

**Speech by HE Sylvie Bermann,
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom
at the City of Bordeaux event.
French Residence, 4 February 2016**

Good evening everyone.

It is a real pleasure to host an evening in London devoted to Bordeaux and the Aquitaine area, given the historic links between Britain and that wonderful part of France.

The English love affair with Aquitaine and Bordeaux is a long one, starting in the twelfth century, when Aquitaine became an English possession through King Henry the Second of England's marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine in eleven-fifty-four.

In fairness to King Henry, he did try very hard to please his French subjects – decreeing, for example, that any ship sailing from Bordeaux would be exempt from export tax.

But, thankfully for us, it wasn't too long before Aquitaine became French again, when we emerged victorious in the Hundred Years' War. It has remained French to this day!

Yet this has not prevented another kind of British invasion, one caused by a desire to sample some of the finest wines on earth. It has even led to the creation of a new county, “Dordogneshire”, and Britons have been a nation of claret-lovers ever since...

However, despite the rocky start to the relationship, you are, of course, always welcome!

From these historic links, we now have gastronomic links - Hélène Darroze, who is from the region, has her fabulous restaurant at the Connaught [*prononcer : konnôt*] here in London, Gordon Ramsay runs the restaurant of the *Grand Hôtel de Bordeaux*, and Joël Robuchon has restaurants in London as well as *La Grande Maison de Bernard Magrez* in Bordeaux.

As for our “love affair with drink”, the passion is undiminished as claret remains king in the UK, with Bordeaux wine comprising seventy-four percent of wines traded in this country on average.

The Aquitaine region is France's seventh most popular destination for British travellers, who account for up to twenty percent of its accommodation market.

Building on its success, the destination is now served by direct links to no fewer than sixteen cities and airports in the United Kingdom, and it boasts more than seven hundred and seventy wine-tasting venues, thirty-two golf courses, eighty hotels with spas and forty-three Michelin-starred restaurants.

Bordeaux was not only voted "Best European Destination" in twenty-fifteen by the European Best Destinations organization, it has also been recognized as one of the key global brands in the National Tourism Council's destination branding strategy. The work being done on the city's brand should help it become not only a local emblem, but also one that represents the whole destination.

Admittedly, our Bordeaux classification system, with all its various *châteaux*, may sound complicated and political, but it's perhaps no more so than English Premier League Football with its various relegations and promotions, team

signings and the fact that a new team with no wins so far this year is guaranteed to earn sixty million pounds this season just for showing up!

Of course, Bordeaux loves football too, and it will have the pleasure of hosting several matches during the Euro twenty-sixteen tournament, including a game between Wales and Slovakia on the eleventh of June.

Anyway, without further ado [*prononcer : a-dou*], I shall now hand over to Stephan Delaux, who is Bordeaux's Deputy Mayor, in charge of tourism.