Bill Blatch's Preliminary Bordeaux 2009-vintage report **Dec 2009 / Feb 2010**

2009: The first decade of the 21st century goes out in a blaze of glory

A decade with no off-vintages – Bordeaux has never experienced that before - even those all-time great decades, the 1920s and the 1840s had a few misses. In this first decade of the new millennium, all have been successful, four made by end-of-season sunshine (2001-02-07-08), two by heat early in the season (04-06), and four of highly concentrated wines from a combination of good summers as well as good autumns (00-03-05-and now 09, each receiving more acclaim than the previous one). That is a total all-time record.

And this final one has turned out to be the most concentrated of them all. In 2009, we seem to have reached the extreme limit of Bordeaux concentration Yet it was not the hottest year by any means – that was 2003 – nor was it the driest – that was 2005. In 2009, there were no extremes, just good regular heat at the right times, with everything coming in the right order: the vine amply nourished by ground water during its growing period, then, as from 15th June, starved of water – very progressively - during the ripening and concentration of its bunches right through the rest of the vineyard year.

As a result, it functioned perfectly, creating sugar levels in the grapes that we have never seen before, together with a build-up of massive but gentle tannins for the reds and a complexity of flavours for the whites. In this sense, 2009 bears little resemblance to the more extreme scorching build-up of concentration as in 1990 or 2003, nor to the drier build-up of the more vigorous and harder tannins of the 2000 and 2005. 2009 is in an altogether gentler, softer, fatter style, something in the ilk of 1970 or 1982. But, as soon as the harvest was under way, it was to the 1947 that comparisons started to be made - difficult to challenge because not everyone has been drinking that many '47s recently. Technically, however, the sugar build-up was reported as being similar in 1947, (not bad considering France was 1.1° colder then), but often some of it is said never to have fermented out, making the wines slightly sweet, and in addition 1947 seems to have been a very irregular vintage, especially on the Left Bank, some wines glorious, some disastrous. 2009 has some of this irregularity, but is clearly, if only for reasons of technical expertise, more of an across-the-board vintage. Maybe everyone was just thinking of the legendary Cheval Blanc 47 rather than of the vintage as a whole.

The cold winter, with good rainfall in January and April, prepared the vineyard for a textbook budding and a good flowering, and then the dry, hot, and above all sunny summer and autumn just did the rest, all nice and easy, without any excess. This vintage goes to show, just as in '82, that gentle conditions make for gentler wines.

Of course there were problems along the way, and we spare a thought for all those growers who caught the massive hail in May, and who were thereafter reduced to being spectators rather than players. There was also some storm damage, and some parcels of vines that got stressed and blocked during the summer, yielding grapes that failed to develop properly. But overall, the whole thing was a quite remarkable success story.

And what accounted for it all? I was hoping you would ask. Back in December 2008, the meteorological stations had noticed a cooling of the North Equatorial current in the Atlantic, probably a chain reaction from the termination of La Nina in the Pacific. They consequently predicted – correctly - that the US hurricane season would be mild, and that the North Atlantic low pressure systems would come over further North than usual. This too was correct up until June, and accounts for all those cooler more stable Northerly and Easterly air flows over Bordeaux during winter and spring, rather than the more usual, warmer and unsettled Westerlies. Then in July, a mild El Nino system unexpectedly started up in the Central Pacific, quite a surprise to everyone, and upsetting the whole Northern hemisphere's jet stream patterns. Hence the record hot dry summer in Oregon and the wettest July on record

for Rhode Island, hence too a more Southerly flow over the Atlantic, causing all those continuous rain-storms over Ireland and England during the summer. These rarely affected Bordeaux because it was protected by a further phenomenon from the same cause: an elongation of the Azores high pressure system over the whole Atlantic rather than over just the European side; hence the gently warm and fine July and August in Bordeaux coming from the milder West rather than from the more usual and more scorching South and East.

Winter 2008/9

During the winter, however, the air flows came in from the North-East round the continuous Mediterranean high pressure systems, making for conditions that were colder than usual, and the first frosts came early, on those grey foggy icy mornings of early December. This is never a bad thing for getting the sap down early to the roots and ensuring against pests, further assured by a freezing – but not a white – Christmas.

