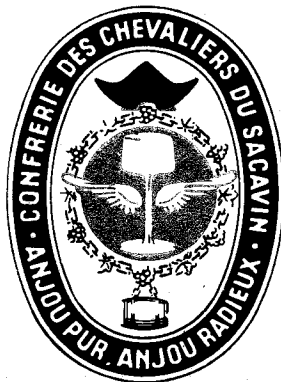


SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No 4.

Autumn 1981

The cold and wet of May, June and July made summer seem very late in coming this year. Even so, two outstanding Sacavin activities engendered a warmth that the weather failed to provide.

VISIT TO ANJOU - May 1981

The small group of Sacavins and their wives who paid a visit to Anjou in mid-May were truly fortunate to avoid the frustrating delays occasioned by the Civil Service strike, fortunate to exchange the cold, wet weather of England for the sunshine of Anjou, and fortunate to be able to enjoy the generous and varied hospitality of our French hosts in the genial company of Rabelasian companions.

Immediately on arrival at Nantes, a coach was waiting to take us to the Chateau du Cleray in Vallet, where, under the expert guidance of M. Jean Sauvion we were introduced to the delights of the products of his cellars. After this tasting, we were entertained, in the impressive surrounding of the Chateau, to a splendid buffet luncheon with accompanying wines. Muscadet at its best. Then on to Saumur, an interesting drive through the Anjou countryside, following the course of the Loire, which, because of the previous heavy rains, was in high flood carrying down great trees in its torrent. A very pleasant interlude in our journey was a visit to Robert Cointreau's delightful home and garden. Mme. Cointreau entertained us to a sumptuous and very acceptable afternoon tea.

The next morning we visited the famous vineyard, the Clos de la Coulee de Serrant. The Chateau de la Roche-aux-Moines has a long history dating back to the 12th century when it was a strong fortress overlooking the Loire from its position on the rocky heights. Our tour was conducted by Mme. A. Joly herself, pointing out to us with the enthusiasm and expert knowledge of a proud owner, the interesting and beautiful aspects of her splendidly maintained estate. At the foot of the vineyard is a charming house and an old monastery with its ancient cellars. The vineyard is worked almost entirely by horses and by hand, the terrain being too steep for machines to turn on the narrow terraces. The chenin blanc is the cepage used and the vines growing ranged from five to eighty years old. After the tour Mme. Joly entertained us for tasting in the beautiful salon in her home. The afternoon was spent at the Cointreau distillery. Our Grand Maitre Robert Cointreau

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had, during the morning, entertained Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, in his home and afterwards touring the Distillery. Our party was shown an explanatory film of the distillery and then taken on a tour with explanations of the various processes carried out in this fine modern factory complex.

The following day was one of the highlights of our whole visit. In the morning we drove to the cellars of Bouvet-Ladubay where we spent some hours with M. Patrice Monmousseau following the various stages in the production of the sparkling Bouvet-Ladubay prepared by the champagne method. Still in the cellars, the tour was followed by a tasting and a delicious buffet lunch accompanied by the appropriate wines.

The evening was the occasion of the grand combined chapter - The Chapitre de Plantagenets - with the French Confrerie. The chapter was preceded by a very comprehensive tour of the Abbaye Fontevraud, a tour during which our own Chevalier David Burroughs performed prodigiously, translating the text given by the French speaking guide. The chapter was held in the imposing, magnificent hall of the medieval abbey. The officers of the British Commanderie robed and marched with their French colleagues. The induction, carried out in French, was completed for about two dozen Chevaliers, from Great Britain, France, Belgium and Switzerland. Then followed the magnificent banquet. (The menu and list of wines served is given below). The intervals between courses were enlivened by an entertainment, the performers in which were in Plantagenet dress; the leader could have been Rabelais himself. The acts included an escapologist, a levitation act, fire eating acts and performing dogs. During the meal, various experts expounded on the wines being served. Our Grand Commandeur replied suitably to the Grand Maitre's welcome to the British party. The celebration continued until the early hours and members of the party were glad that the following day was a 'free' day with no official visits planned.

The final day dawned with beautiful sunshine, ideal weather for a pleasant journey to St. Cyr-en-Bourg to the Cooperative of the Vignerons of Saumur. The Cooperative uses ancient caves cut into the soft calcareous rock, down four storeys, to cellars twenty five metres deep. Here we spent half the morning in the company of M.M. Neau who at the banquet had described a number of wines. We explored the cellars and tasted the excellent wines of the Cooperative. The coach took us to Montreuil Bellay where the party had lunch 'en plein air' almost in the shade of the Chateau overlooking the very pleasant village. Then on to the plane, to return to the dismal cold and wet of London.

The visit was an unqualified success, a success due to the work of our Chancellor Chris Wilkinson in arranging the visits to vineyards and to Chevalier Nick Kyriakides who arranged with meticulous care all our travel by plane and coach. The Hotel Budan in Saumur, overlooking the Loire, was our centre for the stay.

