Farewell Gaston Huet

24 Nov 2004 by JR

The grandfather of modern Vouvray, and indeed the town's mayor, died on 24 April leaving his son-in-law, Noel Pinguet, who has been running this great domaine for many years, in sole charge.

Gaston Huet ploughed an increasingly unfashionable furrow (for the wines of the Loire have been quite unjustly neglected by all but the northern French for many years now) with great tenacity and style. Top-quality classic Vouvray such as his Haut Lieu, Le Mont and Bourg requires extremely careful selection in the vineyard (despatching the fruit for Sec, Demi Sec or Moelleux styles of increasingly sweet wine), very pure fruit, no new small oak, no malolactic fermentation and considerable bottle age - in short the very opposite of modern wine orthodoxy.

The results, from Huet, have been superb and Noel Pinguet has simply continued the tradition with the added refinement of biodynamic principles in the vineyard. Only the other day, a Demi Sec Le Mont Vouvray 1952 made a truly memorable start to a 50th birthday dinner. Served with terrine of foie gras with truffled jelly, it made what seemed like the perfect partner, much more refreshing than Sauternes would have been. With its deep molten honey colour, toasty nose, wonderful tang and great vivacity and length of flavour, it was difficult to imagine anything more suitable. I'm also a great fan of Huet's sparkling Vouvray - nothing remotely like champagne, more like a champagne cocktail with its depth of flavour and richness. All Huet Vouvrays last and last and are seriously underpriced.