On the 26th October 2023 members of the Shell Travel Club visited the Worshipful Company of Vintners (one of the 12 Great Livery Companies in the City of London).

Waiting to escort us back in time (first Royal Charter from Edward 111 in 1363) was Guy Fairbank (a Vintners Liveryman and a qualified London Blue Badge Guide).

Guy welcomed us to the Spiritual home of the International Wine Trade. He took us back to the Middle Ages when wool and wine were the two prominent trades. Their motto “Vinum exhilarat animum” - “Wine cheers the spirit”. Vintner means wine merchant and the Vintners’ Company came into existence to supervise the wine trade.

Brilliantly presented, each room full of historical interest, from St Martin of Tours (Patron Saint of the Vintners) to anecdotes (Mr Van Horn and his consumption of wine - drinking 365,600 bottles in 22 years and living until he was 90) and Guy’s fine voice when he sang the "Song to the Vintners” to us in the Livery Hall.

Today the Company provides yearly scholarship grants enabling young people in the wine trade to study methods of production. It is very much involved with the relief of the poor, destitute and homeless. It is involved in charities treating the social effects of alcohol abuse and misuse and amongst other charities it supports three schools in the East end of London. During Covid lockdown, the Company supported food banks as well as various wine merchants.

For over 900 years the annual event of “Swan Upping” takes place yearly in the third week of July. Originally for allocating ownership of swans, it was a sign of status and importance. Today it is about counting and checking the health of the birds and educating people about the importance of Swan Upping and conservation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Frieda Boase (Shell Travel Club - STC) for arranging a most enjoyable visit to the Worshipful Company of Vintners. I would also like to thank the Company for arranging our visit and to Guy Fairbank, our Blue Badge guide.

If you wish to join Shell Travel Club please find us on shelltravelclub@gmail.com