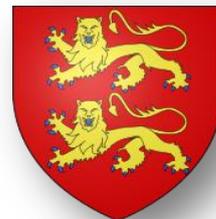




## Woking DFAS Tour 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> June 2015

### Art, Gardens and Châteaux of Normandy



Caroline Symington (**left**, Tour Leader)

Helen McCabe (**right**, Tour Guide)

Nigel (**centre**, Coach Driver)



#### ITINERARY

##### Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June

- 8:30 am : Departed from Woking Station (Oriental Road side) by touring coach to Dover, ferry to Calais, onward to Rouen, arrived at our Hotel at about 5:30 pm
- 3 course dinner in Hotel

##### Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June (Dieppe)

- Le Vasterival
- L'Eglise de St Valery
- Le Bois des Moutiers
- Château de Miromesnil

##### Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June

- Monet's gardens and house in Giverny
- Le Jardin Plume

##### Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June

- AM. Rouen.
- PM. Château du Champ de Bataille

##### Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June

- En route back to Calais visited Château du Mesnil Geoffroy and arriving back at Woking Station at 8:30pm



## LE VASTERIVAL

Princess Greta Sturdza (left) died in 2009, age 96, surrounded by her beloved garden which she began building in 1955 after buying the property from composer Albert Roussel.



Romy Read



Mary Phillips



Ann Greening

Mary Lang



## LE VASTERIVAL



Chris Symington

Phillip Hammersley



John Phillips



Robin Broadley



You can see by our Members attentive looks that The Head Gardiner, who has worked at Le Vasterival for over 30 years, was most interesting. He explained the “transparent” pruning technique. With (say) a rhododendron bush its middle is severely pruned so that the structure of the major boughs can be seen and instead of there being an impenetrable solid mass of leaves there is a canopy and side curtains through which the sun can filter to reveal a carpet of spent blossom on the ground beneath the bush.

## LE VASTERIVAL



We were impressed by the great variety of the trees and shrubs and by the Princess's artistic placement of them in this stunning garden which today's management are devoted to maintaining.



## Le VASTERIVAL

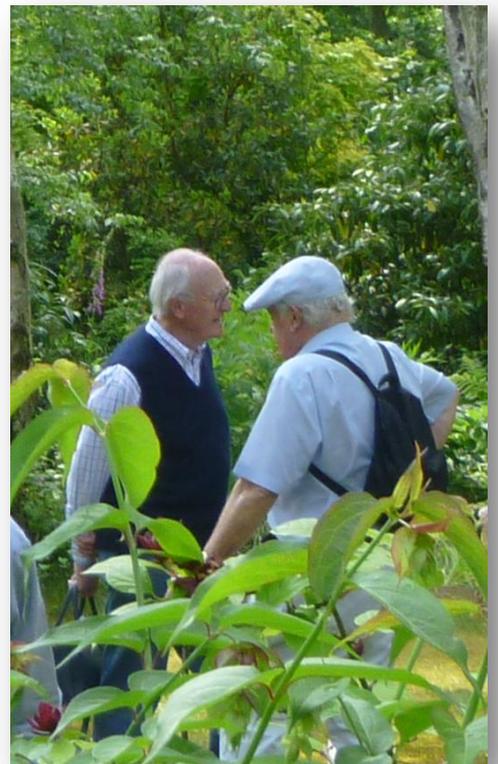


(top) Aurelie (Guide) and Gail Heanley



(right) Robin Broadley  
& John Phillips

(left) Caroline & Jill  
Broadley



## L'ÉGLISE de St VALERY at VARENCEVILLE



*Claude Monet*

This enchanting church at Varengeville has been made world famous by two men:

**Claude Monet** who painted "The Church at Varengeville" many times. If time had permitted I would have liked to have taken the path down to the beach to see for myself how the vista has changed since 1882 when Monet painted the church. Above is the closest photo that I could find on the internet.



**Georges Braque** who, along with Picasso, invented cubism and whose beautiful stained glass window "The Tree of Jesse" dominates the church.

