

SACAVIN



COURIER

COMMANDERIE DE GRANDE BRETAGNE DE LA CONFRERIE DES CHEVALIERS DU SACAVIN D'ANJOU

No 26

Winter/Summer 1992/93

For a variety of reasons - not least the pressures of all sorts of other commitments of the Chef d'Historiographe - this is the first 'Courier' to appear for a year. Picking up the threads again, this lends even greater credence to the feeling that everything about life is circular and cyclical. A little sharpness in August's evening air is a reminder that Autumn is coming and, with it our usual Autumn event including the annual Induction Ceremony and Dinner so it is natural to be suddenly reminded of last year's magnificent:

LE CHAPITRE DU MARCHÉ COMMUN

held on Monday 16th November at the Naval and Military Club (more usually known as the In and Out Club), Piccadilly, London W1.

The title of this Chapitre was chosen by the Management Committee in all good faith and mindful of the fact that we are the English branch of a French Wine Order, to celebrate what September 1992 was intended to mean to the EEC. It is only at this point in time it seems more ominous, with just the hint of a death knell, whilst there we were, back in the past, the flames of the torches lighting up a superb 18th Century Mansion as we made our way across the carriage way, encouraging something ghost-like in thoughts of the great political figures and influential society hostesses who, similarly, had traversed this crescent to call upon Lord Palmerston in his awe-inspiring town house.

There were very different spirits that prevailed, however, as over ninety Chevaliers and their Guests - the best attendance at a Chapitre for many years - sipped their Vin d'Honneur - savouring the truly 'cremant' quality of the wonderful Saumur sparkling wine for which our region is justly famed - as a preliminary to the Induction Ceremony, presided over by Chris Wilkinson, at which Chef de Protocole, George Wilks, introduced, instructed and otherwise coerced the election of the following new Members of our ORDER:

Michael HATTON - whose academic studies included a thorough research into wine with a special affinity to those of our region. He is a brother of Terry Hatton, also a well-loved Chevalier.

/ cont

Ernest LEE - whose many duties as Associate Director of the London Chamber of Commerce Industry Commercial Education Scheme include Assessment, which undoubtedly assists his good judgement of all wines but especially those of our region.

Martin REYNOLDS - who, as a Barrister, knows what is entailed in being called to the bar particularly as his brief includes arbitration - for Sacavin, upon the excellent qualities of the wines of our region.

Paul SCAIFE - an esteemed practitioner in the wine trade whose judgement will always support the wines of our region.

In addition, we took into our Order the following Members of the now defunct Confrerie des Compagnons Haut Normans du Goust Vin who are keen to transfer their allegiance to Sacavin and to the wines of our region:

Mary FARROW, who was one of the Officers of the Norman Order, with the title 'Noble Dame'.

Michael HARVEY, who is an Executive in Textiles and also a Member of the Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers.

Alan SEAL - who has a life-long experience in security and is secure in his appreciation of good wine.

Norman WILSON - a former pilot and retired Company Director whose life has taught him that wine is "an essential ingredient to enjoyment of the good things of life"

together with a married couple who joined together:

Mary LITTLETON BERNSTEIN - who was also a 'Noble Dame' of the Confrerie des Compagnons Haut-Normans, and who lectures upon wine and spirits.

Eric BERNSTEIN - who has served as both a sailor and a soldier, then as a civil servant, and who is being coached upon the finer points of wine by his wife, Mary.

Our grateful thanks are due to Ecuyer Raymond Harris for persuading his friends of the Haut-Normans Confrerie to join Sacavin. Not only are they making a very welcome contribution to our funds, but also a pleasing introduction to very charming and friendly new members. We extend to them a very warm welcome to our ranks.

The Grand Commandeur greeted all the new Chevaliers joining us, to which a witty response was given by newly-elected Martin Reynolds. During the evening, the Grand Commandeur also promoted the new 2nd Halberdier - Peter Bouch - to becoming an Officier upon becoming the second axeman!

The grandeur of the Naval and Military Club rather than subdued, added to the sense of occasion as Chevaliers and their guests enjoyed a memorable meal complemented by the excellent wines of Anjou, carefully selected and described by Chancellor Frank Coe.

This Chapitre was Malcolm Harris's last as Chef de Cuisine and, after so many Chapitres which he has arranged which have all been outstanding, he nevertheless managed to save the best till last! Our very grateful thanks to him.

