

## DOMAINE TRELOAR, Roussillon – English and New Zealand

May 25, 2010



Jonathan Hesford is one of our Purple Pagers, a frequent poster on our forum, so it was with much anticipation that I went to taste his wines in a packed Vinisud hall. I was warmly welcomed by his wife Rachel Treloar, a New Zealander and ex-tax officer (yes, you can understand the career change) who met Jonathan in London. Jonathan doesn't come from a wine background either. He was born in England, but a few childhood years spent in the Basque region of Spain may have given him a deep-seated love of sunshine and warm-bellied wine. He went on to do seriously brainy things like physics, seismology, designing submarine control systems and building the first generation of electronic trading systems for Merrill Lynch. It was

when they lost their home and jobs in New York because of 9/11 that they realised it was time to do some life accounting, and as a result they made the biggest change of their lives.

Four years later, with a Plumpton College course; six months at Halfpenny Green Vineyards in Staffordshire; a qualification in Viticulture and Oenology at Lincoln University, Canterbury (graduating top of class); and nearly two years as assistant winemaker for Neudorf under Tim Finn, they decided to return to Europe to run their own wine estate.

In January 2006, after a lot of research and armed with O-level French, two small children and a big dream, Rachel and Jon bought a ramshackle old winery and 10 ha of vineyard parcels around the Catalan village of Trouillas in Roussillon. They have put in a huge amount of work: renovating and modernising the winery; creating their own identity and marketing their wines; learning French and learning the way that the French do things; and, of course, making truly handcrafted wine. Jon and Rachel literally do everything themselves from pruning to their website, with the exception of harvest-time pickers and work-experience students from Plumpton College that they take in every year (a wonderful way, I think, of putting something back and investing in the future of good wine).

Why Roussillon? I ask. Jon gave me several reasons. First it is not a well-known region so the land is relatively affordable, allowing them to invest their money in making exceptional wine rather than paying off huge property loans. That same lack of international profile, coupled with the slightly more modern and flexible regulations in the Languedoc-Roussillon region also means that they can do some exciting things and blaze their own trail without being constrained by expectation, regulation or prejudice. And finally, the traditional grape varieties are richly varied and offer a varied palette of flavours to work with.

Treloar currently makes about 36,000 bottles a year and has a range of 11 wines – some made in tiny quantities. They work according to the Sustainable Viticulture Program, managing both their vineyards and the winery with minimal intervention. The lovely photo above right was taken by Sharron Bennett, who was kind enough to let me reproduce it here.