Originally built in the 12th century, then enlarged in the 16th century, the church building has resisted storms and the assault of the waves that gnaw at the cliffs below. Despite the church having been built "by saintly hands" as an archaeologist has written and inhabited by monks, nothing eventually may be strong enough to defeat the sea which remorselessly tries to engulf it.

*G Braque*





**(left)** Pamela Rickard & **(right)** Jenny Bower

## L'ÉGLISE de St VALERY at VARENGEVILLE

Pamela & Jenny were pleased that the rain only lasted for 7 minutes but the weather conditions had not allowed us to have a clear view over the cliffs.



**(Left)** Di Freeman & **(right)** Lyn Spankie

The yew hedge made a fine picnic table. The lovely smiles were graciously in response to my awful pun of ..."Yew-hoo" !!

## Le Bois de Moutiers



## Le BOIS de MOUTIERS



(from left to right) Rosie Whicher, Mary Phillips, Lesley Hammersley, Barbara Britten, Sue Colville

This charming group of ladies were awaiting the après déjeuner arrival of the charismatic owner Antoine Guillaume-Mallet. When he arrived he told us that due to the abolition of Primogeniture by Bonaparte Napoleon there are now eleven owners of the property making

it difficult to run the

business effectively and as such they are trying to find a foundation to take it on.

Due to the architect of the house being Edwin Lutyens and the garden designer Gertrude Jekyll, Antoine stressed that the result is as southern English as it gets.

We were lucky to meet a number of owners of the properties we visited. It made it feel more like we were on a personal visit rather than just sightseeing. Antoine told us of his Grandparents and of the obsession his Grandmother had with Theosophy which she shared with Edwin Lutyens wife.



## Le Bois de Moutiers



Antoine gave us a quick tour of the house explaining that while not lived in today it is used for concerts given in the music room.

Looking at how this room dwarfs the grand piano shows the scale of the interior.

He said that the unusual windows which are over 100 years old perform today as installed. I did not pick up on the practical, rather than the design reason, for the angling of the sections of these window



## Le BOIS de MOUTIERS



## Le Bois de Moutiers

Good use is made of sculpted hedging to make a pleasing frame for the plants.



## Le Bois de Moutiers



Di Freeman, Chris Greening, Ann Greening & Lyn Spankie

Mark Newcombe  
& David Reece



## Château de Miromesnil



## Château de Miromesnil





Ann Alexander & Brian Sheppard amongst the delphiniums

## Château de Miromesnil

On arrival (see previous page) we were given tea and diet inhibiting wedges of delicious apple tart. The charming owner, Nathalie Romatet stood on a chair and welcomed us. She told us her story in respect of Chateau de Miromesnil and then described the house and the potager.



Just look at the prizewinning length of the rhubarb!!

This cart is a wonderful piece of artisan craftsmanship. I wonder how old it is?

## Château de Miromesnil



There must be a market for this kind of stuff from the paying public. However, I noted that none of it accompanied us on the bus back home!!



In the same vein, later we saw at Chateau du Mesnil Geoffroy a series of cut out figures in period dress with holes instead of faces through which Roger Bower, sportingly, poked his face.



## MONET'S GIVERNY



Claude Monet b(1840-1926)

