



Sacavin Courier



NO. 54 WINTER 2008

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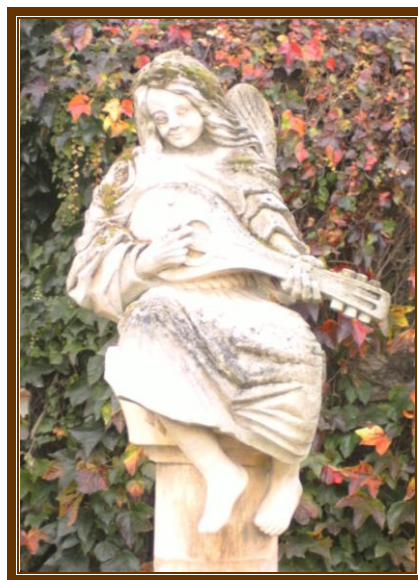
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An angel serenades us at the Château de Montreuil-Bellay



We are grateful to Fouad Ghali, David Hollingsworth, Richard Ridler & Alastair Bellingham for the photographs appearing in this edition of the Courier.



Loire Excursions

...

October 2008

Just for a minute, forget the wine, good food and pleasant company and remember instead the first damp chill of those October mornings as our coach emerged from the impenetrable Loire fog to draw up outside our hotel. But remember too the friendly welcome from Jean-Marie, our driver, as we boarded. And particularly remember the road along the levy, the daylight growing, a warm yellow brightness ahead of us as the sun began to burn its way through. Fog giving way to swirling mist, a glimpse, here to one side, of a great expanse of river and, there to the other, of the Anjou countryside. Then finally clear blue sky and brilliant sunshine, and everywhere the most beautiful patchwork of red, gold and brown, as the foliage put on an autumnal display to rival the best of a Vermont Fall. What a wonderful season to visit the Loire!

Chef des Expéditions, Ernest Lee and his wife Krystyna had, for the 5th time now, done all the foot work, creating for us an interesting and diverse schedule with, this time, noteworthy regard to some of the Loire's red wines. The base they had chosen for us, Domaine de la Blairie, must once have been the château of St-Martin de la Place, hardly a town, more a large village just 11 km west of Saumur. The building included a delightful but now disused chapel, light and airy and perfect for our evening gatherings for the Vin d'Honneur. Strangely, none of the staff could enlighten us on the origin of the name "Blairie". Various of our party speculated on a connection with "blaireau", meaning badger. Others had noticed the hotel's maple leaf logo and the large maple tree in the courtyard. A local name for a type of Acer perhaps? A third suggestion however, seems the most likely: a "blairie" thought to refer to pasture over which the local lord had grazing rights.

It is many years since the Sacavin had paid a visit to the Château de Montreuil-Bellay, just a short drive south of our hotel. It was here, in 1904 in the cellars, that the then owner, Georges de Grandmaison, re-established the

Sacavin, moribund since before the French Revolution. So an obvious starting point for our expedition. And we climbed the spiral staircase from the cellar that, all those years ago, had been the means of entry into our brotherhood. Not as we did it, of course, they had to climb backwards, after a copious meal, without touching the walls. (Limestone powder on the clothes would betray anyone who did). This was to prove an inductee knew how to appreciate good wine without losing any of his dignity! (Nevertheless, some of us found ourselves daubed with limestone even though stone-cold sober!)

Looking down over both the river Thouet and the town that had grown up round it, the Château de Montreuil-Bellay is a magnificent sight. And our guide, Marilyn, did a magnificent job too, in taking us through 400 years of history, from the 13th century kitchen to the 17th century "new" fortress building. Too much to detail here but a few reminders are, perhaps, justified: the 15th century collegiate church that dominates the site, the four canon's lodgings in the castle where lived a college of canons who served the church, the marriage chest of Marguerite de Valois (or

Queen Margot) as a precious relic of the Wars of Religion and, of course, the notorious and highly attractive Duchess de Longueville. This last mentioned found herself imprisoned for two years in her own castle. So she surrounded herself with entertaining friends and gallants like the Duc de la Rochefoucauld. They helped her to “make time pass quickly and avoid boredom....” It was in her bedchamber that we were introduced to an early form of hot water bottle, the “chaufferette”, which the ladies would hide under their skirts to keep warm.

To complete our visit we tasted three wines, the product of the château’s vines: a white Saumur 2007 (Chenin), an off-dry rosé Cabernet d’Anjou for use as an aperitif or, locally, for afternoon drinking, and a medium rosé Cabernet de Saumur, both made from Cabernet Franc.

