



Sacavin Courier



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New members with the Grand Commandeur & the Vintners' Swan

Anjou Snippets

Periodically our Délégué Angevin, Michel Leterme sends us news from Angers. Two recent items from the *Courrier de l'Ouest* are of interest.

As May's visit to les Florales Internationales de Nantes determined, a number our members are keen gardeners. This year, the Horticultural Society of Angers celebrated its 150th anniversary. Nothing special about that perhaps, but it turns out that Elizabeth Péroz, of the French Confrérie, who frequently graces our Chapitres, and her husband Jean-Paul are, respectively, secretary and treasurer of that society. And, as the article goes on to describe, they have the most extraordinary garden at their home above St-Jean-de-la-Croix on the banks of the Loire, by Pont-de-Cé.



It was the mild Anjou climate that encouraged Elizabeth, in 1990, to set about creating "the garden of her dreams". That and the fertile soil. "The Loire silt creates good seed-beds." The work was shared, "He sees to the kitchen garden and the orchard and I do the ornamental garden." Dominated by an enormous sequoia tree (7 metres round and 35 metres in height), the garden has no lawn. "Grassed surfaces are a waste of space for plants." The tree is as old as the house, built in 1860. "I have twice seen it struck by a thunderbolt," says Elizabeth.



In the beginning Elizabeth could be "shovelling until 11 o'clock at night." Today she spends 2 or 3 hours a day in her little paradise. She loves July when the hydrangeas are blooming in red and white. "But the best time is late May or early June when the roses, irises and peonies are in bloom." She says that she spends "May with the rose bushes" – except for the rambling roses which she trails up the chestnut trees, the flowering cherry and the birch tree. But her favourite is the 'banksiae lutea', a yellow rose that blooms in the large oak tree.

"In May it is like a waterfall and quite magnificent." She is no less proud of her pergola where non-climbing roses produce "thousands and thousands of flowers" in Spring. "Everything grows well here – magnolias, camellias. I have a camellia, Glory of Nantes, in bloom for six months of the year."

Elizabeth has attempted to count all the different kinds of plants in her garden. "I stopped at 300," confesses this former primary school teacher, "but there must be more than 1,000." She sows, takes cuttings, exchanges and buys whenever she travels. "If you added it all up, it would come to a lot of money," comments her husband!



The second item concerns the Fleur family's Celliers du Prieuré, based at St-Georges-sur-Loire and founded in 1965. Michel Fleur is well known to many of our members, as are his wines. They produce, condition and market Loire wines, especially from Anjou, Saumur-Champigny, Chinon, Coteau du Layon, Cabernet d'Anjou..... and local wines with their collection "Cépages". They employ around fifty people with a turnover of 14 million euros in 2003. However, according to the article, Michel is now retiring and, with no-one to succeed him, Les Celliers du Prieuré have been bought by Saumur based Ackerman, whom we know well from their production of sparkling wines.

Antique Glass Becomes Crystal Clear

Our late Summer Lunch at the National Liberal Club

Almost 60 chevaliers and guests gathered at the National Liberal Club on 16th September to listen to a most enlightening talk on antique glass, followed by an excellent lunch organized by Des Holland. Luckily the weather was fine and we enjoyed our Vin d'honneur and canapés on the terrace under the autumn sunshine.

We repaired to the Lloyd George Room for the talk and lunch. Des had chosen the excellent food and complimentary wines:-

Hot & Cold Canapés
Cremant de Loire Louis Beauchant-Duroc

Pan Fried Salmon Fillet,
Vegetable Barigoule with New Potatoes
Touraine Rouge "Canaille", Domaine du Clos Roussey
Sauvignon de Touraine 2012, Domaine du Clos Roussey
Touraine Noble Joué, Domaine Rousseau Frères

Pimms Fruit Jelly with Elderflower Sorbet

Coffee and Mints

Our speaker had been invited by Felicity Bellamy to come and give us a talk on the drinking habits of the eighteenth century. Maurice Mclain proved to be an excellent speaker who regaled us with the most interesting and amazing stories. He also brought with him several of his antique glasses ranging right back to Roman times. We were allowed to touch them and examine them closely. Maurice kindly gave me his notes, some of which are summarized here for your enjoyment.

