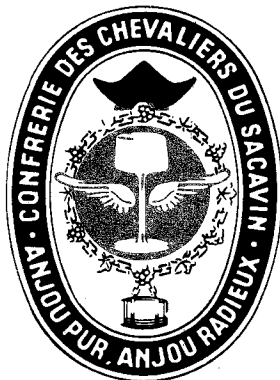


SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No. 8.

Winter 1984

The New Year brings another Newsletter but, before we dwell exclusively on matters in hand, we conclude thoughts of 1983 with a report upon our final event of that year, the:-

Chapitre des Chanson - held on Wednesday 10th November in the Louis and Pompadour Rooms of the Cafe Royal. Because he was still convalescing, the Grand Commandeur was, unfortunately, unable to attend. Whilst this was greatly regretted, the good recovery he was making so that his absence from Sacavin events would only be temporary amply compensated for our missing he and Daphne of this occasion. Senechal David Rutherford stepped in to fill the breach and conducted the Induction Ceremony with great aplomb, very ably assisted by Chef de Protocole George Wilks and fully supported by the other Officers. It was also a great honour to have Mr. Yves Cariou, in his official capacity as Secretary of the Confrerie, amongst those officiating.

The three candidates for membership each brought a special quality to the proceedings. To signify the appreciation of the Commanderie for the wonderful repasts the Cafe Royal have always provided for our Dinners, the first to be inducted, resplendent in his white attire, was their Executive Chef:-

Roger Banfield - who, after a prize-winning studentship of outstanding promise, has progressed brilliantly and upward through the catering departments of many famous, international hotels until reaching the peak of his profession at a comparatively young age. The Queen Mother and the Pope are amongst those for whom he has prepared meals and it is our great good fortune that we, too, are privileged to enjoy his great creative talents.

He was followed by:-

John Ford - a farmer who has followed the great yeoman traditions of generations of his family in ensuring there is food for our tables to accompany the fine wines of our region. His place - Park Farm - is the venue for this summer's Fete Champetre.

and then last but by no means least:-

Mavis Gilhespy - who, by joining our ranks, is also following family tradition. Mavis is the daughter of our recently promoted First Halberdier and, as part of her service to the Commanderie, has undertaken to keep her father in order - quite a prospect in itself! As a fully qualified and practising nurse, she also serves the community as a whole, not least by her approval of the wines of our region - for medicinal purposes of course!

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Following on the tradition established at the 1982 Ceremony, the Chef de Protocole, himself in excellent voice, conducted a short rehearsal of the 'Optime' chorus, after which each ceremonial touching with the winestock was greeted with a good, loud refrain. This exertion meant that everyone was more than ready for the magnificent Dinner that followed - for which great credit is due to our Chef de Cuisine, Cyril Saper, for arranging such a wonderful meal, not to mention our new Inductee for executing it in such superb style. The reason for the name given to this Chapitre became abundantly clear to the guests when the rump steak, venison and game pie was served. A choral accompaniment was provided by the Sacavin Choir - choirmaster George Wilks, who had also devised the lyrics based upon the well-known nursery rhyme:-

'Sing a song of sixpence, a hanap full of wine.
Cafe Royal goodies baked for us to dine,
When the pie was opened for Sacavin to see
Wasn't that a real 'bonne bouche' in succulent pastry.

The Commandeur was dozing, taken by surprise,
The guests were in the Louis Room with hanaps - oh how wise,
The rest were all Chevaliers, slaking off their thirst
When Monsieur Roger Banfield showed the triumph he has nursed.'

The wonderful Dinner was accompanied by some superb wines chosen for the Commanderie by Chancellor Derek Sheen who commented upon both food and drink at intervals during the evening.

In his speech to the guests, the Senechal thanked all those who had contributed to the success of this Chapitre; wished our Grand Commandeur a speedy recovery; congratulated the 'good knight' amongst the guests - Sir Leslie Porter - who had received his accolade from the Queen that morning; and paid tribute to the Officers and Members of the Confrerie in Angers for the wonderful hospitality they had extended to their British colleagues during the April visit. In answer, Mr. Cariou brought the fraternal greetings of the Officers and Chevaliers of the Confrerie, and emphasised the close ties and warm friendships that exist between us all.

The Chapitre concluded with the guest list being signed by everyone present. The Chef de Protocole then sent this to the Grand Commandeur with everyone's good wishes.

The nursery rhyme, as altered above, alludes to the distinctive features of our Order, the most notable being:-

The Hanap: the Glass for the Wines of Anjou - It was an important event when, in 1914, a brilliant company of Angevines decided to inaugurate a competition, open to both professional and amateur craftsmen, to design a glass for the wines of Anjou. Burgundy, Bordeaux, Champagne all have their special glasses, why not a new shape for Anjou. The white wine of Anjou, one of the best in France, deserves a unique shape of glass to show to the maximum its beautiful nuances of colour and scent. More than three hundred entries were displayed in the Hall of the Friends of Art in Angers. However, this was 1914 and the project was postponed until 1920 when a new jury was formed and included such celebrities as M. Massignon, the President of L'Union des Viticulteurs de Maine-et-Loire, Dr. Maisonneuve, director of the oenological station at Saumur, M. Bodinier, a member of the Senate, and the Mayor of Angers. Dr. Maisonneuve, the secretary, addressing the assembly at the final public meeting of the committee gave an interesting account of the history of drinking vessels.

Diogenes said that a fine drinking cup was not necessary in order to quench one's thirst, a hollowed palm or the hand would amply suffice. Many hollow natural objects have been used as drinking vessels, shells, horns, coconuts, even by some primitive tribes, the skulls of slain enemies. These vessels were unstable when they were filled, it was necessary to empty them in one draught.

