



*Epernay, April 19<sup>th</sup> 2024*

## **POL ROGER INAUGURATES NEW PRODUCTION SITE**

Pol Roger founded his Champagne House in Aÿ in 1849, when he was only 17 years old. In 1851, he moved to rue des Fusilliers in Epernay, which has since become rue Eugène Mercier. In 1872, Pol bought a plot of land on rue Croix de Bussy to build a large house with extended cellars and storerooms. The work was not completed until 1880. Pol Roger died in December 1899, and was succeeded by his sons Maurice (aged 30) and Georges (aged 26).

Two months later, in February 1900, the two brothers were faced with a tragic situation: part of the huge cellars had collapsed, along with the outbuildings, dragging down 500 full barrels containing almost the entire 1899 harvest, as well as some 1.5 million bottles. Thanks to the solidarity of other Champagne producers in Epernay (Moët et Chandon and Mercier in particular), Pol Roger & Cie was able to hold on.

Maurice and Georges, now bearing the Pol-Roger surname in memory of their father, acquired a large property containing cellars located between rue du Commerce (now 34 avenue de Champagne) and rue de Bernon to house their wine cellar, which was inaugurated on January 20, 1903.

In 1933, after several years of construction, the Pol-Rogers opened their new cellars on Avenue de Champagne. Next door, in 1968, through the impetus given by Jean Pol-Roger and Christian de Billy, construction began on a new 4,200 m<sup>2</sup> building to house disgorging, packaging and shipping operations. However, a few decades later, this resolutely modern site for its time, facing the Avenue de Champagne and directly linked to the cellars, was no longer suitable. The shareholders and the management team dreamed of building a new production facility in the immediate vicinity of the site where the cellars had collapsed in 1900.

But, as Patrice Noyelle, Chairman of Pol Roger's Board until 2013, used to say: "First, we redo the kitchen!" The House therefore proceeded in order of priority, enlarging and renovating its entire winery between 2000 and 2013. It then seemed natural to tackle the other production buildings.

In March 2016, Pol Roger worked with the CICAL teams to convert the needs expressed into a construction project using plans and 3D views. Although the proposed locations and initial principles had been defined at the beginning of 2017, the challenge was to transform the project by proposing an architecture for the future site that would integrate as harmoniously as possible with the existing environment. It was then that Giovanni PACE was chosen as the architect for a project that would be coordinated by the CICAL and KS groupe teams.

As Dominique Petit, Chef de Caves, who initiated the initial reflections in 2015, wished, Damien Cambres, who joined the House in early 2017 and succeeded him a year later, will be closely involved in the entire project. After two years of very specific soil studies, and research that also unearthed dozens of bottles swallowed up in the collapse of February 1900, work began in early 2020 with 45,000 m<sup>3</sup> of earthworks.

298 piles later, the longest of which descend 35 metres below ground to "carry" the building on this capricious and fragile terrain, 18,000 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space has been deployed over 4 levels, and to keep with the dizzying figures, 3,800 m<sup>2</sup> of bricks were laid.

Nothing is left to chance, all the more so when it comes to complying with the requirements inherent in the UNESCO World Heritage listing under the supervision of Bâtiments de France. It took almost 4 years from the time the ground was broken to the time the first bottles arrived onto the packaging lines.

The site mobilized 43 building contractors, 27 process and technical package contractors, 16 service providers (including control offices, surveyors, landscapers, etc.) and a large number of skilled fellow workers (up to 80 people at any one time) among the leading specialists in their respective fields.

Major design efforts have been made to meet environmental standards. In addition to high-performance insulation, the site is connected to the Epernay municipal hot water network, thus eliminating the need to use gas for the disgorging/labelling part of the process. A rainwater recovery system is also used to irrigate the house's garden and other green spaces.

In any case, as the company is bound by grape supply limits and the appellation is not infinitely expandable, the new facility is not primarily intended to increase volumes. On the other hand, it should considerably improve the working conditions of our employees, as well as our responsiveness in preparing orders.

Pol Roger has chosen to automate certain functions, with a view to keeping potentially traumatic tasks to a minimum. As a result, production teams benefit from assistance in handling all cases, from the provision of coat hangers and straighteners for all large bottles, and from self-supporting stackers to replace forklift trucks. In addition to the ergonomic design of the workstations, the company has also opted to open up the workspaces to natural light.

The new production site also enables us to increase storage space, particularly for labelled and disgorged wines. Capacity at these stages of production has been doubled, providing greater flexibility and improved quality by increasing the ageing time after disgorging.

The choice of location for this new production site was no accident, as the company had a large land reserve close to its offices and cellars and wanted to promote local roots. As the Managing Board points out: "We are very proud to be based in Epernay, and it was important for us to acknowledge this attachment. This location means that we don't need to transport goods, personnel or raw materials between different geographical points, and we therefore limit our carbon footprint as much as possible."

In short, this new showcase represents the perfect amalgam of pragmatism, symbolism and long-term vision, all of which are dear to the values espoused by the family business.



2024 is doubly special for Pol Roger for it celebrates not only its 175th anniversary but also the 150th anniversary of the birth of Sir Winston Churchill, its most illustrious ambassador.