

## After the Rouen celebrations .....

### a visit to Bordeaux

by Ormond Smith

Bright eyed and bushy tailed (well, that is perhaps a *slight* exaggeration !?!) we bade farewell to our German friends on Sunday morning who were travelling back to the Mosel and also to Angus and Anne-Marie Meldrum who, with previous and extensive knowledge of Bordeaux, had opted out of the extended holiday. A direct rail trip into Paris, taxis or metro across the city and after a quick bite of lunch at Gare Montparnasse, it was onto the TGV to Bordeaux.....584kms in two hours – that’s averaging over 292kph or 182mph! Makes Scotrail look a bit lame and tame!! A hasty dismount with all the luggage and it was onto the tram system to the quite magnificent Place de la Bourse and a short walk our nearby Hotel Ste Catherine in the historic centre of Bordeaux, where we were joined by Caroline Duncan and Ellen and Katie Beach who had flown in for the Bordeaux part of the trip. It was then a quick turn around before dinner at the nearby **Brasserie Bordelaise**.

Enthused for our visit to St Emilion, we boarded our coach in the La Place de la Comédie, opposite the impressive Opera House. The old impressive buildings in the centre of Bordeaux are in splendid condition, the limestone facades clean and decorated with countless small balconies each with its individually decoratively designed wrought iron railings. The city undertook the immense and expensive task of having all the city centre building’s stonework restored and cleaned and it is a pleasure to walk around. However, it was onward to **St**



The view over the rooftops of St Emilion

**Emilion** and our visit to the ancient UNESCO World Heritage city dating back to prehistoric times. The Romans planted vineyards here in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and the town was named after the travelling monk Émilion who settled here in a hermitage carved into the rock. We were to visit this underground church and its crypts, elaborately carved out of the bedrock, which was in turn used to build the surrounding settlement. St Emilion is a delightful little town to visit, with its mighty ancient walls and the views out over the red roofed houses to the surrounding vineyards are mesmerising.

It was then onward to our first vineyard visit at **Chateau Cantenac** ([www.chateau-cantenac.fr](http://www.chateau-cantenac.fr)), established in 1870 and described as “the vanguard of the St Emilion vineyards”, where we were welcomed by the delightful “AJ”, (the Chateau’s wine marketing manager) or Adrienne-Jennifer Roskam-Cheung to be exact, the daughter-in-law of owner Mme Nicole Roskam-Brunot, the fourth generation owner of Chateau Cantenac, the name of which in Latin means “enchanted,

charming”..... a most appropriate description! She proceeded to guide us through the winery with detailed explanations before taking us into the vineyards and then into the chateau for a memorable lunch which she hosted and we also met Mme Nicole herself. The lunch..... Fois Gras, followed by grilled Duck and a cheese board and accompanied by three delightful wines from the Chateau, a “**2013 Sélection Madame du Chateau Cntenac**”, followed by a “**2012 Chateau Cntenac**” and with the cheese, a “**2007 Climat du Chateau Cntenac**”.....all Grand Cru!!!! Memorable wines indeed and our appreciation to AJ for her selection.



**The 2007 Climat which we much enjoyed with lunch**

Well wine and dined, the Confreres then travelled the short distance to **Chateau Beauregard** in Pomerol ([www.chateau-beauregard.com/en/index3.html](http://www.chateau-beauregard.com/en/index3.html))



**Our guide Roxanne explains workings of the new the concrete fermentation tanks**

where huge investment has been made and guide Roxanne was waiting to take us through the winery with its state of the art underground epoxy lined concrete fermentation tanks, before enjoying the sight of the setting sun lighting up the surrounding vineyards....it was then into the tasting room for an appreciation of a “**2014 Benjamin de Beauregard**”, their second wine with a 75% Merlot 25% Cabernet Franc blend.....felt still to be too young despite its complex aromas, and fruity, slightly toasty style but the “**2011**

**Chateau Beauregard**”, the premier wine of the winery with a 65%/35% blend was well received, with a complex aroma of fruits and spice leading into smooth tannins, juicy and spicy on the palate with a long satisfying finish. It was then back to Bordeaux and dinner was to be enjoyed at the “**Chez Jean**” restaurant in the Place du Parlement, close to the hotel.