In the 18th century everyone drank and it was common to be intoxicated. In the 17th century French wine was popular but, with wars, heavy taxes on French wine arrived. Then Portuguese wine took over, as the tax on French wine was 8 times higher! 75% of wine drunk in England in the 18th century was Portuguese – i.e. port. Now it is only 1%.

Glasses for use at dining tables were very small and they were not put on the table. When a diner wanted a drink he signalled to his servant who brought the glass on a salver. The diner would take the glass and down it in one and return it to the servant. The glass would not touch the table or dirty the white linen tablecloth. Another reason for the small glass was toasting – when everyone had to toast each other in turn – so if six people dined that would be 32 toasts in all. Certainly enough to send the head reeling!

The expression 'toast' comes from medieval times, when wine tasted so foul that pieces of burnt toast were added so that the carbon would absorb some of the more foul tasting elements.

In clubs where a lot of toasts were drunk the toastmaster had to remain sober, so he would have a glass with a very thick wall to the bowl, holding half the volume it appeared to have. Sometimes these glasses were used at coaching inns in order to diddle unsuspecting travellers. Occasionally after an important toast the drinker would break the glass so that no less important toast would ever be drunk out of it.

Imagine another scene of young men drinking a toast to their beautiful ladies, trying to break the glass and failing. They had specially made toasting glasses with long slender thin stems that could be snapped between the fingers. Naturally few of these survive. More often the glass would be broken by forcing the foot of the glass on the table. Throwing glasses into the fireplace began in Russia in the 19th century.

ANTIQUE GLASS BECOMES CRYSTAL CLEAR



Martin Hart, Susan & Max Brittain,
Elspeth Brown & Valerie Hart



Michael Gray & Alastair Bonar



John Whitcutt & Margaret Harris
with Maurice McIn



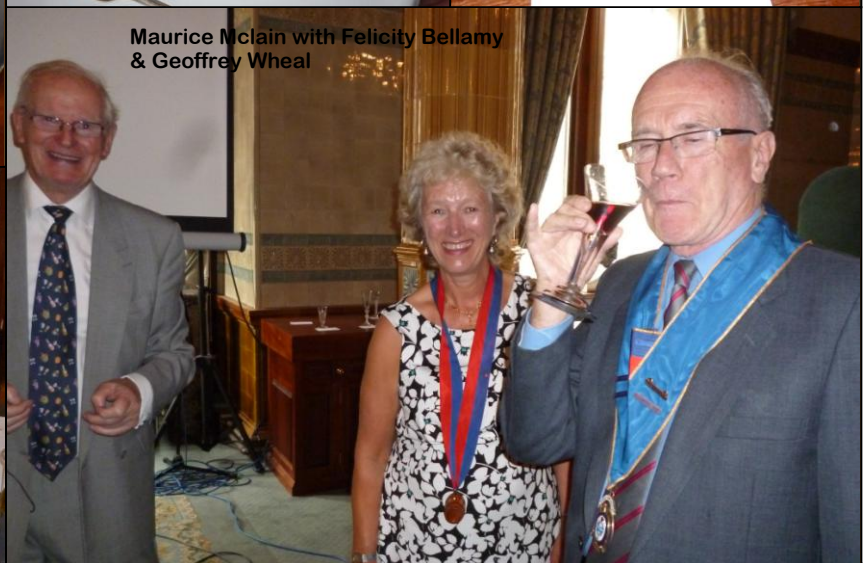
Pimms fruit jelly with elderflower sorbet



Bonnie Prince Charlie's wine glass



Sheena Perry with
Richard & Gillian Ridler



Maurice McIn with Felicity Bellamy
& Geoffrey Wheal



Raymond Harris,
Duncan & Rosemary Burnett
& Brenda Wheal



Shirley Zangwill & Ray Lindley

Maurice's finale proved most exciting and entertaining. He poured some red wine into Bonnie Prince Charlie's glass and handed it to Felicity for a toast. Luckily she knew it was neither a firing glass nor one whose stem should be snapped. She toasted Maurice, who then handed the special glass to the Grand Commandeur who also toasted Maurice. This was the perfect end to an excellent talk.