RASSEMBLEMENT INTERNATIONAL DES CHEVALIERS DU SACAVIN
en l'Abbaye Royale de Fontevraud le 16 Mai 1981
Chapitre des Plantagenets

LES METS

Foie Gras Frais
Homard a la Parisienne
Filet de Boeuf a la Perigourdine

LES VINS

A l'aperitif Saumur d'Origine Brut Bouvet-Ladubay et Gratien-Meyer
Quarts de Chaume 1962
Domaine des Baumard
Saumur Blanc 1980
Cave Cooperative des Vignerons de Saumur

Fonds d'Artichauts

Sauce Mornay

Salade aux Noix

Ronde de Fromages

Casino Glace au Cointreau

Cafe

Cointreau

Eau de Vie de Poire William d'Anjou

Saumur Champigny 1979

M. Filliatreau.

Dampierre-sur-Loire

Saumur Champigny "Cuvee du President"
en Magnum

Cave Cooperative des Vignerons de Saumur

Cremant de Loire Rose Brut

Societe Ackerman Laurance

SUMMER WINE TASTING

"A good wine needs no bush" and the fare which Chris and Hilary Wilkinson give at their functions certainly needs no advertisement. After the success of last year's tasting, there was no doubt that this year's event would be a sell-out. So it proved on the day.

On Sunday 12th July, a party of Sacavins, with their ladies, met at Chough Cottage, the Wilkinson's home at Towersey near Thame, to enjoy a tasting of two dozen first class Loire wines; wines from a number of famous shippers including an interesting selection from Chris Wilkinsor's own list.

The occasion was made more enjoyable because a number of the party had been together in Saumur and had visited some of the vineyards mentioned in the list. The weather was not too unkind and the sun shown for long enough to allow us to enjoy Hilary's splendid luncheon 'en pleine air', a real picnic with gorgeous food and splendid wine. The sun tempted some of us to swim, a leisurely way of spending an afternoon whilst some, after the rigours of a major tasting, wrestled with Chris's cunning competition. The task was to identify bottles by their shape and colour, to name the wines they once contained and the country of their origin. Norman Billington was the winner with an 80% correct entry. His prize is two bottles of choice Anjou wine. Geoffrey Phillips came second and therefore wins one bottle of choice Anjou wine. Sir John Ricks was third and his prize is a champagne cork lighter. It is hoped that the prizes will be presented at the next Induction Dinner on 12th November.

There is no doubt that this event is one of the highlights of the Sacavin year, instructive and enjoyable in all its aspects: good food, good wine, good conversation between friends, all the ingredients for an enjoyable day.

We all owe a great debt to Hilary and Chris, and their children too, for opening their home to us and taking so much care and thought to ensure that we have a great day. Thank you!

AUTUMN INDUCTION DINNER

The few fine weeks have brought us to September and plans for our Autumn and Winter events. The first of these is the next Induction Ceremony and Dinner on Thursday 12th November 1981 at the Butchers Hall, Smithfield, London EC1. This will be the first time the Commanderie has used the Butchers Hall for a Ceremony and Dinner so it is not unnaturally being entitled Chapitre de la Boucherie. The Butchers Company is one of the seven oldest in the City, having been founded in 975 AD. The present premises, however, are post-war, destruction having been

wrought upon previous buildings during both the First and Second World Wars and the Great Fire of London. As we will see on 12th November, the new hall exhibits some fine mementoes of the Company's historic past and some equally impressive modern features.

The Chef de Cuisine - Mr. Cyril Saper - is making most careful preparations for the Dinner. We are such an Ancient Order that we can pride ourselves on recipes going back to the Middle Ages. Some of the courses, therefore, will give an interesting insight into favourite dishes of our Plantagenet forbears.

The Booking Form for the Chapitre de la Boucherie is enclosed with this Newsletter. The Butchers Hall is slightly smaller than the Vintners Hall and so early booking is recommended to avoid disappointment. A splendid evening is promised with our own magnificent wines to match the culinary splendours of Leche Lombard, Veloute C.S. and, in acknowledgement of a venue so close to Smithfield, best quality roast beef with fresh horse-radish sauce. The cost is £25 per person and the completed form, accompanied by the appropriate remittance, should be sent to Chancellor Chris Wilkinson.

1982 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The first activity in 1982 is the Annual General Meeting. This is on Tuesday, 19th January at Whitbread's Brewery, Chiswell Street, London EC1. The Meeting itself will be followed by the AGM Dinner. It is expected that the Agenda and supporting documentation for the AGM together with a Booking Form for the Dinner will be sent out early in December.

SPRING SYMPOSIUM

The coming of Spring 1982 will also see the coming of the first Symposium to be organised by the Commanderie. This is scheduled for Saturday, 24th April, also at Whitbread's in Chiswell Street. The symposium subject will be the Wine and Culture of Anjou and well-known personalities amongst our members will be contributing:- Pamela Van Dyke Price on the Vini-culture of Anjou Wine, Cyril Saper on the founding and development of the Sacavin and other Wine Orders, Robin Yapp will conduct a demonstration wine-tasting. A historical note will be struck by a lecture on our Anjou heritage and culture whilst practicalities will be dealt with by a lecture on the principles and ethics guiding labelling. Senechal David Rutherford will be Chairman of the Symposium.

