



Sacavin Courier



NO. 67 SUMMER 2015

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Sacavin maybe all about wine. But as our Mendips trip proved, it's about beer and cheese too.

Sacavin Challenge No. 8

Wine tasting & Dinner - Loire versus Rhone

A record 79 Sacavin chevaliers and their guests sat down to a most memorable event at the National Liberal Club on 20th February 2015. This certainly proves the popularity of the style of tasting so expertly planned by Des Holland. It is also an excellent way to introduce friends to the Sacavin and see what we are about. 22 of those attending were guests and I hope they enjoyed the Sacavin camaraderie. In time they may like to join our Commanderie.

I think, and I hope many will agree, that our Wine Challenge is great fun. It is enlightening and interesting and to me it certainly proves that the Sacavin is not at all snobbish or pompous about wine in general. Often wine related groups can prove rather elitist and with the Sacavin this is definitely not the case. It is easy to include guests and then chat to them about the wines being tasted, with each person bringing their own opinion to the table - or should I say - the glass!

After Vin d'honneur of Bouvet Ladubay 2011 in the Smoking Room we adjourned to the Lloyd George room ready to compare 4 pairs of wines with an excellent dinner.

MENU

*Smoked Trout, Leeks Vinegrette,
Crispy Dried Ham*

*Daube of Beef with Spiced Beetroots,
Creamed Potato, Winter Greens*

French Regional Cheeses

*Chocolate Malt Tart,
Vanilla Ice Cream*

Coffee and Mints

We began with Domaine Mourgues du Grès Terre d'Argence 2011, Viognier, Roussanne & Petit Manseng from vineyards between the Rhone and the Camargue in the land of the Terre d'Argence. In the thirteenth century it belonged to the eleventh Bishop of Arles. The soil here is pebbly, and called progress, sitting on clay and limestone marl which helps

balance the wine. It is a very successful blend of the three grape varieties. The terroir and micro climate allows perfect ripening of the grapes. It has rich fruit with depth and complexity. The wine had a fresh apricot and peach bouquet with floral tones on the palate, and a long mineral finish.

From the Loire we enjoyed Domaine du Clos Roussely Irréductible 2013, 100% Sauvignon Blanc & organic. Vincent Roussely took over from his grandfather in 2000. The grapes are hand picked in Angé-sur-Cher in the heart of Touraine. The wine is made with no addition of sulphur and is matured in small oak barrels. There were white flowers on the nose, with fine aromatic flavours in the mouth and an animating freshness with good acidity. It has been described as wild and spontaneous! Some grapes were picked later to give weight and body to the wine. The 2013 compares very well to the best Sauvignons from Sancerre but without the price tag. This wine gained the highest vote of the whole evening.

Next came Saint-Joseph, Domaine du Monteillet, 2012 Cuvée du Papy 100% Syrah (25 year old vines). Cuvée Papy began in 1989 when Antoine chose the best slopes and finest grapes to develop this cuvee. The wine was dark ruby with intense blackcurrant and spicy notes. The flavour was elegant with good solid tannin and a long finish. It beat the Saumur by 2 votes.

This was paired with Saumur Champigny Rouge Domaine des Roches Neuves 2012. 100% Cabernet Franc. This is Thierry Germain's old vine cuvée aged partly in cask and partly in barrel. Thierry has owned the

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 vineyard since 1992 and follows biodynamic principles. For him the vine is like an upside down man; the roots are the head and the shoots are the arms and legs. Instead of trimming or green harvesting, he likes to roll the shoots around the trellising so that, come August, the vine will concentrate the grape sugars naturally. The thinking is that if a man cannot function without arms and legs then neither can the vines.

With cheese we tried Chateauneuf-du-Pape Domaine du Grand Tinel 2010, 83% Grenache. Many Chateauneufs are 100% Grenache but this one also has Syrah which lends colour complexity and finesse, as well as Mourvedre for colour, tannic backbone and acidity. The wine was spicy with a lush pure fruit filled palate, coated with deep silky cherries and a long finish. This outvoted the Bourgueil, and was also voted best red of the evening.