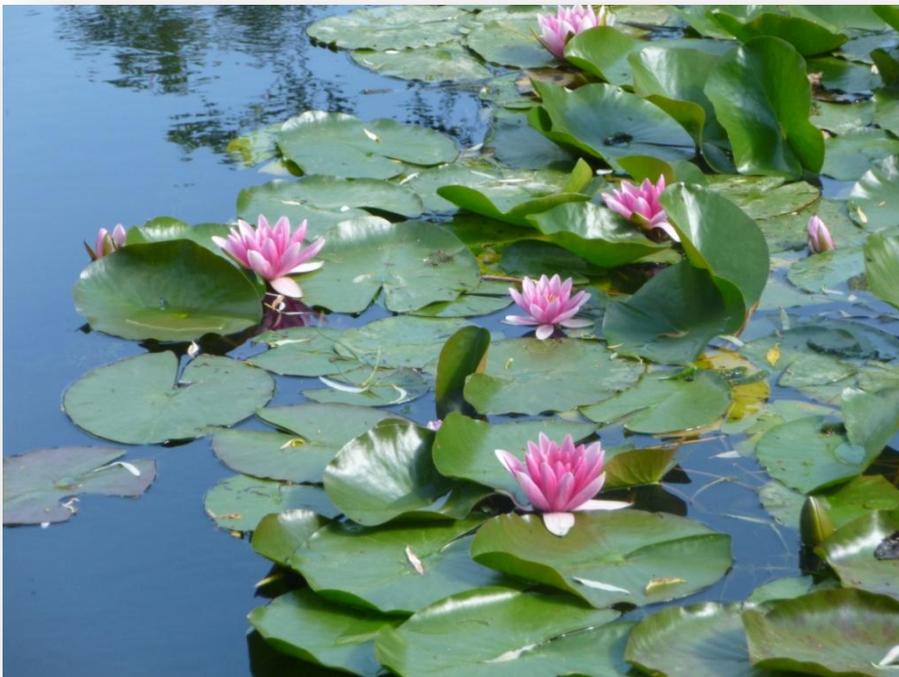
In 1883 Monet moved to his last home in Giverny.

The whole of Giverny (if not all of Normandy) is suffused with the spirit of Claude Monet. Half close your eyes when you are in the flower or the water garden and you can imagine him at his easel endlessly capturing with his brush strokes the colours and the beauty of his lovingly created gardens. Through time he became more and more fascinated by his water lilies and the reflections on the pond of the surrounding environment.

The preservation of the gardens just how Monet had made them allows us to understand his obsession in capturing fleeting visual moments of

nature and inspires us to create our own masterpiece through the lens of a camera. This is why Giverny is not a museum but rather a living studio giving us creative pleasure in a Monet master class. Below is a fairly standard photo that I took of the water lilies but just look at the ones on

the next page that show reflections that have been ruffled by the wind. If you had painted the green reflections no one would have believed that you had not tampered with reality.





## MONET'S GIVERNY



There were endless, wonderful photo opportunities in the flower garden made all the better by the glorious sunshine.





## Monet's Giverny

We all loved  
Helen's hat !!



Purposfully marching after lunching at Les Nymphes Restaurant to take the coach onwards to Le Jardin Plume

(Above, left to right) Helen McCabe, Vivienne Roberts, Ann Alexander, David Roberts and Sheila Davies.

(Left) Sue & Duncan Colville

(Right) Jenny & Roger Bower



## LE JARDIN PLUME

After the riot of colour and the abundance of floral delights at Giverny it took a while to get in tune with the simplicity and tranquility of Le Jardin Plume. Patrick Quibel and his wife created this garden from a Normandy orchard from 1997 onwards.



This garden delighted Monty Don who included it in his BBC documentary on Normandy gardens.

(left) Caroline Symington and Gail Heanley

## LE JARDIN PLUME

Michael Stearn



The seeding grasses on the bottom left of this photo attracted a lot of interest. I sincerely hope that the person's purloined pods propagate and prosper in Pirbright!!



Mark Newcombe



Jean Kenyon & Pauline Tiller

## Le JARDIN PLUME



The grasses, the sculpted hedging and the focal point of the vivid green plant in the box hedge illustrates Patrick Quibel's artistry.

### Les Coquelicots.



Rosie Whicher on the "hedge lawn"



## LE JARDIN PLUME



The artistic topiary in Le Jardin Plume is in harmony with the design of the rest of the garden.

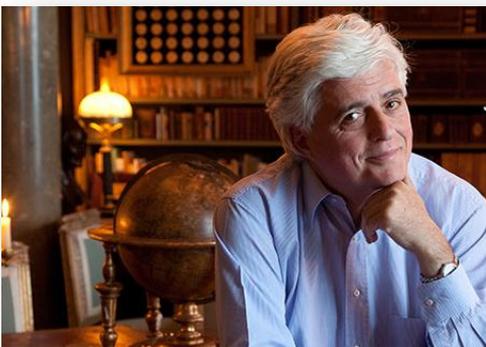


## Château du Champs de Bataille



The name **Château du Champs de Bataille** dates from the 10th Century when in 935 a large battle was fought in the vicinity of the present day chateau.

