

SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No. 7.

Spring 1983

The year is divided neatly into quarters and, for the past year, the Management Committee have managed to organise an outstanding Sacavin event for each one. The highlight of last Autumn was the:-

CHAPITRE DU ROI D'ECOSSE - which was held on Wednesday 10th November in the Pompadour and Louis Rooms of the Cafe Royal, London W1. Over 100 Chevaliers and their guests were present and all took an enthusiastic part in the Induction Ceremony which was presided over by the Grand Commandeur, Col. Hector Mackenzie, ably assisted by the other Officers, and at which the new Chevaliers received into the Order were:-

Mr. Graham JONES - an energetic sporting practitioner specialising in rugby, real tennis and sailing and a distinguished educationist whose search for suitable areas in educational development has led him to include a love of wine, especially that from Anjou.

Mr. David RHODES - also a sportsman, but with hockey and squash as his principal achievements. He begun his career in textiles and, almost by chance, entered the wine trade where he has become a connoisseur of all wines with especial sympathy for those from Anjou.

Mrs. Felicity SIDDARS - is a very versatile and talented young lady with artistic, academic and linguistic abilities. Her recent association with the wine trade has developed her knowledge and appreciation of the wines of Anjou.

Disturbed, at previous gatherings, by the choral abilities of members in the Sacavin anthem 'Optime', Chef de Protocole George Wilks produced a song sheet - nobly borne aloft by the Halberdiers - with words large enough that even those at the back of the room had no excuses! Being a Gilbert & Sullivan tenor of no mean distinction, he conducted a short choir practice after which all present performed, in magnificent voice, during the Ceremony itself! In fact, this new feature was so well received it has been decided to retain it for the future.

An excellent Dinner followed, arranged by the Chef de Cuisine, Cyril Saper, accompanied by wines from the Commanderie cellar upon which Chancellor Chris Wilkinson commented in his customary expert manner.

During Dinner, the Grand Commandeur extended the gratitude of the Commanderie to those responsible for organising the evening and paid tribute to the Guest of

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Honour, Patrice Monmousseau, for all that he had done in making the 1981 visit to Angers such a success. He also gave the apologies of the former Grand Maitre, Robert Cointreau, who had been prevented from attending by ill-health.

The title bestowed upon this Chapter Meeting combined homage to the forbears of our illustrious Grand Commandeur with praise for the magnificent beast after which the third course was named. A lone Piper, resplendently arrayed, accompanied the serving of the beef and the swirl of the pipes around the room added to the enjoyment of the evening with a delightful Scottish flavour.

1982 VINTAGE

Thoughts of Autumn invariably include consideration of the year's vintage and Chris Wilkinson gives us his thoughts on last year's offerings:-

Because weather conditions were right, the 1982 vintage was generally prolific and of extremely good quality throughout France. The extent of the quantity coupled with the strong pound (equalling FFfr. 12.11 at the commercial rate) is assisting in keeping prices stable. These factors remain true for the Loire region. 1982 is of excellent quality and quantity and is a much needed compensation for 1981 where, though the quality was very good, the quantity was correspondingly low! Nothing is straightforward, however, and the excellent conditions brought their own problems. With the Loire whites depending upon a good level of acidity, the extra grape sugar has resulted in the wines being almost 'too fat'. All the much-admired skill of the vigneron is required if the 1982 white is to be the good, typical wine that it should. Consequently, although a good year for laying down, 1982 whites should be picked with great care. Those who buy regularly from importers renowned for supplying the good, classical white wine should be able to rely on them to produce the good whites. The Loire reds should also benefit from the good weather conditions and 1982 is a year for buying them to lay down. The Dessert Wines for which our part of the region is best known should be excellent. 1982 will be a very, very good year for them. Of course, it will be some time before they are ready for drinking but the opportunity should be taken for buying them to lay down.

1983 SUBSCRIPTIONS - QUESTION AND ANSWER FORUM

Q. When is a Chevalier more than an ordinary Sacavin Member

A. When he or she is an Active Member

Q. How does one become an Active Member

A. By paying a subscription of £5 per annum (£7.50 spouse rate) for the Newsletters, Booking Forms for the events, AGM Notice and Minutes, etc.

