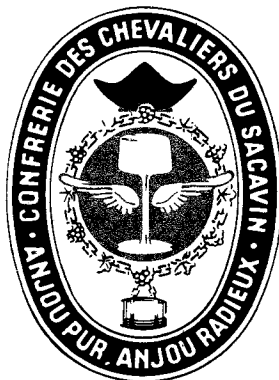


SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No. 17

Summer 1988

This year is the celebration of both the Armada and the Glorious Revolution - events that shaped our country and influenced the course of our history. At a far more modest level, the two Sacavin events we have so far celebrated this year are not all together dissimilar - the AGM will undoubtedly shape future events whilst the other - the Summer Luncheon and Wine Tasting - augured well for the continuation of our history.

The Minutes of this year's AGM were distributed in April so our Active Members have already been made fully aware of the elections and decisions which will contribute to shaping our future. The actual date of the AGM - Leap Year's Day Monday 29th February - could have shaped the future of quite a few individual members, being the occasion when the ladies are permitted to say "will you" and the gentlemen can respond with "yes". There is nothing to tell us this actually occurred as part of the business of our AGM, along with adoption of the Reports and agreeing the Officers, but the Management Committee did all it could to ensure a suitable background - a Supper Dance - with emphasis upon the more romantic pre-war period - the twenties and thirties. Several of our members took advantage of the theme to stroll around in blazer and boater, if gentlemen, or charleston in true flapper fashion, if ladies. The Portman International was a very pleasant venue, providing excellent food and a nostalgically authentic band to conclude a very pleasant and effervescent AGM. We all sparkled with the sparkling wine and very much thank our Chef de Cuisine, Norman Billington, and Treasurer, Malcolm Harris, for their excellent organisation of an evening bubbling over with good humour.

AGM's are not the only occasions to take stock of the past. It is always good practice to remind ourselves of our origins, especially in the richly traditional world of viniculture, as our Chef de Protocole reminds us with his:-

WINE ORDERS OF FRANCE

The British Commanderie of Chevaliers of Sacavin of Anjou is proud of its association with its much older and more illustrious parent, the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Sacavin d'Anjou based in Angers where our famous order was founded in the Middle Ages, the 15th and 16th centuries.

and subsequent desecration in the 18th and 19th centuries when the advance of science encroached into the previous very practical world of the wine maker. In more modern times, many orders were revived as wine societies with a special interest in the wine and the culture of their own particular regions. The standard book on the seventy-six wine orders of France is "Le Grand Livre des Confréries de France" by Fernand Wotaz, edited by Dominique Halévy. This volume has a splendid coloured frontispiece painted by Aristide Cailland, a picture of St. Vincent, the patron saint of vignerons.

In 531 A.D. two kings of France, Clotaire of Soissons and Childebert of Paris were in constant rivalry, an antagonism only brought to an end when their sister Clothilde was abducted by Alamaric the king and leader of the Visigoths. Retribution came to Alamaric at Saragossa, when he was slain by the French forces. The released Clothilde told the kingly brothers of an honoured saint named Vincent burned at Saragossa. The Christian French kings, considering it a dishonour for a saint to be buried in such unholy, heretical surroundings, disinterred St. Vincent's remains and started for home, carrying with them the holy relics. Reaching Mâcon on the Saône, the royal brothers were invited by Bishop, later Saint, Placide, to visit the new cathedral he was building in the city. The brothers accepted and at the reception banquet were so pleased with a wine which Placide offered them that they presented him with some of St. Vincent's holy remains which were duly buried in the new cathedral. The kings Clotaire and Childebert (evidently having a good ear for puns), decided that Saint Vincent was obviously the choice of saint for all makers of good wine - 'cent' and 'sang' are similar in sound as is 'sent', wine largely prized for its scent, is often known as the "perfumed blood of the area". The newly acquired patron saint's remains were interred half in Mâcon and half in Paris in Saint Germain des Prés. To the present time, the ancient wine order of the Maconnais is Le Confrérie des Vignerons de Saint Vincent de Bourgogne et de Mâcon.

