



Sacavin Courier



NO. 75 SUMMER 2019

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A select group of Sacavins visit Kingscote Vineyard in West Sussex.

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A Wine Tryst: The Loire & Portugal

Wednesday 23 January 2019

Fifty five Sacavins and guests braved the freezing temperatures to attend our first event of the New Year at the National Liberal Club. Unfortunately, Max Britain who had planned to attend and who was instrumental in arranging much of the event, had to drop out at the last minute. We met as usual in the Old Smoking Room for our Vin d'honneur and to enjoy an old friend, the seductive Crémant de Loire Brut, Langlois-Château: a young fruity style sparkling wine. Langlois was founded in 1885 and is now owned by Bollinger.

On moving to the Lloyd George Dining Room, we were seated on round tables, mainly of eight. The rules of engagement were briefly explained by Commandeur Felicity Bellamy and clearly set out in a small booklet at each setting. The object of the exercise was not to catch us out in a competition but to give us the opportunity to compare, enjoy and contrast matching wines of the Loire with those of Portugal. The first two wines – consumed with the smoked swordfish loin – were a Touraine Sauvignon Blanc and a Ribeiro Santo Branco Dao. Both wines complemented the dish in their own way but exhibited very different characteristics. Felicity asked for a show of hands which of the two wines was preferred and, by a margin last seen at the meaningful vote in the Commons, our fellow Sacavins opted for the Loire.



Graham Macfarlane & Sid Price

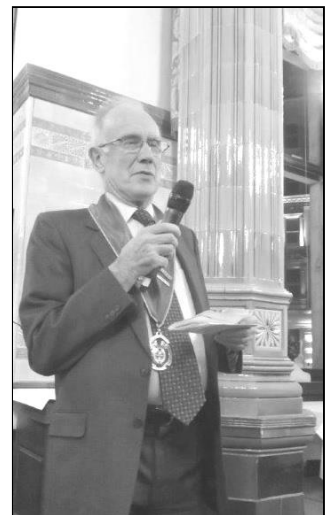
But Portugal was not yet done. Two red wines were served with the main course: a Loire – Anjou villages Brissac and an Almeida Garrett Entre Serras. Both wines complemented the Bourguignon extremely well. On a show of hands our fellow Sacavins had divided opinions on the respective merits of each of the wines. On my reckoning the Almeida Garrett took the vote by a small margin.

Following this success, we were treated to the most famous of wines from the Douro – Port. Ours was a 2013 Taylor's late bottled vintage and one which provided perfect balance to the variety of cheeses with which we were each served.



Adrian Macintosh & Anna McKowen

It fell to our Grand Commandeur, Geoffrey Wheal, to thank all those in the Liberal Club for making possible such an enjoyable occasion, those on the Sacavin Committee for putting it all together, and to wish all members and their guests a safe journey home.



Geoffrey Wheal

Sid Price



Spring Luncheon & AGM

Wednesday 3 April 2019

Once again we met at the impressive venue of the Queen's Tennis Club for our AGM and the Spring Luncheon which followed. Proceedings, as in previous years, began with a minutes silence for the four fellow Sacavins who had died since our last AGM: Raymond Harris, Brenda Wheal, Malcolm Reid and Trevor Harris.

Our able Trésorier, Philip Wood, took us through the accounts indicating that the loss on our current account, before taking into account the surplus on events, should be rectified by the increase in subscriptions. He also indicated that the positive combined surplus on functions, whilst to be welcomed, could easily have gone the other way.

Events over the past year were reviewed by our Grand Commandeur, Geoffrey Wheal, with particular mention of our Golden Anniversary visit to the Anger/Saumur Region and, in particular, to our invitation to the Château des Marchais. Apropos this visit, we were privileged to have received at our AGM our Grand Maître, Mme Laure Pertus, and our host at the Château des Marchais, our Délégué Angevin, Véronique Jérosme.