After lunch, with the weather still fine, some of us took advantage of the terrace again in order to put the world to rights in the true

Sacavin tradition of camaraderie and friendship.

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THE CHAPITRE ROYAUME-UNI

Vintners' Hall, Tuesday 18th November 2014

The Chapitre Royaume-Uni opened with our wonderful fanfare of trumpets at Vintners Hall. The Grand Commandeur welcomed us and before inducting four new chevaliers he made two promotions from the committee to the rank of officier, unbeknown to them!

Jane Berger, joined the committee in 2009 having been inducted in France in 2006. Jane has made a tremendous contribution to the smooth running of our visits to the Loire, acting as unofficial liaison officer with the French Confrérie. Jane's friendship with the Papin family has done much to aid the amicable relations which exist between the two Confréries. Her committee contributions are always well thought out, and her behind-the-scenes work is much appreciated though seldom visible outside the committee and is of great importance.

Felicity Bellamy was inducted in 1982, by former Grand Commandeur Chris Wilkinson at the Café Royale. Part of her induction citation read "You are living proof that Shakespeare's phrase 'one man in his time plays many parts' applies equally well to the gentler sex." She made an immediate impact when joining the committee in 2011, by organizing The Art of Food and Wine at the National Gallery with lunch at the National Liberal Club. This year she organized the Antique Glass becomes Crystal Clear talk and lunch again at the NLC. She writes many of the Courier reports and is a strong and constructive contributor in committee.

Our four inductees boldly swore their oaths before Rabelais and became "one of us" as we welcomed them into Sacavin.

Brian Amor was educated at Merchant Taylors and Oxford. He worked for Wiggins Teape specialist paper manufactures, as part of their European division. He is fluent in French, German and Italian. Having lived abroad he has good knowledge of the Loire wines, as well as those from Italy, California to name a few. His next trip is to the wine growing areas of South America. Brian is a business mentor for the Princes Trust and Chairman of the Richmond Careers Centre. He keeps a good cellar, which is always a good sign!

Anna McKowen was born and educated in Suffolk and then worked for an insurance broker in London. Her introduction to wine was in Bordeaux where she was an au pair. She worked at weekends in a vineyard treading the grapes and drinking the ullage (Ray Lindley's words not mine!). When she moved to Essex she became a keen sailor with her late husband Graham, a chevalier of Sacavin. Now she does fundraising for St Helena Hospice. She has attended many Sacavin events and enjoys the wines of the Loire very much. She is well qualified to be enrolled as a chevalier.

Andy Gwinn's earliest memories include his grandfather drinking Mouton Rothschild or Beaune Premier Cru at Christmas. He is a longstanding member of the Wine Society and has enjoyed exploring the world of wine ever since. Food and drink play a big part in Andy's life. He is a keen Francophile having

honey-mooned in France and travelled throughout the country from Bandol and Bordeaux to Dunkirk and Brest. He is an avid student of military history. He has spent several holidays in the Loire and particularly enjoys Pouilly Fume and Sancerre. Andy enjoyed the wine challenge in 2013 at the NLC, where his father used to take stock (being a stock-taker & gauger by profession).

Zoe Gwinn first went to the Loire with her aunt and uncle as part of a twinning holiday between Wincanton and Gennes. The memory of this stays with her today – being welcomed into the family home of her French hosts and the food and wine of the region. She soon enjoyed more holidays there learning about the history, sparkling wines, local delicacies, wine tasting. While living in Holland and Belgium she continued to source good wines at keen prices. Zoe has always enjoyed travel, and finding new wines and foods to enjoy.

The dining hall at Vintners Hall took on a new perspective for me this year, as I was sitting at the top table with a fine view of the splendid chandeliers and portraits above. We enjoyed a superb dinner and excellent wines thanks to the diligence of Des Holland.

