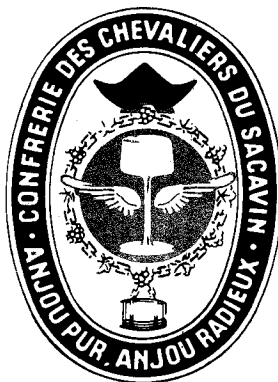


SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No 9.

Summer 1984

The Spring/Summer period of this year's Sacavin Calendar has seen two extremely enjoyable Sacavin Events. The first of these:-

The Spring Reception at the House of Lords - took place late Wednesday afternoon, 25th April, with our distinguished Chevalier - the Baroness Phillips JP - as Hostess to the Commanderie for the occasion. She graciously welcomed each of the 82 guests - in company with Seneschal David Rutherford - at the entrance to the Cholmondley Suite. Guests were then free to wander around the beautifully appointed room and out on to the Terrace. It was a great privilege to enjoy an opposite view of the Thames waterside from a vantage point more famous as the usual view of Westminster. No-one lingered too long, though, as there was quite a breeze blowing!

After everyone had assembled Lady Phillips gave some very interesting details about the House of Lords and the delicately balanced relationship it enjoyed with its neighbours in the Commons, referred to as 'another place', a reciprocal term apparently. By virtue of being a Peeress as well as Lord Lieutenant of Greater London, Lady Phillips considered her position very vulnerable with attack promised by Government and Opposition - both being committed to abolishing one or other of her roles. She can be reassured, though, that she is inviolate as a Sacavin Chevalier!

Because Parliament was in Session, a guided tour of the House of Lords was not possible. However, Lady Phillips had very kindly arranged for parties of ten or so to go into the Gallery at intervals to listen to the debate. This was a fascinating experience - the Chamber is very impressive but seemed smaller, perhaps, than one realises from the occasional glimpse on television. It was certainly a great honour to look down upon one of the most famous and historic places in the world and to appreciate its especial atmosphere - still functioning as originally intended with the Noble Lords deep in debate, this time upon the Select Committee's Report upon Remote Sensing and Digital Mapping.

To complement the History and Sense of Occasion, an outstanding Saumur Sparkling Princes de Loire was served throughout accompanied by delicious canapes, very varied and served very unsparingly. The Commanderie's gratitude to Lady Phillips for

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arranging such a splendid Reception was proposed by the Senechal to which the Chevaliers and their guests responded with loud and sustained applause. The Commanderie's thanks are also due to Delegue-General, Geoffrey Phillips (no relation!), for his organisation of this outstanding event.

Prompted by the long history of the House of Lords, thoughts turn to an even earlier period when great dynasties dominated and none less than the family who reigned in Anjou for so long and so gloriously. Our Commanderie Historian - Marie-Therese Baird - has supplied us with an account of:-

The Early Plantagenets

Again we are grateful to a Plantagenet who took quill to paper and has provided us with the only information about the ancestors of our better-known Plantagenets. His name was Foulques-le-Rechin (Grumpy), 1067-1109, who, in his lively chronicle, takes us back to the 9th Century and Tortulf, known quite simply as 'seigneur, brigand', poacher and outlaw, a combination of attributes quite common at the time, and not exactly unknown in ours. That, I am afraid, is all we know about him, except that he left a son, Ingelger who, in quite classical reaction to his papa, was a very good boy and trustworthy enough for Hugues l'Abbe, Duke of Maine and cousin of King Charles-le-chauve, to create him Vicomte of Anjou. Through marriage, Ingelger acquired Amboise and is said to have distinguished himself in the defence of Tours against the Normans. We don't know when he died.