Q. I would like to be an Active Member - how can I do this

A. By sending the annual subscription (i.e. £5 or £7.50 spouse rate) to the Treasurer:-

Mr. Malcolm Harris,
Harris, Kafton & Co
Chartered Accountants,
28 Bolton Street, London W1Y 8HB

The objective of the rather simple forum conducted above is to emphasise that Chevaliers can participate more fully in Commanderie events if they become Active Members as they will be included on the mailing list sending out details and forms for Commanderie events. The Management Committee would very much like all Chevaliers to become Active. If you have a friend or colleague who is a Chevalier but is not yet Active, please do your best to persuade him/her to pay the subscription.

1983 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

An important activity of the Winter is the Annual General Meeting and, this year, it was held on Saturday 22nd January in the Louis Room of the Cafe Royal, London W1. With the Grand Commandeur, Col. Hector Mackenzie, in the Chair, Members present adopted the Reports and elected the Officers and Management Committee for the forthcoming year. The Minutes of the AGM were sent to all Active Members in February. They gave a full report of the Meeting.

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SYMPOSIUM on "THE WINES AND CULTURE OF ANJOU"

The first event of the New Year - the Symposium on "The Wines and Culture of Anjou" - formed part of the programme for the 1983 Annual General Meeting and took place on 22nd January also in the Pompadour Suite of the Cafe Royal. This was a significant first event generally for the Commanderie, not only because it was our first Symposium but also the first to be organised by a Wine Order in this country. The Grand Commandeur, Col. Hector Mackenzie, stressed this point when he welcomed the participants - over 50 were present - emphasising, also, that all the speakers were distinguished Members of the Commanderie. The new Chancellor, Derek Sheen, as Chairman of the Conference, then made the Introductions.

The First Lady of Wine - Pamela Vandyke Price - opened the Symposium with the Key-Note Address "The History and Culture of the Loire Chateaux and their Influence upon the Development of the Wines of Anjou". She began by reminding us that we had chosen the feast day of St. Vincent - the Patron Saint of Wine - for our first Symposium. She went on to compare the varying architecture of the Loire Chateaux with the shape of the wine bottles of their localities. The grey, fortress-like appearance of the Chateau at Angers was because its original function had been to protect the city against marauding pirates. The Chateau at Saumur, on the other-hand, is lighter-coloured and graceful, reflecting the elegance of a cavalry school whose military rode into battle wearing white gloves. The Abbey at Fontevraud is a masterpiece where the delicacy of the west combines with the more exotic quality of the east. The Kitchen is of exceptional interest with five working areas served by 20 chimneys. The importance of the Kitchen emphasised the practical nature of the monks administering Fontevraud. They also served the local community as bankers and pharmacists. The tombs of the first three Plantagenet Kings rest at Fontevraud, the only Monarchs of England not to be buried at Westminster Abbey.

Mrs. Vandyke Price explained how chateaulife both influenced and was influenced by the natural prodigality of the Loire Valley. The ease of hunting provided various meats and fowl for the table whilst the temperate climate encouraged out of door pursuits such as tournaments and hunting parties for which the light, elegant wines, natural to the region, were ideal for the buffet-type repasts. The development of chateaulife from the robust style of the Middle Ages to the graceful pastoral of the 18th century mirrored the development of the wines. Mediaeval wines were high in acidity, very murky and chiefly regarded as sedatives, digestives and medicines. With the advent of cellars from the 18th century onwards, it became possible to store wine and thus a taste for matured wines developed. The home of Robert Cointreau at Savennieres was a charming example of the refinement of Chateaux architecture over the period.

Mrs. Vandyke Price stressed the extent to which Loire wines had changed throughout the centuries. What had once been acceptable would not be so now as palates developed and tastes changed. She considered that current marketing practises could endanger the character and individuality of the regional wines. She felt that members of the Wine Orders should guard against this trend so that the separate regions retained the qualities for which they were most admired and enjoyed.

Our Chef de Cuisine, Cyril Saper, then described "The Background to Sacavin and other Wine Orders". Using a map of the Vignoble de France, very kindly supplied by Catherine Manac'h of 'Wine and Food from France', he charted the locations of the 76 Wine Orders currently active in France, some of whom, like our own, have overseas chapters. The truly ancient orders had come into being in the Middle Ages, acting as adjuncts to the guilds, with the objectives of maintaining quality and ensuring the survival of local tastes and customs.