No complaints so far and it was only a short stroll from the château to the Hôtel Splendid, the 17th century inn where we were to lunch. Diners might remember, in the courtyard, the pond hiding under an enormous thatched gazebo, full of fish awaiting their culinary fate.



Arrival at Domaine St-Just

Yves Lambert, our host for the afternoon, was already well known to many of us from his appearance at our Chapitre at Armourers’ Hall. We visited him at his Domaine St-Just, where they were in the middle of the harvest.

Pride of place in his yard was €120,000 worth of machinery, a yellow mechanical grape-picker. However, it wasn’t long before we were back in the coach, and he in his Volvo to guide us to his house in the next village.

Who remembers the walnut tree? As we walked from the road to Yves’ lovely house, many of us stopped to gather walnuts scattered all over the ground. (Cracking them open provided an absorbing, if frustrating, occupation for the return journey to our hotel.). Then past various entrances to the troglodyte caves which ran beneath his property.

Yves only started in the wine business in 1996. Before that he worked for Axa Bank in Paris. In 2006 his son Arnaud joined him and together they manage 40 hectares, producing a full range of wines. Amongst those we tasted were his Crémant, a blend of Chenin and Chardonnay in the Champagne style with fine bubbles and gentle colouring, and his “Ardoisier”, a sparkling red. Made from Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon, this was an engaging experience, very fresh and fruity, recommended as a daytime aperitif or as an accompaniment to chocolate desserts.

Pride of place probably went to La Coulée de St-Cyr. A wine in the style of a white Burgundy, using Chenin Blanc grapes, delicately wooded, of golden colour with green reflections. Indeed, Yves believes that this wine will challenge the best Meursault. We shall see, as our Echanson, Des Holland, has included it amongst the wines to be tasted at our gathering in January.

That was Wednesday. Thursday morning saw us at the other end of the spectrum. No mere 10 year history here, the Caslot family have been making wine since 1640 from their farmhouse near Restigné, some 25 km east of Saumur, at the centre of the Bourgueil appellation. It was Stéphanie Caslot, representing something like the 14th generation of her family to be in the business, who briefly welcomed us to the Domaine de la

Chevalerie, before handing us over to her father, Pierre.

The farmhouse sits on the hill overlooking the village. As you enter the courtyard, a dark tunnel, its entrance half covered with vegetation, leads down to the family cellar. Long, narrow staircases also lead down from the courtyard and the barn. Hewn into the tuffa behind and beneath the farmhouse, the cellar is so huge that you cannot help fearing that the house itself might fall in upon you at any moment. Here lies the inheritance. Row upon row, stack upon stack of unlabelled pleasure! And it was here that we were privileged to enjoy a spectacular tasting.

Pierre's Bourgueil is made from the Cabernet Franc grape, and this wine is produced from some of his oldest vines, which were planted over 75 years ago. Although the whole area enjoys a temperate microclimate, well sheltered from the prevailing northerly wind, it is the precise location of each vineyard which affects the quality and style of the wine. With the latitude of the Côte de Beaune and the longitude of St-Émilion, Bourgueil is ideally situated for making fine wine.

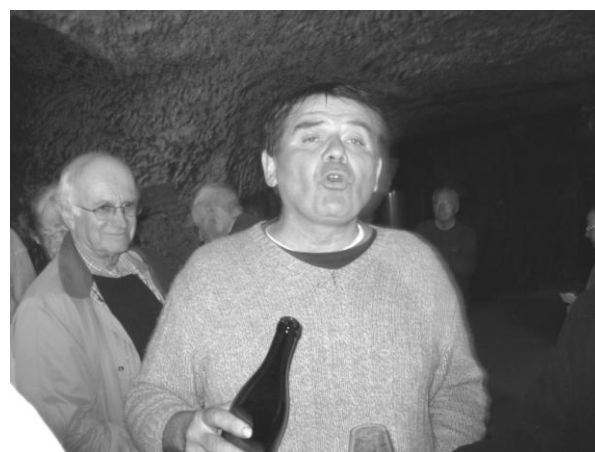
Pierre, like his father, is a great respecter of tradition. He vinifies his wine in the traditional wooden cuves before the second fermentation in modern stainless steel. This is followed by a period of ageing in old oak barrels, which allows the wine to develop without masking the fruit.

The young wine has a delightful fresh, floral bouquet of red fruit, and a dominant raspberry or blackcurrant flavour with just a hint of characteristic earthiness. Drunk cellar cool on a summer's day, it is the perfect partner for a pâté and cheese picnic. You can enjoy it now, but if cellared carefully it will continue to develop for several years.

The older wines develop a more robust nose and an altogether more complex flavour with hints of cherry, chocolate, liquorice and nuts. Although they are particularly good with all

meat dishes and strong cheese, they can still be enjoyed as an apéritif, served slightly chilled.