The wine orders founded centuries ago had a strong connection with the religious foundations, abbeys, cathedrals, priories, etc., many of which were responsible for some of the major advances in the management of vineyards and the production of wine. A notable example is the work done for Champagne by Dom Perignon. It is not surprising that many of these ancient orders have in their ceremonies and rituals, reminders of their religious connections of old. Even the newer orders have established their origins in the history, legendary and documentary, of the wine area. Most orders clothe their officers in robes modelled on the sumptuous dress of the Middle Ages.

The French Revolution suppressed most religious societies and with them many wine orders whose origins were deemed to have had religious connections. The ancient order of Mâcon was disbanded and proscribed and was not revived until after World War II in 1950. The Sacavin Order was revived in 1904 and again in 1947, celebrating in 1959 its new importance the naming of an Air France Caravelle "Anjou" at a ceremony organised with typical Sacavin efficiency and splendour. The Sacavin Order is based in Angers, a city with a long and interesting history. The foundation of the Plantagenet line of English monarchs was laid in Angers when King Henry II was born in 1154. A sprig of brown (planta and genesta in Latin) was the insignia on the crest of the Counts of Anjou. Le Bon Roi René, born in Angers in the middle of the 15th century, wrote, produced and acted in a pageant extolling the virtues of wine.

In a short article, it is impossible to give details of all the French orders, but we can outline a few which have some unique and interesting features.

The Ordre des Coteaux de Champagne is one of the oldest orders, its foundation being well documented in 1666. It was revived in its modern form in 1956. It has about four thousand members with representation in many countries of the world. The important foreign commanderies elect an "ambassador" who attends the important gatherings of the parent confrerie. A grand prize is awarded annually in honour of two of the founders of the Confrerie, François Taittinger and Roger Gaucher, names almost synonymous with champagne. The robes worn by the officers of the order are a beautiful deep purple colour, the colour of the pressed grapes of champagne, with an ornate, decorative collar the colour of champagne itself. These are the colours of Thibaud of Navarre who in the mid-16th century wrote songs in praise of wine and good living.

The order of Burgundy, Les Chevaliers de Tastevin, is not an ancient one (founded in 1934) but it is one of the largest and best known orders of France. The Confrérie of Tastevin is very much involved with the annual auction on the second Sunday in November in Beaune, where the prices obtained have a great influence on the market prices of the year's vintage and where the buyers are decided by an intricate and almost incomprehensible method involving auctioneers (often in Tastevin robes) with lighted tapers. One of the essential items identifying a Chevalier de Tastevin is a silver tastevin hung on a neck ribbon in the purple and gold colours of Burgundy. The shallow silver tastevin with light reflecting dimples is ideal for appreciating the rich colour of a good Burgundy.

The name Compagnie des Mousquetaires seems much more pertinent to the fiction of Alexandre Dumas rather than a wine order. It is, however, the wine order in Armagnac. Their costumes, blue capes with an embroidered silver cross, are just as colourful as those of their fictional namesakes. Chevaliers of the order make horseback forays, in their colourful costumes, into parts of Gascony, extolling the merits of the alcoholic beverages of Armagnac.

Although many of the wine orders were founded in the Middle Ages, the oldest is probably an order in Languedoc, the Antica Confraria de la Galiniera, founded in 1140. Saint Andin was a countryman, a wine maker of very comfortable means who "went about doing good". As a consequence of his kindness to a beggar who Andin later realised was a miraculous manifestation of Jesus Christ, the wine maker found that the small barrel which he always carried was thereafter always full of the best wine of Beziers. Saint Andin became the patron saint of all the farm labourers of the area, a land which became increasingly devoted to vineyards and wine making. In 1140 the wine order was founded in the Church of St Aphrodise where Saint Andin was buried. In 1605, the original ordinances were confirmed and put down in manuscript by the Bishop of Beziers. These ordinances are preserved in the city archives. The original order with its ecclesiastical associations fell into neglect and desuetude, but a new and active order was re-formed in 1967.

