



BOB TYRER ON THE BOTTLE

Although I fantasised as a weedy youth about becoming a paratrooper, I am afraid of heights. So you can imagine my delight when, after climbing up an almost vertical vineyard in the Moselle recently, I was invited to descend in the *Monorackbahn* — the most flimsy, rickety, vertiginous, terrifying, nauseating monorail ever constructed. It's just a tool basket with a lawn mower engine that runs on a 2in rail down a slate-strewn precipice. My eldest son enjoys bullying me onto scary fairground rides, but Stuntman's Freefall has nothing on Clemens Busch's mono-horror.

The reward was to sit outside Clemens's 17th-century house, drinking his rieslings, eating his wife Rita's wurst and looking across the Moselle (Mosel to them) at the soaring Busch family vineyards on the scary Marienburg and Nonnengarten (Virgin Mary's Castle and Nun's Garden to us). This is old Germany. The Busches live in the village of Pünderich beside a line of tall walnut trees; every year the *Bürgermeister* auctions the unharvested crop of each tree for charity. The winners then rush to pick the nuts before tourists snaffle them. Clemens has the same problem. Some Germans who come to this beautiful area from less blessed parts just can't resist stealing his grapes.

I prefer the wines. Pünderich, for all its charm and chugging little ferry to the vineyards, is vinously unfashionable; yet by hard work, inspiration and a touch of biodynamic mystery, Clemens has made himself a beacon for new wave German winemakers. His bottles are not cheap, but the aromas of sandalwood and flashes of fennel make these rare, dry, pure, mineral wines something quite out of the ordinary in Britain — and a special gift at this time of year.

I'll have more to say about presents next week. In the meantime, let's place a curse on the German transport authorities, who plan to violate the serenity of the Moselle with a 525ft-high motorway bridge. (See germanwinesdirect.org/moselthreat.html.) This is not just unspeakable vandalism, it's also horribly scary: imagine being stuck that high up if your car breaks down.

LIQUID HUNCHES

- ★ **Dr Loosen Urziger Würzgarten 2008** (£12.49) A spicy delight from a vineyard the bridge would obliterate (Waitrose)
- ★ **Sybille Kuntz Riesling Gold-Quadrat trocken 2006** (£19.99) The antithesis of "traditional" German wine: dry (*trocken*), intense and deeply flavoured with honey, apples and racy minerals (winelibrary.co.uk)
- ★ **Clemens Busch Pündericher Marienburg Riesling trocken GG 2007** (£26.99) The GG means Grosses Gewächs, equal to the French *grand cru*. A landscape of aromas and the essence of purity (thewineryuk.com)

What are you drinking? Tell me at wine@sunday-times.co.uk