The business does, in fact, cover 5 different parcels, La Chevalerie, Les Busardières, Les Galichets, Le Peu-Muleau and La Bretèche. M. Caslot clearly had something to be proud of here and with great passion he set about ensuring we tried the produce of each. Not just one of each, but comparatively, so as to contrast 2006 and 2007 vintages with those of, say, 1995 and 1996.

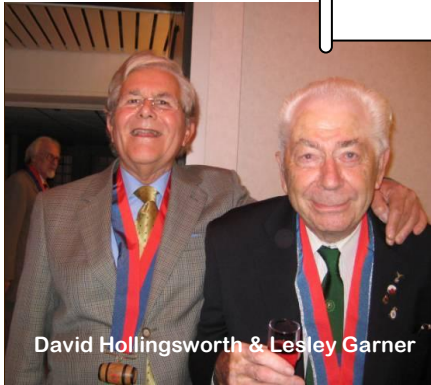


Pierre Caslot with yet another wine to taste!

Pierre's enthusiasm was infectious and with each sample the discussion intensified, the noise reverberating around the cave. Quite naturally the point was eventually reached when, for some, it became impossible to distinguish one wine from another! We vowed to bring bread with us next time, to cleanse the palate. Evidently, however, a great success all round, because not only had we enjoyed ourselves enormously but, putting all credit crunch concerns behind us, we left with the bulk of the hold of our coach filled with M. Caslot's wine.

Purchasers might like to be reminded of the detailed serving instructions given in M. Caslot's notes. For the older wines in particular, he recommends opening them at least an hour or so beforehand and decanting them. Remember, these wines have been stored in cellars at a constant 12°C so they do need a little care and time to recover from the journey. We will be seeing the Le Peu-Muleau

2008 VISIT TO THE LOIRE



David Hollingsworth & Lesley Garner



Dinner at Domaine de la Blairie



Château de Montreuil-Bellay



Shirley Zangill & Krystyne Lee



With Yves Lambert at Domaine St



The Cave under Yves' house



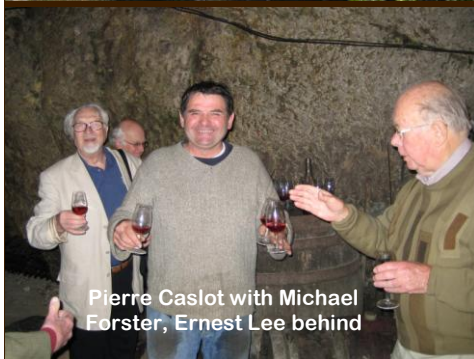
Mushroom cloud over Restigné!



Shirley Zangwill, Sherlie & Peter Vidler, and Madeleine Forster



Melanie, our guide at Bouvet-Ladubay



Pierre Caslot with Michael Forster, Ernest Lee behind



Stuart Craggs with a few purchases at Domaine de la Chevalerie



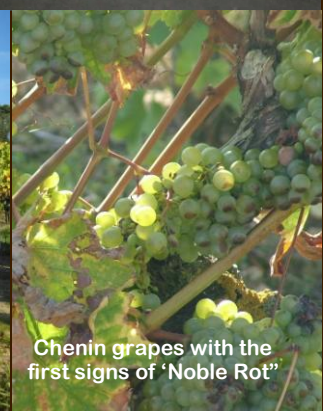
Tasting at Domaine de Haute Perche



Our host at Haute Perche, Christian Papin



Fouad Ghali & Derek Sheen at Château de Fesles



Chenin grapes with the first signs of 'Noble Rot'

1996 at the Liberal Club, this was Pierre's recommendation in response to Des Holland's question "Which of your wines would be showing best in London in January next year?"

Time for lunch and south across the Loire to Chinon, on the Vienne, disembarking from our coach opposite that famous statute of Rabelais, to whom we paid suitable homage. With only a short walk we reached our destination, Restaurant At'Able, where an excellent lunch awaited us.

Being so close to Chinon, in the village of Seuilly, the Musée Rabelais was near enough an obligatory stop. Despite some doubt as to the property's real connection with the great man, (his birthplace), this visit made for a pleasant interlude in the afternoon sun and, although time did not allow entry to the museum itself, a perfect photo opportunity.

Back to Saumur and on through it to St-Hilaire-St Florent, where Melanie, the guide provided by the Domaine de Bouvet-Ladubay, awaited us. Another contrast. Unlike our previous hosts, this producer has no vines. Instead it has an arrangement with some 120 growers all with the appropriate AOC to produce their wine. Every step of the journey is under the expert supervision of Bouvet's trained oenologists. Together they carry out the pressing, which is subject to a strict quality control. The first fermentation takes place in state-of-the-art, self-regulated and temperature controlled stainless steel vats. This eradicates temperature fluctuations, which could be harmful to the product at this stage. Then they journey into Bouvet-Ladubay's 1,000-year old venerated cellars.