Primitive vessels of this sort were often ornamented with gold and precious stones.

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The skulls of decapitated enemies were ornamented with a circlet of gold, encrusted with jewels. Even to the present day, some tribes continue this custom as a traditional and valuable fetish. Across the world, pastoral people soon learned to use, as drinking vessels, the hollow horns of their domestic animals, sheep and oxen.

The knowledge of metals and the art of fashioning them, soon enabled men to shape bronze, silver and gold into vessels to enrich the banqueting tables of the nobility. Kings and princes took pride in their possession of large numbers of precious vessels.

The discovery, by the Phoenicians, of the method of making and working glass opened an unlimited field for the production of drinking vessels. An amazing diversity of shapes appeared reaching its peak in the Renaissance period.

Nevertheless, despite this diversity, the competition committee of 1920 had the temerity to suggest that a completely new shape of wine glass, suitable for and complementary to the uniqueness of Anjou wines could be discovered. The open competition excited great interest throughout France. The conditions were simple; the design should be original, the capacity of the glass should be about twelve centilitres, elegant but not too fragile, easy to wash but, above all, must emphasise the qualities of Anjou wines. More than three hundred entries were received from all parts of France. Many designs were variations on shapes established by long use, many showed the skill of accomplished glass workers.

The jury, after much deliberation, narrowed the entries to forty. Finally, the entry of M. Louis Mignot was chosen. M. Mignot was the owner of the Belle-Rive vineyard in Quart de Chaume.

"La forme de ce verre est volontairement de ligne simple, sa beauté est sobre, le contenant devant s'effacer modestement devant le contenu. Le fond, large et plat, comme une glace est éminemment propre à faire valoir sa jolie teinte ambree. L'orifice, un peu retreci permet à l'odorat de mieux saisir les subtils parfums qui montent du précieux liquide. Le vin avait inspiré le verre".

The name "hanap" is derived from a word in old French meaning a drinking vessel. (GW)

We will now linger in last year just long enough for a report, from our former Chancellor Chris Wilkinson, on:-

The 1983 Vintage. For the Loire region generally, but for Anjou and Saumur especially, the 1983 Vintage is of very fine quality. The sugar content of the grape juice, at the time of picking, was very much above average - in line with the classics of 1971 and 1976. The combination of acidity in the wine and the level of the sugar content means that all the ingredients abound for good, well-balanced wines. The quantity too, is also above average.

The sweet whites for which our region is famed are very rich, succulent, fruity wines. The dry whites and rose are also very nice with a crisp tang to them. As an ultra critical comment, there are just one or two reservations about the Sancerre and Pouille Blanc Fume which may seem a little diluted by sheer weight of a vintage of such big proportions.

The reds should prove to be the most successful of all the types. The quality is superb - similar to 1978 and 1975 - of good deep colour and lots of tannin - unusually strong and vigorous wines for the area.

1983 is definitely a year for laying down the sweet white and the reds. The dry whites are for more immediate drinking.

Although, in post-war literature, 1984 has become an expression of fore-boding, the reality of the year, for Sacavin, confirms interesting and enjoyable events with no hint of doom. The first of these was the AGM and Seminar held on Friday 20th January at the Cafe Royal.

With our Grand Commandeur, Col. Hector Mackenzie, in the Chair, around 40 members attended the AGM where they adopted the various Reports, gave their views on future programmes and policies and elected the Officers and Management Committee Members for the year. The Minutes of the Meeting are enclosed with this Newsletter.

The Seminar on "Different Aspects of Taste - the Pleasant and the Unpleasant" preceded the AGM. The Grand Commandeur opened the proceedings with a welcome to the participants after which the Seminar Chairman, Chancellor Derek Sheen, introduced the internationally renowned clinical toxicologist Professor Roy Goulding of the University of Surrey and Guy's Hospital who was covering the Unpleasant Aspects of Taste with a talk on "Bacchus - or the Persian Maiden's Poison".

The desire to rid oneself of interfering relatives, unpleasant rivals or downright enemies led many, fortunately mostly in the past, to revert to poisoning as a means of gaining their objective. Although there are various routes by which poison can enter the body, Professor Goulding concentrated upon those that were swallowed. Poison, especially the opiates, introduced into wine was a favourite method. Hence the reference to 'Bacchus' in his title. The other part of the title was even more intriguing. Skilled Middle Eastern poisoners, especially from Egypt, developed the hypothesis that if they dosed a young girl with poison in small but regular quantities over a period of time - so that her body adapted to the unusual diet - she would become so toxic that she would poison those who kissed or became intimate with her. The success rate of this interesting theory is not recorded but the young lady has become known as the 'Persian Poison Maiden'.

The Ancient Greeks considered poisoning a satisfactory method of judicial execution but it is in the centuries spanning the Roman Empire that poisoning reached its highest peaks of achievement. Wives rid themselves of husbands, sons and daughters of aged parents, politicians of their rivals and the Emperor Nero of practically everyone near him. He even appointed a Poisoner-in-Ordinary to his court. By 1000 AD attention again turned to the Middle East where it was the practice of Arab doctors to challenge each other to a duel by poisoning. One doctor would produce a vile poison for the other to swallow and then quickly produce the antidote in order to survive! The Health Service might take note of this!!

By the 14th/15th centuries, poison had again become a political weapon for ensuring success where other means failed. The exploits of the Borgias and de Medicis are popular legend although there is not a great deal of documentary evidence to support their authenticity especially with regard to the Borgias. Both Henry and Elizabeth Tudor lived in fear of poisoning - Henry by Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth had her doctor executed on this suspicion. It was very reassuring for us to have confirmed by Professor Goulding that the Plantagenets appear to be totally innocent of any involvement with poisoning.

