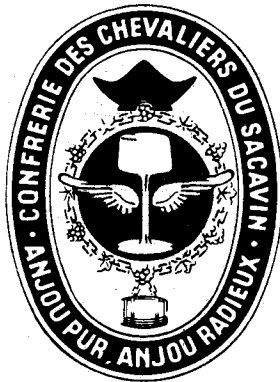


SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No. 6.

Autumn 1982

The well known lyric reminds us it's a long, long way from June to December and that the days grow shorter when you reach September! The nostalgia of this sentiment is infectious and leads us to pause awhile, to recall the Sacavin events that made this summer season so memorable, before we turn our attention to the rest of the year.

CHAPITRE DU GRAND RASSEMBLEMENT

After several years of trying and one or two preliminary attempts at planning, the long awaited Induction Ceremony and Dinner in the North as a GRAND REUNION for the Chevaliers from the North and the South - has been triumphantly and successfully held! Saturday 15th May 1982 was indeed an auspicious day for the Commanderie and, as if realising the importance of the event, the weather was superb and York and its environs were outstanding in their appearance.

The minimum requirement for 50 attendees meant that there were doubts as to whether we could go ahead almost until the last minute. In the end, however, the right number was achieved with 20 coming from the North and the remainder from the South. The largest single contingent was from the Bromley/Orpington area.

Not unexpectedly, Castle Howard proved a magnificent venue for the Chapitre du Grand Rassemblement. With our two charming guides, a tour of the treasures of the state rooms and galleries preceded the Vin d'Honneur. The Induction Ceremony followed and, although some improvisation with the artefacts was necessary, never have the robed officers looked more splendid nor the fanfares and marches sounded more glorious than in the double-domed state room used for the occasion.

The Grand Commandeur, looking magnificently regal, carried out the Induction, ably assisted by the Chef de Protocole to ensure that the proceedings were in accordance with tradition. The new Chevaliers who had the honour to join our ranks at our first Northern Ceremony were:-

Mrs. Deirdre Buchanan - a French-speaking restauranteuse of great charm and wit, a Past President of the Yorkshire Guild of Sommeliers so with an obvious interest in the wines of our region.

Mrs. Shirley Fenton - an 'aerienne' of great distinction and charm with a career in industrial catering. Has acted as her husband's co-pilot in some of their 'sorties' to and from Anjou.

Mr. Ian Collinson - an active member of the Guild of Sommeliers and the Friends of Bacchus whose lifelong links with the wine trade lead inevitably to the ranks of the Commanderie.

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Mr. Anthony Grayson - who has the distinction of being an oenologist, a wine chemist and a microbiologist so that his interest in the wines of Anjou is to be appreciated.

Mr. Ronald Huggins - whose career as a Chartered Accountant has included membership of the Guild of Sommeliers and experience of restaurant and hotel work, thus ensuring an interest in Anjou wines.

Mr. John Perkins - also a Chartered Accountant with an abiding interest in wines so that being Sacavin became an obvious step.

After the Ceremony we were guided round even more impressive State Apartments until we reached the Dining Hall where we sat down to a superb meal accompanied by various distinguished wines of our region upon which the Delege-General commented with great good humour. The Grand Commandeur extended the official welcome to which the first Inductee replied in true Yorkshire style.

In retrospect, a successful outcome to the Commanderie's first venture into Northern regions could be assured with the Ceremony being carried out by a Mackenzie, and the reply being given by a Buchanan!

Castle Howard provided not only a sumptuous venue for our first Northern Meeting but also a very hospitable one. The Commanderie owes a great debt of gratitude to their staff for ensuring the success of our evening. Many people are deserving of our thanks for the successful staging of the Chapitre du Grand Rassemblement - our travel adviser, Nick Kyriakides, for arranging accommodation at the admirable Post House York, our Chef de Cuisine Cyril Saper for the excellent Dinner, our Chancellor, Chris Wilkinson, for the delightful wines that accompanied it and our Harrogate Chevalier, Bill Baxter, who was the inspiration behind the event! We must not forget, either, our Chef des Beaux Artes, Leonard Salzedo, who not only managed to obtain the services of two excellent trumpeters but also acted as 'road manager' to the travelling "Northern Sacavin Show" !!

DEJEUNER AMICALE

Thornbury Castle near Bristol was the venue for our next Summer activity - the Tripartite 'Dejeuner Amicale' - which was held on Sunday 6th June and in which we were joined by members of the Solicitors' Wine Society and Artimino. Thornbury Castle was also a superb setting for a Sacavin function. The Castle and Grounds looked magnificent in the glorious summer weather. The minor heatwave which was a delightful bonus for a Sunday Luncheon in the country also led to a few local storms with the coach party getting drenched whilst waiting to board their vehicle in London. Fortunately this in no way deterred their determination to enjoy a 'day in the country'.