Poets never stop reminding us Spring follows Winter and, for the Sacavin calendar, after the annual Chapitre comes the:

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

this year held at the Bleeding Heart Restaurant, Bleeding Heart Yard,

Greville Street, London EC1, on Saturday 27th March. This venue boasted, perhaps, even more of the ghostly. The bleeding heart refers to that of the 17th Century heiress Lady Elizabeth Hatton whose breast was torn apart, exposing a heart still vainly pumping blood, after her murder by her most recently jilted lover - a foreign ambassador - or so the legend would have us believe. Again, however, the Sacavins were not to be overpowered by what may have happened in the past. Dickens also showed scepticism regarding the Bleeding Heart legend, in 'Little Dorrit' and, certainly, the flavour of our AGM this year was far more Dickensian, with the emphasis upon congenial company, high-spirited conviviality all round.

With both the Grand Commandeur and the Senechal having to give their apologies, the Chair for the Meeting was very ably filled by Chef de Protocole, George Wilks, as he steered members present and their guests through the Agenda items dealing with the general business of the Commanderie. Chevaliers are already aware of these details, however, as the Minutes of the 1993 AGM were sent to each of them at the beginning of May.

This was the first AGM for several years, to take place on a Saturday, and the Management Committee had been worried this might affect attendance. These fears proved groundless as 48 members and their guests filled to capacity the rooms set aside for both Meeting and Dinner. Of those present, half approved a Saturday date for our AGM and half would have preferred a different evening. All, however, approved the impressive five courses of the AGM Dinner and the flowing of the wines, so well chosen by Chancellor Frank Coe, that accompanied it, freeing tongues to converse, in the usual cheery Sacavin way with all and sundry.

The Bleeding Heart Restaurant is an oasis in the city for our new Chef de Cuisine, Newton Grant, and it is through his good offices, and close collaboration with his predecessor, Malcolm Harris, that made this such a welcome event - our thanks to them both.

The delights of Spring are but an introduction to the joys of Summer and, this year, the

SUMMER WINE TASTING LUNCHEON AND VISIT

was a great joy as our Treasurer, Robert Wills, recalls how:

'Twenty-four Sacavins and friends met, as scheduled, at Penshurst Vineyards, just outside the attractive Kent village of Penshurst near Tonbridge on a bright, dry June morning. Warmly welcomed by vigneron David Westphal, the tour began with a brief history of the estate set against a backcloth of rows of young vines. Penshurst Estate began as a commercial grower of apples and Apple Wine and Apple Juice are still made from apples grown in their orchards. Back in 1971 it was decided to clear an old orchard on a south facing slope and plant 2 acres of Muller Thurgau vines. The first planting was made in 1972 and in October 1975 the first grapes were harvested, resulting in 200 bottles of good quality and enjoyable wine. A bumper harvest followed in 1976 when some 14,000 bottles of wine were produced and it was then decided that the Estate should become a commercial vineyard.

Kent has a long history of viticulture and, with soil structures and hours of sunlight for selected south facing slopes comparable with that found in the Rhineland, good yields can be expected from certain varieties of grapes. Penshurst use five - Muller-Thurgau, Scheurebe, Reichensteiner, Ehrenfelser and the Seyval-Blanc and the aim is to make wines that are light and fruity, with a distinctive flavour and bouquet, verging in sweetness from dry to medium. Experimentation with

other varieties and growing of the vines in plastic tunnels to obtain a later ripening shows encouraging results and the vineyard has plans to produce a sparkling type wine. Moves are also afoot to produce blends of wines as well as the varieties.

The 12,000 vines on the Estate are grown on the Double Curtain system. Stout T-shaped supports running north to south about 6ft high carry wire at each end of the cross piece. David explained that the vines could be easily netted if necessary to prevent attacks on the fruit by starlings and blackbirds and the system gives good yields. Harvesting is by hand with 6 teams of 2 pickers in each team working across 3 rows of vines at a time. With 3 teams picking up the rows and 3 teams picking down from the opposite end, very few grapes are missed and the 12 pickers can average 6 tons a day.

Moving into the winery, David gave a brief explanation of his wine making. Incoming trailer loads of $1\frac{1}{2}$ tons of picked grapes are pumped straight into the press. With a maximum loading of $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons, each pressing takes $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours and the resultant must is pumped into stainless steel settlement tanks, where it is kept for 24-48 hours, after which the clear liquid is drawn off and pumped into stainless steel fermentation tanks. Fermentation takes some 4-6 weeks and the wine is racked off, generally in February, when it is filtered and blended. For oaked wines the Estate has a 4,000 litre German oak cask where the wine can be kept for 18 months.

The vineyard uses recycled glass bottles which are sterilised before use, the bottling plant handling some 5,000-8,000 bottles a day. Each bottle has two labels. The neck label records the wine variety, the year and the alcohol content. The main label has a scene taken from a 150 year old print of Penshurst village, showing the church and village from a viewpoint on Rogues Hill, with the amusing addition of a Wallaby hidden in the scene. This because there are wallabies, rare breeds of sheep, black swans, two Emus, plus ducks and geese to amuse and attract the visitors.