In France generally, though, poisoning flourished from the 15th to the 18th centuries. During the reign of Louis XIVth, the death, by poisoning, of the husbands of noble ladies reached epidemic proportions whilst, disguised as a Nursing Sister of Mercy, the notorious Marquise de Briancaville dispatched many she purported to be saving until she was caught and executed.

The development of analytical chemistry in the past 150 years has eliminated poisoning as a practical method of murder unless one also wants to get caught. Nowadays, food poisoning caused by unsatisfactory storage or preparation is the hazard to which most of us are likely to be exposed - unless the pollution of our world by petrol fumes, chemical additives or nuclear emissions leads to a success level undreamed of by ancient practitioners of the art. However, as Professor Goulding warned, the murder two years ago in London of a Bulgarian dissident by a poisoned umbrella tip means that the old skills are not entirely forgotten!

The audience thoroughly enjoyed this fascinating lecture and responded to the Grand Commandeur's Vote of Thanks to Professor Goulding with sustained applause. Perhaps,

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too, with some relief at leaving poison to go on to the 'Pleasant Aspects of Taste' with Mr. Neil Braithwait talking us through a Tasting of the following interesting and, in some cases, newly introduced Loire Wines:-

Saumur Blanc de Blancs Brut M.C.
Langlois-Chateau S.A.

Saumur Rose M.C.
Langlois-Chateau S.A.

Chateau 'Le Perdriau' Cabernet Anjou
Marcel Biguet

Bonnezeaux 'La Croix de Mission' 1982
Rene Renou Fils. Thouarce

Saumur 'Chateau de St. Florent' 1982
Langlois-Chateau S.A.

Menetou-Salon 'Morogues' 1982
Henry Pelle. Morogues

Saumur-Champigny 1982
Langlois Chateau

Chinon 1979/81/82 (3 vintages compared)
J. Spelty

all of which were enthusiastically sampled by the participants. No small wonder that everyone was in a very receptive frame of mind for the immediately following AGM and just as receptive of the AGM Vin d'Honneur and Dinner that concluded the programme. The Dinner - arranged by our Chef de Cuisine, Cyril Saper, was a true Plantagenet feast combining best of French fare with a great traditional English dish, all greatly enhanced by wines from the Commanderie cellars, chosen by Chancellor Derek Sheen.

The contribution of an eminent medical practitioner to this year's AGM programme leads to thoughts on the contribution of a great medical practitioner of last century -

Louis Pasteur - 1822-1895. What is the common factor in such diverse subjects as the crystalline deposit in wine, a "black spot disease" in silk-worms and the prevention and cure of anthrax and rabies? The answer is the genius of Louis Pasteur.

Louis Pasteur was born in Dole in the Jura, of humble parents. His father was a tanner and the young Louis received the elementary education of his native city and further education at Besancon, receiving his B. Lettres and his Doctorate. At this time, his primary interests were chemistry and physics.

Normal light consists of vibrations in all planes. If vibrations are restricted to one plane (many crystalline substances will do this), the light is said to be polarised. By passing the polarised light through some crystalline substances, the plane of polarisation may be rotated either to the right (dextro rotatory) or to the left (laevo rotatory). While examining the crystalline deposits from wine, Pasteur noticed a very small difference in crystal formation from one crystal to another. Very laboriously, he separated, using microscopic observation, the two crystalline forms and found that one was dextro-rotatory, the other, laevo-rotatory and when combined, these two forms of tartaric acid were optically inactive, a form of tartaric acid called racemic acid. Pasteur's search for four forms of tartaric acid reads like a treasure hunt. Pasteur became Professor of Chemistry first at Strasbourg, then at Lille.

His work on tartaric acid had furthered his interest in fermentation. Microscopic examination of "good" and "bad" beers showed him that "good" yeast cells were elliptical in shape and "bad" yeasts were round. He separated them and found that round yeasts always gave bad beer and oval yeasts, if pure, gave good beer. The empirical, rule of thumb, knowledge of wine and beer making was, by Pasteur's observation and experiment, placed on a sound scientific basis, capable of control within fine limits.

While Pasteur was performing his experiments, the theory of spontaneous generation was widely held. It was believed that living organisms could be spontaneously generated from inanimate material - e.g. rotting meat produced flies. In a series of brilliant experiments, Pasteur demonstrated that the idea was false; even his newly discovered microscopic yeasts reproduced themselves. He separated one single

cell and from it produced a pure culture. He succeeded in isolating and identifying the ferments which produce sour wines, 'ropy' wines, bitter wines, flat wines and those which sour milk. From these observations, Pasteur suggested heating liquids to about 60°C for a short time to kill organisms present. Pasteurisation has been of incalculable value ever since.

The protagonists of the spontaneous generation theory believed that the processes studied produced the microscopic 'animalculae', e.g. meat putrified and decayed and in doing so spontaneously produced bacteria. Pasteur believed the opposite, decay was caused by the incidence of bacteria which came from the air. By rigorously controlled experiments, by filtering or excluding air in ingenious ways, he showed that different sources of air varied in their power to bring about putrefaction; they contained varying numbers of bacteria.

By 1867, Pasteur had evolved a complete biochemical explanation of the way in which wine changed to vinegar by the action of the organism *mycoderma aceti*. He was so sure of the truth of his ideas that he sent 650 litres of 'pasteurised' wine and 50 litres of untreated wine to West Africa. On its return, the treated wine was still sound, the untreated was, of course, completely bad.

In 1871, Pasteur surprised Samuel Whitbread by an extremely accurate diagnosis of the deficiencies of a batch of beer. Pasteur insisted that a microscope should be obtained (it is now in Whitbread's museum) and demonstrated that the faults could be attributed to the impure yeast which had been used.