In 1992 the castle was bought by the flamboyant Interior Designer **Jacques Garcia**, who restored the building and created the gardens. Garcia is one of the most globally sought-after interior designers. It is said that the elegance of his work is exceeded only by his personality.



Our Group opinions about this property were as varied as you would expect taking into consideration the overwhelming opulence of the furnishing of the chateau and the sometimes outrageous imagination in the massive gardens.



## Château du Champs de Bataille



We awaited entry to the chateau although we had temporarily lost half the group to the delights of the Chateau shop.



## Château du Champs de Bataille



Contrary to my expectations, I was amazed and delighted by everything I saw in both the Chateau and the garden.

The parterres were designed to be enjoyed from the Chateau and it is only at height that you can make out their unusual lace design.

Because we were disallowed from taking photos in the Château I found a few on the internet and will show these as a reminder of what we saw. The furniture, fittings, wall coverings, carpets and soft furnishings had either been renovated or produced afresh to the very highest standard. Of course, we should have expected this as Jacques Garcia is a world renowned expert in this field.



## Château du Champs de Bataille



It could be said that this would be a minimalist Designer's s worst nightmare and could you imagine having to dust that lot?

## Le Jardin de Château du Champs de Bataille



The gardens were so large that soon our group became much dispersed. I took photos of people using my zoom lens and then had to further enlarge these prior to printing!

I was so far away from Duncan & Sue Colville (top) and John Britten (left) that they might not have known who they were waving to.

The garden is huge with monumental (as in buildings) topiary, parterres, ancient stone statues and buildings and water features. It is a mile long from the front entrance to the top of the garden.



**Le Jardin de Château du  
Champs de Bataille**



## LEDA'S TEMPLE



Legend has it that Leda, Queen of the Spartans, met the Greek God Zeus who was in the form of a swan. He made love to her and from this union was born Helen of Troy. In those days they had colossal imaginations when it came to legitimising an adulterous relationship!!

I was photographed from half a mile away poking my head through the iron bars that were blocking the entrance to the temple in order to take a photo of the temple's heavily bejewelled interior. I also noted a round plaque celebrating Leda's union with the "swan." This legend was depicted in paintings by many artists including Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo as well as in a raunchy sonnet by W B Yeats.



I saw this solitary swan on a nearby pond and wondered if this was a co-incidence ...or not?



## LEDA'S TEMPLE



The photo of the area behind the temple shows Garcia's attention to detail and his quest for perfection.

## Le Jardin de Château du Champs de Bataille



I was intrigued by the monumental topiary. I think that only an artist would have thought to include a castellated border to the lawn.



## Le Jardin de Château du Champs de Bataille



I thought that the water features were most unusual and at best quirky but perhaps this is just because I did not understand the Designer's intended meaning.



## Château du Mesnil Geoffroy



## Château du Mesnil Geoffroy



Princess Kayali welcomes us to her home.



During our tour of this delightful and homely chateau we are shown period dresses along with an explanation of the associated rituals and challenges of wearing them.



## Château du Mesnil Geoffroy

I wonder if you noticed this exquisite table in the entrance hall which I thought was made out of inlaid marble but not so. It was hand painted on wood and topped with glass and was very difficult to photograph due to light reflection



At the beginning of our visit I heard a lot of bird chatter. I wondered if it was coming from the aviary but those birds were not saying much.



And then I found the culprit who was well camouflaged.

## Château du Mesnil Geoffroy



Roses, roses and more roses.



## Château du Mesnil Geoffroy



## Château du Mesnil Geoffroy



Adrian Rickard and Caroline have a laugh watching Malcolm Read photograph me in the act of snapping Romy Read enjoying the scent of this magnificent climbing rose.





Rose enthusiasts were delighted at the huge number of named and different rose species.

John & Jenny Lock





## ROUEN

The Paschal Lamb has been part of Rouen's coat of arms since the 14th century.



