tasting clubs Costa Blanca” as the search words which requires ongoing effort to update tags and content, etc.

We welcomed 20 new members in 2025, with 60% joining through personal recommendations from fellow members—the most effective way to grow our membership. 40% came from Facebook.

Towards the end of December 6 members had informed use that they would not be renewing they membership, and at the beginning of January a further 9 did the same.

We therefore offered these spaces to pending members and we now have 15 new members, with only 2 left on the pending membership list. We have 6 members who have not renewed their membership. They until the 30<sup>th</sup> January to renew, after this date these spaces will be made available to new members.

-End-