

Written by Jancis Robinson & Richard Hemming 27 Jul 2015

# Canada shows off in London

Long-serving members will know that this site has been charting the progress of Canadian wines ever since its humble beginnings in 2000. In fact, I would not be surprised to learn that our coverage is greater than that of any other non-Canadian wine publication (click on the Canada tag at the top to see what's on offer). This is out of sheer curiosity and not just because the first professional wine tasting I ever attended, in early 1976, was of Ontario wines in Canada House in London.

I reminded Hugh Johnson that we had first met there 39 years before when we both attended the latest showing of Canadian (not just Ontario) wines in Canada House last May before trooping across Trafalgar Square to have lunch together at the Garrick Club (one of London's famous private members clubs which has just, shamefully in my view, voted against opening its membership to women).

Canada tends to organise a generic tasting of its wines in London every few years. I have to confess that the last one two years ago (see [Canadian wine comes to London](http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/canadian-wine-comes-to-london) (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/canadian-wine-comes-to-london>) ) made more of an impression on me than this one. Last time there seemed to have been a real step up in quality – especially of the Chardonnays – from the previous time I had surveyed Canadian wine. This time the improvement curve seemed less steep.

But this time Richard and I split the tasting so that I tasted only Ontario wines and he tasted the British Columbia wines shown in London, to which I have added tasting notes on a couple of white 2013s from fellow Master of Wine Rhys Pender's fledgling Little Farm operation.

Among the Ontario wines, the 2013 whites seemed more interestingly tense and intense than the 2012s in general, and I found a few of the Chardonnays had that slightly formulaic pineapple-chunk quality that I more readily associate with the 1980s and early 1990s than with this century. Norman Hardie (whose wines are imported into the UK by the Wine Society) was an outstanding producer for me while Queylus 2012 Pinots seemed particularly promising. Clearly the young Prince Edward County plantings are beginning to come into their own.

I was quite surprised by how relatively old some of the wines shown were. Presumably, as is the wont of most of these generic showings, this collection of producers and wines was self-selecting (those prepared to invest the time and money in a trip to London) whereas the wines at the last showing were tested beforehand by an independent panel as representing the best of Canadian wine.

Richard was particularly impressed, as I was when I tasted a hand-picked selection of Canada's best? (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/canadas-best>) at home in London at the beginning of 2013, by the wines of Church & State and Meyer Family among the BC offerings. He was also enthusiastic about the Okanagan wines of Painted Rock, La Stella and Le Vieux Pin – especially their red Bordeaux blends and a couple of Syrahs. BC wines tend to be much more dramatic and emphatic than their Ontario counterparts.

## **Norman Hardie, County Unfiltered Chardonnay 2013 Prince Edward County**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570662>)

100% MLF. Very low sulphur. Malo on the nose but very fresh, citrus wine that's delicate and well balanced. Very lively. Racy. Not (yet?) that subtle but there's a nice delicate touch.

12.2%

Drink 2015-2018

16 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570662>)

## **Norman Hardie, Cuvée L Chardonnay 2012 Ontario**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570661>)

*Blend of Prince Edward County with 70% from Niagara. After blending it goes into old neutral oak for an additional six months.*

Pale gold. One of his richer wines and just a little heavier and more savoury than the 2013 Niagara. A tad stolid.

12.4%

Drink 2015-2017

16 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570661>)

## **Norman Hardie, Unfiltered Chardonnay 2013 Niagara Peninsula**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570660>)

They lease the land and direct the viticulture. Cool, racy, lively and mouth filling. Really nice and fresh. Just the job. Vibrant. The 2012 of this is at the Wine Society.

12.7%

Drink 2015-2018

17 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570660>)

## **Norman Hardie, County Unfiltered Pinot Noir 2013 Prince Edward County**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570665>)

Great to have so much aroma for such a low alcohol! Bravo! Edgy, lively, hint of tamarind but pure naked Pinot too. Very low SO2. Great stuff! Fragile but fresh and lovely.

10.9%

Drink 2015-2016

16.5 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570665>)

## **Norman Hardie, Cuvée L Pinot Noir 2012 Ontario**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570666>)

Blend. A little smudgy on the nose with fine tannins. Reticent though with some real

structure and interest here.

11.8%

Drink 2016-2020

16+ (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570666>)

## **Norman Hardie Pinot Noir 2013 Niagara Peninsula**

(<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570664>)

Some mushrooms and violets on the nose. Fresh and transparent. Perhaps slightly less distinctive than the County 2013 but still very refined.

11.9%

Drink 2015-2018

16.5 (<http://www.jancisrobinson.com/tastings/view/570664>)