There were the normal number of frosty nights during the winter – 25 over the 3 months compared to the average of 22 – but none were very severe. The lowest temperatures were in early January, when it froze on 13 consecutive nights, three of them at -6°C, very cold but nothing that would stress the vines at all like the record frosts of January 1985 or of February 1956, of the two months at -20°C in 1709 and in 582 when starving wolves invaded the city of Bordeaux.

With the sap down so early and spring coming late, pruning could be done at leisure. Most got it out of the way by the end of February, mainly because it's more pleasant to do it in the dry than in the rain that was forecast for early March.

There were long dry periods during this winter but the rainfall had come early, the November rains spilling over into December, and this ensured enough ground moisture for the soil to get through to the next band of rain in the second half of January (128mm), which in its turn was more than enough until the showers of early March (23mm) and above all until the high rainfall of April (116mm). All this high winter rainfall was of paramount importance in preparing the vines for what was to come.

One other noteworthy event had no incidence on the vintage. This was the freak winter hurricane that slammed into the region early on Saturday morning 24th January. It was exactly the same phenomenon as the December 1999 one, the Atlantic jet-stream catapulting a deepening low pressure area in the Bay of Biscay, of the same intensity (172 km/h on the coast) and once more knocking down all the trees in the forest. The Bordelais were all up on their roofs that day checking the tiles, but the vines were OK.

Spring 2009 and the budding

The cold and relatively dry winter ensured that the vines wouldn't wake up from their hibernation quickly. Even the 23mm of early March rain and the ensuing 10 days of 17-24°C afternoons (50% over normal) didn't stir them. It was only towards the 23rd that some Merlots and Sauvignons started to swell and even sporadically burst, but the main bud-burst had to wait until after the near freezing night-time temperatures of late March had put off any further activity. Now we were in early April and it was getting late. The Merlots of the earlier vineyards like Pomerol and Pessac were out to 4-5 leaves by 8th, but the later ones, and most of the Cabernets, were only just slowly bursting. This was the beginning of the year's great disparity in the ripening cycles between the warmer and the cooler soils, a disparity that would later get increased by differences between these two soil types' reaction to the coming drought.

This irregularity was to stay with us all year, even when the mid-April showers, followed by the sudden warmth of 18th-24th ensured that it partially caught up. It rained hard

the final week of April (61mm) so that by early May, in spite of the irregularities, we were generally back on schedule.

For once, there was never a hint of spring frost during the whole of April and May – the average number of frosts for April is 4. This year zero: A great relief after all the frost angst of the previous year that had especially afflicted Sauternes and the Graves.

Early Summer 2009, hail-storms, and the flowering

May and June became progressively warmer and sunnier: May 1.9°C over the average and June 2.0°C over, with 235 sunshine hours in May (average is 221) and a whopping 293 in June (average is 224). Encouraged by the still damp subsoil from the April rain, and egged on by a further 78mm in May and 75mm in June, the growth galloped ahead and the shoots and foliage looked vigorous and bright-coloured. They were clearly having no trouble feeding the quite substantial amount of embryo bunches that the budding had provided.

It was now that for some growers the axe fell. Late in the afternoon of Monday 11th May, a nasty little low pressure formed over the Bay of Biscay – just like for the January hurricane – and convected into a major hailstorm when it made landfall over the Charentes, wreaking havoc on 3000 hectares of the Cognac vineyards. It then moved slowly South, devastating 500 hectares in Bourg- Blaye before crossing the river and decimating the Southern Médoc, Cantenac, Arsac and Labarde in Margaux, then dispersing over Léognan and the Southern Graves, only fizzling out when it got to Barsac.

As if that was not enough, early next morning another storm departed from Arcachon, and started convecting over Castres and Portets in the Graves, growing into a veritable two-kilometre wide hail front that swept across the Entre-Deux Mers then crossed the Dordogne into the Eastern part of St Emilion before dying out over Montagne and Castillon.

Never since 1935 (when hail devastated the entire Right Bank) has there been such extensive hail-damage. Usually hail is very localised, but this time, it was two broad swathes moving over a vast area. The worst-hit areas were the Central Entre-Deux-Mers, especially Créon, and the vineyards immediately North-East of St Emilion. In these areas, the landscape afterwards looked like Verdun. Overall at least 18000 hectares are estimated to have been damaged. Then the Central Entre-Deux-Mers region got hit twice more, on 25th May and 1st June, and Fronsac and the Northern part of Bordeaux were hit, less seriously, on 8th June. The regions that were totally spared could consider themselves very fortunate indeed: the Médoc above Cantenac, Pomerol, the western part of St Emilion, the eastern side of the Entre-Deux-Mers and Sauternes. All the rest had damage ranging from minor to total, had to heal their battered vines as best as possible and hope for a counter shoot that often never came, and if it did, it flowered much too late to produce anything worthwhile.