Founded in 1851 by Etienne Bouvet, the domaine was acquired by the Champagne house Taitinger in 1974. So, naturally, a traditional sparkling is amongst the full range of wines on offer. We did not explore all 8km of cellars, nor see all 6 million bottles stored there. Instead Melanie concentrated on what is called "La Cathédrale Engloute", meaning

"the cathedral swallowed" by the cave. At least, this is the impression given by the display of 40 or so sculptures by Philippe Cormand on the theme of gothic pillars and vaults embedded in the walls of the cave around five years ago.

We tasted three sparkling wines. Evidently red sparklers are gaining in popularity because here was another example: Bouvet Rubis, Excellence, 100% Cabernet Franc, a demi-sec red and, like Yves Lambert's the day before, recommended for afternoon drinking, with chocolate or strawberries. The others tasted were a rosé, "Excellence", 100% Cabernet Franc and Saphir Brut 2006, 90% Chenin Blanc, 10% Chardonnay, served at Vintners' in 2007.

For our final excursion, on the Friday, we headed west, to that area of forest and vines between the rivers Aubance and Layon. By this time the weather was perfect and we were able to experience the Loire autumn colours in all their glory. A brief stop to view the Château de Brissac only served to reinforce the effect.

Then on to St-Melanie-sur-Aubance, to the Domaine de Haute Perche, the 30 hectare vineyard worked for the last 30 years by Christian and Agnes Papin. It was their friend and one-time neighbour, Chevalier Jane Berger, who had recommended this visit and we are very grateful to her because it was as near flawless as these things can be. Jane was there herself to act as interpreter and help with the tasting. The Papins had thoughtfully supplied tasting notes and local food to partition one wine from another.

Although specialising in Côteaux de l'Aubance, it was the reds that were of most interest today, contrasting their award-winning Anjou Villages Brissac 2005, recommended for keeping 6 years, with 2007 Anjou Gamay and Anjou Cabernet Franc, considered ready for drinking now. Whites were tasted too, notably the Anjou Blanc sec "Le Caractère" 2005, an

intense yellow Chenin that fooled a few by that appearance and, indeed its nose, into thinking it would be sweet! We will be seeing the Papin's gold medal winner, AOC Côteaux de l'Aubance 2001, at the Liberal Club in January.

For lunch we adjourned to the nearby village of Martigné-Briand, to the restaurant of the same name.

Our final visit was to the Château de Fesles, another contrast in that it's considered to be one of the most premium estates in the region, on the summit of one of the four hills possessing the right to use the appellation Bonnezeaux. It is headed by Bernard Germain, who also owns and runs the nearby Château de la Roulerie where he produces wines already known to us from recent Chapitres: Les Terrasses and his Coteaux de Layon. Indeed, the family seems to be a favourite of ours, we have also enjoyed at a recent AGM Saumur Champigny made by Bernard's brother Thierry at Roches Neuves.

The 35 hectare Fesles estate is divided into two parts: the hillside, planted with 100% Chenin Blanc, the only grape allowed for Bonnezeaux wines, also used for the Anjou Blanc, and the plateau, planted with mainly Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon dedicated to the production of Anjou Villages and Anjou Rouge "Viellies Vignes".

It was on the hillside, amongst the Chenin Blanc, already beginning to show signs of Botrytis, or "Noble Rot" brought on by the morning mists that came up from the Layon river, that we listened in the sunshine as our host explained the four stages in grape maturity and the need for time-consuming hand picking. Back in the Château we tasted Anjou Blanc, Anjou Villages and Rosé d'Anjou "Le Jardin" but it was the Bonnezeaux that was the most memorable, quite justifying the €35 per bottle cost of this labour-intensive dessert wine.



Amongst the Chenin Blanc at Château de Fesles

Three days of excursions were now at an end and we returned to St-Martin de la Place for our final dinner in the hotel before transferring the following morning to Hôtel Ibis in Angers, in preparation for the Chapitre des Vendanges that Saturday night. However, it is time to bring in another chronicler, because there was more than one Sacavin trip to the Loire this October.

The brainchild of Commandeur Owen Collins, a second expedition was organised, not for Sacavin members themselves, but those interested in future membership once work commitments allowed. Inevitably, this was a much younger group. Just a weekend visit but no less enjoyable for that and a great introduction to the Loire and its wines, as the following report by Robert and Alison Marsden, with assistance from Tim and Jill Hollingsworth, all members of the party, tells us.