Proceedings began with the Vin d'Honneur served in the garden, giving guests the opportunity to wander round the flower-beds, the herb garden and, most interestingly of all, the vineyards. This was followed by a lunch of incomparable quality. Each course was perfection in itself yet somehow managed to seem more perfect than the course preceding it. To this was added the perfection of wines of our own region.

We extend our warmest gratitude to our Host, Chevalier Kenneth Bell of Thornbury Castle, for providing such a marvellous event for the Sacavin and to our Delege-General, Geoffrey Phillips, for his excellent arrangements.

CHOUGH COTTAGE

How do you visualise a wine tasting? An impressive room with long tables and rows of bottles with cuspidors, usually wooden cases filled with sawdust and leaking ominously after an hour, but above all earnest tasters both male and female, steadily progressing from A1 to Z15, taking copious notes and discussing

in hushed tones, noses, bodies, colours and ages.

The tasting at Chough Cottage could not be more different. Arranged by our Chancellor Chris Wilkinson, it combines the pleasures of a Sacavin Meeting, a garden party, an al fresco buffet lunch, a swimming display and last, but by no means least, a serious and instructive wine tasting.

On 27th June, about forty of us gathered at Chris and Hilary's home for what has become one of the major events in the Sacavin Calendar. In his garden, Chris had arranged thirty one wines of the Loire, all of them splendid examples of the wines of their areas. In some cases (no pun intended!), we had the added pleasure of the presence of the shipper ready with advice and information. No intrusive cuspidors, but some of Chris's shrubs are obviously very alcohol tolerant. It goes without saying that the buffet lunch provided by Hilary was excellent, up to her usual standard and that is high praise indeed.

The weather was good, the garden was a "green and pleasant land", the wines were excellent, the food was superb and the company - as always at a Sacavin gathering - pleasant and stimulating. What more could one wish for? Once again, we are grateful to Chris and Hilary for a most enjoyable day.

The lovely, long summer days are already receding but, as a compensation, the coming of the Autumn also means our final event for the year:-

CHAPITRE DU ROI D'ECOSSE

Wednesday, 10th November is the date of this year's London Induction Ceremony and Dinner - Chapitre du Roi d'Ecosse - which is being held in the Louis and Pompadour Rooms of the Cafe Royal, Regent Street, London, W1.

In his negotiations for the Dinner we feel that our Chef de Cuisine, Cyril Saper, has surpassed all his previous achievements in arranging a superb meal for a Commanderie Induction. In his honour, therefore, the Chapitre is being called after the main dish he has devised for us and the details of the outstanding repast being placed before the Chevaliers and their Guests are included on the Booking Form enclosed with this Newsletter. When our members have studied these details we feel that there will be a rush for places so early booking is advised to avoid disappointment.

Whilst there are already several candidates for Induction, Chevaliers who have friends they would like to propose for election at this Chapitre should notify immediately either the Chancellor Chris. Wilkinson on 084 421 3251 or secretary Pat Salzedo on 01-242 3800.

1983 PROGRAMME

From the Autumn it is but a step into Winter and then, at least, there is the cheering prospect of next year's Programme which promises more events of very great interest.

ACM and SYMPOSIUM

Provisional plans for mounting the Commanderie's first Symposium on the Wines and Culture of Anjou have been bandied around these past two years but, always, a convenient date that did not conflict with other events seemed impossible to agree. The obvious solution to this dilemma is to combine events and so the Symposium will now be held in conjunction with the 1983 Annual General Meeting on Saturday 22nd January. The Louis and Pompadour Rooms of the Cafe Royal, London, W1, will again be the venue.

The Symposium will commence with a Vin d'Honneur and Registration at 2 p.m., the lecture programme beginning at 2.30 p.m. with presentations by Pamela Vandyke Price on the History and Culture of the Loire Chateaux and their

Influence upon the Development of the Wines of Anjou, Cyril Saper on a Background to the Sacavin and some other Wine Orders, George Wilks on the Life and Times of Rabelais and Charles Whitfield on Labelling.

A Demonstration Wine Tasting on wines of our region will bring the Symposium to an end by 6.25 p.m. so that the Annual General Meeting can commence at 6.30, the AGM Vin d'Honneur at 7 p.m. and the Dinner around 7.30 p.m.

In addition to the cost of the AGM Dinner, a modest registration fee will be charged for those also wishing to attend the Symposium. For those who only want to attend the Symposium, a slightly higher but still very inexpensive fee will be charged.

The Booking Form for the Symposium and 1983 AGM will be distributed before the end of November with the Notice convening the Meeting, etc. Meanwhile, Chevaliers who would like to reserve places provisionally for themselves and guests can, if they wish, phone the secretary, Pat Salzedo on 01-242 3800 so that these are held for them.