Now it was time for the vines to flower, and, with some extra moisture in the ground from the mid-May showers, followed by a hot spell from 27th May to 4th June, the Merlots and most of the whites flowered fast and efficiently. The Cabernets then got a bit spun-out by the showers of 5th – 10th June, but the temperatures remained steady and they completed it, as always, satisfactorily. We were now on course for a good-sized harvest, and also quite an early one, the flowering having finished in good time around 14th June. This is usually more like the date of the mid-flowering rather than the end-flowering. So we were now a bit early, and also some of the irregularity at the budding had now been caught up.

High summer

As soon as the flowering was through, the weather patterns started to change. In place of the first half of the season's largely dry Easterly air flows, interspersed with weak fronts every ten days, the winds now went round to the West, circling round the lows that were beginning to come in further South than before, over Ireland. The highs that had been

positioned over Europe moved out West into the Atlantic, where they stayed almost motionless for 2 months, expanding in a big oblong, often right over to the Eastern US seaboard, and providing exceptionally stable, mild and progressively drier conditions for South-West France. Such conditions are most unusual – as are winter hurricanes! Bordeaux's weather patterns have been changing dramatically…but this year we were not complaining, and maybe that's the way Bordeaux will continue to benefit from the gradual warming of South-West France, which is currently warming up at twice the speed of the rest of Europe.

The final 10 days of June were 2.2°C over the average, with a record 119 sun hours (the average is 72), and every day over 25°C. The foliage looked magnificent and the bunches started to swell nicely. It was about now that there began to be a realisation that we could have a shot at a truly great vintage if the weather would hold.

And hold it did. All of July and August continued in the same vein, dry and above all, sunny: 532 sun hours for the two months, compared to the average of 484, the heat gradually building up over July and the first week of August. This was not the brutal scorching heat of the previous record years 2003, 2006, 1990 and 1921. There were 13 days of 30°C or more, and the average is…13 days. In 1921, there had been 21 in July alone, and in 2003 there had been 20 in August alone. This was altogether a much gentler summer. And, as in 1982, July was tempered by just enough showers (1st-2nd and 17th July) to keep the vine active: further evidence that if extremes produce very good vintages, the great ones generally seem to come from gentler conditions.

Rainfall became rarer during August (a total of 23mm, confined to 1st and 9th), a little heavier inland and on the Right Bank; in the Médoc non-existent. Also the middle of the month started to get seriously hotter, spiking up to 5 days over 30°C, with the hottest day of the year, 36°C, for the National Holiday of 15th - a nice day for the beach but suffocating for those who stayed in town - after which the temperatures slid back to where they had been for the last part of the month. Here and there, blocking had occurred during these hot, dry days, and, especially on the lighter sub-soils, the ripening process was arrested temporarily, or, as we would see later, in some cases permanently. But generally the vine was to revive quickly.

During these two summer months, the by now usual vineyard work had been performed: beginning with a first de-leafing in early July, very cautiously (bunches left too exposed could et scorched if these dry hot days were to escalate into an August like 2003), together with an even more conservative green harvest (after last year's small crop, and with even a big crop looking so healthy this year, there was no point in eliminating too much, especially in the hail-damaged areas). In August, most did a second run-through to expose the bunches on the other side – again conservatively – and to weed out the few laggard bunches they could find. But in general, the mood this year was not for over-indulgence in green-harvesting.

That irregularity of bunch formation we had noticed after the budding, and which had been partially caught up at the flowering, returned for the véraison (the colour change phase of the grapes) which happened in a progressive, quite spun-out sequence, between the final week of July and the third week of August. It was early - but nothing like as early as the three previous records of 1997 (a vintage of record early mid-véraison - 31st July – but all to no avail because of the damp August that was to follow), 1952 (3rd August) and 1990 (6th August – by far the most successful of the three).

