

SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No. 31

Spring 1997

Strictly speaking, this should be the winter issue of the Courier, to complement issue No. 30 which was for Summer 1996. But we will make this a permanent arrangement so that we can greet you in the Spring with news of the AGM and a calendar for the year to come. However, the weeks have slipped by even more inexorably than usual since Christmas and with summer temperatures and sunny days, it is not just a question "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" Spring is well and truly here! So Spring it is! Though winter may have gone now, it did come and with it, for us, our Grand Event for 1996.

Le Chapitre De Boeuf Ecosse

Our 1996 Chapitre was held at Butchers Hall on Saturday 16th November. In many ways, it was a bitter-sweet occasion for us - sweet because it was the Sacavin celebration of the ninetieth birthday of George Wilks, our Chef de Protocole of many, many years of distinguished service - bitter, because this Chapitre was George's own swansong in this demanding role. And no swansong was ever sweeter as George, surrounded by three generations of his own family, and even more present of his Sacavin friends and admirers, responded with characteristic warmth to the atmosphere of happiness and goodwill pervading the whole proceedings. This was reflected throughout the Induction Ceremony as George, in his final appearance as Chef de Protocole, supervised the election, as new Chevaliers:-

Michael Forster - who is eminently qualified to join an Anglo-French Order, like Sacavin, being half-French, with a French wife and part-owner of a French vineyard;

Keith Lockyer - whose office as Secretary of the Royal College of Pathologists has encouraged his interest in wine and he now looks to Sacavin to develop his knowledge of its magic and mystery;

Shirley Webster - whose love of good wine and good food is combined with her interest in and knowledge

of the Plantagenet history we share with our colleagues in Anjou and there can be no better reason for joining us.

This sense of occasion was continued by the Grand Commandeur, Derek Sheen, as he read out the apologies for absence but congratulations to George and our Order generally from K N 'Bobby' Baskomb, former Grand Commandeur Chris Wilkinson, former Chef de Cuisine Cyril Saper, and Chevalier Felicity Sidders, also remembering her father, the late Bill Leyland, a Chevalier of many years standing.

The 'specialness' of the event was enhanced even more by the presence of the Grand Maitre, Camille Besnier, heading a small party from Angers who were honouring us with their presence at our Chapitre. The Grand Commandeur extended the warmest welcome to our French guests, to all Chevaliers and to the new inductees on this unique and important occasion, to which Chevalier Michael Forster responded on their and our behalf.

It almost goes without saying that the seventy-two Chevaliers and guests present enjoyed an excellent dinner, arranged by Chef de Cuisine Newton Grant, accompanied by superb wines chosen by Délégué Général Frank Coe, in the magnificent setting of Butchers' Hall.

Although retiring as Chef de Protocole, George is continuing as an active Sacavin, and is determined to continue attending our events. The somewhat 'bitter' thought of no longer having George as Chef de Protocole is sweetened by his being followed in this Office by his son-in-law, the ebullient, erstwhile 1st Halberdier, Owen Collins, as details of the 1997 AGM confirm, in this account of it prepared by Chancellor Peter Bouch.

Notes from the AGM

Our annual business meeting took place at the end of a beautiful Spring day in London. We assembled in the newly refurbished "Bleeding Heart", which has more space for the meeting, the vin d'honneur and particularly for the dinner. Following the AGM fifty-four Chevaliers and their guests enjoyed a splendid meal. The authentic French food complemented Frank Coe's selection of bin ends. Tables were arranged to seat eight or ten, providing a sociable setting.

Our formal session was busy, and enhanced by contributions from members. The Grand Commandeur made two well earned presentations. Malcolm Harris' meritorious service over many years in several important offices was recognised. Malcolm became Chevalier in 1978, Officier in 1985 and Commandeur in 1990. George Wilks, in his 90th year has handed his staff as Chef de Protocol to Owen Collins. George became Chevalier in 1974, Officier in 1976, and Commandeur in 1979. Through the years he has presided over our induction ceremonies, and provided a witty and polished approach. Both of these stalwarts stay with us. George will remain a member of the Management Committee. Malcolm left the Committee when he relinquished his post as Sénéchal but is still supporting us.

Changes in the Management Committee were approved. Chevaliers Lis Burroughs and Audrey Thompson became Halberdiers, and Tony Morris Chef de Cuisine. A full list of the Management Committee can be found on the last page of this Courier.

A new item on the agenda, "Chevalier's opinions", gave us the opportunity to discuss the results of the questionnaire circulated recently. Some forty active members returned completed questionnaires, (a very good response for these exercises) and added helpful comments. The numerical results are presented on the penultimate page of this Courier.