To complete the visit, David invited the group to taste 5 wines. The first was an oaked 1986 Ehrenfelser. Developed in 1929 from a crossing of Riesling x Silvaner it ripens early, but being a strong and healthy vine, the berries can be left on the vine for later harvesting. This wine was dry and fruity with a definite oaky finish and, at 10.5% volume, a surprisingly weighty wine. Then followed an unoaked 1989 Ehrenfelser which, compared with the first wine, was softer but still dry and fruity.

The third wine was a 1989 Scheurebe. Named after George Scheur, this is another crossing of the Riesling x Silvaner. Developed in 1916, this grape has a distinctive blackcurranty aroma and a good acidity. It does need to be fully ripe to produce a palatable wine and, in the right conditions, can be made to produce quite a sweet wine. This was a medium dry wine with a distinctive taste and, at 9% volume, a pleasant drinking wine.

The fourth wine was a 1990 Muller-Thurgau. The most famous of the crossings of Riesling x Sylvaner, it was developed in 1883 but was not generally accepted until 1938. Characterised by low acid levels, it produces a very agreeable 'jug' wine.

Finally we were given a 1990 Seyval Blanc. A French Hybrid of the Seibel, the vine is good, disease resistant, and, by budding and ripening early, it is a very popular variety to vine growers in England. A medium wine, this would be a particularly pleasant wine to drink on a summer's day.

As with most English table wines, bottle prices were on the high side, ranging from £4.30 to £5.40 but, taking into consideration the size of the vineyard, the cost of production and the Excise duty payable on such wines, represent reasonable value for money. It was generally agreed that the wines tasted were good examples of the high standard found with English wines. Clean, fresh, with fine fruity bouquets that promise and deliver in the mouth, the tasting ended with Derek Sheen, the Organiser of this Visit to Penshurst, thanking David for a most interesting and instructive visit.

The group just had time to take a brief look at the wallabies, sheep and birds, before driving through winding Kent lanes to Chiddingstone where luncheon was arranged at the Castle Inn. The first reference to this ancient village occurs in 814 and the row of Tudor timbered houses are now under the protection of the National Trust. The Castle Inn has been a hostelry for some 500 years and is justifiably famous for its food and ambience. The menu for the lunch was varied enough to suit varying palates and, judging from the rising volume of noise as the meal progressed, was greatly enjoyed by all.

A typically pleasant Sacavin luncheon ended when Derek Sheen enjoined the group to follow him to Cowden where we were to visit Waystrode Manor Gardens. Inevitably the line of cars lost contact along the winding lanes and were somewhat fortuitously reunited at Cowden village before driving on to the Manor House. Nobody knows when the house was built but Elizabethan historians say the first owner bore the name of Wheystrode in the early 13th Century and the Style family occupied the house for over 500 years up to the 1960s. Mr and Mrs Peter Wright, the present owners, bought the Manor House in 1963 and have created a fascinating plantsman's garden in the 8 acres of grounds. We were met by Pat Knight and invited to view the many interesting features including the water garden, the laburnum tunnel, a wisteria walk, statuary, and natural ponds, all set out in immaculately kept lawns. Old fashioned roses, clematis and a variety of shrubs and unusual trees gave much pleasure to the gardeners in the party and it really was a pleasant late afternoon stroll in idyllic surroundings. Tea and truly scrumptious home-made cakes, enjoyed in a small garden pavilion, concluded the visit and ended a first class early summer event! All congratulations to Organiser, Derek Sheen, for arranging, once more, a truly memorable day out in the country.

The more than a hint of frost in August brings the sudden realisation that, ever so slightly, the evenings are beginning to draw in and it is time to think, once more, of the attractions of Autumn. The first of these, the Biennial

VISIT TO FRANCE

will see 21 Chevaliers and their partners leaving England on 23rd September to enjoy five days of visits and reunions with our French colleagues in Angers. For the first time, only two participants are flying - the rest travelling by car over land and sea, leaving one to wonder whether the new regulations enabling a greater allowance of wine to be brought back has something to do with this new arrangement! All are staying at the Hotel d'Anjou in Angers with a coach taking them to the various vineyards in an itinerary arranged by Chef de Protocole George Wilks, in association with Chancelier Frank Coe and in close collaboration with our French opposite numbers, whilst the new Chef de Voyage - Pat Calmels - has coordinated hotel and travel arrangements.

