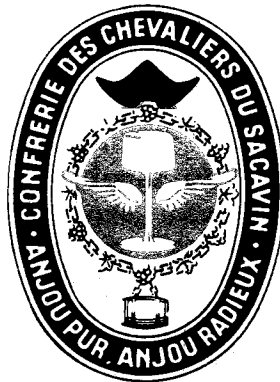


SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No. 3.

Spring 1981

Apologies for Spring being a little late this year as far as the Sacavin Courier is concerned. Spring, nevertheless, has been a very active period for the Officers with plans for current and future activities under constant review.

Committee Meeting

At the Committee Meeting held towards the end of March, firm plans were made for present functions and various possibilities discussed for future events. The following lines will give details of these.

Anjou Visit

In the event, it proved possible for the Commanderie to organise a Visit to Anjou and 25 members and their spouses set off the weekend of 14th/15th May for a memorable few days in Saumur, Angers and the surrounding vineyards! A formidable programme of feasting and wine-tasting had been planned by the Chancellor which included a very welcome visit to our Grand Maitre, Robert Cointreau. The travel arrangements had been undertaken by Chevalier N. Kyriakides and were excellent. The highlight of the four days was undoubtedly attendance at the Induction Ceremony and Dinner at Fontevraud organised by the Confrerie in honour of the British visit and at which our Officers were requested to attend, fully robed, alongside their French counterparts. A full report of the Anjou Visit will be included in our next Newsletter.

Summer Wine Tasting

Last year's Summer Wine Tasting arranged by the Chancellor at his charming Oxfordshire home proved so popular with all who participated - fortunately also the organisers - that it has been decided to make this an annual event.

This year's Summer Wine Tasting will therefore again be held at Chez Wilkinson (Chough Cottage, Towersey near Thame) on Sunday 12th July, from 11.30 a.m. The programme includes the tasting of many excellent, interesting and unusual wines of our region and the enjoyment of a superb buffet meal prepared by Mrs. Wilkinson and her daughters. It is hoped, too, that the Chef de Protocol, George Wilks, will again demonstrate his considerable aquatic abilities.

The Booking Form for this event is enclosed with this Newsletter. Attendance is restricted to 50 - members and their spouses only - so early reservations are advised to avoid disappointment.

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Autumn Induction Ceremony and Dinner

This year's Induction Ceremony and Dinner will be held on Thursday, 12th November at the Butchers Hall, Bartholomew Close, London EC1. The initial arrangements have been made by our Second Halberdier Frank Moody whilst the preparation of the Dinner will progress under the personal direction of the Chef de Cuisine Cyril Saper. We can be certain, therefore, of an excellent evening. The budget requires final confirmation but it is expected that the cost of this year's Dinner will be in the region of £25 per person. The Booking Forms will be distributed with the next (Autumn) Newsletter.

Symposium

Our Calendar eventually proved to be so full for this year that it was not possible to fit in the Symposium on our Confrerie and its Wines. Plans have been shelved only temporarily, however, and the Symposium is now scheduled for Saturday, 24th April 1982 at Whitbread's, Chiswell Street, London EC.

Programme for 1982

The Management Committee have already given much thought to functions for 1982. In addition to the AGM and the Symposium, possibilities of organising a weekend in the North are to be investigated. Preliminary plans put forward suggest York as the venue and an Induction Ceremony and Dinner at Castle Howard providing, of course, agreement can be obtained. A successful outcome to plans for a Northern Weekend depend not only upon the willingness of our members from the North to support an event in their own territory but also for those from the South to venture north of Watford and add their weight to the numbers that would be necessary to make it viable. Every opportunity for obtaining concessionary travel and hotel rates will be thoroughly explored and full advantage of these taken wherever possible. Meanwhile, it would be helpful to the Committee if members who are interested, in principle, in attending a Northern Weekend or a Northern Function generally would very kindly confirm this either to the Chancellor or the Secretary (the addresses are given at the bottom of this Newsletter).

Various possibilities for a 1982 Evening Event in the South are still being considered including a Cinema Evening followed by a Buffet Supper.

Toasts

The age-old history of wine is full of stories, some verifiably true, others obviously legend. In like manner, subjects associated with the story of wine have their share of interest, the evolution of our bottles, the use of corks, the shape of glasses, the convivial social formality of drinking toasts are all worth study. Word origins are often obscure, but many words and customs still show faintly a palimpsest of an original purpose.

The Greeks and Romans, before drinking, poured wine on the ground as a libation of worship and of thanks for benefits received from the gods (and there were many) they wished to placate and propitiate, a form of grace before drinking. Social habits of long standing are often modified but rarely completely forgotten, and if the gods fall into disrepute, why should not the libation be transferred to a friend.

Before the Christian era, a Hebrew greeting with wine was "Lek Hayyim" meaning, literally, "to your lives", that is "to your health". In many countries, old romantic tales tell of assembled companies drinking wine in memory of great heroes

and their deeds of bravery, a libation drunk to valour. Libations may be the ancestors of our toasts.

Our present day custom of drinking toasts to individuals may, however, have a monastic origin. Ancient chronicles record that in monastic houses, at meal times in the refectory, either for economy or asceticism, one cup of wine was allowed for two brethren, a custom which, while giving rise to obvious difficulties, could between friends engender a brotherly spirit of friendly accord. Eventually, in the interest of concord, individual cups were provided fostering the spirit of friendship. As an indication and acceptance of this spirit brethren would often touch cups showing as we do today, a symbol of mutual fellowship, a toast. The word toast for the action of drinking in this manner is probably derived from the "sop", a piece of bread toasted at the fire and put into the wine ostensibly to improve its flavour, but considering the methods of storage and transport of wine at the time, in all probability to disguise its flavour.

A Latin poet of the first century A.D. tells of a method of toasting in which a cup of wine was drunk for every letter of the name of the person being saluted. Imagine the consequences of toasting two or three with names like Petronius or Androcles.

The Goths used a drinking greeting "Eils" meaning health. The Saxons brought the greeting to England as "Waes Hael" "be of good health", an easy step to our "wassail". Toasts in every language are many and varied. Some have acquired customary replies. "I looks t'wards you"; "You does me proud"; "A la tienne"; "Sensible"; "De tout coeur"; "Memement" and together "Comme de just"; or the more down to earth "Mud in your eye" a reminder of toasts drunk in the less comfortable times of war.

History of the Commanderie

A copy of the History of the Commanderie - written by our Chef de Protocol George Wilks - is enclosed. This History is being sent to all active members and, from now onwards, will be presented to the new members at the conclusion of each Induction Ceremony.

Next Newsletter

The next issue of the Sacavin Courier - No 4 Autumn 1981 - will be sent to all active members in September.

Chancellor:-

Chris. Wilkinson,
57 North Street,
Thame, Oxon, OX9 3BH
(Tel: 084 421 3251)

Secretary:-

Pat Salzedo,
363 Bideford Green,
Leighton Buzzard, Beds, LU7 7TX
(Office Tel:- 01-242 3800)