Tortulf's son, Foulques (Falcon) le Rouge, added quite a bit to his inheritance and, again by marriage, acquired Loches. This chap is important in the history of the Plantagenets because it is from him that stemmed the legend that the whole lineage came from the devil. The beautiful woman he married bore him many children and was good and quiet and domesticated. She did, however, have one peculiarity which didn't escape the notice of a busy-body Abbe who asked the unsuspecting Foulques if he hadn't, by chance, noticed that the good woman, although she invariably accompanied her husband and children to Mass, always left the church just before the Consecration. Foulques, perturbed, agreed that his wife should, on the next occasion, be made to stay on to the end of Mass. Now, as we all know, the Consecration is absolute anathema to a witchand, lo and behold, the woman, with a loud screech of fury disappeared in a cloud of sulphur, taking two of her children with her. I don't think the kind Foulques can have been very grateful to the man of God for his interference. After all, she was a beautiful and good wife. However, the point was made and the Plantagenets have never forgotten it. Richard Coeur-de-Lion was often heard to mutter 'From the Devil we came and to the Devil we shall return'. Foulques-le-Bon (940-960) son of the witch and, presumably, of the devil, turned out to be a man of quite remarkable piety, goodness and virtue. He performed countless good deeds and threw charity about as if it was going out of business, but ... well, bad blood will tell, and eventually he very brutally murdered a child his wife had had by a previous marriage.

Of Geoffrey Griseignolle, we know very little except that he conquered Loudun and that he got his name from the fact that he never wore anything but grey all his life. He must have bought a bale of grey cloth that fell off the back of a lorry!

Now we come to Foulques Nerra (972-1040), Comte of Anjou at the age of seventeen, short, thickset and extremely dark and hirsute, hence his name Nerra (Black). He 'neutralised' the Bretons by conquering Nantes. He was the first really powerful ancestor of the Plantagenets and built the chateau of Montresor, which still exists but much altered, and the chateaux of Bauge, Chateau-Gontier and Durtal, all of which have disappeared. In the grounds of the Renaissance-built chateau of Langeais, one can still see 'Foulques Hill', the ruins of a castle he started building in 990, but gave up, possibly called away to a nice battle somewhere. Foulques Nerra adored battles. He never minded whose side he was fighting on, as long as it was a good battle. Turning his black eye to the very powerful Comte de Blois, he deftly relieved him of Lorraine.

Foulques Nerra was physically very strong. He is said to have ridden from Angers to Saumur, fought and won a battle there and gone back to Angers without dismounting. He was a man burdened with an implacable conscience. Sometimes he'd sack and burn a town and all its inhabitants, then go into agonies of repentance. He set fire to the town of Angers because he knew his wife was shopping there that day and he had rather wanted to get rid of her. Then remorse set in and he'd go to Jerusalem, get his followers to put a chain round his neck and drag him, half-naked, through the streets. I think we can rightly call him the father of exhibitionism!

At other times, after some particularly dastardly deed, he'd quickly build an Abbey or two and give huge sums of money to the Church. He went crusading three times, leaving his son in charge of his domains at home. The lad, having possibly diagnosed a spot of masochism in his father, on one of his returns, gave him a sulky look and said 'No. I don't feel like giving it all back to you'. There followed a terrible fight which put Junior in hospital for a very very long time, and made Papa reach for his cheque-book for another huge gift to the Church, with firm directions to God to forgive his 'ame pecheresse'.

At the age of 70 he embarked on his last Crusade and died on his way back, in Metz in 1040, thus setting God a bit of a poser. A small matter of membership to Heaven or the other place.

Meanwhile another ambitious soldier, Geoffrey Martel, Comte of Anjou, was quietly busying himself expanding his lands, mainly in Maine and Touraine. He founded the Abbaye of Cunault and, in 1044, acquired the Chateau of Chinon. We owe him a lot of the work that can still be seen there today. Rabelais is said by some to have been born in Chinon, but this is by no means certain. What we do know is that he lived and worked there.

And here comes Foulques-le-Rechin, the chronicler we mentioned at the beginning. It is a pity that very little is known of him. Obviously, he can't have been very amiable, if we go by his nickname. We know he was a very lively writer but we are told that, as a ruler, he was weak and ineffectual and, when not engaged in writing, hopelessly lazy. His wife, Bertrande, wrote to King Philippe I to tell him that she rather desired him. The king thought it was a charming letter. Foulques saw no reason at all why he should not share his wife with his King. The gossips have it that they slept three in a bed. Foulques just slept.

At last, we come to the origin of the melodious name Plantagenet. Geoffrey-le-Bel (1131-1151) was, allegedly, a charming young man. Since we are interested in the 'Induction' of Chevaliers, I think it's worth writing here the whole of the chronicle describing the 'Induction' of young Geoffrey.