The choice of dates for this Visit has been prompted by the opportunity

for British Sacavin to be present at one of the most important annual events of the Confrerie, the:

GRAND CHAPITRE DES VENDANGES

which is being held half way through the Visit - on Saturday 25th September - in Angers Castle, with the Belgian and Japanese Ambassadors to France among the honoured guests. The Order of Programme is:-

- 18.30 Welcome Reception by Le Grand Maitre, M. Pierre Gaté, in the Castle Gardens
- 19.00 The Induction in the Castle Chapel
- 20.00 Dinner in the Grand Salon of the Castle Governor

Those not going on the Visit but who may be in France at this time and would like to attend, should apply, without delay, to:

La Confrerie des Chevaliers du Sacavin d'Anjou,
73 rue Plantagenet,
49100 Angers, France
Tel: 41 87 62 57

Mention of our host for the Visit:

LE GRAND MAITRE

is a reminder of being recently notified by our French colleagues that, at the General Meeting of the Confrerie held on 5th July 1993 in Angers, M. Pierre Gaté was re-elected 'Le Grand Maitre'. M. Gaté has welcomed several parties from the British Commanderie to the Chapitres in Angers and we send our sincerest congratulations and loyal greetings to him on being chosen to continue in this highest office of our Order.

For our part, we would be delighted to welcome Le Grand Maitre to

LE CHAPITRE DE BACCHUS

taking place on MONDAY 8TH NOVEMBER 1993 at the Savile Club, Brook Street, London W 1. Two very successful Annual General Meetings with their complementary AGM Vin d'Honneurs and Dinners in the delightful setting of the Savile Club has persuaded the Management Committee that it should prove a superb venue for the most prestigious event in our annual calendar - the Induction Ceremony and Dinner. The Booking Form is enclosed with this newsletter from which Chevaliers can see that they and their guests will enjoy an outstanding meal, planned for them by Chef de Cuisine Newton Grant. They may take it for granted that this will be enhanced by wines of our region, especially chosen by Chancelier Frank Coe. The programme for the evening follows the pattern of previous years, i.e.:-

- 6.00 pm Vin d'Honneur
- 6.30 pm Induction Ceremony
- 7.30 pm Dinner

The wheel turns yet again and, though still in summer, we are already projected not just past Christmas but into next Spring with plans all ready well advanced for the:

1994 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

with SATURDAY 16TH APRIL 1994 confirmed as the date. The venue for this year's AGM proved so popular with so many members that we are setting a new precedent for ourselves by returning, for next year's Meeting, to the Bleeding Heart Restaurant, Bleeding Heart Yard, Greville Street, London EC1. Final details need to be finalised but the programme can be announced as:-

6.00 pm Wine Tasting
7.00 pm Annual General Meeting
8.00 pm AGM Dinner

Next year is the 25th Anniversary of the Founding of the British Commanderie and this is the first event to celebrate a year the Management Committee aim to make truly memorable.

OBITUARY

Earlier we greeted our newest members and now we have the sad duty to record the passing, from our midst, of all too many eminent Chevaliers who have been influential in the development of Sacavin.

Just after this year's AGM, we learned of the death of our first Chef de Voyage, Nick Kyriakides, after a long illness. Nick had organised the travel and hotels for most of the Commanderie's recent Biennial Visits to France and, as an Officier, had, for several years, been a very supportive member of the Management Committee. The Commanderie's sympathy and condolences has been passed on to his family.

Within a few days of this loss, we were advised of the death of Harold Way who had been amongst our most stalwart supporters. With his wife Joan, he had attended every event - AGMs, Chapitres, Visits - for many, many years, both of them impressing us all with their cheerful and friendly manner. We send our sincerest condolences to Joan upon her very sad loss.

Then, just a few weeks ago, news came of the sudden death, whilst on holiday in Vienna, of Stanley Holmes. Until recently he, too, had supported us actively and we shall miss his jolly face at our events. Our thoughts are with Felicity on her very sad bereavement.

It was also a very great shock to learn, in May, of the very sudden and unexpected death of Yves Cariou, the secretary of the Confrerie in Angers. Yves Cariou had always helped us as much as he was able and had been instrumental in arranging the visits and ensuring hospitality for those attending the 1989 Biennial Visit to France. We extend to our comrades in Angers and the family of Yves Cariou our deepest sympathy upon their loss.

SECRETARIAT

Chevaliers with queries or who wish to notify address changes, etc., should contact the Chef d'Historiographie:-

Pat Salzedo
363 Bideford Green
Leighton Buzzard, Beds
LU7 7TX (Tel: 0525 371126)

Chevaliers with queries regarding payment of their subscriptions as Active Members should contact the Treasurer:

Robert Wills
14 West Meads
Onslow Village
Guildford, Surrey
GU2 5ST (Tel: 0483 62314)