Tuesday was to be a day of pure pleasure, travelling through the Médoc with the seemingly endless chateau name boards reading like a high quality wine list! Sadly, the weather decided not to cooperate and we spent the day travelling in fog to varying degrees, a classic Scottish “haar” as someone remarked. Nevertheless and despite limited vision of the Médoc vineyards, we would not be denied the pleasures of our visits! First on the list and in line with its stature in wine was **Chateau Margaux** – for detailed and expansive information see [www.chateau-margaux.com/en](http://www.chateau-margaux.com/en).



**A fog shrouded Chateau Margaux in its splendour**

The site has been extensively developed over the years and the bulk of the operation is now underground with state of the art fermentation tanks in stainless steel, as well as the traditional wooden tanks, which allow the individual wines, i.e., Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon (harvested in that order) to be processed on their own before being blended, thus allowing each wine to fully develop its characteristics – intensive and laborious work but the

end results are wines which are simply exquisite! The Norman Foster designed cellars are extensive and as one completes the tour, one emerges via a spiral staircase into daylight smack bang in one of the vineyards surrounding the winery – impressive! But before we emerged into the grey foggy damp air, we enjoyed a brief tasting of Margaux, (sadly, but given the price of it, perhaps unsurprisingly not the Premier Grand Cru) but the second wine, “**Pavillon Rouge de Margaux**”. Originally referred to as “**Chateau Margaux 2<sup>nd</sup> Wine**”, it was renamed **Pavillon** in 1908 and encompasses both red and white wines. In reality, although the second wine, almost a third of the harvest goes into Pavillon Rouge and the quality has become very close to that of the Premier Grand Cru, the grapes coming from the same vineyards and although the wine doesn’t display the same complexity, depth and “magic”, the flavours and balance have the same subtle senses of power and softness. The **2009** vintage of “**Pavillon Rouge**” represents only 41% of the crop due to a low harvest (lack of rain) but with a blend of 67% Cab. Sauv.; 29% Merlot and 4% Petit Verdot, the



concentrated tannins of early years have given way to an amazing softness and delicacy. We can only concur with the thoughts of the winemakers!!

With that lingering aftertaste exciting our taste buds, we headed off to Pauillac and a very satisfying lunch at the Hotel de France et Angleterre where we sampled the delights of sturgeon as a main course. Now running slightly behind schedule, we headed for our second degustation of the day at **Chateau Pichon-Longueville** ([www.pichonbaron.com/en](http://www.pichonbaron.com/en)) where a slightly agitated guide Margot was ready and waiting to whisk us through the winery before her next tour arrived. This is another

**Chateau Pichon-Longueville....."what a superb degustation!"**

Chateau with underground facilities and again much investment has been made in equipment, the estate and that of neighbouring Chateau Pibran being purchased by **AXA Millésimes** in 1987. The perhaps fortunately “hurried tour” ended in the tasting room where we were able to taste no less than three of the estate’s wines. all 2014 vintage, the first being the “**Chateau Tour Pibran**” – a powerful wine displaying cherries on the nose and a full bodied texture. The “**Les Tourelles de Longueville**”, named after the towers of the chateau, is claimed to be alluring, voluptuous and a delight for the senses.....the writer wouldn’t disagree! It is an introduction to the Pichon Baron spirit and can be enjoyed young, or cellared for 15 years or more. The final wine was the “**Chateau Pichon Baron**”, classified as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Grand Cru Classé in 1855 and it did not disappoint.....a wine of great complexity, with great elegance and intensity and a long satisfying finish, indeed class in a glass!

On our way to our final degustation of the day, we briefly stopped off for a photo shoot at **Chateau La Tour Carnet** ([www.bernard-magrez.com/en/wines/chateau-la-tour-](http://www.bernard-magrez.com/en/wines/chateau-la-tour-carnet)