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September-October and the harvest

As usual, the Atlantic high pressures that had provided such a great summer began to deflate in September. The Lows were still coming over the Atlantic on the same quite southerly track as in July and August – providing plenty of flooding for Northern England – but, with deflating European Highs, the fronts spinning off them over France now met with less resistance. This is presumably the reason that from the first of the month right up to 21st, the daily forecast was for rain. There were sudden fears of a replay of 2006, when autumn rains had taken the edge off a truly great potential, but, apart from a few light showers 2nd-4th September (total of 6mm), all these fronts in the end stopped just short of Bordeaux. This allowed the dry white harvest to be almost totally completed in ideal conditions by the time the heavier traditional Equinox rain arrived 15th ,18th,19thband 20th September.

Some Right Bank growers on earlier soils had decided to harvest their Merlots just before this rain on 14th, but many, after a first day of rather inconclusive trial picking, decided to leave it another week – in the end just as well as these four days provided more precipitation here than elsewhere - and they would have picked in the rain. However at this time, some picked their Merlots, often those that had got blocked by the summer heat and were going nowhere, but also several who started to panic because of high sugar readings.

From 21st September right up to the end of the harvest, there would be no more rain, and temperatures would gradually rise. This is a most unusual phenomenon while the days are getting shorter and is a further explanation of this most unusual vintage. The maximum daily temperature for the last 10 days of September was 25.8° (cf average 23.7°), and for the first 10 days of October a whopping 24.6° (cf average 18.8°), providing ideal conditions for the final concentration period. Last year, such conditions – although much cooler – had saved the 2008s, giving them just enough constitution to balance their otherwise hard tones. This time, it was rather a question of heaping yet more concentration on already concentrated grapes, and it was this period that was to account for the exceptionally high alcohol levels that we would see in the finished wines.

Different vineyards have different time-cycles, but generally, in spite of these high sugar readings, it took yet another week before "technical ripeness" (high sugar, low acidity) became "phenolic ripeness" (totally ripe tannins). During the week of 21st, many were talking about "Languedoc ripeness" (high alcohol but difficult tannins). The mornings had been very cold mid-month, serving as "ripeness arrestors" and it was only when it turned very warm again that the tannins started to soften, putting the vintage more in the fatter vein of a 1982 than the harder style of a 1975 (when the tannins never really reached absolute phenolic ripeness). Most put the turning point at 28th-29th September.

This hot spell was caused by an unusual high pressure over England sucking warm air up from the South and expelling it into a stationary mid-Atlantic Low. Such Lows normally move West fast, which accounts for all the forecasts for rain at this time – rain that finally never came, apart from a few insignificant showers 8th–11th October, because the Low refused to budge. All this frayed many nerves and encouraged a few growers to harvest some plots maybe a touch earlier than they should have done, but the main body of the harvest was brought in now, the Merlots during this hot period up to 9th October, the Cabernets during the much cooler week of 12th. This cooler period was perfect, with its near-freezing early morning temperatures ensuring that the totally ripe bunches didn't deteriorate.

The harvest was just about over by 16th, red, white and Sauternes (see chapter on Sauternes later), but a few die-hards kept some parcels back and picked sporadically into the rainier week of 19th.

So ended a textbook perfect vineyard year. Nobody could have wished for better. Now, with the grapes crushed and the musts in the cellar, the big question was: what to do with all that potential alcohol?

The wines

2009 reds

The high alcohol levels are of course the main defining feature of the vintage. These are strong powerful wines, stronger than any Châteauneuf-du-Pape and as strong as any Oz Shiraz. Modern vinification know-how and temperature-control have seen to it that the sugars got totally fermented out, in itself a big difference from 1947 when the famous Cheval Blanc is reported to be slightly sweet and some of its peers didn't make it into bottle. Generally the Merlots came in at around 14° on the Left Bank and 15° or more on the Right Bank, whilst the Cabs were around 13° and 14° respectively. Generally, this was considered to be the absolute limit of what Bordeaux red wines can or should achieve in terms of concentration – but then we said that in 00, in 03, and again in 05

Yet there is much more to the 09s than just alcohol. Indeed it would seem that there is so much else in these wines that all this alcohol even appears necessary to balance all their other components. The tannin levels are extraordinarily high, often registering at well over 100 pts on the IPT scale, sometimes as far as 135, especially on the Médoc Cabernets. This is way more than we have experienced in any previous reported vintage, and all this in spite of the vinifiers' generally gentle maceration policies. Then, the acidity levels are quite reasonable – not as high as the more robust 05s but in stark contrast to the considerably lesser acidities of the softer '90s and '03s. The 09s seem to have a "togetherness" that will make them at once approachable in their youth but also probably, as for the '29s, unexpectedly long-lived. The wines are far too young to be sure of that but certainly that is the impression they give right now. They will be lovely young and certainly lovely old.