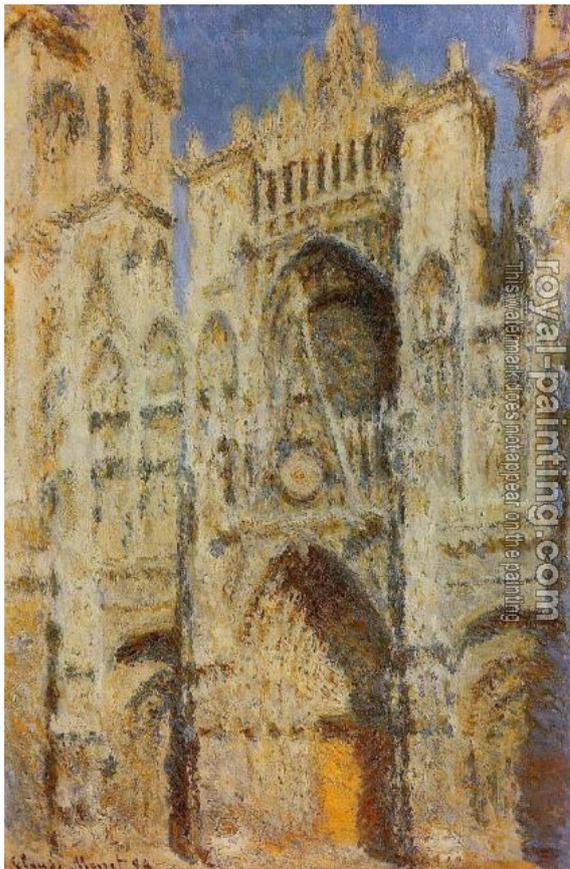
**The Mercure Hotel** is to the right of the Ibis Hotel...see the red sign ↑ on the first building above the arrow. It was ideal both in respect of ease of parking for our coach and accessibility to the sights of the city.

As Helen told us Rouen was one of the largest and most prosperous cities of medieval Europe. It was one of the capitals of the Anglo-Norman dynasties, which ruled both England and large parts of modern France from the 11th century to the 15th century. It is in Rouen that the English burnt Joan of Arc in 1431.



View from the back of the Mercure Hotel

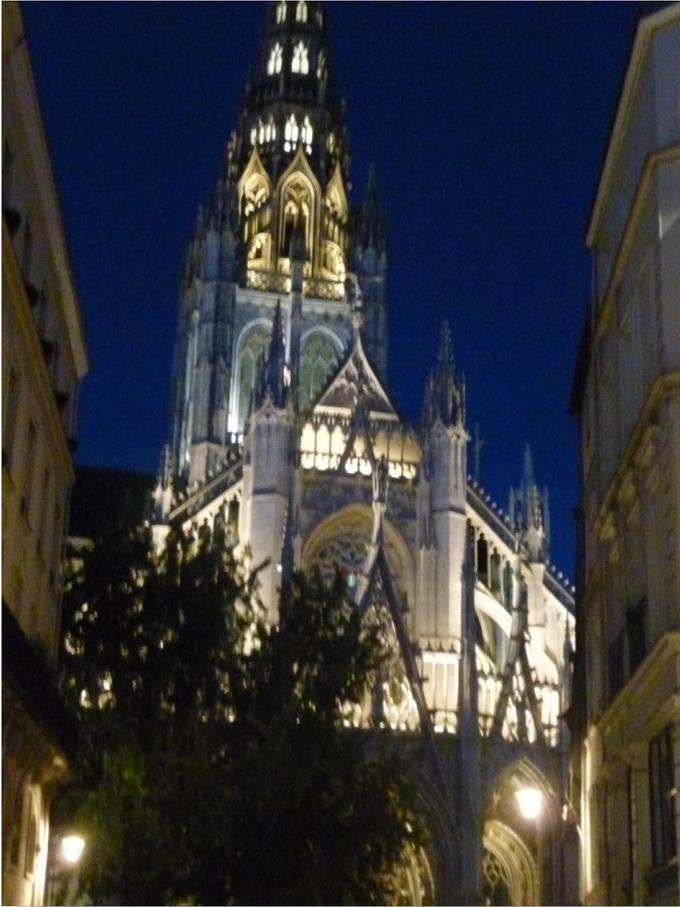
## CATHEDRALE de NOTRE DAME



Rouen Cathedral, built in the Gothic style, was a style of architecture that was admired and adopted by many European countries during the middle ages