In almost every instance, the Wine Orders became inactive from the end of the 18th century until the end of the 19th century when there was a revival of interest

with our own Order - re-vitalised in 1896 - being the first to practise, again, the old customs and traditions. The revival of the old Orders gained momentum throughout this century with an especial flowering after the second world war and during the fifties and sixties. The success of this rebirth influenced the creation of many modern orders so that every wine region in France can now boast several local orders to which adherents can belong - one for every evening of the week perhaps!

The subject matter of Mr. Saper's talk was so broad that time, unfortunately, did not allow him to give all the fascinating details he had compiled upon the Wine Orders now practising in France. The obvious common ground between them is in their Ceremonies where they all demand vows of eternal loyalty and continual imbibing of the local wines.

The largest of the Orders is Burgundy which has its own Chateau and organises banquets for 600 in celebration of various festivities, especially the wine auctions in Beaune. The Bordeaux Order was originally founded by Richelieu and practises a small, select membership. King John was the founder of Jurade St. Emilion. Cognac has two orders, the inductees for both being given the title 'Les Bruleurs'. Languedoc and Armagnac is another ancient Order and covers, amongst others, Roussillon and Gascony. Touraine has seven orders of which Chinon is the best known. The Order of Alsace was legalised in 1561 to control the quality of the wine. Louis XIV was involved with the Order of Champagne, Provence Chateau Neuf du Pape has three orders. Our own region, the Loire, has four orders with SACAVIN the main one.

After Mr. Saper's fascinating account of the proliferation of Wine Orders, Chef de Protocole George Wilks concentrated attention on "The Life and Times of Rabelais", the legendary founder of our Order and the recipient of our vows of never-ending loyalty and imbibing. Francois Rabelais was born near Chinon, in the last decade of the 15th century and died in the middle of the next century. His sixty-year life span coincided with the spread of the Renaissance throughout Western Europe, heralding a period of great change in art and philosophy upon which he, himself, had a not inconsiderable influence. His father was a lawyer and landowner and he was dedicated to the priesthood at seven years of age.

Rabelais was an exceptionally gifted man with an intellectual ability that was outstanding. Printing was newly invented and this opened up many avenues of learning not previously available. His enquiring mind and rational approach led him to challenge the unquestioning acceptance of Ancient Greek and Egyptian scientific principles whilst his ridicule of the superstitious beliefs of his time meant that he was in continual conflict with the practitioners of established thought and behaviour. Fortunately for his survival, he had powerful patrons - most notably Joachim du Bellay and, later, the Bishop of Paris and Francis I.

Rabelais studied at the Universities of Angers and Montpellier. Although it was forbidden, he taught himself Greek so that he could study Galen in the original. This enabled him to qualify medically and, for a period, he was Town Physician of Metz. He was an admirer of Erasmus and was sympathetic to the cause of protestantism.

Rabelais had an enormous appetite for life and learning and his penetrating mind was appalled by hypocrisy and prejudice. He used literature as a means of decrying Mediaeval thought and customs. In his most famous work 'Gargantua and Pantagruel' he poked fun - invariably maliciously and with great obscenity - at the most cherished concepts of his times, becoming one of the first authors to use a comic approach to veil criticism. In his dying breath he is reputed as commenting 'Tirez le rideau, le farce est fini. Je m'en va - chercher le grand peut-etre'.

The final lecture was by our former Seneschal - Charles Whitfield - who gave a fully detailed account of "Wine Labelling - the EEC Regulations". He explained the

objective of the laws introduced five years ago to protect the consumer by distinguishing the various differences between light, still wines. Labels have to give country of origin, name and address of bottler, nominal size and description of contents. Wines not produced in EEC countries may not be described as table wines and must give details of the importer. If EEC wines are made in one country with grapes from another then this must be stated. Labels of all wines marketed in Britain can be in English. A wine description panel sits to adjudicate on the suitability of names. Queries regarding wines are dealt with by the Wine Standards Board who have had this responsibility since their first charter in 1364. Since 1973, this has been operated through the Vintners Company. Laws are becoming quite stringent as the various regulatory processes are completed. All wine imported into this country receives documents akin to a 'birth certificate' making it possible for it to be traced in the case of possible complaints.