At the beginning of dinner Des spoke to us about his wine choices, having decided the menu way back in February 2014. A lot of thought and preparation goes into this process. The Bouvet-Ladubay Saumur Cuvée Saphir 2010 is a delicious old favourite. 90% Chenin 10% Chardonnay.

The Menetou Salon Sauvignon Blanc Domaine Teiller 2012 is nutty and smooth with a brilliant gold colour and peaches on the nose. For the last 4 years Teiller have been in the Guide Hachette to French wines.

The Anjou Rouge Château de la Roulerie Les Merances 2011 is 90% Cabernet Franc 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Grapes are hand picked from 80 year old vines. It is made by Philippe and Marie Germain. At Wine Challenge 7

this wine was preferred over a Chianti Classico and it drinks well with the main course as well as being perfect with cheese.

<i>Vin d'honneur</i> <i>Saumur Brut Cuvée Saphir, Bouvet-Ladubay 2010</i> <i>90% Chenin, 10% Chardonnay</i> <i>Menu</i> <i>CRAB & SAFFRON PANNA COTTA,</i> <i>With a crab & black pepper tuille,</i> <i>Lobster jus & sea herbs</i> <i>~*~</i> <i>Menetou-Salon Blanc Domaine Teiller 2012</i> <i>100% Sauvignon blanc</i> <i>~*~</i> <i>ROAST FILLET OF BEEF & BRAISED OX CHEEK</i> <i>With Dauphinoise potatoes, red kale,</i> <i>Heritage carrot ribbons & red wine jus</i> <i>~*~</i> <i>Château de la Roulerie Anjou Rouge Les Merances 2011</i> <i>Field blend of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet</i> <i>~*~</i> <i>CHEESE BOARD</i> <i>Brie de Meaux, Bleu d'Auvergne and Ste-Maure Caprifeuille</i> <i>~*~</i> <i>PEAR & ALMOND FRANGIPANE TART</i> <i>with almond cream and caramel</i> <i>~*~</i> <i>Coteaux de l'Aubance 2013</i> <i>100% Chenin blanc</i> <i>Domaine de Haute Perche</i> <i>~*~</i> <i>COFFEE & CHOCOLATES</i> <i>~*~</i> <i>Choice of Cointreau or Dalmore 15-year old Single Malt</i>
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Next we have the superb Coteaux de l'Aubance Domaine de Haute Perche 2013. Jane Berger proved a marvellous help in bringing this wine back in her car. Jane has a long association with this vineyard. Christian Papin has handed over the running of the vineyard to his daughter Veronique so it is a pleasure to serve a wine made by her now. Jane also found space in her car for a L'Aubances Fontanelles dessert wine to challenge one from the Rhone at Challenge 8 at the NLC in February.

Des thanked Jane for her valuable help. He also thanked Chris Lewis for all the help he gives in getting our wines from France to the UK. It is greatly appreciated.

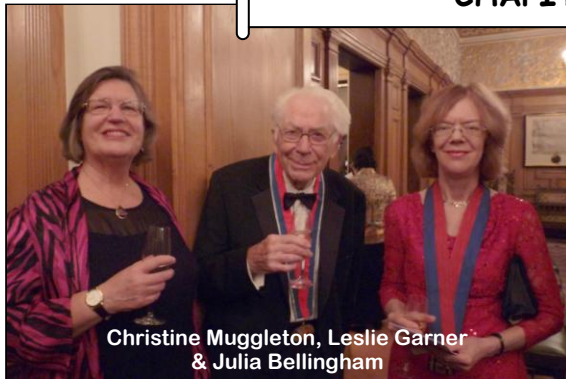
The Grand Commandeur welcomed our four new inductees Anna, Zoe, Andy and Brian.

In the words of my son (aged 25) who was my guest at the Chapitre "Great wine, great food, great place, a lovely evening, very well organized". I could not have put it better myself! I hope one day he will become a chevalier of the Sacavin and carry on a special family tradition begun when my father Bill Leyland, joined at only the second UK Chapitre in 1970.