As an Introduction to the Symposium, some preliminary details related to topics to be covered are:-

LABELS

We have, in previous articles, spoken about bottles and corks, how the evolution of the modern bottles was necessary if modern methods of binning and maturing wine were to become possible. We have seen, too, how the binned bottle when brought to the table became a decanter.

The Georgian period was a time of elegance; elegance in buildings, furniture, in clothes. In an atmosphere of such refinement, a bottle straight from the cellar to the table was unthinkable; the clear glass decanter began to replace the 'decanter bottle'. The decorative cut-glass decanter became a thing of real beauty. In a cellar, a stored bottle could easily be identified by a simple tag of wood tied round the neck, but an elegant table decanter could not be labelled in this way. The invention of decanter plaques or labels was inevitable. These metal plaques of silver or pewter, hung on a short chain loop round the back of the decanter soon became commonplace. They were often beautiful examples of the silversmith's and engraver's art. There is a fine collection of decanter labels at the Vintners Hall in London and in this collection you may see not only metal plaques but plaques of mother-of-pearl with the wine name engraved and painted black, a kind of intaglio. Here, too, are ivory rings, similarly engraved, which were placed over the neck of the decanter. Metal discs were expensive, the mother-of-pearl ones were fragile and, in the first half of the eighteenth century, parchment labels were beginning to appear. Parchment in its turn was superseded by cheaper paper. From a simple black print on a white ground, giving just the name of the wine, has evolved the colourful modern label which is often a mine of information about the wine in the bottle.

Some well known vignerons commission famous artists to design labels for each year's vintage. It is obvious that the originals and the reproduced labels become collectors pieces.

Occasionally bottles themselves have a raised or indented medallion design. These are of little significance and are usually just a shippers' identification or trade mark.

The introduction of the crown cork and the use of metal foil and plastic have superseded the use of wax as a bottle seal. While the modern materials afford some opportunity for a printed design and identification, such modern seals bear no comparison with their ancient predecessors, the seals used by the

Egyptians, the Assyrians and the Greeks. These seals were of dual purpose, serving to close the vessel and by the design on the seal identifying the contents, showing the name of the vineyard and either the shipper or the owner of the vine. Egyptian wine jars were stoppered with mud-plastered pads of grass, the exposed part being brightly painted with hieroglyphics picked out in contrasting colours. The Greeks used a disc of potsherd, of pottery, overlaid with vine leaves which were tied down and the whole sealed with clay. The clay cap was stamped with seals recording the producer of the wine, the purchaser and the merchant's trade mark.

Our bottle labels have an interesting and ancient ancestry.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR EVENT IN JANUARY

Mid-winter is invariably a time of increased social activity to lighten the long, dark nights. With this in mind, an extra event has been arranged for FRIDAY, 28TH JANUARY 1983:-

Association of Wine and Gastronomic Societies (WAGS) Ball - Inn on the Park

As a Member of the above Association (formed to ensure co-operation and liaison between many such Societies in this country) Sacavin has been invited to offer to its members the opportunity of attending this function as an "extra" for 1983.

It is not proposed that a Ball of this magnitude (300 people) should be annual, or even regular, but it was recognised that, every now and then, most lovers of food and wine would like to indulge their predilections at a rather "grander" event than any individual Order could contemplate.

The evening will consist of a reception and full banquet, with aperitif and all dinner wines included in the ticket price. Thereafter, there will be dancing until 1 p.m. and (it is hoped) a cabaret of some sort, with a cash bar.

Those of you who have experienced the quality of food and service of which the Inn on the Park is capable will, we feel sure, regard this as a welcome innovation at a top-class venue and not something to be missed. Notwithstanding, however, that we will be rubbing shoulders with friends and colleagues from many other famous Orders (e.g. Jurade de St. Emilion, Ordre des Coteaux de Champagne, etc.) we should emphasise again that this is essentially an addition to our normal exclusive programme and, naturally, one's first loyalty is to support the specific functions of one's own Order. However, for those with extra energy and for whom the WAGS Ball is interesting, the Application Form will be circulated towards the end of November.

ANJOU VISIT

The success of the Spring 1981 visit to Anjou has led to many requests for a repeat of the very enjoyable experience. Plans have therefore been agreed and the 1983 ANJOU VISIT will be from Thursday 14th to Monday 18th April. Nick Kyriakides and Derek Sheen are the Organisers and they confirm that arrangements will be similar to the previous visit with air travel Heathrow/Nantes/Heathrow, hotel accommodation in Saumur, a programme of visits to vineyards and vigneron (with some variation from the 1981 itinerary) and the Grand Rassemblement of the Confrerie in Fontevraud on Saturday evening, 16th April as the highlight of the whole occasion.