We have combined the responses and comments, the discussion at the AGM and deliberations at a recent committee meeting to reach the conclusions that follow.

About half of our members attend events regularly, some attend when they are able to and about a third no longer attend. We are aware that there comes a time when travelling, attending functions and getting home becomes a challenge.

Most members are generally satisfied with the way in which events are arranged and feel that costs are about right. The question of venues is more complex. There is a clear majority for London venues, preferably Livery Halls. But there is too a clear interest in out of town venues, sometimes combined perhaps with an overnight stay.

London is favoured not only by Londoners. Many feel it is the best way to travel without the problems of drinking and driving. Those who want to come to summer tastings share that problem. Livery Halls are expensive. We stay with Butchers' Hall again this year because they do not ask for a surcharge for a weekend date and most helpfully they do not charge corkage.

We intend to explore the potential of an out of town event perhaps in 1998. Several comments ask for a further event, perhaps with more opportunity to meet other members, and to learn more about wines. Tony Morris is working on a tutored tasting of Loire wines followed by a buffet supper in London in early 1998. There were pleas for longer notice of events. A programme for the year appears on the final page. Inevitably there are some conflicting requests and we know that we cannot please everyone all the time. It does seem though that we do please some of the people some of the time. We have enjoyed your responses and are grateful for helping us. We will continue to try to provide events at which we can all share friendship, good food and wine.

It is getting on for three weeks now we have enjoyed the Spring sunshine and although, being English, we don't expect it to last; it is a reminder of summer joys to come so how better than to begin with a look backwards at last Summer's Wine Tasting and Luncheon, as described by Tresorier Robert Wills:

A Hampshire Wine Tasting

Fortunately for all concerned Saturday June 15th dawned and stayed a brilliantly sunny, warm day.

Fortunate in that thirty-six Chevaliers and friends could happily park their cars in the field adjacent to

the rear of Oak Cottage at Lower Froyle and enjoy a perfect afternoon in Tony and Pat Morris' garden

tasting wines and having lunch and tea in the company of friends, old and new. For the more adventurous there was even outdoor swimming, but heeding Noah's warning "I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't get into the wine", I stayed out of the pool!

We were gathered in the grounds of a lovely home to taste wines from vineyards in Hampshire. Our host Tony Morris persuasively argued that as the Isle of Wight, geologically at least, was once part of the county, he could include wines from the island under the Hampshire appellation. There are over thirty vineyards in production that could use this title and the six chosen to represent the county were:

Adgestone Vineyard, named after the nearby hamlet of Adgestone near Brading on the Isle of Wight, and established in 1968. There are twelve acres of vines producing up to 40,000 bottles of wine in a good year. Müller Thurgau, Seyval Blanc and Reichensteiner are used to produce wines that have won many medals and commendations over the years.

Barton Manor Vineyard at East Cowes, Isle of Wight. Bought by Queen Victoria in 1895 as overflow accommodation to Osborne House, the vineyard is but a small, albeit expanding part of extensive grounds. Planted with nine grape varieties this estate has collected a number of awards.

Meon Valley Vineyard at Swanmore, Hampshire. With twenty-five acres of vines, this estate has developed a full range of English wines, from sparkling white and rose, through dry, medium dry whites, to light and full bodied reds.

Northbrook Springs Vineyard at Bishops Waltham. Only established in 1991, this vineyard has quickly gained a reputation for high quality, classic style wines. The main varieties grown are, Schönburger, Bacchus, Kerner and Huxelrebe and only the first pressings of the grapes are used for their premium wines.

Wickham Vineyard near Whitchurch. First planted in 1984 there are eighteen acres of vines in a forty acre estate. Varieties include, Faber, Schönburger, Wurzer, Bacchus, Eichensteiner Dornfelder and Pinot Noir. The estate has won many awards in both national and international competitions and one of its wines has the honour of being selected by the House of Commons as their own label wine.

Wooldings Vineyard near Whitchurch, some ten miles north of Winchester, has eight acres of vines first harvested in 1990. Ten varieties are grown from which up to six different wines are made. Although a young vineyard, the wines have quickly gained a reputation for quality and style.

So much for the vineyards. That most pleasant of pastimes, the tasting (and drinking) of wines, started with a sparkling 1989 dry white wine from the Meon Valley vineyard.

A blend of Pinot Meunier, Chardonnay and Seyval and made by bottle fermentation in the classical manner, this made for a very agreeable introduction to seven white wines. The first being an Adgestone 1992, a light, fragrant and not too dry blend of Müller Thurgau, Seyval Blanc and Reichensteiner.