Future events were outlined. Chris Powis gave the 20th June for the trip to a Kent vineyard, using his vintage double-decker bus. Richard Ridler indicated that the visit to the Cotswolds and Highgrove was scheduled for the 10th September. Our own Chapitre was to be held on the 19th November and that of our parent body in Angers on the 12th October. John Foley was about to embark on his reconnaissance for our French visit in 2020: he was thinking of around the 11th May in the Sancerre area of the Loire. Further details of all these events would be circulated in calling letters to members.

It was at this AGM that our Grand Commandeur, Geoffrey Wheal, after holding the office since 2011, handed over to his successor Felicity Bellamy. Geoffrey gave a valedictory speech of his time in post and gave his best wishes to Felicity who, in return, thanked him for all that he had done. Geoffrey also gave his thanks, together with a gift from the Confrérie, to our Délégué

Général, Richard Ridler, who was also stepping down for a well-earned rest.

With the close of the AGM, 63 Sacavins, including 9 guests, which is one of our best attendances at our AGM, proceeded to the President's Room for Vin d'honneur and a truly memorable lunch. Vin d'honneur was the excellent Bouvet Ladubay Saphir and, as on previous occasions, the Queen's Club demonstrated this was one of the finest venues at which the Confrérie dines.

Vin d'honneur : Bouvet Ladubay Saphir

Lunch Menu

Home Cured Loch Duart Salmon

Apple & Avocado Foam, Cucumber, Watercress

Pouilly-Fumé, Domaine de Riaux 2016

or

Lamb Cannon, Cauliflower Soubise, Tender Broccoli,

Sauté Potatoes, Tarragon Jus

Val de Loire Vendée Moulin Blanc Pinot Noir, Jérémie Mourat 2017

or

Bakewell Tart, Clotted Cream with Fresh Raspberries

Coteaux du Layon Saint-Lambert, Aguilas Domaine Guadard

or

Coteaux de l'Aubance 2014 Domaine Haute Perche

or

Coffee & Chocolates

Felicity gave us her authoritative advice on the wines served with the meal and also took the opportunity to thank those Sacavins who had made the event possible: in particular, Duncan Burnett, Robert Aitken-Sykes, John Ingram and Christine Muggleton. It fell to our Grand Maître, Mme Laure Pertus, to draw the luncheon to a close by thanking us for inviting her to our AGM and to Geoffrey and all those who had visited Anjou last year.

Sid Price

SPRING LUNCHEON & AGM

John Muggleton, Max Brittain & Christine Muggleton



Retiring Grand Commandeur Geoffrey Wheal receives his collarette from his successor, Felicity Bellamy



Michael Gray with Brian Amor, Gaynor & Martin Reynolds & Ingrid Gray



Felicity Bellamy, Laure Pertus & Geoffrey Wheal.



John Foley with Laure Pertus



Table 8, replete and relaxed at the end of a splendid lunch

In my all too brief time as Echanson I have had a few interesting adventures whilst in pursuit of Loire wines to bring to your table at various Sacavin events. I thought I would share some of these with you to make you aware of how much trouble your committee members go to, in order to make each Sacavin event a success.

When buying in the UK for our events it is not always easy to find fine good Loire wines at reasonable prices. One can spend hours scouring price lists, checking terms for delivery, how long a special offer lasts, never mind actually tasting the wine! Some companies have minimum order requirements, others charge an inordinate amount for a delivery.

At the other end of the scale, in 2018, when I went with Sacavin to Angers, I bought a lot of wines from about 10 different vineyards. I would never have been able to replicate the situation above, replenishing stocks on the day of a Sacavin dinner in the UK! In France however we had the huge advantage of being

Luckily, many of the vineyards (or their owners) were members of Sacavin, so they looked upon us very favourably. Not only did we benefit from buying at source, but we had discount as well. It was very good to meet the producers, and to know that the wines I had chosen were made by our French Sacavin friends. I managed to buy enough wine in France for almost four events last year, and the savings to Sacavin were considerable. One challenge in choosing the wines was to imagine what we might be eating at each event. Normally one chooses the food first and next the wine.