Charles Whitfield's authoritative review of wine labelling concluded the theoretical part of the programme and we then went on to a practical session with Robin Yapp giving a demonstration wine tasting of Loire wines. Mr. Yapp, who practises dentistry, began importing wine as a hobby - mainly because of difficulty in obtaining the wines he wanted. With the assistance of his wife, his hobby has become a thriving business concern. He specialises in wines of the Loire and, in the tasting demonstration for the Symposium, he extolled the virtues and appeal of eight still or sparkling wines, interspersing his descriptions with fascinating accounts of the vigneron who had helped him in building up the unique variety of his cellars. The wine tasting proved a highly enjoyable and much appreciated finish to the Symposium which was formally concluded with the Grand Commandeur expressing the gratitude of the Commanderie to the Lecturers for their excellent contributions. Needless to say, the wine tasting ensured that the audience was in a happy and responsive frame of mind for the AGM that followed! This is borne out by the brief details that preceded this account! The day's programme was then completed by the:-

AGM DINNER

Our Chef de Cuisine, Cyril Saper, had once more arranged a very enjoyable meal which was accompanied by some excellent wines from the Commanderie Cellars, chosen for us by our retiring Chancellor, Chris Wilkinson.

The Hanap Presentation was a pleasant feature of this year's AGM Dinner. Chevaliers will recall the Glass Hanap that was used in the Induction Ceremonies until it was replaced, three years ago, by the Gold Hanap. As an acknowledgement of the imagination, initiative, time and effort that Charles Whitfield had put into, firstly, the founding of the British Commanderie and then serving it faithfully and well through its first ten years, the Grand Commandeur presented the Glass Hanap - engraved in commemoration of his contribution - to Mr. Whitfield amid the plaudits of the Chevaliers and their escorts present at the Dinner.

With Winter celebrated in true Commanderie style mixing Plantagenet culture with the excellent wines of our region and some good Anglo-French fare, the outstanding event for the Spring was a return visit to Angers. Our Chef de Protocole, who was our most senior Officer present, gives us this account:-

VISIT TO ANGERS, 1983 - Early in the morning of 14th April, a party of 27 Chevaliers, their wives and friends gathered at Heathrow for the flight to Nantes. We arrived in pleasant sunshine and throughout the whole of our stay enjoyed balmy spring weather. The journey from Nantes to Angers was broken by a visit to Chateau du Cleray, to tour the winery and to taste several vintages of good Muscadet-sur-lies. We had, too, a number of "discovery" wines bottled by the company of Sauvignon Fils by sending a small, portable bottling plant to a number of small private domaines with a small but characteristic output of individual, unique wines of rare quality. Even to the experienced members of the group, to taste sparkling Muscadet was a new

experience. After a hilarious lunch at Ancenis, we journeyed beside the flooded, swollen Loire, past flooded orchards and market gardens to Angers, the lively, bustling capital city of Anjou.

The following morning, our coach took us through vineyards with the twisted, gnarled, black vinestocks just beginning to show the pale green new season's growth. Doue la Fontaine, our destination, is the largest privately owned winery in all Anjou. After a tour of the winery, following the whole of the process of production from vintage to bottling, to storage cellars, we had, in the cellars, a tasting of some of the better wines of Les Vins Touchais. We were told "such a special party deserves a special tasting". The vintage Coteau du Layon wines included in the special year 1975, described by one lady of the party as "real nectar". In the afternoon, a visit was arranged to the Cointreau Distillery, for a guided tour, explaining in detail the whole process of manufacture.

The evening of Friday, 15th April, was the highlight of the whole visit, the Induction and Dinner in the company of the French Confrerie at the hospice St. Jean. This, the oldest Hospice in France, was built in the last quarter of the 12th century by Henry II, Plantagenet, King of England and Count of Anjou. The Induction was held in the old cellars, a fitting setting for our traditional ceremony. The banquet following the induction was given in La Salle des Greniers of the Hospice, a large, stone-built room with great oak beams supporting a high vaulted ceiling, the beams carrying some very efficient, modern electric radiant heaters. About one hundred and fifty diners were accommodated at about a dozen round tables decorated with large yellow daisy-like flowers and large purple orchids. The Grand Maitre, Mr. Louis-Eugene Breheret, made a speech of welcome and our own Chef de Protocole made a suitable reply. A small orchestra played throughout the evening and a number of guests took the opportunity, between courses, to "trip the light fantastic toe" - of course, sedately elegant, not the over vigorous, energetic "pop" and "rock and roll" ! Needless to say, the banquet - all seven courses - was superb and the wines were a suitable complement to the delectable food.

