



CLUB MAGNUM

VINS ET EXPÉRIENCES

CHÂTEAU DE CHARODON

A QUICK FLICK THROUGH THE MAJOR BURGUNDY REFERENCE WORKS WILL PROVIDE LITTLE, IF ANY, INFORMATION ON CHÂTEAU DE CHARODON. HAVING A HANDSOME PROPERTY JUST A FEW KILOMETRES FROM BEAUNE WITH A LONG VITICULTURAL HISTORY AND A LINE OF WINEMAKERS IN THE FAMILY WOULD NORMALLY SOUND LIKE A DEAD-CERT RECIPE FOR WINE STARDOM.



However, between 1884 and 2010, the domaine ceased to produce any wine at all. Its re-birth is an absorbing and inspiring story. The spark comes from one 21st century source, Louis Vallet, a direct descendant through his maternal line and the driving force in the re-emergence of this once-famous name.

The property itself is situated to the east of Beaune, in the hamlet of Le Poil which falls under the commune of Montagny-lès-Beaune. If one were to travel back in time, these flatter lands on the Saône plain

were some of the most viable and sought after in the region, being ideal for large estates where vines were cultivated alongside cereals and livestock. The actual site takes its name from a gift of the Duchesse de Charost, who in 1710 granted a fief that thereafter took the name 'Charost-don'. In 1737, the Charodon estate, as it had become known, was sold to Baptiste Lardot who along with buildings dating from the 16th and 17th centuries became a significant landowner, including 7 hectares of vines.

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While his descendants remain owners today, the Revolution of 1789 brought significant change in the make-up of the estate, including redistribution of land. The de Charodon family nonetheless continued to be prominent in the region, contributing two mayors to Beaune in the 19th century. However, it was the outbreak of phylloxera which brought an end to their involvement in wine and with ensuing generations making their careers in different fields, the winemaking identity of the estate was allowed to fade from view and the estate's vineyards were never replanted.

On Louis' father's side, the Vallet family hail from Gevrey-Chambertin, where indeed they are cousins of the Rousseau and Mortet families. The Vallet family property, Pierre Bourée et Fils, which includes 10ha of prime vineyards, was founded in 1864. It is still run by Louis' grandfather (well into his nineties!) and his father has been a director of the business for 40 years, until his recent retirement. It is here where the young Louis was able to cut his teeth working in wine alongside his studies at the lycée viticole in Beaune but like so many of his generation, he was encouraged to spread his wings and in early 2002, he headed across the Atlantic. This was to be the beginning of a peripatetic existence, where he would combine his duties in Gevrey with work in Oregon, California, Central Otago and in Chile, allowing him to do two harvests a year- even three in 2003!- and gain vital experience.

It was in Chile, where he stayed for seven years, that he also met his wife. Louis describes his time in South America in the fondest terms but the call of Burgundy could not be ignored and the young couple started to think about the permanent move back to France.

In 2010, an important step had been made with the first wines appearing under the Château de Charodon label in more than 120 years, following the purchase and vinification of 1400kg of grapes in Gevrey-Chambertin. At this stage the operation was too small to justify its own premises and Louis was able to use the facilities at Pierre Bourée. However, encouraged by the results, Louis' ambitions for growth and full independence meant that he knew he had to make plans for his own premises and what better than the romantic dream of bringing winemaking back to a beautiful, historical property.

Over the ensuing years, Louis built things up the hard way, combining his own activities with work at Pierre Bourée, in addition to working alongside his friend Pascal Marchand and also at Vinoboam, a business started by another like-minded friend, Nicolas Potel. However, the direction of travel was clear and by 2017, he was finally able to dedicate himself 100% to Charodon. In 2018, after the first round of renovation work, the first wines were able to be made at the Château itself and by 2019, he was producing 10,000 bottles a year, which doubled for the 2020 vintage after a further round of renovations.



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His two brothers, Pierre and Thibault are partners in the business helping with vineyard work, order preparation and administration and his proud parents are also enthusiastic supporters.

Today, 90% of the fruit comes in the form of purchases, in addition to a hectare which he is farming under a fermage agreement in Fixin La Croix Blanche. No herbicides or fungicides are used and in the winery, Louis only uses a little sulphur, otherwise nothing at all. Inspired by the likes of Nico Potel and Benjamin Leroux, Louis will look for opportunities for further contracts and, eventually, vineyard purchases. For the moment, the fruit from the Pierre Bourée vineyards is not accessible for Charodon, however there is clearly the possibility of change there too in the future. Louis is confident that he will reach the level required for his goal of producing 75-80,000 bottles a year.

The range is thus evolving year upon year but already he is able to offer an excellent line-up from generic to Grand Cru, his considerable contacts book enabling him to access some prized lieu-dits and crus in both the Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune.

Unearthing new talent is always incredibly exciting, regardless of the field in which one is operating. A charismatic, engaging and hardworking man, Louis is already someone who is enormously liked and respected by his peers in the region. Now, with his own facilities and a few vintages under his own label to showcase his talents, his rise will surely continue to gather pace. Attention is already arriving from sharp-eyed sommeliers and journalists yet until production is able to increase further, this will continue to be something of an insider secret. It is thus with great excitement that we are now able to bring the wines of Château de Charodon to Club Magnum members.