Of course there will be the annual contest between Left and Right Bank. It's a difficult call to say which is better. The wines of the Right Bank, by dint of its heavier soils (which are said to have made it the winner in '21, the hottest, driest vintage of them all) and predominance of Merlot, are clearly more powerful in all aspects, especially in alcohol, whilst those of the Left Bank balance the equation through the most concentrated Cabernets they have ever experienced; these Cabs got more blocked by the aridity of the Médoc and Graves summer than their Right Bank Cabernet Franc equivalents, but then made a wonderful come-back, after most of the Right Bank Merlots were in, during the end-of-season October heat-wave, often ending up with alcohol as high as their Merlots. Finally, the Northern Médoc, with its predominance of Merlot on heavier soils has produced some very concentrated wines which hopefully will become the best values of '09.

So much for the positive aspects of this extraordinary vintage. But the story would not be complete without mentioning the significant variations within it. First, we have already noted the disparity between the earlier- and later-budding vines, which got assimilated to a certain extent during the summer –especially on the moister clay and chalk soils - but still accounted for irregularly ripe bunches at the end. Then there were many growers, mostly in lesser areas, who got frightened by the abnormally high September sugar readings and who picked there and then, before true phenolic ripeness, often realising their mistake afterwards and trying to catch up with longer macerations, which just made it worse. There will be some examples of these rather hard and bitter wines in the spring tastings. Then, at the other end of the scale, the habitually very late pickers, especially on the Right Bank, have certainly sometimes made wines that will be incredibly alcoholic, very dryly tannic, ultra low in acidity and maybe prone to brett. We just have to hope that the counter-trend that we have noticed in our tastings of the bottled wines of such estates since the 2004 vintage towards more balanced wines will have continued.

Overall, of all the great vintages of the last 100 years, '09 seems to have more in common with the silky concentration of '82, '47 or '29, rather than the more robust tannic

balance of ’05, ’00 or ’28. Yet it does not seem to have all the warm, exotic softness of the extreme heat-wave vintages ’03, ’90 and ’21, nor the more traditional style of the ’45 and ’61 (which got their concentration primarily from the tiny yields caused by freak late May frosts) Comparisons to other vintages are proverbially difficult to make, but maybe we can say that ’09 is what ’82 or ’85 would have been if the vineyard and the yields had been managed as today, or what the ’47 would have been if the vinification had been controlled as today. All of those historic vintages seem to share the same sweetness of concentrated fruit as the ‘09, but in those days, 12°5 for the Cabs and 13°5 for the Merlots was the absolute maximum. These ‘09s have, in addition, far higher alcohol levels which make the vintage - so far – unique. Better? We’ll see.

2009 dry whites

These are totally different wines from last year. The ‘08s had been steely and citrus flavoured, whereas these ‘09s are fat and rich with a roundness of peachy fruit, as one would expect after such a summer. The alcohol levels are high, but Bordeaux whites rarely go as high as the reds, and, like the reds, their acid balance and strength of fruit seem to demand such a strong base. Their acidity is generally lower than in ’05 but greater than in ’00 and especially than in ’03, giving the wines a gentle balance that should make them approachable very early but certainly capable of holding that balance for many years.

Everyone seems just as pleased with their Sauvignons as with their Sémillons, except as regards the yields which were generally lower for the former. So expect more Sémillon in the final blends. The aromas of both are already well-evident yet complex and will certainly respond well to oak.

Then we have to spare a thought for all those Entre-Deux-Mers, Blayais and Graves growers, often the same ones who suffered from the Spring frosts of ’08 and who, in ’09, were at the centre of the devastating May hail-storms. There are many with less than half a normal crop, and supply shortages are already appearing, especially for Sauvignon.

Yields

These hailed white vineyards and many red ones in the St Emilion, Blaye, Southern Médoc and Graves produced a very small crop, sometimes even none at all. A few estates on both banks also lost yield by excessive green harvesting in early summer, but, for all the rest, the crop was quite large, usually at or close to the maximum permitted yield

2009 Sauternes

Last year, the Sauternais had caught the thick end of the wedge with that nasty spring frost, but this time, after such a summer, by mid-September, the prospect of a great and plentiful vintage was at last within their grasp. There had been more water in the 3rd August showers than elsewhere (45mm in Sauternes, only 5 in Pauillac) and, as elsewhere, the showers of 2nd-4th September had re-invigorated the vine, so the hot 30°C days of 6th-10th sent the ripening galloping ahead. The grapes were already going golden and at 14° potential by mid-September. All that was needed was some botrytis to finish the job off.