Having saved the brewing industry a great deal of money, Pasteur was asked to turn his attention to a scourge which was devastating the silkworm industry of France. Using his brilliant microscopic technique, he managed to prove that the scourge was caused by two different organisms, one of which was anaerobic and resembled the bacterium he had isolated in his studies of butyric fermentation. He was even able to introduce new healthy strains of silkworms to the stricken industry.

For the next twenty years Pasteur worked acidulously and in the face of great opposition to his theories, to conquer the dread diseases of anthrax and rabies. Much of his work was an extension of the findings of Jenner and Lister in developing and demonstrating the benefits of inoculation and vaccination.

In one of his letters, Pasteur wrote "Three things - will, work and success - between them fill human existence". On his death-bed he said to some of his pupils "You have to work". These words are the complete epitome of his whole life. Pasteur's study of tartaric acid led to the study of fermentation and thence to the germ theory and to a general appreciation of asepsis, vaccination and inoculation. Few men have done so much to ensure the safety of Man's food and drink and advance Man's conquest of the ills to which he is subject. (GW)

1984 Programme - Like the well-known piece by Vivaldi, the Management Committee have planned an event for each Season during 1984. The Seminar and AGM were admirable activities for 'Winter'. For 'Spring' a Reception at the House of Lords - with Chevalier Baroness Phillips JP as Host - will take place on Wednesday 25th April, 6.30 p.m. to 8 p.m. The Booking Form is enclosed with this Newsletter. 'Summer' will provide a Fete Champetre at Park Farm, St. Osyth, near Clacton-on-Sea on Sunday 17th June. It is being arranged by new Chevalier John Ford who, with his wife Gaynor, will be the hosts whilst Frank Coe is organising the Wine-Tasting. 'Autumn' is the traditional time for our annual Induction Ceremonies and Dinners. This year's will be on Wednesday 28th November and entitled 'Chapitre des Dames'. Always looking to plan something new and novel, the Induction will be for ladies only - as acknowledgement of the influence of the ladies upon the popularity of wine drinking in Britain. In the meantime, one of the candidates for induction has prepared for us a piece upon that formidable Plantaganet lady whose influence upon many things, including wine, has become legendary:-

Eleanor of Aquitaine - passionate, beautiful, wayward, cultured, elegant, unscrupulous and indomitable, with a lifespan almost unheard of in the 12th Century,

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Eleanor of Aquitaine was born in 1122, at the chateau de l'Ombrière near Bordeaux.

Influenced by her father, Duke William of Aquitaine and Poitou and his elegant Court, she grew up pleasure-loving and witty. William had allied himself with Geoffrey, the first Plantagenet, Count of Anjou and founder of the House that would eventually rule England.

At the death of her father, she became, at the age of fifteen, the richest heiress in Europe, owning twice as much land as the King of France, a fact that had not escaped the notice of Louis-le-Gros, so-called because his grossness had made it impossible to move him from his bed, but not prevented him from being an astute monarch. In his wisdom, he had decided that his son and heir, Louis Florus, could do a lot worse than marry the heiress of Aquitaine. Louis Florus, travelling through the fertile and beautiful lands of Aquitaine, on his way to collect his bride, felt very well disposed towards cherishing such a rich wife. As an added bonus, he found her comely and highly emotionally demonstrative. She found him slender and elegant and she started lusting after him without further delay.

According to a contemporary chronicler, the magnificence of the Nuptials were such that "it would need the eloquence of a Cicero or a Seneca to do justice to them", thus letting himself out of a piece of copy that would have been interesting.

During an incredible drought in 1137 when, it was said, both the Seine and Loire dried up, the old King, overcome by heat and excessive avoir-du-poids, died in Paris on 4th August 1137. Louis Florus became King of France and Eleanor found herself a Queen, married to a kind, quiet and very pious husband - so pious, in fact, that he quite possibly spent in prayer the time that would have been more suitably devoted to a young husband's activities. Very soon, the child-bride was heard to refer to her husband as "the monk".

She, for her part, turned her attentions to making the Court of France a very lively place. It was said that she "drank cup for cup with the men in the Hall". Presently, being, even at that tender age, of a rather authoritarian turn of mind, she instructed Saint Bernard, who had performed many a miracle, to cause her and the King to produce an Heir for France. Possibly he didn't like her tone of voice. He turned a deaf ear and Eleanor gave birth to a daughter, Marie, the future Marie de Champagne. After two years of motherhood, Eleanor heard certain rumours about a proposed Crusade. Like our modern mums, she declared firmly that she was sick and tired of having only a toddler to talk to, and demanded to be taken away on a long holiday. So, having obtained the necessary permission from Pope Eugenius the Third, the royal couple set off on their Crusade.

Since quite a few ladies, including the Countess de Blois, the Countess de Toulouse, Sybille of Flanders, Maurille of Roussy and Talquary de Boulogne, had decided to emulate their Queen and follow their husbands to the Crusade, Eleanor amused herself designing a uniform for these new female Crusaders. She dressed them in loose-fitting white tunics bearing the traditional red cross on the front and on the back, a broad leather belt from which hung a small elegant dagger and red leather boots with bright yellow turn-ups. Very natty. Thus the Queen's Amazons set forth. As an afterthought, the Queen decided to add to her luggage a few of her favourite troubadours, just in case she became a little bored with Crusading.

Eleanor was utterly charmed by Constantinople. She quite simply adored all that gold and precious jewels. She also cast an appreciative glance on the suave, handsome noblemen of the Greek Court. While pious Louis the Seventh visited Saint Sophia and knelt for hours in prayer and meditation, the Emperor Manuel, his lively Empress and our Eleanor were having themselves a ball. Sumptuous parties and the exchange of many lavish presents made the time pass most agreeably. However, in time, Louis instructed the ladies to don their uniforms again and to follow him further afield. After all, he reminded them gently, the object of the exercise was to fight the Saracens, was it not?