Our other cheese partner was Bourgueil Haut de la Butte Jacky Blot Domaine de la Butte 2011 100% Cabernet Franc. Jacky acquired this vineyard in 2002 having already brought his wines at Domaine de la Taille aux Loups to international acclaim. He seized on the chance to make equally great reds in this ideal bloc of 30 year old Cabernet Franc vines entirely on one south facing slope.

The first of our dessert pair of wines was a classic Muscat de Beaumes-de-Venise Domaine de Durban 2010 100% Muscat Petit Grains. This is the oldest member of the Muscat family. The vineyard was founded in 1159 overlooking the village of Beaumes-de-Venise. It is at the heart of the Dentelles mountains and is blessed with a rich soil and temperate climate. Domaine Durban extends over 56 hectares and has perfect climatic conditions. The wine had delicate flavours on the tongue with apricot and pear notes and the bouquet was sweet and rich.

The next dessert wine was from Domaine de Haute Perche Coteaux de l'Aubance Les Fontenelles 2011, Bronze Medal Paris 2013,

100% Chenin Blanc We were lucky enough to have Agnes and Christian Papin's daughter Véronique Papin, who took over in 2012, to speak to us personally about this delicious wine. She continues the tradition of her parents, with 30 hectares of vineyards divided between Cabernet France and Chenin, near the river Aubance. The wine was intense in colour with yellow and green then amber reflections. It had floral notes on the nose with marks of white fleshed fruit. It enjoyed a good balance with its richness and freshness marked by the minerality of the terroir. It proved 5 votes more popular than the Muscat.

As we tried to guess in each pair, which was the wine from the Loire, some decisions were more obvious than others. As the evening wore on I think we just enjoyed each wine for the pleasure it gave us, without really worrying where it came from! I wonder if I am allowed to say that! We certainly enjoyed a wonderful repast married with excellent wines.

Des Holland thanked Sandra and her team at the NLC for all their hard work. This was echoed by our Grand Commandeur. Geoffrey had diligently worked out that 70 bottles had been opened and 600 measures poured, excluding Vin d'Honneur! He then thanked Alastair for all his organization and Des for beginning to get the hang of it with the great success of Challenge 8! He produced impeccable notes and lots of hard work behind the scenes. He welcomed Véronique Papin and was delighted, as were all Sacavin, that she had graced our evening. He thanked us all for coming in record numbers. He said that all wines are best drunk in the company of friends, and their selection does not come by accident.

It certainly was a marvellous evening, and the crisp February air outside the National Liberal Club at 10 pm could not mar the sense of warmth, conviviality and well being engendered by the Commanderie des Chevaliers du Sacavin.

**FB**

## SACAVIN CHALLENGE No. 8

Jane Berger &  
Véronique Papin



Laurence Kauffmann, Mariela Sotomayor,  
Tessa & David Hollingsworth



Geoffrey Wheal with his guests,  
Phillip & Christine Newfield



Ann Price, Anna McKowen & Marie Foley



John Muggleton serving our wine



Des Holland, our Master of Ceremonies



## AGM 2015

Krystyna Lee



Brian Amor & Diana Whitcutt



Michael Gray



Rosemary Burnett,  
Julia Bellingham & Ann Price



Martin Hart & Martin Reynolds



## Spring Luncheon and AGM 2015

For our AGM at Queens Club on 18 April, some 60 turned out, members, spouses and guests, an attendance that made for a lively meeting and genial get-together at the lunch that followed.

The AGM itself began with a minute's silence to remember former Grand Commandeur Chris Wilkinson and one-time Chef de Cuisine, Norman Billington, whose deaths had occurred since the previous AGM. A prime feature of the proceedings was the review of our functions, now generally five per year, with lunchtime events proving popular, as was the change to May from October for our Loire excursions. Chef des Expéditions John Foley was about to leave for France with Marie, his wife, to reconnoitre the area round Blois, covering also Amboise, Chevalny and La Loire tributary, Le Loir, in order to plan the next trip. That is for 2016, tentatively scheduled to start on Tuesday 17 May. It has been quite some years since we visited this region. As for our previous excursion to Clisson, near the Loire's mouth, the hope was to devote one day to a non-wine attraction.