Many estates had some pickers out as early as 14th, cleaning up the bunches rather than actually picking (they call this “nettoyage”), but all the same a small quantity of fresh-scented and beautifully sweet wine could be made from the occasional botrytised or shrivelled bunches. Compared to the volume that was to follow, this was almost nothing, but at the time, remembering what had happened in 2000 (when that was all they would get), at least now there was some must in the cellar.

The First Picking proper didn’t start until after the quite heavy rain (33mm) of 18th-20th. This brought a surge of botrytis development but it took a few more days for it to

progress from “pourri plein” stage to “rôti”. The nights had been just too cool and the afternoons too hot and dry. However, there had been some foggy mornings, creating the perfect medium for this to happen, and on Monday 28th, all estates were out. That day, the pickers took their time, but the botrytis was concentrating so fast that the musts were already too rich, and this First Picking had to be accelerated in order to keep the sugar at a reasonable level. The concentration continued apace, and the Second Picking kicked in immediately, with no let-up for the weekend of 3rd-4th October.

With the musts now averaging 22 – 26° potential, and with little hope of averaging the sweetness back down on the later pickings, some decided to call in all their reserve troops for the Monday and to spend the whole week harvesting whole bunches: everything, rôti, pourri plein, half-botrytised, golden grapes, the lot. This week of 5th October became one of explosive activity in the vineyard accounting for ¾ of the harvest by the Friday night. It reminded everyone of those 3 other vintages where the same thing had happened: 11th-21st September 1990, 15th-26th September 2003 and especially 12th-17th October 2001.

With the days getting hotter and the nights warmer, there were a few outbreaks of bad rot and mould, which slowed pickers down over the weekend of 10th-11th. But by then most had finished. Just a few estates lingered on into two final pickings during the much cooler week of 12th – there was even a light frost on the Friday morning – and there were still some die-hards out up to the rainy period starting 20th, but these final pickings were of botrytis that had not really evolved for some time due to the cold nights.

The general conclusion is that this is indeed a great vintage: The extreme richness is nicely balanced by acidity, with final blends typically at 14° alc, 7 to 9° of residual and a refreshing 3.8 or so g/l total acidity. This suggests a very different kind of wine to the fatter, softer but similarly very sweet vintages like 2005, 2003, 1990, 1976, and (I am told)1947, 1929 and 1921, and a similar style of wine to the more vibrant but just-as-sweet and complex wines of 2001, 1989, 1975, 1959, and I am told, 1858 and 1847…

The aromas are already very interesting, with beautiful complex flavours of all sorts. Many châteaux – and not the least - managed to balance out their sweetness by doing a bigger early pick, so obviating the need to pick non-botrytis grapes later. Maybe these will turn out to be more true-blue Sauternes than the rest. We will see.

Conclusion

Is the concentration of the ’09s the result of global warming? The answer is quite clearly yes: The average temperature in South-West France has risen by more than 1°C over the past 50 years, and, as we have seen, the changes in the trans-Atlantic air currents are provoking wetter springs and drier summers. However, there seem to be other cycles at work too: The 50s, 60s and 70s were cooler in Bordeaux, and the 80s, 90s and 00s warmer. So it’s quite possible that for the next 30 years, there could be a battle between global warming on the one hand and a return to a natural cool period on the other. Wine makes for optimism but let’s not forget those two decades of poor vintages from 1901 to 1919, which followed the two legendary vintages 1899 and 1900.