When I delivered wine to Vintners' Hall, I was lucky enough to have a quick tour of the Vintners' wine cellar. As you may imagine, it was very impressive. I believe it had been purpose-built underneath Vintners' Hall. There were cool brick cellars with alcoves. Interestingly most of the wines were not in boxes but stacked horizontally, bottle upon bottle. My eyes were on stalks! Great names stood out. There was also a wonderful display of magnums and jeroboams too, and very expensive champagnes.

Often the addresses for delivery are different to the venue, so we had several challenges in finding exactly where to deliver the wine!

Another thing I learnt during my time as Echanson, was the glories of the spread sheet. This was all due to Max Brittain. At the touch of a button on the computer I was able to work out how much wine was needed for each event, and how much it would cost per head. Magic! There is a very fine line between having ordered enough wine, or too much, depending on how many members attend each event. I allowed at least one bottle per head

for each member. I always tried to have as few bin ends left as possible. In the main, the committee purchased bin ends to try and make housekeeping simple.

I very much enjoyed my time as Echanson and felt honoured to have been given that role within Sacavin. It certainly was not all plain sailing, but everything turned out well for each event in the end, with plenty of Loire wine to go round and enjoyed by members and guests.

Felicity Bellamy



Visit to Kingscote Estate, West Sussex

Thursday 20th June 2019

It was one of those most beautiful of English days when after heavy rain everything was fresh, clear and green and the sky a stunning blue but full of scurrying white clouds. Down the hill towards the Roebuck Inn came a dark green vintage double-decker bus driven by Chris Powis with Jan on board in the regulation dress code of a '50s conductress to make sure all had purchased their 4 penny tickets. With the Roebuck party on board it was off to East Grinstead station, with its accompanying convoy of following cars, to pick up the rest of the Sacavin party before driving the short distance down some challenging lanes and through the best countryside that Sussex has to offer to the Kingscote Estate for a conducted tour and tasting.



On arrival at Kingscote we were met by a number of the staff who showed much interest in the bus. The bus itself first entered into service at Chelsam and then in 1951 at Greys before, after a long history, ending up in the good care and restoring hands of Chris and Jan. The original farmhouse at Kingscote

was built in 1320 and part of the building had been used as an iron master's residence forging cannon balls during the English Civil war. Unsurprisingly, much of the building subsequently burnt down. The visitor centre, which hosts the tasting and other events, is a converted 15th Century tithe barn.

OUR VISIT TO KINGSCOTE VINEYARD



Duncan Burnett, John Martin, John Foley & Cathy Martin



The 15th century Tithe Barn at Kingscote



Rosemary Burnett with
Lynda Edwardson



Ellie Coleridge takes us through
the history & production of Kingscote



Lunch in the Tithe Barn



Jan & Chris Powis with
Lynda & Richard Edwardson



We were ably shown around the 150 acre estate by Ellie Coleridge. Originally, the vineyard was conceived as producing sparkling wines growing only the three champagne grape varieties and using the traditional champagne method. But on the untimely death of the founder, the current owner, Mark Dickson, has introduced other grape varieties such as Bacchus. New to me was a grape variety called Regent: a red grape but with pink flesh which produced a natural rosé wine.

The whole estate enjoys a tranquil and beautiful setting. Around the lake were spotted a number of greylag geese – such a change from the ubiquitous and garrulous Canada geese. And during Ellie's tour we were blessed with the sight, noise and steam of a passing locomotive and carriages of the Bluebell railway.

Lunch was served in the tithe barn: a simple but truly delicious chicken and vegetable dish followed by a selection of local English cheeses. We were instructed to a tasting of three Kingscote wines and their premium

sparkling cider. The first wine was the Kingscote Bacchus made from 100 percent Bacchus grapes. It was a refreshingly dry wine with, to my mind, the floral and citrus notes associated with a good NZ Sauvignon Blanc.