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CHAPITRE ROYAUME-UNI



Christine Muggleton, Leslie Garner
& Julia Bellingham



Richard Ridler with
Mark & Jane Berger



Valerie Ingram & Laura Garner



Bob & Linda Holland with Michael Hindley



Anna McKowen & Brian Amor



Major Steven Marcham, MBE
General Manager, Vintners' Company



Sid & Ann Price



New members Anna McKowen, Brian Amor and Zoe & Andrew Gwinn
together with the Management Committee



Geoffrey Wheal

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**Chris Wilkinson**  
1936 – 2014

One of our former Grand Commandeurs, Chris Wilkinson, very sadly died in May 2014 aged 77. He lived on the Isle of Man and had been Deputy Launch Authority for the Peel Station lifeboat for 13 years. The operations manager there said it had been a privilege to have had someone with such commitment, drive and an inability to shirk responsibility. He truly has been a rock. This description of Chris can also be described for his role within the Sacavin. He was inducted in Angers in 1970. He was made Officier in March 1976, Commandeur in October 1977 and Senechal in the early 1980s.



In 1981 Chris joined Nicky Kyriakides in organising the trip to Saumur, at the Hotel Budan. In 1980, 1981 and 1982 Chris and his wife Hilary hosted wine tastings at their home, Chough Cottage near Thame in Oxfordshire. When Hector Mackenzie died in December 1988, Chris succeeded him as Grand Commandeur at the AGM in 1989. He continued in that role until the AGM of 1995.

The Chough Cottage wine tastings were true Sacavin occasions. How do you visualise a wine tasting? An impressive room with long tables and rows of bottles with cuspids, wooden cases filled with sawdust and leaking ominously after an hour, and above all earnest tasters, steadily progressing through the wines taking copious notes and discussing in hushed tones, noses, bodies, colours and ages. Tastings at Chough Cottage could not be more different.

In July 1980 some 40 chevaliers and their wives gathered to taste 30 fine Loire wines. They were offered Muscadet, Saumur, Chenin, Sancerre, Malvoisie, Bonnezeau; wines from the cellars of Messrs Hawkins and Nurick, John Fells, Mayor Swarder, Rawlings Voigt, R & C Vintners, Whitwham & Co, and of course Chris Wilkinson. This was a rare chance to taste wines from lesser known vineyards of the Loire and compare them with more well known ones. An interesting feature was the rare chance to compare six vintages of the small ten acre vineyard of Coulée de Serrant.

A delicious lunch was prepared by Hilary with Anjou wines. An eau de vie de marc was served with coffee, ensuring that euphoria persisted after the last cork was drawn and the last glass emptied. After this the highlight of the afternoon was the swimming pool cabaret, featuring George Wilks, supported by a juvenile cast.

A year later Chris and Hilary very kindly hosted another tasting and lunch, with 20 Loire wines including an interesting selection from Chris's own list. Chris ran an excellent wine shop in Thame. The occasion was made more enjoyable because some of the party had been together in Saumur and had visited some of the vineyards. Later while some swam, others wrestled with Chris's cunning competition. The task was to identify bottles by their shape and colour, to name the wines they once contained and the country of origin. There is no doubt that this event was one of the highlights of the Sacavin year. It was instructive and enjoyable in all its aspects: good food, good wine, good conversation between friends, all the ingredients of Sacavin.

The Chapitre d'Or in 1986 was named in honour of Chris's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. A special song was composed and performed for Chris to the tune of Simon the Cellarer.

When Chris stood down as Grand Commandeur in 1989 he was presented with a framed photograph and the entry in the Courier describes it thus:

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"If one might be allowed one final reference to the epithet – which we are sure Chris will enjoy – we have lost a very 'full-bodied' Grand Commandeur which the framed photograph of him, enrobed and in full Rabelasian Splendour, and presented to him on behalf of the Management Committee, amply demonstrated. An inscribed silver salver – also from the Management Committee – further ensured he would never forget the Commanderie whilst savouring his 'full-bodied' wines!"