Monet seldom painted anything other than landscapes, the notable exception being his series of paintings of the Cathedral. Historically, Monet's series was commercially well-timed as in the early 1890s France was seeing a revival of interest in Catholicism.

Monet's paintings of the cathedral have brought worldwide fame and tourism to Rouen with the added attraction of nearby Giverny.



### **The Church of Saint-Maclou**

This church is considered to be one of the best examples of the Flamboyant style of Gothic architecture in France. It was built during the transition from the late Gothic period (15th - 16th century) to the Renaissance in the 16th century.

### **The Church of St. Ouen**

This church is famous for both its architecture and its large, unaltered Cavaillé-Coll organ, which Charles-Marie Widor described as "a Michelangelo of an organ". Built on a similar scale to nearby Rouen Cathedral, it is, along with the church of Saint Maclou, one of the principal Gothic monuments of Rouen.



## LE GROS HORLOGE



The mechanism of the clock is one of the oldest in France, the movement being made in 1389. The clock was originally constructed without a dial, with one revolution of the hour-hand representing twenty four hours. The movement cast in wrought iron, is perhaps the largest such mechanism still extant. A facade was added in 1529. The Renaissance facade represents a golden sun with 24 rays on a starry blue background.

The phases of the moon are shown in the oculus of the upper part of the dial. It completes a full rotation in 29 days. The week days are shown in an opening at the base of the dial with allegorical subjects for each day of the week.

The mechanism was electrified in the 1920s and it was restored in 1997.



Le Gros Horloge is installed in a Renaissance arch

On the underside of the arch the stone carvings include sheep showing the historic importance of the wool trade in Rouen.

I wonder how many people living in Rouen have walked under the arch countless times without noticing the carvings.