The second wine was their 100 percent Chardonnay: an un-oaked wine, dry and aromatic and full of citrus and apple flavours. I believe there was a general agreement that this wine would make an excellent aperitif.

The third wine, the Kingscote Fat Fumé, like the first was made from 100 percent Bacchus grapes but had been lightly oaked, giving it a slightly richer and more peachy flavour. We finished the Kingscote tasting with their premium sparkling English Cyder: a fine cider quite different to most of the ciders we traditionally come across.

Since we are a Loire wine society it is not altogether surprising that we brought with us a most generous supply of Loire wines, both a sparkling white and a red. As per custom we were able to enjoy our vin d'honneur at the table with a, now traditional for us, fine Bouvet Ladubay. The red, chosen to accompany the meal, was a Touraine: 'Le Becassou' Domaine des Echardieres 2017. Nevertheless, the proximity of a supply of good English white wine was too great to ignore, and a couple of bottles of the Kingscote Bacchus we had tasted earlier completed our enjoyment.

We remain deeply grateful to Chris and Jan Powis for providing their vintage bus and driving us to such an interesting venue. Although only 15 Sacavins managed to avail themselves of Chris and Jan's hospitality, I must confess that of all the Sacavin events I have been to this one was amongst the most enjoyable and memorable that I have attended.

Sid Price



Brenda Wheal 1938 – 2018

Sacavins were very saddened to learn, in December, of Brenda's death. We had previously had an inkling as to the gravity of her condition, because it had prevented her husband Geoffrey from attending our November Chapitre, his last as Grand Commandeur.



Inducted in 2007 at the Chapitre de l'Echanson, Brenda was already well known to our members, a familiar, genial figure by Geoffrey's side at so many of our events. Born in Sheffield, as evidenced by that friendly hint of Yorkshire in her voice, she came to London to study domestic science. It was at a Valentine Day's dance that she first met Geoffrey. Things could well have turned out differently as it was her roommate whom he was partnering that evening. Clearly, however, St Valentine had other ideas, because Geoffrey and Brenda were married in 1962 and set up house in Hatch End where they brought up their children, Robert and Elizabeth.

It is not difficult to fathom one aspect of Brenda that attracted Geoffrey's attention. Her culinary skills. Not only Geoffrey but the pupils of Victoria Girl's School in Watford, where she taught domestic science, benefitted from this. Later in life, her career took her to

the position of Chief Examiner, Domestic Science, London University. Indeed, Brenda became famous amongst family and friends for her

catering expertise, where she was known as Miss Efficiency, hosting anything from 25 to 30 at lunches, dinners and Christmas parties. Among other interests, the horticultural pursuits of the Hatch End Flower Group and assisting Geoffrey with Old Haberdashers' jumbles sales occupied her leisure time.

Brenda's funeral, at the Breakspear Crematorium in Ruislip, was well attended by the Wheal's many Sacavin friends. Our sympathy goes to Geoffrey and his family. We will all miss Brenda's cheerful presence at our gatherings.



Trevor Harris 1932 – 2019

Modesty kept Trevor's life story hidden from many a Sacavin. Born in Palmers Green, 11-plus success took him to Latimer Grammar School, Edmonton, where he excelled in mathematics. Accountancy was the obvious profession which led him to Westcote, Maxwell & Co, in Finsbury Circus. A great sportsman with a passion for football, swimming and ice-hockey where he played in goal, it was at a tennis dinner dance that he met Margaret in 1953. They married five years later and settled in a flat in Haringay.

Trevor had a fascination for surveying, scientific and optical instruments, developed as he explored suppliers' premises in High Holborn during his lunch hour. At one, Clarksons, a conversation with the owner led him to being offered the job of book-keeper. Unsure whether to accept, a

Ford Corsair was thrown in which clinched the deal.

Trevor had a love of cars inherited from his father!