For myself, I have wonderful memories of Chris Wilkinson. I remember him as always being hugely welcoming, kind and jovial, fun to be with and great company. He was a true Sacavin through and through, and knew how to create Rabelasian occasions. He gave willingly of his time to the Sacavin and I shall never forget him. I feel the Sacavin was very lucky to have had such a fine Grand Commandeur who contributed much to the Order in so many ways. He will be sorely missed. Our sincere condolences go to his wife Hilary and the rest of the family.

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Norman Billington
1929 – 2014

A past Chef de Cuisine, Norman died in November at his home in Garstang, Lancashire. He was inducted in March 1976 at Vintners Hall and very soon joined the Management Committee. In 1986 he was appointed Chef de Cuisine in succession to the redoubtable Cyril Saper and, as so often happens, he rose to the occasion splendidly with his first event, the Chapitre des Angevins at the Dorchester in 1986. This event was notable for the representation of the Sacavin logo presented as an ice sculpture and also in icing sugar as a background to petits fours. Notable also, was the fact that dancing was introduced at this meeting and, by co-incidence, he was appointed Officier ! Subsequently, at the Chapitre de Rabelais the following year he requested members, optionally, to attend in period costume. As for himself, he appeared dressed as a medieval friar ! He was succeeded in 1989, after only three years, by Malcolm Harris but, as will be seen, his short term of office was marked with innovation, variety and great enjoyment.

His wife, Barbara, was inducted in 1984 at the Chapitre des Jolies Dames held at the Cafe Royal and together they supported Sacavin events loyally until, in 1999, they moved to Garstang in Lancashire. The move brought them back to their Lancastrian roots (although Norman was actually born in Yorkshire !) but, obviously, distance limited their future involvement with Sacavin. Another reason for their moving north was their great love of the Lake District, Ambleside and, in particular, Langdale where they have had a time share for many years.

Norman's career had spanned many different aspects of the retail trade involving House of Fraser and Army and Navy Stores, to name but two, but, in a distinguished career in management, he was responsible for rescuing two failing stores. Prior to the move back to Lancashire, they lived at West Coker in Somerset near to Yeovil and it was here that Norman's community spirit was much in evidence, for he became Clerk to the Parish Council for a period of 5 years and then, similarly at Garstang, he was to involve himself in the community and, in particular, the local Methodist Church. Although born in Yorkshire, Norman, having spent so much of his early days in Lancashire, was imbued with much of the Lancastrian character. He was very intelligent, personable, a loyal friend and with a dry sense of humour. He will be sadly missed.

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



Management Committee meeting **Wednesday 21 January 2015**
The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place at 11.30 am



Sacavin Challenge No. 8 **Friday 20 February 2015**
National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place
Calling letters to be dispatched early January



Spring Lunch & AGM at Queens Club **Saturday 18 April 2015**
Calling letters to be dispatched at the end of February



In the Obituary for Chris Wilkinson, Felicity mentioned that a special song was composed and performed for him to the tune of Simon the Cellarer. We reproduce it below. Should you be unfamiliar with the tune, it can be found by doing an Internet Google search, typing in "Youtube Simon the Cellarer". The version sung by John Montague is the best.

Our Sénéchal Christopher

*Our Sénéchal Christopher keeps a fine store
Of wines of the Loire Vallee,
Of Anjou and Touraine, the best wines of France,
For sale to the people of Thane,
For sale to the people of Thane.
Of Layon and Bouvet he never doth fail
And there's always Vouvray and Chinon on sale
But, he never alleth he always doth say,
While he keeps to a noble good ration each day.
But yo ho, ho, his bulk doth show
How oft the hanap to his lips doth go.*

*Dame Hilary too has her own domain
From which she dispenses good fare.
At Chough Cottage, too, we have tastings in Spring
With unstinted food and good wine;
With unstinted food and good wine.
Both Cordon Bleu dishes with pastry supreme
And majestic helpings of strawberries and cream.
Of the vending of wines, too, she takes a good share,
To allow the good Christopher office to hear.
So yo ho, ho, Chevaliers doth know,
What debt to both Chris and his wife we owe!*