Many other orders have romantic names, 'Echansonnerie des Papes' on the Cote-du-Rhone. An 'echanson' was a king's sommelier, the Confrérie des Trois Ceps in Burgundy, the Ordre de la Dive Bouteille in Gaillac, Rousillon.

The wine orders have lost their importance to oenology and viticulture.

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Very few have an examination requiring inductees to show their knowledge of the wines of the order. However, the Commanderies still have a valuable contribution to make in the appreciation and knowledge of the wines, the history and the culture of the area in which they are established.

Many orders, following the French pattern, have been founded in other countries, in Italy, in Spain. How long will be it before we have a Confrérie of Biddenden or an Order of Lamberhurst?

George Wilks

A SUMMER DAY AT BRIGHTLINGSEA

Sparkling is also the adjective to describe this year's Summer Event - the Wine Tasting and Luncheon at Brightlingsea - for which the Commanderie should be never-endingly grateful to all four generations of the Wilks family under the personal supervision of their Paterfamilias, our Chef de Protocole and Sacavin historia George Wilks. Sunday 12th June was the day and, as can be imagined, everything was perfectly organised and in good order - even the weather sparkled and we enjoyed one of the few good Sundays of this perverse and intemperate summer. We were entertained at "Oakwood", the home of George's daughter Brenda and her husband Chevalier Owen Collins. It was a lovely setting for a Summer Luncheon - a charming house, boasting a superb vine growing within its own specially created conservatory - and set in three acres of very pleasant garden. George's son Peter had organised outdoor pursuits including croquet and archery, although the aim got rather erratic as the afternoon wore on! The food had been specially prepared by Brenda and her daughter Lorraine and there are just not sufficient superlatives in the dictionary to describe how good it was! We had fresh salmon, home-cooked ham, spit-roasted beef and gorgeous quiches together with an excellent variety of salads and cheeses and delicious sweets of which the Pavlova cake was outstanding.

To ensure we maintained a good appetite for the food - for there was a vast array - we commenced with a very instructive, informative and entertaining Tasting conducted by our 2nd Halberdier Noel Rooke, in which he brought to our notice several unusual and unexpected Wines of our Region:-

SANCERRE 1987 REVERDY
(young and fruity, will improve)

POUILLY FUME 1984 LES ROCHES
(dry and fruity but not hard, ready for drinking)

SANCERRE ROSE 1986 (Pinot Noir)
(Very light and pleasantly dry)

• SAUMUR CHAMPIGNY DOMAINE LAVIGNE 1985
(A little aromatic, slightly flinty and should be good for laying down - 1990+)

CLOS DE COULAIN ANJOU ROUGE 1983 -from Savennieres
(Similar to the Champigny but a little mellower, same aromatic quality)

BOUVET BRUT DE BLANC N.V.
(One of the best sparkling wines outside Champagne, beautifully fruity and dry)

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With so many Sacavin experts present. (the comments in brackets are from one of them), opinions naturally varied as to which was preferred and it was very useful to have the opportunity of making the comparisons. We extend the Commanderie's very deep gratitude to Noel Rooke for his choice and for his expert and witty commentary upon his reasons for bringing these particular wines to our attention.

An additional pleasure to the eating and imbibing was the opportunity to wish 'Good luck and God Speed' to George's grandson-in-law, Robert White, who, it was announced during the Luncheon, had been chosen to represent Great Britain at the Seoul Olympics, taking part in the Tornado Class of the sailing events. As this 'Courier' goes on its way to our readers, Robert will be in the final stages of his training or even on his way to the Far East. We know it is honour enough simply to take part in the Olympics but in wishing him success too, we would all be delighted for him to get the Gold Medal!

The introduction to Robert emphasises that the Brightlingsea summer event was very much a family occasion - as well as the young Wilks, it was also very pleasant to meet the young Harrises and the young Rookes. It was very nice, too, to have Muriel Moody and Gayna Ford join us and to see Lady Ricks again, very much better after her recent illness.