After such a dismal summer in the UK we were looking forward to our trip to Angers in October which had been arranged for friends and family of the British members of the Sacavin. After a five hour traffic free drive from Boulogne we easily found The Ibis in Angers and sussed out the various parking arrangements. We had an hour or so to go for a walk around to get our bearings and discovered

how the hotel was perfectly situated by the La Maine.

Our first meeting was with our Sacavin British hosts, Brenda and Owen Collins, who introduced us to the other members of the party. Apart from ourselves there were Dakia and Jeremy Tribe, Valerie and Martin Hart, Jill and Timothy Hollingsworth, Laurence Kauffmann, Freda and Eric Mottram. We also met our charming French Sacavin hosts, Michel Leterme and Monique Christiaens. Then it was off to a wonderful little restaurant "Muscade and Cannelle" where we spent several hours eating, drinking Loire wines and conversing mainly in French. Thankfully one of our party, Laurence, was French and her translations throughout the weekend were invaluable when we got "stuck"! I think we were meant to have an early night then to prepare us for the rigours of the next day, but hey ho, we managed to find a cocktail bar to watch the evening life go by in Angers.



From the left, Robert & Alison Marsden, Laurence Kauffmann, Timothy & Jill Hollingsworth

Bright and early Saturday we met up and were allocated to a minibus and a couple of cars. First stop was the Château d'Epiré owned by M. Bizard. This is one of the oldest and most famous of the appellation Savennières and has been in the same family since the XVIIth century. We walked into the vineyards with marvellous views over the open countryside. Unfortunately one of the ladies fell backwards on the rough ground into a deep ditch, hitting her head on the dry stone wall. However future Sacavins are obviously made of stern stuff and she was able to continue the day, even doing rather well at the game of Boules de Fort later on.

The tastings took place in the ancient XVIth century Church. M. Bizard explained in good English that the wines take on the taste of the regional soil.

Our next stop was at Domaine Gaudard in Chaudefonds-sur-Layon which is the vineyard of the Sacavin Grand Maître, Pierre Aguilas. Here we had a simple lunch of superb cold meats, bread and of course his wine. M. Aguilas then showed us his vines and explained a lot about the methods of growing. All this was in French but between us he answered a lot of our questions (thanks to Laurence as well). Apparently the quality of the wine is dependent upon the pruning of the vine which should have no more than 5 shoots, cheaper wine having up to 8 shoots.

The next activity was at Chalonnes where we learnt all about the region's game of Boules de Fort at the local club. Never having heard of this particular game we were surprised to find that it took place in a bowling type alley which had curved sides. Even more intriguing was the boule which was unevenly weighted and not round! All it needed was the lightest throw, aided by our hosts, and then it wobbled its way down the alley, affected by the curved edges and eventually by great skill from some of the ladies hit the small white ball. This game originated in the hulls of sailing vessels and the curvature of the alley takes on this appearance. Therefore the boule is not directed straight towards the target and winds across the alley gaining some momentum hence the very light throw! After this more wine was consumed before our departure back to the hotel.

There was barely an hour before we were off again for the main evening event, the Chapitre des Vendanges with the main British Sacavin contingent. Some taxied and some walked (high heels on cobble stones?) over the river to assemble in the gothic Hôpital St-Jean to admire the tapestry of the "Chant du Monde" of Jean Lurcat. Then the French and British squeezed into the Caves des Greniers St-Jean for a tasting of Bernache Chardonnay 2008, Domaine des 2 Arcs before finally processing to the Greniers St-Jean for the Chapitre and the following dinner dance.

With a fanfare of the War March of the Priests, the Grand Maître and his entourage were processed into the hall. Being strangers to this event we had expected speeches but had not taken into account that there would be so many individual inductions, we noted 17 before losing count, each lasting at least 5 minutes. However that was an opportunity to meet some of our British party at the beautifully set dinner tables. Once the dinner started it became obvious that the French know how to enjoy themselves amongst family and friends. They also enjoy dancing and made the most of every opportunity between courses, which probably explained why our main course was served at about 11.30 p.m.! So with good company, music, excellent food and the very best Anjou wines we had

a most memorable evening. Our party was the last to leave as they turned out the lights! A final walk back to the hotel at 2 a.m. was a perfect way to end an exhausting but action packed day.

Finally on Sunday we managed to arrive on time to catch the morning 9.30 "tourist train" to take us on a tour around the streets of ancient Angers and to appreciate the many historic landmarks.

We could never have organised such an interesting and diverse weekend as this if visiting the region on our own and thank both the British and French Chevaliers for all the effort they have put in to making this possible.