Pausing only to sharpen the pencil, I then tried a Barton Manor Dry White 1994. A blend of Huxelrebe, Reichensteiner, Müller Thurgau and Ortega with a touch of Bacchus, that produced a wine not greatly to my liking - perhaps it was that Bacchus! Wine number four was a Meon Valley 1993 varietal wine made from the Orion grape, a new German cultivar. I thought this produced a light, fresh and quite fruity white wine.

Next came an Oak Matured Dry 1993 from Northbrook Springs. A fumé style wine made from a blend of Reichensteiner and the Bacchus grape varieties and fermented and matured in a combination of new and two-year old barriques. An ideal wine to sip as an aperitif or as an accompaniment to fish or white meat dishes. Mindful of my duties as scribe, I resisted the temptation to try another sample of this very pleasant wine and moved on to another wine from the Northbrook stable, their Aromatic Dry 1994. A blend of Schönburger and Huxelrebe produced a light, crisp, fragrant white wine.

A nibble of dry biscuit and half a tumbler of water set me up for a medium dry 1994 from the Wickham vineyard. A blend of the Schönburger and Wurzer grape varieties has resulted in a wine with a delicate floral nose, yet with a spicy, crisp and lasting finish. Intrigued, I tried another sample and then realised the spiciness probably came from the Wurzer, a cultivar derived from a cross of the famous Gewurztraminer (of Alsace fame). This was a wine that at first tasting you either enjoyed or disliked immediately. I liked it.

Stumbling onwards I next tried a Wooldings Schönburger 1994. I liked this single varietal wine with its pleasant taste and finish, but it was with some relief that I was next offered wine number nine, a red from the Meon Valley vineyard, their Meonwara 1992.

Made from the variety, Triomphe d'Alsace, this wine has good colour and had plenty of fruit to give a very passable English red.

The next red was from the Wickham vineyard, their Vintage Selection Oaked 1994. Produced mainly from the Triomphe, but with blends of Dornfelder and Pinot Noir to give a medium bodied, fruity red wine. Fermentation is followed by one year in French oak barrels, and this additional 'oakiness' came through well on the palate. The third and I thought the best red came from Wooldings, a Triomphe 1994/5. Good colour with a fruity aroma and more 'bodied' than expected, this was a very good English red wine.

Finally we were encouraged to try a most unusual wine from Northbrook Springs, a Noble Dessert 1994. A stunning wine with the unique character of 'noble rot', intense sweetness but with a balancing acidity in the finish, this was an extraordinary wine to find at an English tasting. It was no surprise to learn later that this wine had won the Gold Medal and President's Trophy at the English Wine of the Year Competition 1995. Although priced at £12.95 a bottle, this is a wine well worth savouring with a few friends (or perhaps behind a locked door, by oneself!).

With taste buds well and truly whetted, we selected a shady corner of the garden and enjoyed a buffet lunch of Coronation of Hampshire Chicken, garnished by potato salad/green salad, with ham and quiches, followed by cheese and biscuits, and fruit, all accompanied by more sampling of the Northbrook Oak Barrel Matured Dry 1993. One could have easily slipped into a post prandial snooze after such a tasting and lunch, but the chance to meet old friends and acquaintances was too good to miss, as was the happy buzz of conversation that filled the afternoon.

We were stirred into action by our Grand Commandeur, Derek Sheen who spoke for us all in thanking our hosts Tony and Pat Morris for inviting us to their house and garden, and for their hard work in making this such a memorable occasion. The twelve wines provided for the tasting were well chosen and showed how much the art of making good quality wines has advanced in England over the past ten or so years.

To round off a splendid day, Pat invited us to partake of a tea of Froyle scones with jam and cream, plus cucumber sandwiches. Thanks to the wines, we responded with gusto.



Summer Wine Tasting And Luncheon

That account of a wonderful Sacavin summer day out must surely whet our appetites for this year's summer event on Saturday 14th June at Syon Park. Tresorier Robert Wills and Délégué Général Frank Coe are conducting the tasting with wines supplied by Chevalier Robin Yapp. Afterwards, these can be purchased for drinking with the luncheon which is being organised by Chevalier John Brooks. Who will ever forget his organisation of our first outstanding chapitre at the Dorchester Hotel? This year's Summer Wine Tasting and Luncheon is more than usually a Sacavin event and the Management Committee hopes our members will respond by coming along. Details and booking form are enclosed with this 'Courier'.

Shakespeare had Richard III comment that a 'forward Spring may mean a short Summer' which we certainly hope is not our fate this year but, even so, Autumn follows and with it, this being an 'odd' year, our biennial expedition will visit the Loire.

