

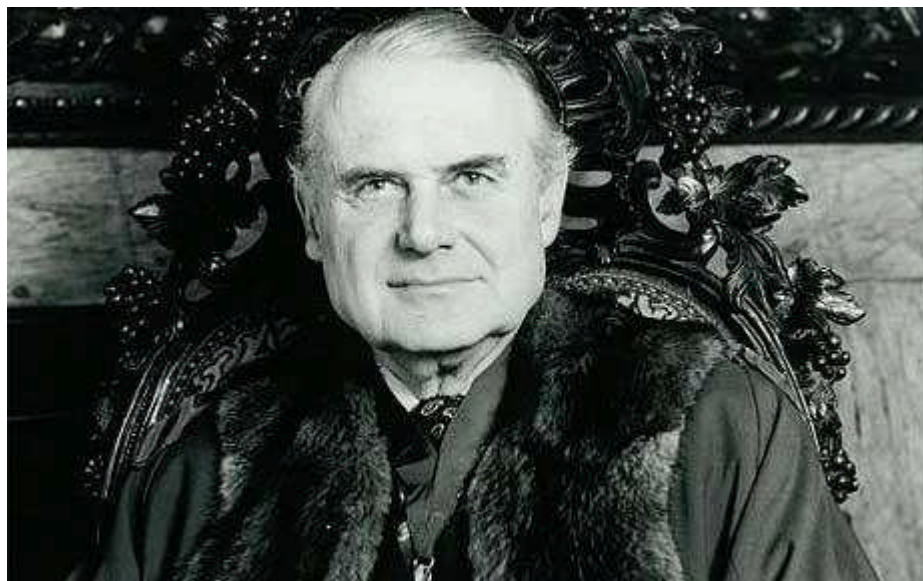


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Anthony Berry

Anthony Berry, who died on February 23 aged 94, was a director for over 60 years of the 312 year-old family wine firm, Berry Bros & Rudd, with two decades as chairman. A familiar, immaculately turned-out figure in St James's Street until well into his nineties, he only gave up wearing a bowler hat on his way to work when he found he was being photographed by tourists as a curiosity.

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Berry was one of the last of his breed – the old-fashioned, gentleman wine merchant. He had made up his mind to enter the trade during his early teens, despite the fact that the rules of the business partnership with the Rudd family limited space at Berrys to his elder brother, George.

A wine trade lunch, to which he was taken by his father when he was 17, made a lasting impression. The wines served included such treats as 1896 Château Lafite, 1864 Château Léoville, 1877 Château Labégorce and 1923 Château Coutet. "I seem to have absorbed my share of all this quite happily because in the evening I went to Bertram Mills's Circus at Olympia without apparently being

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any the worse for it," he recalled.

After leaving school Berry worked with Williams & Humbert in Jerez, before spending his university vacations with the likes of Delamain in Cognac and GH Mumm in the Champagne region. On coming down in 1936 from Cambridge (where he admitted to drinking little but beer) he joined Rutherford, Osborne & Perkin as an office boy on £2 a week. He remained until the outbreak of war, during which he served with the RNVR.

In 1941, the death in action of George Berry made Anthony's entry into his family's firm a necessity, and he became a director in 1946. In 1965 he took over as chairman, and continued in the post for the next 20 years. Despite the fact that his main focus was wine, these were years of great success for the company largely through the growth in export markets of Cutty Sark Scots Whisky – invented by his father.

Berry acquired something of the importance of an elder statesman of the wine and spirit world, having served for many years on various bodies associated with the trade, not least the Vintners' Company, of which he became Master in 1980.

Anthony Arthur Berry was born on March 16 1915, the son of Francis and Amy Marie Berry, and educated at Charterhouse and Trinity Hall, Cambridge. In 1953 (having proposed on Coronation Day), he married Sonia, the daughter of Sir Harold Graham-Hodgson KCVO, radiologist to the royal family. The couple had a son, Simon – Berrys' current chairman – and a daughter.

A gentle and shy man, he had a dry sense of humour and a keen wit, and in private could be jovial company indeed; in public, and to the staff at Berrys, however, he could appear somewhat buttoned-up. Underlings were apt to keep their heads down when he passed through the shop, although nobody could fault either his manners or his charm, both of which came from a different era. Even as chairman he would write personally to every new customer. Such was his reserve, though, that one employee was moved to say: "For such a lovely man he always looks so miserable."

Despite his apparent shyness, Berry was immensely clubbable and enjoyed membership of Boodle's, MCC, the Sainsbury and a brace of golf clubs. He was also a fine host. He shared his birthday with two celebrated wine writers – Cyril Ray and Edmund Penning-Rowsell – and although he certainly did not share their politics, he delighted in drinking fine vintages with them over birthday lunches in the directors' dining room at No 3 St James's Street.

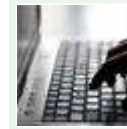
Berry, whose wine knowledge was formidable, was liked and admired and his somewhat old-fashioned views ensured he became a rich source of anecdote. There was much merriment, for example, when word got back from one of his buying trips to Château Latour in the 1970s. The celebrated first growth estate had recently installed stainless steel vats in its cellars; Berry was seen to shake his head and declare that he had never thought he would live to see the day that Latour looked like a dairy.

He retired to Bath but returned regularly to London for board meetings. He caused both family and firm great concern during his first such visit, turning up at Berrys alarmingly late for a man so punctual and punctilious. It turned out that his tardiness was due to the fact that he had been waiting for best part of an hour at Paddington for a tube train with a first class compartment

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an hour at Paddington for a tube train with a first class compartment.

The day after Anthony Berry died the flag at No 3 St James's Street stood at half mast. He is survived by his wife and children; his son, grandson, nephew and great-nephew continue to work for the company.



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