**One of the olive trees planted in 734AD and still flourishing!**

[carnet](http://www.bernard-magrez.com/en/wines/chateau-la-tour-carnet)) which dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and survived the 100 Years War. The quality of its wines was recognised in the 1855 classifications in being granted Grand Cru Classé status. Interestingly, just outside the chateau gates are two olive trees planted

in 734AD and still flourishing! Our final Chateau beckoned and as we pulled into **Chateau Gruaud-Larose** ([www.gruaud-larose.com/en](http://www.gruaud-larose.com/en)) in St Julien, our guide Stephanie was waiting to greet us. Once again, all the vinification and maturation was done underground with very modern giant epoxy lined wooden fermentation tanks and cavernous cellars housing hundreds of barrels of quietly maturing wines. Also of interest is the seeming “clash” of



architecture styles, the 1725 chateau contrasting markedly with the nearby very modern tasting room and offices with a tower but with typical French flair.....it works! Following the tour of the cellars, it was back up to ground level and into the tasting room where we

**In the private cellars.....sadly we were strangely denied a tasting of what was a great vintage**



**In the extensive underground cellars of Chateau Gruaud-Larose**

we were to sample two excellent wines from this chateau, the first being a **“2008 Sarget de Gruaud-Larose”**, a blend of 60% Cab. Sauv., 30% Merlot, 5.5% Cab Franc, 3% Petit Verdot and 1.5% Malbec.....the result being a pleasant, rounded and light wine displaying velvety aromas of black fruit with smoky, toasted mineral notes on the palate. The second wine and the culmination of our Médoc degustations was a **1999** (a good vintage in the Medoc) **“Chateau Guaurd-Larose”**,( Deuxieme Cru Classé) with 57% Cab. Sauv., 31% Merlot, 7.5% Cab. Franc, 3% Petit Verdot and 1.5% Malbec, a slight variation of the blend used in the **“Sarget”**. Garnet red in the glass, the nose emanated floral, spicy tones with overtones of toast, leather,

dark chocolate and orange zest. The palate was one of finesse with a good tannic structure and one was left with a long lingering satisfying finish..... what a superb way to end our Médoc adventure. It was then back into the gathering foggy gloom to return to Bordeaux and our closing dinner at the gastronomic **“Comptoir Cuisine”** in the Place de la Comédie. The cuisine was “par excellence”, the main course of Roasted Spanish Pork with celeriac lasagne was ably accompanied by a **“2014 Le Secret de Sainte Frivole Bordeaux”** (100% Merlot). We said our goodbyes to Dan and Doris Weisman who were heading Stateside in the morning.

Our French friends were departing on the Wednesday but not before a visit to **Cité du Vin** ([www.laciteduvin.com](http://www.laciteduvin.com)) on the banks of the Gironde in Bordeaux. To adequately describe the Cité, the writer quotes their own description, “Embark on an immersive, sensory adventure to discover the cultures and civilisations of wine. In an open exhibition space occupying more than 3,000 m<sup>2</sup>, nearly twenty different themed areas invite you to take a voyage of discovery and enjoy a unique experience exploring the many and varied facets of wine across time and space”. With cutting edge technology and audio and with innovative headphones, the visit encompasses virtually all you could wish to learn about wine, visiting the world’s wine terroirs and the Nosing Room is quite



**The Cite' du Vin in Bordeaux - a visit is highly recommended!**



**Porte Cailhua built in 1494 and part of the old city walls**

incredible with opportunities to scent the aromas of everything imaginable in relation to wine. The whole experience is mind blowing and we could have spent a whole day there. The climax of the visit is the 8<sup>th</sup> floor Belvedere where visitors may sample a wine of their choice (sadly only one!) from an almost endless selection. We then bade farewell to our French hosts who were heading back north on the TGV while the Scots and the Koolish's enjoyed a final afternoon in Bordeaux, some walking around the city centre, some relaxing and others taking a Tuk-Tuk sightseeing ride around the city to enjoy some of the architectural splendour. Our final dinner was enjoyed at **Le Petit Commerce**, an excellent seafood restaurant near to the hotel which found favour with all.

Thursday morning saw us heading out to the airport for our respective flights home with glorious memories of Bordeaux and its viniculture.....ah, what memories indeed! Sincere thanks to the Grand Conseil in Rouen for organising the trip (in particular Sonia and Joel) and indeed to Connetable Nicol for "pulling all the strings together" in Scotland. A few more photo mementoes:-



**The Herring & Scallop Fair in Dieppe... a freshly opened scallop, Monsieur?**



**The Champagne "fountain" at the 50th Anniversary Dinner**



**"Bobbies on the Beat" ..... French style - on Segways !!**