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There followed one really big Victory when, having crossed the river Maeander (incidentally, the origin of the word meandering) they left the field littered with Turkish corpses. After another battle or two, the King got a strong feeling that his luck was turning. He escaped to Antioch with the Queen, her ladies, the troubadours and a few choice Knights. All the rest were left to continue the fighting or perish.

At Antioch, the travellers were received with great rejoicing at the Court of Eleanor's uncle Raymond, a tall, handsome, well-knit man in his early thirties, renowned for "the strength of his thighs". Eleanor at once told Uncle Raymond that she liked him exceedingly well and proceeded to prove it to him in the simplest and most direct manner. In no time at all, the Queen's Amazons had turned into a troupe of cheerful harlots, not in the least adverse to the attentions of the Saracens. In fact, in a more modern war, they would have had their hair chopped off.

Raymond tried to convince King Louis that an attempt to conquer Jerusalem was doomed to failure but the saintly King shook his head and said 'no way' because his duty was precisely to proceed to Jerusalem without further delay. Eleanor then informed him quite pointedly that if he wished to go, he could go alone because she was staying in Antioch. This declaration confirmed the poor man's suspicion about a small matter of incest between uncle and niece. Ironically, the dear girl chose this moment to threaten Louis with a divorce on the grounds of consanguinity. Were they not, indeed, related by blood, six generations back? She'd done her homework all right. There is nothing very clear about the journey to Jerusalem but it is generally thought that Eleanor was taken there by force. The couple spent a year in the Holy City, achieving nothing and disliking each other more and more. The Crusade ended in a fiasco and when they eventually started on their journey back, it was in separate vessels. The poor King must have felt things were stacked against him just then. He was going home a failed Crusader and a cuckolded husband.

There was, however, a reconciliation, due to the fact that the Pope presented the brave Crusading couple with an absolutely magnificent new bed. He seems to have had his head screwed on right, His Holiness Eugenius the Third. The Queen was pregnant again and all France awaited the arrival of the heir, but it was a miss again. Alix was born and immediately handed over, in disgrace, to a wet nurse and other suitable attendants. Louis and Eleanor then appealed to the Pope for a divorce. The Pope must have regretted the expenditure on the bed. The King could have divorced Eleanor on the grounds of adultery but, quite apart from the necessity for him to burn her alive, as was the custom, it would also have meant that, in the event of her having got away with her life, neither could marry again and, after all, Louis the Seventh was still without an heir. Therefore, he was compelled to restrain himself to a claim of consanguinity. This was always fairly easy to obtain from the Pope since all the ruling houses in Europe were related somewhere along the line.

On March 11th, 1152, the marriage was dissolved and Eleanor reverted to the title of Duchess of Aquitaine and Poitou and became, once again, "the richest heiress in Europe". Here enters Henry Plantagenet, aged seventeen, eleven years younger than Eleanor, and known to have inherited the violent temper of the Angevins. They fell in love with each other's prospects. His chances of gaining the throne of England had not escaped the notice of the wily girl. On her way back to her own lands, Eleanor was almost kidnapped twice, first by Thibault of Blois who kindly invited her to take a rest in his chateau and then explained that she would not be exactly free to leave it again without marrying him first. She escaped. Then, on the road to Tours, she was nearly captured by Geoffrey, Henry's younger brother, who had had the same idea, but she was warned of the ambush, took another road and arrived safely in her own town of Poitiers. She immediately wrote a letter to Henry to inform her that she was now free and very willing to bestow upon him her valuable person and her lands.

Henry hurried to Poitiers, greatly appreciative of the countryside around him. Louis heard of the plan and, as was his suzerain's right, forbade the marriage. This was totally ignored and Henry Plantagenet and Eleanor of Aquitaine were married in her cathedral in Poitiers on 18th May 1152. Henry was then crowned Duke of Aquitaine. In England, at that time, reigned Stephen de Blois, grandson of the Conqueror who had, through remarkably quick thinking at the death of Henry the First, crossed the Channel to get there first. His claim to the throne was through his wife Adela, daughter of the Conqueror, and strictly speaking he had no business to be there instead of Henry, but he was and that was that. Henry and Eleanor went to England and arranged to meet Stephen in order to discuss with him the best way to pinch his throne from him. Henry was prepared to fight for it but, as it happened, this was not necessary. Stephen was tired and lacklustre, he was unpopular, he was in constant dispute with his barons - why, even his own eyes were not on speaking terms with each other. A poor figure of a man but what gave him the coup-de-grace was the sudden death of his heir, Eustace. There was no fight in Stephen and no resistance to Henry. The Barons met to discuss terms at a Council in Winchester in 1153 and Henry was declared rightful heir to Stephen who, very considerably, died the following year. Our Eleanor and her Henry sailed for England and were crowned King and Queen at Westminster Abbey on 19th December 1154.

Eleanor was now Queen of England, Lady of Ireland, Duchess of Normandy, Aquitaine and Gasconne, Countess of Poitou, Saintonge, Angoumois, Limousin, Auvergne, Bordeaux, Agen, Anjou, Maine and Touraine. Not bad! Henry's lands extended from the border of Scotland to the South of France which made the kingdom of Louis of France look like a miserable little bit on the side. Furthermore, Eleanor had presented Henry with a son, William, born a year before the Coronation. Good organiser, that wench! She did, all the same, take a thoughtful look at baby William and decided that he was a bit sickly, so she immediately started another one, just in case. But a daughter, Matilda, was born in June 1156. Eleanor clicked her tongue in annoyance, especially since William had indeed died in the meantime. The diligent Mummy got to work again and this time produced a big, lusty child, Henry, followed a year later by Richard, born in Oxford on 8th September 1157.