Clearly a rewarding addition to our traditional biennial visit. As always, we are indebted to Ernest & Krystyna Lee, whose organisational skills led to a most enjoyable week. Additionally this time, we thank Owen Collins for masterminding the mini visit. And we should not forget our Délégué Angevin, Michel Leterme, working there behind the scenes to ensure the success of both.

FOOTNOTE

Late in the evening at the 2008 Chapitre des Vendanges, Geoffrey Wheal, Julian Thompson and Ernest Lee were called upon to re-enacted a famous – famous to French people, anyway – episode from French history, which provided the Grand Maître with an opportunity to make one of his legendary witticisms. Ernest describes the scene:

We were lined up, the 3 representatives of the British commanderie facing 3 representatives of the French confrérie. All 6 were given a glass and the head of each group was given a bottle of Crémant de Loire. "Messieurs les Anglais, tirez les premiers!" was the order of the Grand Maître.

This scene was a re-enactment of an episode that took place during the Crimean war, when the opposing armies lined up, facing each

other, the nationalities represented being French, English, Austrian and Russian. The French general was, however, notoriously "eccentric (i.e. mad as a hatter) and he had no idea which army was which and what he should do about it. So he issued the immortal instruction "Let the English shoot first" – which would enable him to identify who they were!

The Grand Maître's little joke was that his instruction could be understood to mean "Let the English draw their cork first", because 'tirer' means both to draw a cork and to shoot a gun..... Anyway, on this occasion the Crémant was poured into our glasses and expressions of comradeship were exchanged. Vive le vin de la Loire!



Many thanks to Des Holland for his help describing the wines mentioned in this report.

THE CHAPITRE DES VENDANGES IN ANGERS



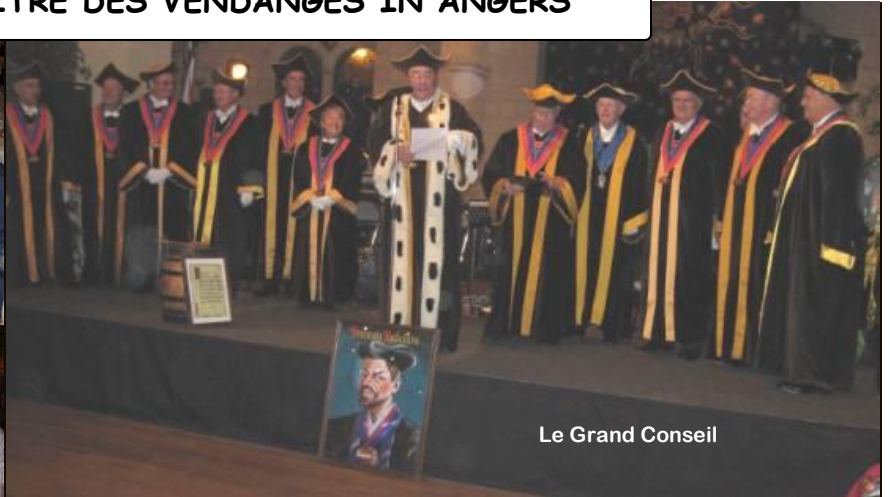
Des Holland, Gill & Philip Wood



Tessa Hollingsworth with Alison & Robert Marsden



Alison & Robert again, the morning after!



Le Grand Conseil



Pam & Colin Grant



Julian Thompson, Geoffrey Wheal & Ernest Lee

THE CHAPITRE DES FRÈRES NOIRS IN LONDON



2008 Inductees:
Martin Hart, Philip Wood, Reg White, Michael Hindley & Michael Gray



Gill Wood & Reg White



Elizabeth Peroz, Christians Asselin & José Mabit



Laila & Fouad Ghali



Lucy Gallon & Diana Whitcutt

Chapitre des Frères Noirs



Apothecaries' Hall

We are fortunate that, in the City of London, there is such a magnificent variety of livery halls. From the references in the previous article to the Chapitre des Vendanges at the Greniers St-Jean in Angers, it is obvious why we, the British Commanderie, would want to find a building equally fitting when it comes to our own Chapitre in London. Our choice this year was a jewel of a 17th century hall, miraculously untouched by the wartime blitz. Chevalier Shirley Zangwill has kindly provided the following account.

Sacavins were privileged to hold their Annual Chapitre at the Apothecaries Hall, Blackfriars Lane. The Society of Apothecaries is the oldest fraternity. It was known originally as the Guild of Pepperers in 1180. (It was fined 16 marks for adulteration in 1182!!!!). The Pepperers dealt mainly in spices and peppers and were responsible for importing, inspecting, cleansing and compounding these items. In 1373 the body assumed the title of the Grocers Company, because they imported goods 'en gross'. (Hands up all those who knew the original meaning of the word grocer). The word Apothecary derives from the Latin word for storekeeper and was applied to the person in great mediaeval households who kept the stores of spices and the like. By the middle of the 16th century the title of Apothecary was restricted to those who specialise in preparing and selling substances for medicinal use.