The Application Form to take part in the 1983 Anjou Visit will be distributed in January. In the meantime, it would be very helpful for the Organisers to gain some idea of possible support so perhaps those interested, in principle, would very kindly confirm this to:-

Mr.N.C. Kyriakides,
Tazab Travel Limited
273, Old Brompton Road,
London SW3
(Tel: 01-373 1186
01-370 6355)

/- cont

From these details you will notice that Nick Kyriakides has changed his address so perhaps you would very kindly amend your records accordingly.

With the prospect of another Commanderie visit to our chosen region, it is pleasant to consider further:-

GLIMPSES OF ANGERS - IV

There are several fine historic houses in Angers. One of the finest is the Hotel Pince, a splendid example of Renaissance town architecture, now housing a museum of painted Greek vases and an important collection of oriental art (ceramics, statuettes and engravings). The Logis Barrault, another fine building built in flamboyant Gothic style takes its name from Olivier Barrault, a corrector in the Audit Office of Brittany. Known for its gallery and staircase tower, it is the home of the municipal library. It also houses the Fine Arts Museum containing 18th century paintings, primitives of the 14th and 15th century and the works of David d'Angers (1788-1856). The statistically-minded may like to know that practically all David's works are exhibited as originals or casts: 55 statues, 20 statuettes, 150 busts, 70 bas-reliefs and 531 medallions. A little-known fact is that Mary Queen of Scots stayed the night at the Logis in September 1548, having been accompanied by Joachim du Bellay and her entourage during her visit that year to Anjou. It is recorded that, while there, she was given sugared almonds, preserves, pears, peaches and grapes.

The Adam House is a magnificent 15th century half-timbered house, richly carved with many figures. Those from which the house takes its name, Adam and Eve and the serpent, were unfortunately destroyed at the time of the Revolution but others remain such as angels, monkeys, a pelican, a shepherd and shepherdess, a flute-player and a bagpiper. Another fine house is the Hotel du Croissant, reputedly where King Rene instituted the Order of the Crescent in 1448. St. Maurice was the patron of the Order and services were held in the Cathedral.

Off the boulevard Descazeaux is the elegant half Gothic, half Renaissance Hotel des Penitentes, alas not open to the public. It originally served as a refuge for the monks of St. Nicholas Abbey, situated outside the fortified wall of the town. The monks were forced to abandon it to the Duke of Mercoeur at the end of the 16th century. It was earlier, about 1640, that the community of the Penitents was installed there. The Abbey itself, built originally, in the 11th century by Foulque Nerra, Count of Anjou, housed the Benedictines until the Revolution. Rebuilt between 1725 and 1732, the two wings and a central pavilion remain. It is still used for religious retreats and by the Congregation du Bon Pasteur.

OBITUARIES

Chevalier Bernard Nelson Bessunger

Bernard, who died at Worthing on August 28th, 1982 aged 75, had all the attributes of a true Sacavin. After an early career of selling rare china and glass, he turned to farming, first in Kent then in Ireland, before returning to England to become a wine merchant, then moving in as Mine Host of the Lamb and Flag tavern in Rose Court, Covent Garden. He had already published a novel, but when not serving, quaffing and spreading bonhomie

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among his mixed clientele of printers, actors, actresses and advertising folk, he heaved away at his collection of recipes of Old England. These, published under that title, with the sub-title 'Three centuries of English cooking, modernised by Bernard N. Bessunger' were published by David and Charles in 1973. Plans for a modernised Brillat-Savarin were frustrated by a paperback edition by another hand and a projected book on the great chef, Alexis Soyer, was similarly beaten to the post.

After the death of his wife, Stella, Bernard's grip on affairs slackened and, giving up 'The Lamb' he retired to Shoreham, coming rarely to London. One visit was to take the Chair at a Savage Club Dinner on his birthday, 21st 21st November, in 1980.

We mourn the loss of a true bon viveur.

Chevalier Humphrey Searle, CBE, FRCM

Humphrey Searle died in London on 12th May, 1982, aged 66 years, after a short illness. He was a distinguished composer, a pupil of Webern and one of the first exponents in this country of the twelve-tone or serial method of composition. He wrote many symphonic, chamber and operatic works and also contributed scores to several film and theatrical productions. As befitted a true gourmet and lover of fine wines, he was inducted at the Chapitre la Musique in 1975. His career had also included two spells as a BBC producer both before and immediately after the second world war. Since 1965, he had taught composition at the Royal College of Music. Humphrey was a kindly, sensitive man, whose unassuming manner hid a discerning intellect and a great deal of personal courage illustrated by his fine record of service during the second world war. He will be greatly missed by his many friends within and outside the world of music.