Mention was made of the Chapitre des Vendanges in Angers on Saturday 17 October this year. A number of our members had indicated they were likely to attend as part of a British delegation. Other than procuring the tickets, this was not to be an officially organised Sacavin event, but the hope was that there would be others who would also like to participate. Further details would be circulated to members during the summer.

It was also pointed out that 2018 would mark the British Confrérie's Golden Anniversary. The intention was to celebrate this in proper

Sacavin style. So, members, if you have any good ideas for making this a really special occasion, please mention them to one or other of the Management Committee.

### MENU

*Vin d'honneur*

*Cremant de Loire Louis Beauchant Duroc*

Smoked Salmon with Caper & Radish Salad,  
Horseradish Crème Fraîche

*Anjou Blanc Château de la Roulerie 2013*  
*100% Chenin blanc*

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Roasted Rump/Rack of Kentish Lamb,  
With Grain Mustard Mash,  
Chargrilled Baby Leek, Spinach,  
Red Current & Rosemary Jus

*Anjou Rouge Château de la Roulerie 2013*  
*Cabernet franc*

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Classical Eton Mess

*Coteaux de l'Aubance, Domaine de Haute Perche 2013*

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Coffee & Chocolates

As always, Queens Club produced a wonderful lunch. To accompany it we had wines from two of our favourite producers, Philippe Germain at Château de la La Roulerie and Véronique Papin at Domaine de Haute Perche.



# Sacavin Visit to the Mendips

*12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> May 2015*

The time for all the talking and planning was over. 12<sup>th</sup> May had arrived. Visits had been arranged, the twisting, turning, high hedged, narrow lanes of North Somerset had been extensively surveyed, assurances had been given by the Coach Company that they would be able to drive to all the venues and incantations (and other rites) had been performed for fine weather. (The latter will not be described in case of squeamishness amongst our readers).

A beautiful sunny day dawned and during the afternoon of 12<sup>th</sup> May Members of Sacavin, having driven through downtown Yatton and beyond, began to arrive at Cadbury House, Double Tree by Hilton, Congresbury to have breathtaking views across the Bristol Channel and beyond into Wales. Clevedon sits on the hillside to the NW and the fringes of Weston-Super-Mare are to the SW. There was time for our Chevaliers and their companions to explore the grounds of the hotel in the warm evening sunshine before meeting in the bar for the time honoured Vin d'Honneur and then sitting down for our evening meal in the Marco Pierre White Restaurant.



*Cadbury House Hotel*

Another sunny day dawned on 13<sup>th</sup> May and after breakfast we all met for an early start to drive to Lower Westcombe Farm near Shepton Mallet with the prospect of seeing the "Green Hills of Somerset" at their best. The Coach Driver agreed to take the route across the Mendip Hills passing through Burrington Combe - a mini Cheddar Gorge - where the Reverend Augustus Montague Toplady, a preacher from the nearby village of Blagdon, was travelling along the gorge in 1763, when

he was caught in a storm. Finding shelter in a gap in the gorge, he was inspired to write the Hymn "Rock of Ages". The fissure that is believed to have sheltered Toplady is now marked as the "Rock of Ages", both on the rock itself and on some maps! No problems for us when we passed the Rock of Ages but leaving Shepton Mallet we found that the road to Westcombe Farm was closed. Fortunately there was an alternative route and we arrived at the wisteria bedecked Farm on time, where we were warmly welcomed by Tom Calver who is the cheese maker and by Andrew Cooper who is the Wild Beer Maker. We were swiftly divided in to two groups - one group to the cheese making the other for the beer making.



*Tom Calver & Andrew Cooper*

Immediately we were struck by the huge enthusiasm of these young(ish) Cheese and Beer Makers. Tom proudly, and with great affection, described how his father had established a well run Dairy Farm and how they decided to create a product which gave added value to their farm. Research was carried out locally and in France and now they

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 have created cheeses which are in demand. They are currently constrained by storage capacity and are in the process of building a new purpose-built Cheese Store. This is set into the hillside and will be cooled and kept cold by the water from existing springs running off the Mendip Hills.