So, the Sacavins began their Annual Chapitre in these illustrious surroundings. We were privileged that Michel Leterme and Monique Christiaens, Christian Asselin, Elizabeth Peroz and José Mabit from Angers were able to join

us on this occasion. The evening began with a delightful sparkling Saumur. When the assembled company were well satiated we adjourned to an adjoining room for the Inductions.

First, however, there were two promotions. Terry Hatton and Julian Thompson are well known to us and it was with great pleasure that we observed the scene as Grand Commandeur Derek Sheen presented them with Officier collarettes.

There were six candidates for induction. We offer them a warm welcome to Sacavin.

Martin de Betham Hart, who had pursued a career in the shipping industry, ending up as deputy general manager for a group of engineering companies. The shipping industry brought him in touch with a number of well-known wine & spirit companies, as forward and shipping agents, provoking an interest which led to studies culminating in a Diploma from the Wine & Spirit Education Trust and a brief secondment to a vineyard in South Africa.


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**Michael Gray**, whose career with EMI Records at Abbey Road Studios took him around Europe, meeting leading conductors and instrumentalists and recording all the principal orchestras. His subsequent move into management saw him handling EMI's entry into CDs. It was while in Vienna that he met his wife Ingrid, whose family had vineyards in lower Austria.

**Michael Hindley**, a past deputy of the Cinque Port Liberty of Brightlingsea, Chairman of the Governors of the Colne Community School & College and CEO of a religious charity. Originally from Lancashire, his career had been in educational administration, which brought him to Essex, latterly managing large capital building projects.

**Reg White**, a Brightlingsea man who had established a successful boat-building business, "Sailcraft", and had followed a sailing career of his own which led to Olympic Gold in 1976, Yachtsman of the Year twice over and an MBE. Amongst other notable achievements, he constructed and sailed "Crossbow" for the World Speed Record and built "British Oxygen" for Robin Knox Johnson.

**Philip Wood** trained as an accountant and then went into partnership with a colleague with the surname "Disney". This quickly became known locally as the "Mickey Mouse Practice"! His hobby of property renovation included Wivenhoe Hall Folly, formerly the gardener's cottage, now his fascinating home with a most impressive cellar. Here, from time to time, he hosts his local wine group, Brightwine.

The final candidate was my son, **Jeremy Tribe**. Unfortunately he was seriously delayed, but in the true spirit of the Sacavins he was exceptionally privileged to be intronised after dinner in an informal and most friendly way. Born in 1961, his education took him into the study of computers. I know nothing about these things myself but they have enabled him to earn a living ever since. Working with

British Telecom, he has spent time in Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur and Nairobi and is married to Dakia from Morocco.

The food and wine were chosen by our Chef de Cuisine & Echanson Des Holland. Des puts a lot of energy and knowledge into choosing the wine and food and should be congratulated on his expertise and the time and trouble he takes to get things just right. Until one has organised a dinner such as this one it is difficult to understand the intricacies of the task.

### MENU

#### *Vin d'honneur*

*Bouvet-Ladubay Blanc de Blancs Brut  
A.C. Saumur 100% Chardonnay*

#### GALLETTE OF THREE SMOKED FISHES

*Julienne Green Beans with Sesame  
Sauce Hollandaise*

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*Clos du Rousseley 2006 100% Sauvignon Blanc
A.C. Sauvignon de Touraine*

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#### BRAISED RUMP OF BEEF

*With Baby Root Vegetables and Madeira  
Mini Salted Baked Potatoes, Sour Cream and Chives  
Spiced leaf spinach*

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*Domaine de Beauséjour 2004 100% Cabernet Franc
A.C. Chinon*

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#### SELECTION OF BRITISH CHEESES

*Celery, Radishes & Bath Oliver's*

~~~

CHOCOLATE AND FIG TART

Crème Fraîche

~~~

*Domaine de la Belle Angevine "Les Bonnes Blanches" 2005*

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CONTINENTAL BLEND COFFEE/MINTS

Choice of Cointreau or Dalmore Single Malt

A wonderful evening was enjoyed and we look forward to our next Sacavin meeting.




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We offer hearty congratulations to our Grand Maître, Pierre Aguilas. In November he was elected Président of the Confédération nationale des vins d'appellation d'origine contrôlée (Cnaoc). Since 1997 he has also been Président of the Confédération des vigneron du Val de Loire. So, together with his duties as Grand Maître and producing his own wines at Chaudefonds-sur-Layon, Pierre is going to be a very busy man!