The royal couple spent a reasonable amount of time in England but Anjou was for them what the wealthy modern Frenchman calls a 'residence secondaire' and Eleanor in the short intervals between her pregnancies was always crossing and recrossing the Channel. Whenever Henry was abroad on some skirmish or the other, Eleanor ruled over England with superb competence and when he came home, she used to depart for Anjou or Aquitaine. It does appear, though, that the couple spent nearly every Christmas, with great festivities, in Anjou. The local wines may have had something to do with that choice of residence.

The marriage jogged along. Although it was not the custom of the times to marry for love, there's plenty of evidence that there was a strong sexual attraction between the beautiful woman and the virile young man. Eleanor not only acted as her husband's Regent during his absences, but she continued to provide him with children who could be used to contract interesting further alliances. In 1158 another son, Geoffrey, was born, then came Eleanor in 1161, Joanna in 1165 and, finally, John in 1167. Eleanor had given the King eight children. Seven survived infancy which was a pretty good record in those days.

At about that time, a double engagement was arranged between Henry and Louis the Seventh of France, who had yet again produced two daughters by his second marriage. The elder, Margaret, aged 3, was to be betrothed to Henry, aged 6, and Alys, aged one, to Richard, aged 4. With Margaret went Vexin, a very desirable territory between Normandy and the Ile de France. According to custom, the two little girls were despatched to the English Court to be brought up with their future husbands. One can't help wondering what the mothers felt about those games of chess where their little infants were used as pawns and posted abroad, especially in this case, if one considers what did, eventually, happen to the little Alys. Henry promptly infuriated the French King by getting the children, Henry and Margaret, 'married' at once, thus adding the Vexin to his lands without having to wait for it.

As soon as Henry realised that his wife's fertility had come to an end, he withdrew from her bed altogether. The eleven years that separated them mattered a lot more now. She was forty-five, old by the standards of the times, although it would appear that she had kept a very beautiful youthful figure. He was in his prime. He had never been a faithful husband and to escape from the humiliation of his now more open infidelities, Eleanor spent more and more time at her chateau in Niort. Her favourite son, Richard, lived there with her and was brought up by her. At the chateau, Eleanor kept a brilliant, intellectual Court. Her troubadours sang to her of Courtly Love in the 'langue d'Oc' which was the French spoken in the south. They sang to her about 'amor de lonh', love of the unattainable woman. It's interesting to reflect here that the often licentious songs of the troubadours had originated in songs dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the original 'unattainable woman'!

On one of her visits to England, Eleanor discovered that Henry's liaison with Rosamund Clifford, the 'fair Rosamund', had become very much a public affair. Rosamund had given the King two sons by then. Although it is almost certain that Eleanor had allowed her favourite troubadour, Bernard de Ventadour, to comfort her in France, after her husband's desertion of her bed, it was a very different story indeed to be made a fool of in the country where she was Queen. She set off in hot pursuit of the 'fair Rosamund' and found her in Woodstock where she gave her the very worst edge of her wicked tongue. The Queen's violent fury so frightened the poor girl that she sought refuge at the Abbey of Godstow, where she eventually took the veil, greatly to the annoyance of her royal lover, and died there in a state of near-sanctity. Let's admit that it's difficult not to die a 'near-saint' when confined to a Convent.

The Queen's humiliations had not come to an end yet. There was far worse to come. Henry, the boulder, cast a roving eye on young Alys of France, entrusted to him and betrothed to his son Richard. She was twelve years old and he was forty when he made her his mistress. It is accepted, in the course of History, that political marriages took place between children but were not to be consummated till they were older. There can, however, be little doubt about consummation when a King takes a girl of twelve as 'a mistress'... This was too much for the Queen. She sat and thought. She thought, also, of the fury of young Alys' father, King Louis... and then she started scheming. She made overtures to her former husband, Louis, and the two agreed that Henry must be punished for the misappropriation of the little girl. They also agreed that it would benefit them both if Henry junior was to spend some time at the French Court.

In 1170, at Westminster Abbey, the Archbishop of Pont-l'Eveque had (to the impotent rage of Thomas Becket, then in exile in France), crowned the King's fifteen year old son, Henry, King of England. This creating of Kings whilst the present King was still alive was without precedent in England, but it was usual practice in France, and King Henry rather went for the idea. It is said that, at the banquet that followed the ceremony, 'old' King Henry insisted on waiting at table on 'the Young King' and when someone remarked that this was indeed an honour, the cheeky little blighter is alleged to have said "What is so special about the son of an Earl serving the son of a King?"

But back to Eleanor and her weaving of spiderwebs. Craftily manoeuvred by his mother, the Young King slipped into France and declared himself in rebellion against his father, on the grounds that the old man had steadily refused to grant him complete sovereignty over either England or the Duchy of Normandy. It didn't take long for Henry and King Louis to become bosom pals and for Louis to declare that, as far as he was concerned, there was now only one King of England, the Young One. Eleanor then went to her lands and formally presented her son Richard with Aquitaine and Poitou. Finally, she cajoled the younger prince, Geoffrey, into joining the happy family in France.