A detailed description was given to us of the techniques involved in cheese making along with the chemistry associated with the process. WESTCOMBE CHEDDAR is made from unadulterated, unpasteurised fresh cows' milk which reaches the dairy soon after milking and hits the vat still warm from the cows. Once heated, only traditional starter cultures and rennets are added to transform the milk into cheese. After they are cut and drained, the cheddaring of the curds – as well as their stacking and turning is done solely by hand. Once the curd slabs are ready, an old peg mill (one of only a few still in use in the country) is used to mill them down. After mixing in the salt, the curds are pressed into traditional cylindrical cheddar moulds and cloth -bound with lard so they can breathe through their slow aging (anywhere between 11 to 18 months). This all results in a cheese which has a deep complex flavour with a mellow lactic tang and long notes of citrus, hazelnut and caramel. The texture is structured and firm, with a smooth breakdown that keeps the flavours lingering on the palate. This cheese is often called a 'five mile Cheddar' because it is still tasted five miles down the road.

Also made is DUCKETT'S AGED CAERPHILLY from the same unpasteurised milk using the recipe used in the Duckett family tradition from whom the cheese was acquired. A spring has been diverted through one of the cellars creating the perfect temperature and humidity for the cheeses' maturation. It has a lovely fresh taste with a clean lactic tang, followed by bright flavours of fresh grass, raw mushroom and citrus. Firm, but soft and springy, it has a lightness and delicacy that is the perfect foil to the richness of the Cheddar.

We saw the WESTCOMBE RED being made which is made from the same raw milk as the other cheeses and is a take on a traditional Red Leicester. So we learned that cheeses, unlike wine, take their names from the particular process used in their manufacture rather than the location in which they are made. This cheese is a mellow but characterful semi-hard cheese with a smooth, somewhat crumbly texture. Made in traditional cloth-bound ten kilo wheels and aged for around 5 months it boasts a good depth of flavour with lasting notes of roasted nut and fresh summer grass.

Andrew described how he took the opportunity to start the Wild Beer Co in some space that was available on the farm with the desire to create beers that were not only different from beers that were currently available but also had unique qualities which set them apart. The basic process is much the same as exists with any beer but with the addition of a variety of fruits and hops collected from around the world. We saw barrels of blue berries stored ready for the current production line. He described his venture with enthusiasm and excitement and in the space of a few years now finds that he is exporting all around the world. He cannot wait to have more space when he moves out of his cramped areas once the new Cheese Store is completed. A full description of all the beers available is on www.wildbeerco.com. At the conclusion of both tours we all looked forward to being ushered into the tasting shop.

Then it was time for the cheese and beer tasting. We started the tasting with the Somerset Ricotta and quickly realised that the descriptions previously given of the cheese flavours are appropriate. It was further quite clear that the Beers were strong and are meant to be taken in amounts, similar to that of wine. Purchases were made, our Grand Commandeur, Geoffrey gave a Vote of Thanks and we departed through the narrow lanes to Bruton.

Lunch was taken at "At The Chapel", which is a Grade II Listed former 19th century congregational chapel in Bruton - a small quiet village built around King's School (founded 1519) and Sexey's School (founded 1891).



"At the Chapel Restaurant", Bruton

Our interesting Buffet Lunch was served in the Club Room and advantage was taken of the warm sunshine to sit on the south facing terrace overlooking ancient rooftops with steep gardens beneath and with an unspoiled calm vista of Bruton's mysterious and iconic 16th Century Dovecote sitting in solitude on a distant hill.



Beautiful Bruton

After lunch it was only a short drive in the coach to the Wraxall Vineyard which lies on a beautiful warm south facing slope situated

between the Mendip and Quantock Hills, where we were warmly welcomed by the proprietors, Jacky Brayton and Brian Shirley.