For those who were privileged to be present, Brightlingsea was a truly memorable Sacavin occasion, offering a charming venue, with the warmth of the day reflecting the generous and unstinting hospitality of our hosts. We extend our heart-felt gratitude to Owen, Brenda, Lorraine and not least George for their hard work in organising such a marvellous day for us, well in the tradition of all the other wonderful Summer Events we have enjoyed at Chough Cottage and Park Farm.

An account of Sacavin members enjoying each other's company as they dine and wine reminds us of our Great Founder, who spent many hours in similar circumstances enjoying, with his boon companions 'Juicy Morsels out of Rabelais':-

PROLOGUE TO BOOK TWO

Most illustrious and most valorous champions, noblemen and others who have often amused ourselves in the company of maidens and ladies, you who would gladly devote yourselves to all gentle and honest pursuits, I would have every one of you set aside his proper business, take no care of his trade and forget his affairs in order to devote himself entirely to this book. Find me a better book anywhere and I shall pay you a quart of tripe. Just as Noah, that holy man to whom we are so much obliged for his having planted us the vine from which comes that ambrosial, delicious, precious, celestial and deific liquor we call wine, do you also, I beseech you, partake joyously of a good draught without water.

Gargantua, at the age of four hundred, four score and forty-four years, begat his son upon his wife Badebec who died in childbirth. At the time, the good people of the land were plagued by a terrible drought that had come to them from Africa; thus was Gargantua inspired to name his son 'Panta' from the Greek 'all' and 'gruel' from the Hagarene 'thirsty' Pantagruel. When Pantagruel was born, his father Gargantua was exceedingly astonished and perplexed, seeing, on one side his good wife Badebec dead, on the other his lusty son so big and handsome. His mind was horribly troubled by this dilemma. "Shall I weep?" said he, "My wife who was so good is now dead. She was the most this and the most that that ever was in the world. She was my sweeting and my

honey, the darling of my codpiece. This is a loss beyond all calculation. Ah, Badebec! my sweet, my tenderling, my little coney, never shall I see you again!" and, as he spoke, he bellowed like a cow, then when Pantagrue came to his mind, he suddenly began to laugh like a calf "Ho, ho, my little son!" he cried "my little ballocklet, my jolly little fellow! How glad I am of you! Let's drink, ho, ho, and banish all melancholy. Lay the cloth, rinse the glasses, blow up the fire, light the candles and pour out the good wine!".

But as he set down to his pleasures, he heard the litanies and dirges of the priests, so broke off his talk and was carried in the other direction "Lord God! why have you done this to me? It grieves me so that the joy of my bed should lie there dead! But she is well-off! She is in paradise by now. Good creatures, go and bury her while I write an epitaph for her tomb, as follows:

Dead is the noble Badebec
Who had a face like a rebec
A Spanish body and a belly
like a woman of Switzerland.
She died, I tell you, poor simple bride,
In childbirth, here at my side.

And having written this homily, Gargantua turned to his little son to rock him and coo like this: Ho, ho! How pleased I am with my pretty rogue, my childilolly!" Pantagrue grew from day to day and progressed in the way which rejoiced his father's natural affections. One day, when Pantagrue was walking outside the town, he met a man of handsome build, elegant in all his features, who bore the name Panurge and whom Pantagrue set out to love well all his life. "Indeed" he said to him "you and I will make such another pair of friends as Aeneas and Achates". "My Lord" replied Panurge "I shall tell you my story but the bagpipe can never sound except with a full paunch, and you will have first to whet my teeth and nurture my empty belly and dry throat. If you will only set me to work in all this, it will be a treat for you to see me stuff myself, in Heaven's name, with your good food and wine".