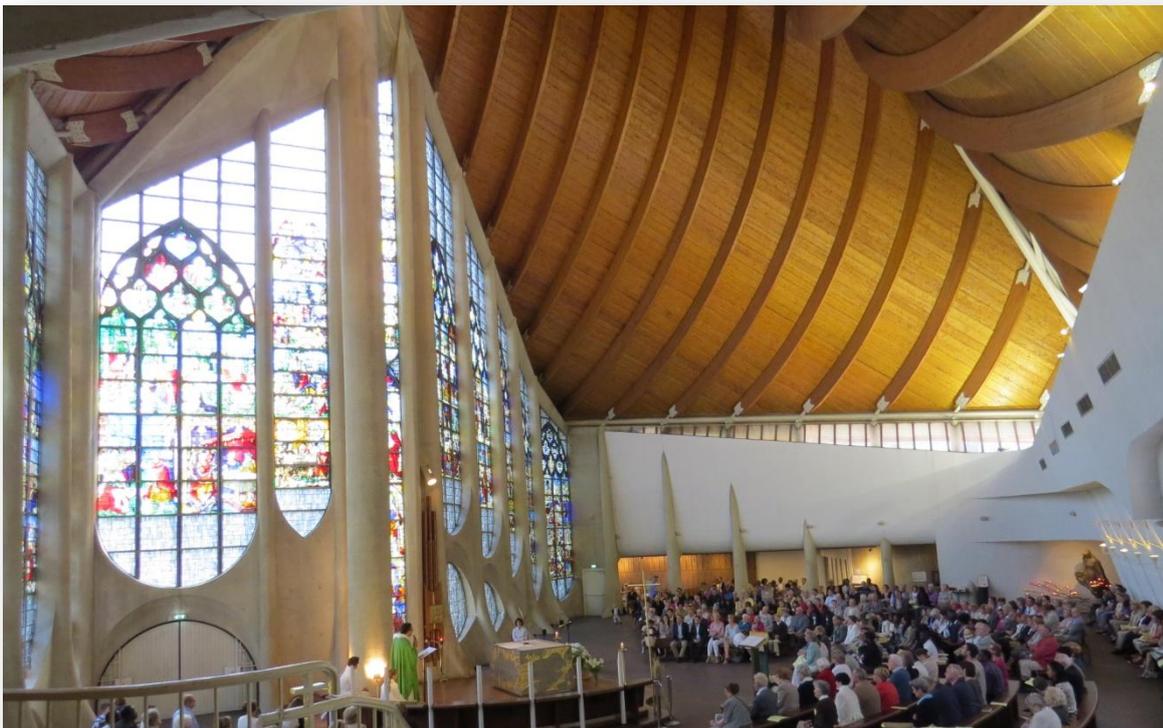
## L'ÉGLISE de ST JOAN OF ARC



The new church was built in 1979 in the Place du Vieux-Marché where Joan of Arc was burned alive in 1431

These beautiful stained glass windows came from the 16th century Church of Saint Vincent which was almost completely destroyed in 1944 during World War II, but fortunately the windows had been removed and stored in a safe location during the war.

The design of the ceiling depicts the billowing flames that consumed Joan of Arc.



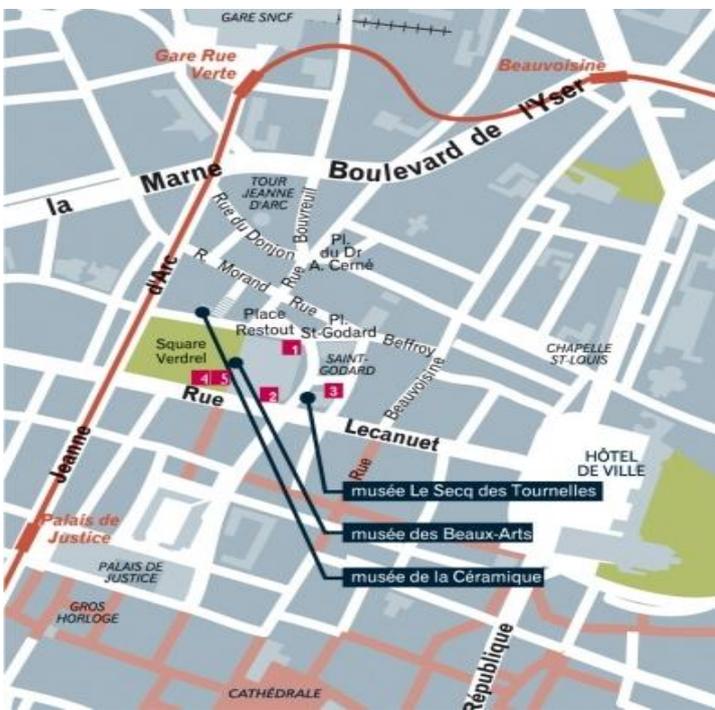
## L'ÉGLISE de ST JOAN OF ARC



(above) The exterior of the church and the large cross which marks the exact spot of Joan's immolation.

(below) a detail from one of the stained glass windows.





## ROUEN MUSEUMS & GALLERIES (Map, left)

Comprehensive information is available on the website that covers all three museums (Google: Musée des Beaux Arts, Rouen) These buildings are about a 15 minute walk from our hotel

### Final comments

We believe that Rouen was an ideal City to base our tour to Normandy inasmuch as in our free time, beyond the formal itinerary, we had an enormous choice of sightseeing opportunities and restaurants to choose from which were all within walking distance of the hotel.

The Tour surpassed our best expectations. In our view this was due to the camaraderie which was better than first class.

Thanks to Helen for her excellent lectures and thanks to Malcolm & Romy Read and also to Chris Greening for giving me their photos which I added to those that I took myself.

Whilst this pictorial journal has been produced solely as a memory for ourselves of a great few days in Normandy we would be very glad to share it with anyone who was with us on the tour.

Thanks for your wonderful company,

Chris & Caroline Symington

June 2015