Poor Henry soon realised that not only his wife but all his sons, except the luckless John, had turned against him. He ranted and raved about the infamy of this extraordinary woman. Eleanor then played her last card and decided her place was with

her three sons at the Court of King Louis of France. Since the journey promised to be fraught with danger, it had to be made in secret and the Queen disguised herself as a young boy which, incidentally, casts a light upon the youthfulness of her figure at the age of 52! Alas, she was betrayed and captured and made a prisoner by her irate husband. It seemed to the King that the Abbey of Fontevrault, founded in 1101 by Robert d'Arbrissel, a Breton priest, would be a very suitable place for his prisoner but Eleanor staunchly refused to forego her sovereign inheritance and her loyal and faithful sons, and she was certainly not, at the age of fifty-two, prepared to take the veil and lead a monastic life! She was sent to Salisbury Castle instead. Louis the Seventh of France now died and his son, Philippe-Auguste, enthusiastically inherited his father's feelings towards the King of England.

Henry now started negotiations with the Pope to obtain a divorce from Eleanor. On what grounds? Why, consanguinity, of course! It's just as well that this consanguinity often had to be traced back several generations, otherwise, not knowing anything about genetics at that time, all the heirs to all the thrones of Europe would be drooling idiots by now.

Queen Eleanor spent the next eight years, from 1175 to 1183 in prison. Eight years in durance, all her life a nuisance. It was there that she was told her eldest son, the 'Young King' had died after a violent illness in the Dordogne. He was 28. His last act was to write to his father, imploring him to set his mother free. Henry, profoundly affected by the death of his heir, did, in fact, order Eleanor to be released, but forbade her to leave England. On her release, Eleanor joyously laid out a vast stock of new clothes and wine to help her celebrate her freedom.

In 1186, Prince Geoffrey died in a tournament in Paris. Of all that fruitful progeny, only two sons were left, Richard and John, known as Jean-sans-terre, John Lackland, because he had constantly missed out on his father's appropriations of his lands to his sons.

Henry, who was in Normandy, suddenly ordered Queen Eleanor to join him there, under escort. In her presence, he then ordered his son Richard to give back Poitou to his mother. Henry wanted Poitou very much and had hit on this idea to try and get it without a fight. He had guessed shrewdly. Richard and his mother had such a long-lasting and deep affection for each other that, since Richard had received Poitou from her in the first place, he handed it back to her without hesitation. He failed to understand his father's manoeuvre. Henry took Eleanor back to England and, for no obvious reason, promptly made her a prisoner again, this time in Winchester. However, it appears that from now on, the King's sons refused to discuss matters of state with their father if their mother was not present. They refused to forget that she was the owner of half the Kingdom. Therefore, the Queen was allowed out from time to time to join some Council or the other. She made sure, every time, to appear to her menfolk in style. In one instance, it is recorded that she received £28 for 'scarlet robes, grey furs and embroidered cushions'.

Although there was no love lost between Philippe-Auguste and Henry, they did have one thing in common. Both disliked going to war which they considered dangerous and expensive. As often as possible when a dispute arose, they met in Gisors, under the legendary elm tree, to try and sort out their differences peaceably. Such a meeting took place on 14th January 1189 between Henry on one side and Philippe-Auguste and Richard on the other. They failed to come to terms. War was inevitable.

Henry was, by then, a very tired man. He had been overworking of late, conquering Ireland, putting down repeated risings in Normandy and Poitou, fighting the Scots and making their King, William the Lion, prisoner, and coping with an invasion of Flemish mercenaries, led by Robert, Earl of Leicester, in Norfolk. He certainly wasn't in good trim as he set off to fight his son in France. It is worth noting here that, through all Henry's troubles and for many years, he had enjoyed the loyal support and affection of his bastard son, Geoffrey of Lincoln (future Archbishop of York). It is alleged that the King was heard to say to him "All my sons have turned out to be bastards. You are my only true son", but I have grave doubts about the veracity of that story. In the twelfth century, the word bastard was not used

in the sense we use it now. It meant, simply, illegitimate, and there has never been the slightest suggestion that Henry thought he was not the father of all Eleanor's children. Therefore, it is nonsense and is better taken as a legend.

Not surprisingly Henry fell seriously ill in France and was urged by his advisers to double back to Normandy in order to obtain fresh help from England. He refused. Travelling night and day and in increasing fever, he made his way to Anjou. Meanwhile, Philippe-Auguste and Richard had captured Tours. Henry, ill and feeling persecuted by his son, sought a meeting with his adversaries. They refused, suspecting a trick, and insisted that, if he wanted to parley, it was up to him to go to them. Henry set off, proudly riding his horse and when he arrived they noticed at once how ill he was. Indeed, his pride collapsed under their very eyes. He agreed to all the terms put to him and had to be carried back to Chinon in a litter.

In his absence, he had sent Roger Maechael, of his household, to Tours to secure a list of all those who had betrayed him. The first name on the list was that of his beloved son, John. Henry turned his face to the wall and, three days later, died in great bitterness, cursing all his sons and himself for good measure. He was buried at Fontevrault, accompanied only by Geoffrey his bastard son who is said to have been shedding bitter tears. Richard went to Fontevrault to see his father's body and while he gazed at him, blood suddenly spurted out of the corpse's nose, to the horror of all who witnessed it as it was, at the time, firmly believed that a corpse would bleed in the presence of its murderer. And so the new King of England was Richard Coeur de Lion (known to all Continental school-children as Gare-de-Lyon on account of his immoderate addiction to travel).

Naturally, the very first thing he did was to have his mother set free and to instruct her to reign in his place until his arrival. Eleanor immediately ordered all the prisoners in the land to be released because, in her own words, she "knew that life in prison was irksome and what a delightfully refreshing thing to the soul it was to come forth therefrom". She then started on a grand tour of the Kingdom, thoroughly enjoying her popularity in every town she visited.