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This was the start of a long career which ultimately took him to Financial Director and then joint owner, along with travel throughout the World. It also enabled him to move to Tadworth, Surrey where he and Margaret brought up two children, a daughter, now a barrister with the Home Office, and a son, a successful surgeon. He instilled in them, and his grand-daughters, the importance of education along with his appreciation of the better things in life, good food, classical music, foreign holidays, Royal Ascot being just examples. Yet he lived life at all levels, providing opportunities for those less

fortunate, including his own secretary, a disabled lady and through Masonic membership, St George's Lodge, for which he was Treasurer.

Last year Trevor & Margaret celebrated their Diamond anniversary, a great milestone in the life of a very English gentleman. Trevor was an enthusiastic member of Sacavin, enjoying in particular our fine dining events and, whilst never taking formal office, for many years became something of a de facto Deputy Ecuyer.



### Alan Stratton 1946 – 2019

One of several Savage Club members to have joined Sacavin over the last few years, Alan was inducted at the Chapitre Princess Charlotte in 2015, along with his wife, Vanessa and they quickly made many friends. It was not only with sorrow therefore, but profound shock that we learnt of the seriousness of the illness which suddenly struck him in February. Shock coupled with admiration for the strength of spirit apparent in the way he faced infirmity and provided details of his treatment. We are indebted to Pete Cockle at the Savage Club for providing much of what follows here.

Alan was born in Islington, his parents moving five years later to East Sheen, near Richmond. His father was an artist in glass and in a reserved occupation during the war, making specialised scientific instruments. Alan undoubtedly inherited his father's love of artistry in its many forms. He attended St Mary's School where he met Vanessa Blundell at the really tender age of 13! They were inseparable and married in 1967, celebrating their 50th Anniversary at the Savage Club two years ago. They had four children, Oliver, Rupert, and Ellie, tragically losing Jeremy who died just two days old in 1982. It was soon after this traumatic loss that Alan became a Christian, eventually volunteering as a teacher at the local Sunday School. He and Vanessa were members of their local church in Hampton and their faith was a great comfort throughout Alan's illness.

Alan left school at the age of 16. After a stint in the Civil Service, in 1969 he joined Freemans, the mail order company, working on the early LEO computers. He became a



systems analyst rising to a senior management role in the IT department. In 1990 circumstances dictated a change in direction, so he and Vanessa opened an Aladdin's cave of a delicatessen, *Tropicana*, on Richmond Hill with the Attenboroughs & Dimblebys regularly popping in for larks' tongues and a pint of milk. In the latter years Alan became involved with the Elizabeth Fitzroy support charity and worked in their finance department until he retired.

Alan and Vanessa shared a special interest in music: jazz, classical and opera. Another love, which began in 1998, was for the island of Barbados. After multiple visits they decided to invest in a beautiful apartment - White Sands Beach - in St Lawrence Bay. They have been commuting there ever since.

To lose a Sacavin colleague at such a relatively young age leaves us with great sadness. We all feel for Vanessa at this difficult time.

Our thanks to Martin Hart, Sid Price and John Ingram for the photographs in this issue of the Courier.

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



Sacavin Highgrove Visit **Monday 9 & Tuesday 10 September 2019**

*Calling letters were dispatched 21 May*



Management Committee meeting **Wednesday 18 September 2019**

The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place at 11.30 am



Chapitre des Vendanges **Saturday 12 October 2019**

Greniers St-Jean, Angers, France



Management Committee meeting **Tuesday 12 November 2019**

The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place at 11.30 am



Chapitre des Deux Belles Dames **Tuesday 19 November 2019**

Vintners' Hall, City of London

*Calling letters to be dispatched early October 2019*



Management Committee meeting **Monday 20 January 2020**

The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place at 11.30 am



Call My Bluff Wine Quiz **Wednesday 29 January 2020**

The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place

*Calling letters to be dispatched mid December 2019*



Management Committee meeting **Tuesday 10 March 2020**

The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place at 11.30 am



Spring Luncheon & AGM **Saturday 4 April 2020**

The Queen's Club, West Kensington, London W14 9EQ

*Calling letters to be dispatched at the end of February 2020*