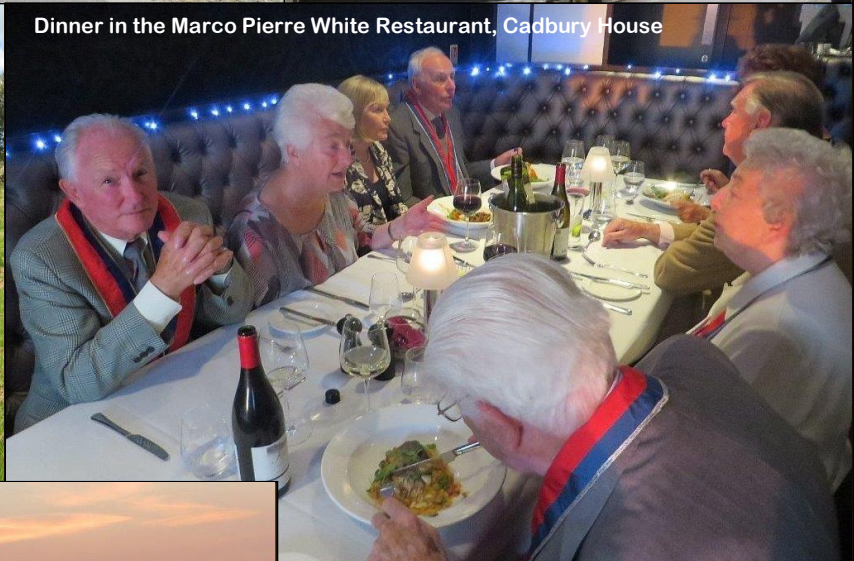
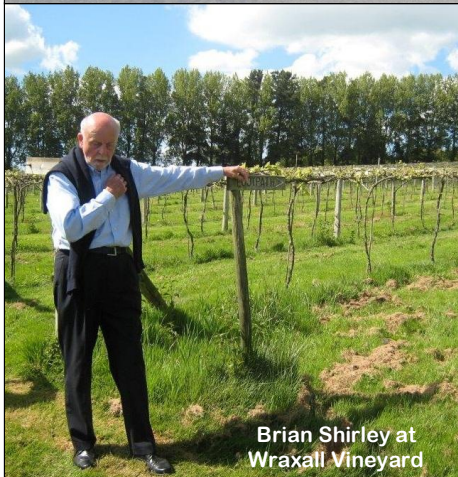


Brian Shirley & Jacky Brayton at Wraxall Vineyard

Wraxall is a medieval name meaning a nook of land frequented by buzzards. The Vineyard was originally planted in 1974, but sadly, by the mid 1990s, it began to fall into disrepair and become the home to 4m high brambles, deer, foxes and rabbits. All of the original plantings - with the exception of the Madeleine Angevine - were lost. Brian and Jacky were looking for a Vineyard in 2007 and bought Wraxall without even looking around the house. We separated into two parties. Jacky took one party up to the higher end of the vineyard which afforded stunning views of the Somerset Levels and Brian took the other party to the lower end.

In 2007 it was realised that most of the vines were beyond saving. With expert advice, the Madeleine Angevine was saved and several medals have already been won and awarded by the United Kingdom Vineyard Association. In 2012 Jacky and Brian won their first award in the International Wine Challenge. In May 2008, with the help of a company from Luxembourg who specialize in satellite controlled planting equipment, they planted 4000 new vines with military precision in 3 hrs 45 mins! Four new varieties have been planted in this way. Bacchus - which will give a quality dry white wine, two varieties of Pinot Noir for a rosé and to blend with Seyval for a white/ rosé sparkling wine. The two areas of

VISIT TO THE MENDIPS



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vines are clear and the vines are beginning to sprout in the warm spring sunshine. The hard work that has been done to recover the older vines was apparent.

As Jacky's group returned down the hill we were all asked to remove any buds that we had been shown were not needed for this year – a little help for her that day! To harvest they employ friends and local people as a team of careful constant Pickers. In keeping with Brian and Jacky's wish not to industrialise their vineyard home their wine is made for them by a wine maker in Shepton Mallet. This year this was creating delays in that the wine maker is going over to "screwcaps" rather than corks and so there were no sparkling wines available to taste. However we assembled in the tasting barn for a description of the wines and the tasting.

**BACCHUS** : the grapes produce a Sauvignon Blanc style wine. On the palate it has a mineral quality, a clean fresh, dry, taste perfect to serve with sea food.

**MADELEINE ANGEVINE** : This is a Loire grape that grows very well in Somerset. A white wine with lots of fruit in the bouquet and on the palate leading to a dry finish. These vines have a depth of flavour associated with old vines.