Richard had always considered "that island", England, as a suitable place for merchants and yokels, a mine of revenue, but hardly a pleasant residence for a Plantagenet Seigneur. In fact, he had only visited England twice since his birth in Oxford. However, he had to admit, reluctantly, that he ought to attend his own Coronation! which took place at Westminster Abbey on 3rd September 1189. Surprisingly, he did not return to France immediately after the ceremony but lingered on. It very soon became evident to all that the purpose of his prolonged visit was to raise all the money he could possibly obtain for a Crusade. "I would sell London itself" he said cheerfully, "if I could find a purchaser".

His mother, overjoyed by the reunion, presently remembered that sooner or later, Richard would have to produce an heir. She looked at her son and possibly said "Mon Dieu! Not married yet, at your age!" and set about putting the matter to rights. Her choice fell on Berengaria, Princess of Navarre. Richard quite amiably fell in with her wishes, then turned his attention to better things and started packing his bags. His journey, by sea, to the Holy Land, took him first to Sicily where he was received by his sister Joanna, Queen of Sicily. Eleanor set off immediately after him, taking Berengaria along. She handed over the hapless princess to her daughter Joanna, with firm instructions that the marriage should take place soon. In fact, it took place in Limassol, in Cyprus. Berengaria never won Richard's love. This explains why she always remained in Eleanor's good books. It had never been her intention to come second in her son's heart.

In Autumn 1192, Richard, on his way back from his Crusade in tempestuous seas, found himself drifting off course and was taken to the coasts of the Adriatic where he was hi-jacked by pirate ships and eventually landed near Venice. He set off to make his way across Europe incognito but didn't make a very good job of it. Almost at once, his identity was revealed. In Austria he became a prisoner of Count Leopold who had a long-standing agreement with the German Emperor that all "pilgrims" from

the East should be arrested. He dutifully handed him over to his suzerain, the Emperor, who imprisoned Richard in the Fortress of Dürnstein on the Danube. Appealing to Pope Celestine the Third for his intercession in having the prisoner released, Eleanor wrote with great eloquence "I, Eleanor the Miserable, why have I, the mistress of a Kingdom, the mother of two kings, reached the ignominy of a detested old age? In all things, the Lord has become cruel towards me and opposes me with a heavy hand" signing herself, "Eleanor, by the wrath of God, Queen of England".

The answer of the Pope is not known but it had ceased to matter because it now became known that Richard would be freed on the payment of a stupendous ransom, to wit, thirty-five tons of silver! Undaunted, the Queen set about raising the money and in 1194 took the King's Ransom to Germany herself. Mother and son enjoyed a very joyful reunion and, in London rode side by side to wild acclamation. But where was Berengaria? Nobody seems to know or care.

Richard left England for the last time that same year to take back from the King of France all those little bits of territory he had been nibbling at whilst Richard's back was turned. At Chaluz, walking unarmed around the castle, studying its defences, he was hit in the shoulder by an arrow. The wound itself was not terribly serious but, through the diligent ministrations of his surgeons, he died, on 6th April 1199, in his mother's arms, naturally. He was buried at Fontevrault.

Eleanor hurried back to England to supervise the safe enthronement of her last son, John, who had lacked not only in lands and in charm but also in loyalty and faithfulness. Eleanor then returned to France for the last time. At the incredible age of seventy-seven, this indomitable woman set off on a perilous and exhausting journey to Spain to visit her daughter Eleanor, Queen of Castile, and to view her eleven grandchildren, with the purpose of arranging suitable marriages for them. She found all the girls comely and lively. She managed to 'place' them all. She chose Urraca for the throne of Portugal and the pick of the bunch, Blanche, for the French King. She took her back with her and, on 23rd May 1201, the King married Blanche de Castile, destined to become the mother of Saint Louis. Eleanor would have been very surprised, one feels, had she ever known that she would become the great-grandmother of a saint!

And now her work was done. At the last, the very last minute, she became a nun at Fontevrault, confessed her numerous sins and died piously (!) on 30th March 1204, aged eighty-two. She was buried next to her beloved son Richard at Fontevrault. The stone effigy on her tomb is very beautiful. Her face bears a very slightly ironical look. In her long, slender hands, she holds an open book. One must certainly not take it for granted that it was a prayer-book! (M-T.B.)

Thoughts upon this year's programme provide an opportune moment to remind Active Members of the:-

Annual Subscription - which became due on 1st January, in the sum of £5 (£7.50 spouse rate). Members so subscribing are deemed Active Members and receive the Newsletters, advance Notices and Booking Forms for Meetings, etc. Active Members who do not pay by Banker's Order and who have not yet paid for this year should send their remittance immediately to the Treasurer:-

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Please Note - cheques should be made payable to 'SACAVIN'.

Inactive members can become activated by similarly sending their remittances to the Treasurer, as given above. Then they, too, will receive all programme details, etc.

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Obituary

It is with very great sorrow that we report the sudden death of Captain James Mackenzie, the eldest son of our Grand Commandeur, Col. Hector Mackenzie and his wife, Daphne, on 2nd January aged 26 years.

James was an Officer in the Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Cameron) - his father's old regiment. He saw service in the Falklands and on the Chinese border and it is one of life's tragic ironies that, after exposure to these expected dangers, he should have lost his life in a drowning accident, having first ensured the safety of his younger brother.

James Mackenzie was a brave young soldier with a brilliant service career ahead of him and a very nice young man. In offering our sincerest condolences to Hector and Daphne, we hope that the inspiration of his short but exemplary life will be of some comfort to them in their cruel loss.

The admiration and affection that was felt, not only for James, but also for his parents, led to them receiving hundreds and hundreds of letters of sympathy, many of them from our members. Eventually, they will all be acknowledged but this, in itself, is a mammoth task. Meanwhile, and through these columns, they thank all those who have written for their kind messages and would like them to know how much these have helped to sustain them during this very difficult period in their lives.

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