"You are truly a jolly companion" said Pantagrue "and I want to put you in my own livery" and had him smartly dressed, after the prevailing fashion, except that Panurge insisted on having the codpiece of his breeches three foot long and square instead of round. This was done and made him a most noteworthy sight. Panurge was a mischievous rogue and a vagabond, a cheat, a boozier and a roisterer, but otherwise the best fellow in the world. He had sixty-three ways of making money and two hundred and fourteen ways of spending it. Panurge soon gained a reputation in the city of Paris and elsewhere for the great and gifted use he made of his codpiece, which he caused to be decorated with embroidery in the Romanesque style.

And here is your Rabelais maxim for today:
Let's have a bit of feasting and let's drink, I beg you my lads. It's a good drinking season all this month.

Marie-Terese Baird

CHAPITRE de la DEMI-LUNE

This year's Induction Ceremony and Dinner - the Chapitre de la Demi-Lune - is on MONDAY 14TH NOVEMBER at the Green Park Hotel, Half Moon Street, London W 1. Our Ecuyer, Peter Morley, made the astronomical check and, as this date actually coincides with the half moon, it seems propitious to acknowledge that the heavens are with us for what promises to be a truly auspicious occasion. A star-filled menu has been arranged

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by our Chef de Cuisine, Norman Billington, with heavenly wines chosen by Chancellor Derek Sheen. The Booking Form for this extra-terrestrial Chapitre is enclosed with this Courier and we look forward to welcoming as many members as possible to the event.

1989 EVENTS

Just as summer and winter seem to have merged into one - at least as far as the weather is concerned - so it will be Christmas, then the New Year, before we know where we are! Taking full account of the way time flies, the Management Committee have already confirmed plans for the first two of next year's activities:-

THE 1989 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be on MONDAY 13TH MARCH at the Portman International, Portman Square, London W 1 . The evening's programme will commence, with the AGM itself, at 6 p m to be followed by a Wine Tasting-cum-Panel. We are arranging for various wines of the Loire region - some eight to twelve - to be tasted by a Panel of our Members who are expert in the field (or should we say the vines?) who will give their personal comments upon them. When it comes to the final analysis, a preference or otherwise for a wine is very much a matter of personal taste and so we are looking forward to a variety of views with, very likely, a hint of controversy to add that extra zest! The Chairman will be Ecuyer Peter Morley who will also encourage the audience to express their opinions . The Management Committee are sure this will prove to be a very illuminating as well as instructive occasion and hope that as many members as possible will attend. The Booking form will be distributed with the AGM Agenda and supporting documentation, towards the end of the year.

THE 1989 SUMMER WINE-TASTING AND LUNCHEON

Following on the very popular tradition that one of our member's hosts a Summer Event on our behalf, our Delegee-General David Burroughs and his wife Liz are organisers for next year's Summer Wine-Tasting and Luncheon at their charming country home Old Buck's Head, near Horsham, Sussex. The date is provisionally arranged for SUNDAY 11TH JUNE but will be definitely confirmed later. Programme plans include a visit to Leonardslea after the Tasting and Luncheon.

Further details regarding the above, queries generally or any other information that is required can be obtained from the secretary:-

Mrs P M Salzedo
363 Bideford Green
Leighton Buzzard
Beds LU7 7TX
Tel: 0525 371126

NEW ADDRESS FOR THE SENECHAL

Our Senechal, Chris Wilkinson, recently announced that he, Hilary and their daughters are moving from Chough Cottage, Towersey near Thame to the Isle of Man and that, from 31st August, their address will be:-

Mr & Mrs C J Wilkinson
Fenella Cottage
2 Orry Lane
Peel
Isle of Man
Tel: 0624 843307

OBITUARY

Those of our members who attended the annual Chapitres will recall the trumpeters who heralded our ceremonial with the Sacavin Fanfares and Marches. It is with great sadness we report the death of the First Trumpet, Geoff Brown, who died very suddenly on 28th July, aged only 34 years. We extend our sincerest condolences to his wife, Karen, and to baby Hannah Sue, only a few weeks old, upon their cruel loss.