Appendix 1: The year's monthly rainfall and temperatures

	Rainfall 2009 mm	Normal Rainfall mm	Rainfall 2005 mm	Temp °C in relation to normal 2009	2005	Sun hours as a % of normal
12/08	74	107	68	- 1.4°	- 0.9°	
01/09	128	92	32	+ 0.8°	+ 0.5°	
02/09	33	82	38	- 0.8°	- 2.7°	
03/09	31	70	38	+ 0.5°	+ 0.2°	
Winter total Dec - Mar						
	266	351	176	- 0.5°	- 0.7°	
04/09	116	80	90	+ 0.8°	+ 1.5°	+ 11%
05/09	78	84	16	+ 1.9°	+ 1.7°	+ 6%
06/09	75	64	32	+ 2.0°	+ 2.7°	+ 31%
Spring total Apr – June						
	269	228	138	+ 1.6°	+ 2.0°	+ 16%
07/09	47	55	20	+ 0.7°	+ 1.5°	+ 8%
08/09	24	60	14	+ 1.4°	+ 0.3°	+ 12%
Summer total July – Aug						
	71	115	34	+ 1.1°	+ 0.9°	+ 10%
09/09	49	90	56	+ 1.1°	+ 0.5°	+ 34%
10/09	34	94	55	+ 1.7°	+ 3.0°	+ 36%
Autumn total Sept - Oct						
	83	184	111	+ 1.4°	+ 1.8°	+ 35%
Total	689 mm	878 mm	459 mm	+ 0.8°	+ 0.7°	+ 20%

Figures are as registered at Mérignac

Appendix 2: Diary of the 2009 vintage's harvest

Date	Temp°C	Weather	Rainfall	Harvesting dates
September (Norm:12°5 - 23°7)				Dry white
02 W	16-25°	s/sh	3 mm	
03 Th	17-23°	s/sh	2 mm	I
04 F	16-22°	s/sh	1 mm	I
05 Sa	9-22°	s		I
06 Su	10-28°	s		I
07 M	12-32°	s		**I**
08 T	15-33°	s		**I**
09 W	16-30°	s		**I**
10 Th	14-32°	s		**I**
11 F	16-27°	s		**I**
12 Sa	15-26°	s		**I**
13 Su	14-26°	s		**I**

Date	Temp	Weather	Rainfall	Dry white	Merlot			Sauternes
14 M	13-22°	s		**I**	I			
15 T	12-20°	sh	12 mm	I	I			1
16 W	8-21°	s		**I**	I			1
17 Th	8-24°	s		**I**	I			1
18 F	14-22°	r	13 mm	**I**	I			1
19 Sa	14-19°	r	8 mm	I	I			
20 Su	16-19°	sh	5 mm	I	I			
21 M	14-21°	s		I	I			1
22 T	13-25°	s		I	I			1
23 W	13-27°	f/s		I	I			1
24 Th	13-27°	f/s		I	I			1
25 F	13-24°	s		I	I			1
26 Sa	11-25°	s			**I**	Cab Franc	Cab Sauv	1
27 Su	12-27°	s			**I**			1
28 M	13-27°	s			**I**	I	I	**1**
29 T	13-28°	s			**I**	I	I	**1**
30 W	10-28°	s			**I**	I	I	**1**
October (Norm: 9°5 - 18°8)								
01 Th	14-26°	f/s			**I**	I	I	**1**
02 F	10-22°	s/c			**I**	I	I	**1**
03 Sa	8-22°	s			**I**	I	I	**1+2**
04 Su	10-25°	s/c			**I**	I	I	**1+2**
05 M	15-28°	s			**I**	**I**	**I**	**1+2**
06 T	19-29°	s			**I**	**I**	**I**	**1+2**
07 W	18-27°	s			**I**	**I**	**I**	**1+2**
08 Th	16-22°	sh/s	1 mm		I	**I**	**I**	**2**
09 F	15-22°	sh/s	1 mm		I	**I**	**I**	**2**
10 Sa	16-23°	sh/s	1 mm			I	**I**	**2**
11 Su	16-23°	sh/s	1 mm			I	**I**	**2+3**
12 M	15-20°	c/s				I	**I**	**2+3**
13 T	7-19°	f/s				I	**I**	**2+3**
14 W	8-18°	f/s				I	**I**	**2+3**
15 Th	5-15°	s				I	**I**	3+4
16 F	10-20°	s				I	**I**	3+4
17 Sa	6-16°	s					I	
18 Su	2-15°	s					I	
19 M	4-17°	s					I	3+4
20 T	11-19°	r	20 mm				I	3+4
21 W	11-16°	c/sh	1 mm					3+4
22 Th	10-17°	s/c/sh	1 mm					3+4
23 F	11-17°	c/r	5 mm					3+4

Figures are as at the Met Station in Mérignac.
Bold type = the main days of harvesting

c = Cloud f = Fog
s = Sun r = Rain
sh = Showers dr= Drizzle

Bill Blatch, Bordeaux, 4th February 2010
and meteorology assistant Claudia V. Knight