Following the instructions of Henry I, Beauclerc, so named because he had a smattering of elementary education, Comte Foulques the fifth of Anjou, was ordered to send to Rouen, at Whitsun 1128, his son, Geoffrey, to be inducted a Chevalier. Preceded by local gossip which, in the 12th Century, was an excellent predecessor of our media, the young man, then aged 14, duly went to Rouen where Henry had sent 'la creme de la creme' of his entourage to meet him.

The next day, Geoffrey took a bath. I wonder if all our own Chevaliers of Sacavin d'Anjou take a bath on the eve of their induction? Geoffrey took his bath in the 'balneorum lava-ro', a basement room set aside, in the better class of castle, for this purpose only. Geoffrey, having survived the bath, was then dressed in a linen shirt, then a golden gown, then a mantle of 'clamide conchilli et muricis sanguine tincta'. Don't reach for your Latin dictionaries, it means 'purple'.

His feet were inserted into shoes embroidered with sweet little baby lions. At least, that's how I see them, they certainly don't look fully-grown in the picture. A contemporary chronicler declared that he looked like 'a lily of blinding whiteness and brilliant with the brilliance of a rose' which shows that romantic writers are not all that new! He then retired to the 'Secreto thalamy' which was a room

where aspiring knights retired for a last quiet think. At the Sacavin d'Anjou we don't do that. We quaff sparkling Saumur and we're not a bit quiet!

They then brought the youngster a beautifully dressed Spanish horse, of such speed, they said, that it exceeded that of birds flying overhead.

Geoffrey, already overdressed in my opinion, now donned a mailcoat of double-knitting, that is so made that no sword could transpierce it. His legs too were encased in mail stockings and his feet adorned with golden spurs. On his head they placed a 'Heaume' scintillating with precious stones. Then (at last) the King presented him with a sword from the Royal Treasury.

For seven days and seven nights non-stop splendid feasts and 'warring exercises' celebrated this august induction. On the seventh day, Geoffrey was married to the frustrated Matilda. It will be remembered that Henry I had had twenty-one illegitimate children but only one legitimate son, William, who perished on the 'White Ship' in the Channel. Broken-hearted Henry nominated Matilda, William's twin, as his heir. At his death, she fought like a wild cat for the throne of England but never got anywhere. Now she married this young Geoffrey, a Chevalier and a husband, but still only fourteen years old.

Geoffrey grew up to become a hunting fanatic. To provide cover for the game in his forests, he planted thousands of bushes of broom (Planta Genesta) and took to wearing a sprig of the yellow flower on his helmet when going into battle. History doesn't say what he did when fighting during the months the genesta wasn't in bloom but the name stuck and, from Geoffrey-le-Bel, he became Geoffrey Plantagenet.

In Anjou, Geoffrey established his lands firmly. He was fond of making sumptuous gifts to the Church, such as giving his favourite sister to the Abbey of Fontevrault as Abbess. Geoffrey died in 1151 and was buried in Le Mans. Geoffrey and Matilda had a son, Henry the Second, and this is where we come in!

With a fine Spring leading into a lovely Summer, our summer activity:-

Fete Champetre - more than lived up to its name, taking place on a typical English midsummer day (a lot of sun, a little wind and a few spots of rain!) - Sunday 17th June - at Park Farm, St. Osyth, the home of Chevalier John Ford and his wife Gaynor. During the Vin d'Honneur - a superb Sparkling Saumur of our region - Chef de Protocole George Wilks regaled us with a history of Park Farm. It is a most beautiful period house, dating back to Tudor times but with even earlier links with St. Osyth Priory which is the other side of the village. It was in a very run-down state when the Fords moved in, in 1946, since when Gaynor has supervised its restoration with great care and discrimination. During the work, a Monk's Room with small adjacent chapel (now a dressing room), inglenook fireplaces, timbered walls and ceilings, were all uncovered and brought back to their original appearance. Items of great historic and artistic interest were also discovered - a fine tempera painting on wood, similar to one in the Priory, is now in the Colchester Museum but two paintings in tempera on mohair are too fragile to be moved to the museum and are protected by glass in their original position.

