

# Circle Update



March 2009

INSIDE THIS ISSUE ● **Burning Australia** ● **Santorini, Portugal, Tuscany** ● **England sparkles** ● **Caption competition**

## **Circle Update is the newsletter of the Circle of Wine Writers**

It is published five times a year: March, May, July, October and December.

Editor: Jim Budd

34 Frobisher Court, Sydenham Rise, London SE23 3XH

tel: 020-8699 3173 Skype: gymbudd email: budmac@btinternet.com

Deputy editor: Liz Sagues liz@sagues.force9.co.uk

*Circle Update* is available to external subscribers for £60 a year. The Circle's membership list is available in various media from £95. A special joint package of the membership list with frequent emailed updates through the year and a year's subscription to *Circle Update* is available from £135. These options can be viewed at [www.winewriters.org](http://www.winewriters.org). For more information, please contact Andrea Warren (see below). Membership enquiries should also be directed to her.

### **Circle Officers**

**Julie Arkell** (Chair) 01277-354531 [julie.arkell@btinternet.com](mailto:julie.arkell@btinternet.com)

**Sally Easton MW** (Treasurer) 01962-855592 [sally@winewisdom.com](mailto:sally@winewisdom.com)

**Natasha Hughes** (Secretary) 020-7274 122 [natasha@natashahughes.com](mailto:natasha@natashahughes.com)

**Christine Austin** (Membership Secretary) 01904-612107  
[christine@christineaustin.co.uk](mailto:christine@christineaustin.co.uk)

**Stephen Brook** (020-7328 1001 [s.brook93@ntlworld.com](mailto:s.brook93@ntlworld.com)) and

**Charles Metcalfe** (01444-811682 [charlesmetcalfe@btopenworld.com](mailto:charlesmetcalfe@btopenworld.com)) are tastings co-ordinators with Tim Atkin and Jim Budd.

**John Radford** (Circle trips liaison) 07-886-247-132 [john@johnradford.com](mailto:john@johnradford.com)

**Stuart Walton** (web maestro) 01273-684218 [stuartinbrighton@waitrose.com](mailto:stuartinbrighton@waitrose.com)

### **Committee members**

**Sarah Ahmed, David Furer, Patrica Langton, Maggie Rosen.**

**Andrea Warren** (Circle administrator)

01753-882320 [andrea.warren@btinternet.com](mailto:andrea.warren@btinternet.com)

## **Contents**

**March 2009**

**Issue 90**

Julie Arkell: chairman's report	3	Liz Sagues meets young harvesters	29
Jim Budd: bad news for writers	3	John Radford on the many riches of Portugal	31
Members' news	5	Neil Fairlamb travels round Tuscany	38
Reaction to e-Circle Update	10	More detective work in the Loire	42
Forthcoming Circle events	12	André Simon awards	46
Caption competition	13	Books	47
David Furer in Santorini	14	Other news: deaths, media news, Arkwright's Corner, trade notices	50
Andrew Jefford on desolation row	19	Quotes	56
Bio disappointments	23	Noticed on the net	57
Jim Budd discovers that England is sparkling	25	Your diary	59
Michael Fridjohn's Riesling rant	27		

### **Featured photographers:**

*Front cover:* Spring, by Per Karlsson. Per is a wine and travel photographer and writer. His photos appear regularly in a variety of publications around the world (*National Geographic*, *Geo*, *WSJ*, *Forbes*, *Fodor's*, *Frommer's*, *Decanter*, *World Atlas of Wine*, etc) and he contributed all images to a ground-breaking book on the wines of Languedoc (2007). He runs BKWine with Britt Karlsson. See his pictures on <http://wine-pictures.blogspot.com/>

*Back cover:* Very old wines in the vintage bottle cellar of Château Margaux – dating back to 1848, by Mick Rock. The owner and founding photographer of Cephass Picture Library, [www.cephass.com](http://www.cephass.com), established in 1985, Mick spends his time between the world's wine regions and the company headquarters in SW London. His latest project has been the recently-released French Wine Odyssey DVD, from which the Margaux photograph is reproduced.

Membership of the Circle of Wine Writers is open to accredited wine journalists and other professionals communicating in the media about wine. As such, it is editorial policy to give the Editor and each writer for Circle Update freedom to express his or her views. It must therefore be stressed that the Circle as an organisation does not formally associate itself with the opinions expressed by contributors, except where this is specifically stated.

© Circle of Wine Writers 2009



## Pick 'em young...

*Could you imagine this happening in the UK – not simply four-year-olds running free with scissors in a vineyard, but also the supervising teachers allowing their charges to be photographed for publication in a newspaper? But Gascogne is different. Liz Sagues reports and clicks.*

**N**o, says one five-year-old rebelliously, I don't like eating grapes. So much for Francis Dèche's effort to persuade a new generation of the appeal of French agriculture's most revered crop. Moments later, though, the little boy is back among his classmates, his blunt-nosed scissors energetically cutting bunches destined to become Domaine de Millet vin de pays des Côtes de Gascogne 2008.

For all the little Pierres and Michels, Chantals and Simones of the nursery school at Eauze, a workmanlike provincial town in the Gascon heartland of the fruity white much loved by UK wine drinkers, a trip into the vineyard is part of understanding their cultural



heritage. Picking grapes makes the experience more fun, even on a drizzly October morning. It's just for a short while – don't imagine for a moment that the Dèche family is taking advantage of under-age, unpaid labour.

Even the teachers are learning, and participating just as enthusiastically as their young charges.

Soon, as the clouds roll away and the sun dries the grapes to rescue 2008 as a good, if small, vintage, it's off to picnic, meet the ducks, go on a nature walk, take a quick peek into the cellar to see what happens to their harvest, play on the swings and pick flowers for their parents from Lydie Dèche's garden.

What's great is that, with luck, they'll remember the wine aspects as a natural part of life in the part of south west France in which they live. I hope Somerset children have a similar experience in the cider apple orchards...

Staying in the Millet gîte, just yards from the tanks in which the grapes are fermenting, was made even better by coinciding with the nursery school visit. You've missed that, but you can join in – at a distance – by drinking the results, as the wine (and the family's Armagnac, for this is the homeland of the Gascons' spirit, too) is on sale here.

The 2008 is ready for shipping, but if it hasn't arrived when you're looking for the first of the summer whites the 2007 is still fresh and fragrant. Domaine de Millet's main UK importer, Yapp Brothers, is enthusiastic about the family and all it produces (there are two reds and a pink as well). Talk to the staff and there are immediate tales of warm hospitality, wonderful meals, a healthy approach to winemaking and a sensible understanding of the pressures of the modern drinks market (Francis was astute in diversifying beyond Armagnac in the bad spirit days of the late 1980s).



*Francis Dèche approves of his young harvesters' crop.*

That Millet is on the Yapp list says a lot for the wines. Those that the Eauze nursery school pupils saw in the making are delightful for everyday drinking, wines which are just as much part of France's vinous culture as the poshest bottles from Burgundy or Bordeaux.

*This article is a reduced version of one published in the Ham&High on March 19. Thanks to the Ham&High Series for permission to publish it here, and also to the teachers and pupils at Eauze nursery school and the Dèche family for their grape-picking enthusiasm.*