Saturday was another fine, warm day. A pleasant coach journey through the flooded countryside close to the Loire took us to Saumur and the premises of Bouvet Ladubay. Here we were welcomed by Sacavin Commandeur Patrice Monmousseau. In his own inimitable way, Patrice explained all the sequences in the making of Bouvet Ladubay by the method champenoise. After a generous tasting, we were entertained to a delicious buffet lunch with appropriate wines, finishing with an unusual sparkling red wine.

The kindness of our coach driver enabled us to see the unique Anjou form of bowls, "La Boule de Fort". He took us to his own village where a match was in progress. The game is played on a hard, smooth, concave surface with the sides raised about 50 cm. The woods have a bias and are circled with a steel band. The skill is shown in controlling not only the movement due to the bias, but also that caused by the concavity of the rink.

Sunday dawned with a slight drizzle which quickly dispersed to give another fine day. The visit to Chinon took us through Rabelais country and through the scene of some of Joan of Arc's campaigns. The cellars at Couly-Dutheil gave us an opportunity to taste Rabelais' "bonne soupe de Septembre", a chance to compare vintages - a young wine of 1982 comparable with a new Beaujolais - with wines of much earlier vintage. Lunch at the Restaurant Gargantua reminded us of the Rabelasian connections of the area. A visit to the Chateau Azay le Rideau in the afternoon completed the formal arrangements for the whole holiday. The following day we left Angers and Nantes in pouring rain and arrived in London in pouring rain, congratulating ourselves on our good fortune in having had a few days of warm spring sunshine.

Especial thanks for the success of the trip are due to Chevalier Nick Kyriakides who arranged all our transport so meticulously, to Chancelier Derek Sheen who arranged

the visits to the various wineries and to Chevalier Roy Clements who acted as general interpreter. An interesting, instructive tour enjoyed immensely by all the participants.

Before leaving thoughts of the lovely region that is the inspiration of our Order, let us look back to:-

GLIMPSES OF ANGERS V - No account of Angers would be complete without reference to its superb gardens. The town is regularly placed in the front rank of the flowered towns of France, as Maine-et-Loire is the leading Departement for seeds and nurseries and second in the list for floral culture. The Botanical Gardens, famed for their trees, are entered from the Boulevard Carnot through the monumental iron gates, erected in 1893. Facing the entrance is the statue of the Angevin chemist, Chevreul, framed by greenery and flowers. Off the Boulevard Bessoneau is the beautiful Jardin du Mail, a Dutch garden which is always in flower. Both the Fine Arts Museum and the Prefecture have delightful public gardens and La Roseraie has a splendid collection of different roses. There is also an Arboretum. Away to the west, beyond the Boulevard Clemenceau and St. Nicholas Abbey is the Parc de la Garenne, a wild parkland surrounding a small lake.

The Angevins are encouraged by the authorities to make their gardens as colourful as can be, particularly during the summer months when the tourists flock through Anjou. The streets, squares and other public places are bright with flowers and annual competitions are held by the Maison Fleurie. Guidance is given in the choice of plants and those recommended for abundant summer growth include balsam, begonias, heliotrope, phlox, sage and zinnias in the 40-60 cm height category; and carnations, petunias, purslane, nasturtiums, roses, salvias, verbena, lobelias and calceolaria in the 20-40 cm. range.

HONOURS FOR CHEVALIER

Summer has brought the Birthday Honours and we extend our congratulations to our distinguished Chevalier - the newly-knighted Sir Leslie Porter - upon this well-deserved recognition of his contribution to our national life.

NOVEMBER INDUCTION CEREMONY AND DINNER

Our annual activities come round full circle and this Autumn's Induction Ceremony and Dinner is on Tuesday, 8th November in the Louis and Pompadour Suite of the Cafe Royal, 68 Regent Street, London W1. Preparations are well under way and another grand evening is assured. The Booking Forms will be distributed with the next (Autumn 1983) Newsletter.