Although the facade was added in the mid-19th Century, it is a good example of its kind and does not detract from the marvellous overall appearance of the house. In addition to her work on the house, Gaynor also undertook the creation of the garden, which is truly lovely and - continuing the links with the house's Tudor origins - features four ornamental urns that were cast for Henry VIII. Not content with just flowers, flowering shrubs and ornamental trees in the garden, Gaynor also rears different breeds of chickens - local breeds and some from more exotic places - and she has some unusual and unique birds amongst her collection. Both house and garden are a tribute to her hard work, dedication and very great creativity.

Because of these qualities, Gaynor also found time to serve us a most delicious buffet lunch which was accompanied by, firstly, Muscadet, followed by a Chinon and

finishing with a Cote de Layon, all enthusiastically served by our Host, John Ford and Chevalier Frank Coe, who had also organised the wine. After this splendid repast, enjoyed 'en plein-air', the Harwich Mummers entertained the guests with a fine display of morris dancing and local folksongs.

The Fete Champetre had all the qualities that inspired the Percy Grainger piece 'English Country Garden'. It was a refreshing breath of bright summer in a typical English country setting; the Commanderie's very great gratitude is due to Gaynor and John Ford and, also, to Pat and Frank Coe for all their hard work in organising such a memorable event.

Also in June, and in Angers, there was another event which should be recorded and that is the election of the new:-

Grand Maitre - and we extend our heartiest congratulations and respects to M. Guy Sorgniard upon the bestowal of the highest Office of our Order. M. Sorgniard has already been invited to attend the November Induction Ceremony and Dinner and it is hoped that, together with M. Yves Cariou, the Confrerie Secretary, his schedule will permit him to attend.

Reference to this reminds us that our Autumn activity is our annual Induction Ceremony and Dinner which, this year, is on THURSDAY 29TH NOVEMBER and please note this is a change of date (by one day) since the announcement in the previous Courier:-

La Chapitre des Jolies Dames - heralds a unique first occasion for the Commanderie as this year's candidates for Induction are all Ladies. To emphasise again, it is on Thursday 29th November 1984 at the Cafe Royal, 68 Regent Street, London W1. A superb meal has been organised by Chef de Cuisine Cyril Saper, to be enhanced by wines from the Commanderie Cellars chosen by Chancellor Derek Sheen. The Application Form for La Chapitre des Jolies Dames is enclosed. The evening commences with the Vin d'Honneur at 6.45 p.m., the Ceremony at 7.15 p.m. and Dinner around 7.40 p.m.

Contemplating the details for this year's Induction and Dinner - which is our most important annual activity - is, perhaps, an opportune time to remind ourselves of our Order's Commandments, translated for us from the original French by Commandeur John Braun:-

The Sacavin Commandments

As exemplar, you will preach
Like Rabelais, wisely.

As a good Sacavin, you will drink
Of the wine of Anjou, obviously

You will partake of this nectar
A little at a time, but frequently

Before, during and after meals,
Wherever you may be, daily

Of course you will choose
The vintages gastronomically

In your glass you will appraise
Each wine, very elegantly

Then you will breathe
The bouquet deeply

After that, you will bring your glass
To your mouth delicately

With care, you will savour
The wine religiously

You will build up your cellar
With Anjou crus specially
You will invite friends and neighbours
To drink with you repeatedly
You will offer them Anjou wine
For their pleasure assuredly
You will always put yourself out
To serve them perfectly
You will praise the quality
Of Anjou wine eloquently
You will support its cause
Everywhere, eulogistically
In all places, you will observe
These commandments strictly
You will pay your dues
Every year punctually
Thus doing, you will honour
The Wine of Anjou faithfully
And you will carry out your mission
As a Sacavin worthily
So may you live a long life
And at all times joyously.

Next year's programme will commence with the:-

Annual General Meeting and Seminar:- This is on FRIDAY 1ST FEBRUARY 1985 - and please note this, too, is a revised date from that announced in the previous Courier. The Cafe Royal is again the venue. The AGM will be preceded by a Seminar in which the sense of smell will be featured by, firstly, a lecture/demonstration on perfumery covering the history, genealogy and identification of perfumes followed by a wine tasting of 6/8 wines of our region conducted by our former Chancellor and Wine Master, Chris Wilkinson in which he will illustrate the importance of the bouquet in the judgement of wines.