The first intimations of the excellent programme being arranged for this year's trip to France was given by its organiser - Sénéchal Roy Clements - at the AGM on 22nd March. He has followed this with a mailing to all Chevaliers, giving full details of an exciting programme that commences on Thursday 25th September and concludes on Monday 29th September, taking in wine visits and festivals, historical excursions and the Confrerie's Chapitre in

Angers. By popular request, the Hotel Clos des Benedictins is again providing the principal accommodation. Should the Clos des Benedictins be filled, there is a sister hotel in the village. Transport will be provided between the hotels and all will take dinner in the main hotel. This looks to be the best supported of all our visits to Anjou and early booking is advised to avoid disappointment.

After some years of different experiences, there are venues that seem, to satisfy the majority of attendees to our events and not least of these is the Butchers Hall where we will again be enjoying this year's Chapitre on Saturday 15th November. Further details will be mailed when more definite plans have been made.

And so another Sacavin year opens before us providing, perhaps, the opportune moment for reflection upon what has gone before and how our members feel about it, which was the purpose of the Sacavin questionnaire

Chevaliers opinions

It is now nearly two years since the Commanderie celebrated its 25th Anniversary and, in the intervening period since the Inaugural Chapitre in February 1970, a programme of events has taken shape, formed into a pattern and continued more or less undisturbed over the years. But it is always a good thing to take stock now and again and this is the aim of the recently distributed questionnaire.

Approximately half the active Members responded which is high compared to the usual reaction to such requests for opinions. Support for the events and their ratings had few surprises, though some points were made which the Management Committee have taken up as explained in the account of the AGM. It is the comments, however, that are fascinating with, as often happens, one cancelling out the other, or one supporting the other. For the one "not fit to drive,

now in France" there is the suggestion of "Le Shuttle Outing to Paris". In answer to the query "What about another Chapitre in the North" the answer agreed "Experiment out of town". The first and only time this was ventured, in 1982, most attendees were from the South! "More events in London" was countered by "Distance, don't want to stay in London". Lethargy plays a part; for one for whom "rather an effort now we're retired" there is the blunter and more emphatic "idleness". As to be expected, Chevaliers show a high level of responsibility and mention "drinking and driving" and "dislike driving after wine tasting and lunch".

The serious points raised by the comments will not be overlooked. Cost is obviously a factor - and this is understandable with several retired members in our ranks. Announcing the dates of the events much earlier is a common call; . . .

A Sacavin Calendar - for your diary

Event	Venue	Date and Time
Summer Event - Tasting and lunch	Syon Park	Saturday 14 June at 11.30
Loire Visit	Clos de Benedictins, Saumur	Thursday 25 September to Monday 29 September
Induction and Chapitre	The Butchers Hall	Saturday 15 November
Tutored Tasting	The Savage Club	Tuesday 3 February 1998
AGM and Dinner	The Bleeding Heart	Saturday 28 March 1998



The Questionnaire - the numbers

These results are presented as simple percentages of the total response to each question rounded to the nearest whole number.

Events - who goes to which?

	Never	Sometimes	Often
The AGM and Dinner	3	44	53
The Summer Event	19	53	28
The Chapitre	3	39	58
The Loire visit	36	39	25

How satisfactory are the events. How do you score them?

Scores awarded	1	2	3	4	5
The AGM and Dinner	4	9	15	45	27
The Summer Event	0	4	4	40	52
The Chapitre	0	5	5	37	53
The Loire visit	0	0	10	35	55

Is cost an important factor?

	Too dear?	About right?	Should spend more?
The AGM and Dinner	21	76	3
The Summer Event	2	97	1
The Chapitre	24	76	0
The Loire visit	24	76	0

Venues. Do we go to the right places?

London venues?	Out of town?	Alternate?
34	9	57

Venues. If in London, what sort of venue? (Many favoured more than one. All are included)

Hotels	Livery Halls	Restaurants	Hotels
11	47	20	22

Might you be interested in a concessionary hotel room?

Yes	No	Maybe
33	33	34

Please see overleaf for a full list of Management Committee members

Commanderie de Grande Bretagne de la Confrerie des Chevaliers du Sacavin d'Anjou**The Management Committee for 1997 - 1998**

Derek Sheen	Grand Commandeur. Appointed by the French Commanderie
Roy Clements	Sénéchal
Frank Coe	Délégué Général
Raymond Harris	Ecuyer
Peter Bouch	Chancelier
Owen Collins	Chef de Protocole
Tony Morris	Chef de Cuisine
Pat Salzedo	Chef de Historiographie
Lis Burroughs	First Halberdier
Audrey Thompson	Second Halberdier
George Wilks	