

Languedoc assortment 2014

- **TASTING ARTICLES**
- LANGUEDOC
- LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON



We arrived in the Languedoc in July just a few days after the terrible hailstorms had cut a massive swathe of bruised, shattered, brown vines through the south east of the Minervois zone. This picture, taken with the hills of the north Corbières

in the background, gives some idea of the miserable devastation.

While I was there I spent much of the time at my desk hard at work updating the *Oxford Companion to Wine* for its 4th edition due out in a year's time (as Julia was doing the same thing for the viti and vini entries in London). The 3rd edition was published back in 2006, so you can imagine just how much updating has been required - even though we have tried to keep the version you have exclusive online access to on this site revised with the most major changes. Because this is a million-word book of alphabetically listed articles of very varying lengths, it cannot be edited and laid out piecemeal according to a pre-ordained design (unlike, for example, [The World Atlas of Wine](#), whose spreads can be planned in advance and worked on while I write the text). So it will take Oxford University Press almost a year to copy-edit, design, lay out and print the text. We will of course keep you informed of their plans to publish a digital version.

But I do not believe in working in the evenings so was able to devote a bit of time to tasting wines of the western Languedoc and Roussillon. Below are the fruits of my evening labours, including some delicious wines, none of them particularly expensive. The hillside vineyards of this part of France continue to be the source of some of the best-value wines in the world, and I'm delighted to see more and more producers keener to make interesting and unusual wines from the local grape varieties than yet another Chardonnay Pays d'Oc.

ABBOTS & DELAUNAY

Effectively a superior négociant based between Carcassonne and Lézignan making wines full of flavour and character, all of them named after cloud formations. In the UK they seem to be imported by Averys of Bristol and sold through their *Telegraph* wine club.

- **Abbotts & Delaunay, Zephyr Chardonnay 2013 Limoux**

Heavy bottle and crystal clear pale gold. Sweet, round start and then very fresh and crystalline. Slightly leesy nose, very slight caramel note underneath, and absolutely irreproachable even if not distinctive. Rather broader than the Rives-Blanques 2013s. The 2010 seems to be widely available in the UK at £16.99. I think for that money I might look for something a little more distinctive for myself but the winemaking is certainly of a high standard. 13%

Drink 2014- 2018

16

- **Abbotts & Delaunay, Réserve 2013 Languedoc**

Vermentino/Marsanne/Roussanne blend. Strong aromatic herbal aroma with verbena notes. Smells as though it's going to be really nervy but on the palate the acidity is not that marked and the whole is pretty broad and evolved. Well balanced and with a nice smoky note on the end but definitely well ready to tackle. Medium persistence. Nicely packaged. This is satisfying enough to drink without food. A thoughtful blend... 13% Drink 2014- 2015

16

- **Abbotts & Delaunay, Alto Stratus 2012 Vin de France**

Heavy bottle, smartly labelled. Mid crimson. Pale rim. You've got to love Carignan to love this.... Sweet and sour but with more concentration than most Languedoc Carignans. Just a bit sharp on the finish. 14%

Drink 2014- 2016

15.5

- **Abbotts & Delaunay, Boréas 2012 Faugères**

Neat blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre grown on the appellation's schists but it lacks the excitement of some of its neighbours. Correct rather than thrilling with some sweetness. No shortage of fruit and rather muted schist influence. 14%

Drink 2014- 2018

16

- **Abbotts & Delaunay, Cumulo Nimbus 2012 Minervois**

Heavy bottle. Deep crimson. Lively, fresh and super-ripe. Sweet fruit and real polish with a hint of animal gaminess. Pretty appealing and quite transparent. For some this won't seem concentrated enough; for others it will be refreshingly lifted. Certainly very Minervois. Toasty and appetising. 14%

Drink 2014- 2018

16

- **Abbotts & Delaunay 2010 Minervois**

Blend of Syrah, Grenache and Carignan. Very pretty and silky now but no one could accuse it of being too concentrated. Lovely fully resolved bouquet but a tad rusty on the finish. Admirable restraint on the oaking front though. In fact, I would guess the most oak it saw was a large, old cask. Good balance. 14%

Drink 2012- 2016