COCKTAILS

It is generally accepted that cocktails, invented in America, came to Europe about the middle of the last century. However, the Americans cannot claim to have conceived the idea of mixing drinks. The Babylonians did it, the Palestinians did it, the Egyptians did it and we have been doing it ever since. Dates, honey and herbs were mixed with wine which had often turned sour or bitter, not to enhance its flavour, but to mask it. Fruit syrups, pepper and cassia were used for hundreds of years from the Babylonians to the Greeks and Romans.

The Greeks drank wine with tastes that, to us, are quite nauseating. Pithoi, the large earthenware wine vessels were washed with sea water and inevitably some salt water remained to dilute the wine. Salt water and wine eventually became the standard taste. Often, perfume was added with a lump of dough kneaded with honey. Pitch was used to line wine vessels and this, with the added preservative resin, gave the resinous taste which is still preserved in the popular modern Greek retzina.

The Romans developed and enlarged on the Greek ideas, using herbs as preservatives but adding other odours and tastes. Spikenard, myrrh, cinnamon, balsam, saffron, resin and pitch were all used. One of the favourite mixtures 'mulsum' was used as

an aperitif; wine mixed with honey and salt (usually as sea water) with violets, roses, pepper and wormwood added. These mixtures continued through medieval times. Spices were added to mask imperfections so often found in the contemporary wines.

Spiced wines were very popular and a great variety of spices were used. Hippocras and Clarre were mixtures of wine with honey, pepper, ginger, cinnamon with occasionally garlic, mustard, parsley, peony seeds, fennel and carnations. Piments was the general name given to these mixtures. The name was derived from "Pigmentari", a dealer in drugs and spices. The home pigmentaria became the still-room of later years. Hippocras, wine flavoured with pepper, nutmeg, ginger, cloves and sugar candy was a favourite of Samuel Pepys.

Bastard was a rich sweet wine from the Iberian peninsula; mixed with aniseed, coriander, ginger, cloves and lycoras it became Osey while, mixed with some grapes, wormwood and fruit juices, it became the astringent Rappis.

The recipes for these drinks bore considerable resemblance to the recipes for cosmetics. Wormwood wine was mixed with the distillate from cherries, cherry stones, elder bark, mint, marigolds, cloves, ginger, rosemary and turnips, to make a variety of cosmetic lotions. In 1616, a recipe for a cosmetic lotion was to mix wine with the distillate from "grounde wormes best founde upon the church yard or among graves". The borderline between alchemy, witchcraft and domestic crafts was very nebulous. Measures against inebriation were equally nauseous and included "roasted lungs of a goate or fried owls' eggs".

Hippocras lasted well into the 18th century. Boswell, Dr. Johnson's biographer in 1763, visited a tavern in Whitechapel to drink warm white wine with aromatic spices, pepper and cinnamon, a contemporary Hippocras, a drink direct from the Middle Ages. This drink was being replaced in popularity by Negus and Punch. Negus, a mixture of wine, water, sugar, lemon and nutmeg was invented, in 1732, by Colonel Francis Negus. When the wine was Burgundy or Claret, the drink was Bishop, when Hock was used, Cardinal and Pope when made with Tokay. If spirits were used instead of wine, the resultant drinks were Punch and Shrub.

The true modern cocktail originated in the New York bars where barmen mixed Claret Punch, Brandy cocktails and Mint Juleps. The introduction of cocktails was in part responsible for the fall in popularity of port and sherry. By Edwardian times, the cocktail was already becoming popular. They were used as aperitifs and were generally much sweeter than today's fashion. Today's mixtures, usually dry, are many and varied, new mixtures being invented to celebrate any special occasion.

The origin of the name 'cocktail' is a little obscure but the most romantic is that an Aztec princess Cochith gave a potent mixed drink to the King. A result ensued which realised all her romantic desires. A more likely derivation is from 'Coquetel', a mixed drink from the Gironde in France. Of course, the multicoloured feathers of a cock's tail combine to give a magnificent iridescence of colour which may be matched by the wide spectrum of tastes spanned by a good cocktail.

POSTSCRIPT

The Spring Newsletter has somehow managed to encroach upon Summer but the Autumn Newsletter should be distributed nearer to time.