**PINOT NOIR ROSÉ** : It is pale pink in colour and has a strawberry aroma.

**SOMERSET DRY** : This is a blend of wines and each year will be different. The 2013 vintage is a blend of 40% Madeleine Angevine, 40% Bacchus and 20% Seyval Blanc. This has produced a crisp dry white wine with a gentle of Madeleine Angevine.

Purchases were made, Richard Ridler gave a vote of thanks and we rejoined the coach to return to Congresbury in time for a short rest before gathering together, with collarettes, for our evening meal in the Marco Pierre White Restaurant.

The weather gods frowned upon us on for the last morning and we made our way to the coach in pouring rain. In spite of being reassured by the coach company that they were used to visiting Aldwick Court Farm & Vineyard, when we were taken down a road with the hedges touching the coach on both sides we could be forgiven for wondering what would happen if we met even a car coming in the opposite direction. However all was well and we arrived at the gates of the farm which lies amidst beautiful countryside at the foot of the Mendip Hills where we were welcomed by the owner, Sandy Luck. The farm has been in her family for five generations and is centred on a 17<sup>th</sup> Century farmhouse complex surrounded by over three hundred acres of cultivated fields, hedgerows and native woodland.

We were shown into the barns which have been partly restored and partly purpose built for entertaining where Sandy gave a very interesting illustrated talk about the history of the farm and its transition to growing vines.

2008 saw the planting of the new Vineyard known as Homefield with approximately 2000 vines. Varieties included Madeleine Angevine, Seyval Blanc and early Pinot Noir (Fruhbrugunder). In 2010 an additional 9000 vines were planted on the site known as Woodlands, to include additional varieties such as the very popular Bacchus, Late Pinot Noir (Blauburgunder), Regent and Solaris.

In 2011 they picked their first Seyval Blanc and Pinot Noir to make a lovely Sparkling Blush, which was released in October 2013. 2012 was a very wet year and almost disastrous for vineyards but they managed to harvest the hardy 'Seyval' to make a fresh crisp white wine. 2013 was quite different with a full harvest and they successfully made Hathway White and an award winning Rosé known as Mary's Rosé named after Sandy's mother. The Pinot Noir and Seyval Blanc went into making their new sparkling wine which is due for release this summer. 2014 was also a good harvest enabling them to make more of the Mary's

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 Rosé, a new White and the return of their Sparkling Blush. The wine making is also carried out near Shepton Mallet by the same Wine Maker used by Wraxall.

By this time the rain was heavier than ever so not all of our party ventured out for a tour of the vineyards. Coffee was arranged for those who stayed and we had a short tour so see just how extensive the Vineyard has become.



Vineyard Manager Elizabeth Laver

We were also introduced to Sandy's friend Elizabeth who has carried out all the pruning of the vines alone! It would appear that apart from the adverse weather that often sweeps up the Bristol Channel they often have to keep badgers, deer and rabbits at bay.

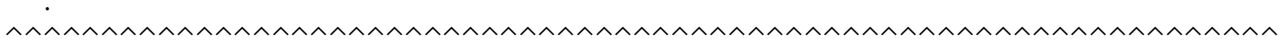
We returned to the barn for a Finger Buffet Lunch and purchase of our wines – Sid Price gave a Vote of Thanks and we returned to Congresbury at a reasonable time for those who were travelling onwards.

For any additional information on the various locations that we visited the following are their web sites:

www.westcombedairy.com
www.wraxallvineyard.co.uk
www.alldwickvineyard.co.uk

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



Sacavin Jazz Lunch at the National Liberal Club **Tuesday 1 September 2015**

Calling letters to be dispatched mid July



Management Committee meeting **Wednesday 23 September 2015**

The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place at 11.30 am



Chapitre des Vendanges in Angers **Saturday 17 October 2015**

Information dispatched with this Courier



Chapitre Princess Charlotte **Wednesday 18 November 2015**

Vintners' Hall, City of London

Calling letters to be dispatched end September



Sacavin Challenge No. 9 **Friday 12 February 2016**

National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place

Calling letters to be dispatched end December