GLIMPSES OF ANGERS - II

One of the best preserved of all mediaeval fortresses is Angers castle, the oldest part of which is XII Century. Pentagonal, flanked by 17 large round towers, it is built of white stone upon alternating foundation courses of sandstone and schist. The splendid moats are now planted with flower beds, alongside which is an enclosure for a herd of deer, a reminder of the famous zoo of King Rene. Beyond the inner courtyards lie the chapel, the fort, and the Governor's apartments. The artistic treasure is the collection of tapestries, housed in the Grand Gallery. The finest are those of the XIVth Century, illustrating the Apocalypse of St. John, woven by Nicolas Bataille from the drawings of Hennequin de Bruges for Duke Louis I of Anjou. These works, some 170 metres of material, form the largest and oldest collection of tapestry in the world.

The Apocalypse inspired the painter Jean Lurcat to create a modern version and the thirteen tapestries of his "Chant du Monde" are now brilliantly displayed in St. John's Hospital, the oldest of the hospices in France, built by Henry II.

Its refectory, chapel, cloisters and storehouse provide a splendid example of angevin architecture. The hospital houses not only the Anjou Wine Museum but also the setting for chapter meetings and induction ceremonies of our mother Confrerie.

BOTTLES

We all appreciate the elegant grace of a Moselle bottle, the subtle strength of a Champagne magnum, the limpid transparency of a Sauterne bottle and the distinctive shade of a Nahe bottle; the names Jeroboam and Nebuchadnezzar roll off our tongues, even if we don't know the equivalent in normal bottles (incidentally, what is the capacity of a normal bottle?). We are so familiar with the commonplaces of the trade, corks, bottles, labels, that we rarely give a thought to the fascinating story which lies behind each of them.

The Egyptians, five thousand years ago, knew how to make glass and to form it into bottles, often to hold perfumes and unguents and often too to hold tears which were too valuable to throw away. By 100 B.C. glass blowing was an established technique and at Trier and Cologne, by 200 A.D., a glass industry flourished. Cylindrical bottles and jugs were produced and in Roman times, had knowledge of wine and technology gone hand in hand, the modern methods of maturing wine by horizontal binning in bottles might have been anticipated by ten centuries. The cylindrical bottles had handles and were matched by cheaper cylindrical pottery bottles. The wine shop at Herculaneum could, with its stacked jars, be of almost any age up to the present century.

The collapse of the Roman Empire and the incidence of the Dark Ages precluded the possibility of the development of modern maturing processes until the 17th century when Dom Perignon successfully wedded bottle with cork.

Medieval English "bottles" were made of leather or pottery. They were called jacks. However, in the 15th and 16th centuries the English glass centre at Chiddingfold produced glass bottles which were first used for storage and then at the table, as decanters. The typical bottle shape in this era was the "globe and spike", shaped like a large onion with a long stem. Such a shape did not allow binning and laying down of wine was not possible. The glass was usually green or black, coloured by metal compounds, usually iron and manganese, present. Bottles were not uniform in size or shape. By the middle of the 18th century the present standard cylindrical shape was very common, and at the end of the 18th century, about two million such bottles were being made in Bordeaux.

The maturing of wine without the deleterious oxidising effect of even small quantities of air was not possible until bottles could be binned horizontally and could be sealed with a tight, flush cork which, because of the position, was kept moist and tight by the wine in the bottle. Until Dom Perignon's work in the 17th century, bottles were sealed with a variety of materials but usually with wooden stoppers wrapped round with oiled rags. Bottles which could be used for storing wine and then after its consumption used as decanters, were distinguished by a bottle plaque or tag of wood, pewter or silver. These name tags have now become valuable antiques. In the first half of the 18th century, parchment tags or labels were used and soon afterwards, printed labels were introduced.

Bottles were not uniform in size, something not achieved until bottles were 'machine' blown. A pint in Pepys's time was only about three-quarters of a modern pint.

No article on bottles would be complete without a word about the punt, the

indentation which is present in the bottom of most wine bottles. Although its origin is not known with certainty, it is generally accepted that the punt allowed sediment to settle and facilitated pouring without disturbing these lees. The additional thickness at the bottom of the bottle increases its stability. The punt is not, as some misguided people think, an evil invention whereby unscrupulous shippers can decrease the volume of wine in the bottle. A normal bottle holds from 70 to 75 cls. of wine, about a sixth of a gallon.

SUMMER 1982

Consideration is already being given to events for next Summer. Chancellor Chris Wilkinson is planning another Wine-Tasting, probably in July. Responses to the suggestion of a weekend in the North, combined with an Induction Ceremony and Dinner seem to indicate that this could be a distinct possibility.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

The next Newsletter is scheduled for March 1982.