Christmas and the New Year intervene between the November Induction and the February AGM. With thoughts of the wine we will be imbibing during these festivities, we conclude this issue with the explanation of our Chef de Protocole, George Wilks, on

What a Headache!

Fermentation is a complex, complicated process and although we have been investigating it for about five thousand years, we still do not have a complete knowledge of all its stages, nor of all the causes of the effects its final product, wine, has on those who over indulge in that delectable beverage.

It is only comparatively recently that some elucidation of the stages of the process of fermentation has explained them as a series of complex biochemical and electrochemical reactions involving both simple substances like water and carbon dioxide, and highly complex compounds like proteins and nucleic acids, the fabric of life itself.

Small wonder that, with such a complicated process acting on grape juice, itself a complex mixture, that the resulting product, wine, is an involved mixture of many types of compounds. A wine may contain two or three hundred different substances of which more than a hundred have been isolated and identified and others characterised in a general way. Alcohols (the commonest and most important is ethyl alcohol),

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acids, esters, aldehydes, pigments and mineral compounds are all present. With such a complicated mixture, it is not surprising that the effects of wine can be so spectacular.

Ethanol (ethyl alcohol) is readily miscible with water, its molecule is small and by simple diffusion it can be directly absorbed from the digestive tract. The rate of this diffusion is slow and is further slowed by the presence of food in the stomach, a "blotting paper" effect. The rate of absorption varies greatly from person to person. The alcohol being thus distributed in the blood stream, is taken up by various tissues in the body, including the brain, according to their water content. Fatty tissues do not exchange water readily with the blood and their alcohol content remains low. When the alcohol reaches the entire lean-body mass, it influences the physiology and the biochemistry of a number of processes all involving the nervous system; a change in the rate of heart-beat, balance, co-ordination, etc. It has been shown that the speed of conduction of nerve impulses and the transmission of impulses across nerve junctions are both diminished and the time for neuromuscular impulses is increased. The higher complicated activities of the nervous system are affected and the effect is made obvious in speech impairment, in walking and in diminished mathematical calculation ability.

After absorption into the blood stream and its attendant effects, elimination of alcohol can take place in a variety of ways. About 90% is metabolised, principally in the liver and kidneys and about 10% is excreted in breath, urine, sweat. The rate of elimination is very variable, but the average for Europeans is about 15.mgms./dl per hour. There is a marked difference in alcohol response between racial groups, e.g. European and Oriental. Recent work on twins has shown that the elimination value is influenced by heredity by the presence of specific genes.

The first step in metabolising alcohol is its oxidation to acetaldehyde, an enzyme and coenzyme reaction taking place, principally in the liver and is controlled by certain types of genes. Acetaldehyde is present in most table wines to about 0.01% by volume, but the 10/14% of ethanol present can produce a much higher percentage of the aldehyde. The physiological effects of acetaldehyde are most unpleasant. It dilates the blood vessels of the face and upper body inducing blushing and flushing, accompanied by nausea and dizziness. The concentration of acetaldehyde is quickly altered by a further enzyme reaction oxidising it to acetic acid and thence to acetates.

It has been shown that the level of a high activity aldehyde enzyme accounts for the most striking differences in response to alcohol. Much of the scientific work on the effects of alcohol has been done on the effects of its metabolism to acetaldehyde and acetic acid. If such a small concentration of one component of a complex mixture has such a great effect on our body functions, the accumulative effect of all the other aldehydes, alcohols, acids and esters must be considerable.

Spirits - e.g. brandy and whisky, because they are fractionally distilled contain a much higher percentage of ethanol and in addition a complicated mixture of higher alcohols (especially amyl alcohol), aldehydes, etc., called collectively fusel oil. The greater effect of these increased concentrations is considerable although the changes in ethyl alcohol are the same as those in table wine.

The remedies for a hangover are many and varied - "the hair of the dog", a raw egg in olive oil, aspirin, vitamin B taken before heavy drinking. Biological research, however, seems to indicate that to minimise a hangover, slow absorption of alcohol by eating to provide a "blotting paper" stomach lining, but above all, choose your racial group and choose your parents who will provide the required specific genes.

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