*Our Chef des Expéditions is not one to rest from his labours. Always on the look-out for articles in the French press that might be of interest to Sacavin members, two caught Ernest's eye during our recent Loire trip. He has kindly translated and summarised them for us, as follows:*

### ☞ MORE CLICKS, LESS POLLUTION

During our recent Loire excursion, an article was published in the Saumur edition of our morning newspaper, entitled "In order to treat their vines appropriately, the producers of Saumur Champigny consult the heavens". The article then proceeded to explain that specialised meteorological equipment had been installed in the vineyards, which will enable the vigneron to anticipate – and, consequently, to counter – the onset of diseases, thus obviating the need to use pesticides.

Ten meteorological stations have been installed at strategic points. The readings they record will enable vigneron to mount surgical strikes, operations that will reduce the need for the application of pesticides. The information that will be derived from these installations will measure humidity, rainfall and temperature. From this information, models will be created, which will enable vigneron to predict the onset of disease, against which they will be able to take appropriate defensive measures. For example, the information collected during the winter will be applicable to the next Spring's vines.

The "Syndicat des Producteurs de Saumur Champigny"\* is in charge of this operation and, when the need arises, they will issue warnings (including on the internet) for members. The diseases that the Loire vigneron expect to counteract are mildew, oidium and other strains of botrytis – good riddance to them, say the vigneron (120 in number). It is anticipated that outbreaks of

these diseases will be reduced by 20-30%. This will yield a financial as well as an ecological benefit, since prophylactic treatments cost 50 euros per hectare and Saumur Champigny is produced from 1,600 hectares: 2 anti-viral treatments would therefore cost 160,000 euros.

This development adds a third strand to the ecological efforts of the vigneron of the Loire, the other two being biodiversity and the establishment of ZERs ("zones écologiques réservoirs"). The publication of the meteorological information on the internet explains the title of this article: if the vigneron click on the relevant announcements of their Syndicat, they will be able to reduce the pollution of vine diseases.

\* The President of this Syndicat is Fredrik Filliatreau – a name that is familiar to Sacavin chevaliers, since we have consumed wine bearing that name with pleasure over the years!

## NO BLUSHES FOR ROSÉ WINE

A newspaper\* in the Midi has published a news item on the popularity of rosé wine: over the past ten years, the proportion of rosé wines in the total consumption in S.E. France has increased from 8% to 21%! It should be noted, incidentally, that rosé wines are customarily consumed in Europe only between Spring and Autumn.

Rosé wine used to have a poor image – it was thought of as suitable for a pizza party. But over the past five years the increase in its share of wine consumption throughout France has been stupendous.

The President of the Slopes of Aix\*\* union of vignerons claims that the quality of rosé wines has improved significantly. In addition, the tastes of wine drinkers have changed: nowadays we prefer lighter wines. A rosé wine makes an excellent apéritif, particularly as an accompaniment to tapas, mezes and similar hors d'oeuvres, which are currently so fashionable. The article points out that rosé wine is traditionally associated with Provence and Val de Loire.

Giles Masson, Director of CREVR (Centre for research and development of vin rosé) makes an interesting point: people have the impression that, in order to appreciate red wine, you have to be very knowledgeable, but rosé wine is very approachable, without any complications.

There is a good deal of ignorance about winemaking technology for the production of rosés that the vignerons of Provence attempt to remedy in their Internet site. Rosé wines are not created by mixing red wine and white wine, for instance. Rosé wines are made from black grapes, but the grape skins are left in the pressed grape juice for 12 hours only, whereas the grape skins are left in the grape juice for a week in the case of red wines. There is wide variation in the pinkness of rosé wines: the rosés of Provence are “clairs et limpides”, while those of the Val de Loire have a deeper hue.

The growing appreciation of rosé wines has given rise to an increase in production worldwide – rosés are being produced in Bordeaux, the Landes, South America, North Africa, Italy and Spain. France is the major producer in the world, however.

\* Var: Nice Matin

\*\* AOC Coteaux d'Aix, i.e. Aix-en-Provence

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

#### The Trésorier's Note

- Subscriptions were due on January 1<sup>st</sup>. The rate stays the same at £15, or £22.50 if your spouse is also a Chevalier.
- Most of you pay by bankers order so there is nothing more for you to do but accept my thanks for making my life simpler.
- If you prefer to pay by cheque, please send this to me, Michael Forster, payable to Sacavin, rates as above at:- The Clearing, Deepdene Wood, Dorking, Surrey. RH5 4BQ

