

SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No 21

Summer 1990

This year signifies twenty years since the British Chapter of Sacavin – the Commanderie de la Grande Bretagne de la Chevaliers du Sacavin d'Anjou – was founded and, as has been the custom since then, the first event of the year was the Annual General Meeting, held on Monday 25th March at the Hotel Inter-Continental in Park Lane.

The Minutes of the AGM were distributed to all Active Members towards the end of April and gave details of the business of the Meeting and the Officers elected to serve on the Management Committee. What the Minutes were unable to do justice to was the sheer excellence of the social arrangements. The Hotel Inter-Continental provided two very good rooms – one for the Meeting, the other, an extremely impressive room, for the Dinner. The food was worthy of every superlative for which we are indebted, as ever, to our Chef de Cuisines, Malcolm Harris, for making the arrangements. To this we must also acknowledge the superb wines accompanying the meal and chosen by Chancelier Frank Coe.

It is hardly surprising that such a combination attracted the largest number to an AGM for many years – around 45 members supporting the Grand Commandeur, Chris Wilkinson, at the Meeting itself with a total of 67 Members and Guests sitting down to Dinner. The Grand Commandeur took the opportunity of this occasion to promote our First Halberdier – Roy Clements – to Officier.

The Management Committee were so impressed with the standard and cooperation extended by the Hotel InterContinental that arrangements are in hand to hold the 1991 Chapitre there.

Although this summer will probably go down in the records as being one of the hottest and driest in recent memory, this outcome was not so obvious at the beginning of June when – after the high temperatures of May – the weather suddenly changed westwards bringing with it cloud and rain and fears of the effect this could have on this year's Grand Summer Event – the Tasting and Buffet Luncheon at High Field, Dunmow. The wine-god Bacchus listened to the pleas of his adherents, however, and, although preceded by colder, darker days, Saturday 10th June was all sunshine and warmth – perfect weather for a perfect country event.

Chancelier Frank Coe – the Commanderie's host – had made arrangements for the Tasting – conducted with superb erudition by Chevalier Howard Davis as he

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described the virtues of the following wines, chosen so that he could also comment on the qualities of different grape varieties:-

Sylvaner d'Alsace de Beblenheim 1988
Pinot Blanc de Beblenheim 1988
Reisling d'Alsace de Beblenheim 1988
Gewurztraminer les Maitres Gaustiers 1988
Chinon 1988 Les Celliers du Prieure
Faugeres 1986 Le Pressoir

To this feast of wines, also enjoyed during lunch and preceded, as Vin d'Honneur, with Saumur Brut Prestige, Pat Coe, our hostess - with very great assistance from Gaynor Ford, drawing upon her experience as our hostess for the memorable Tasting at Park Farm, St Osyth, in 1985, and Brenda Collins, our hostess for the equally outstanding Tasting at Brightlingsea in 1988 - provided a marvellous Buffet Luncheon. Their combined and much appreciated efforts conjured up the atmosphere of a French family party - several children with their parents and grandparents and one dog - Janine Harris's aptly named Napoleon.

The reputation of Dunmow as a haven of marital bliss is centuries old. Chaucer made the Wife of Bath observe, in 'The Canterbury Tales':-

"The bacon was nat fer hem, I trowe,
That some men han in Essex at Dunmowe".

She was explaining how much happier men would be if ruled by their wives. The Commanderie's Dunmow event proved how happy everyone can be when enjoying themselves with very pleasant company in a very beautiful setting.

The promise of a really good day out attracted almost 70 attendees to the lovely home of Frank and Pat Coe. They were superbly rewarded - for which the Commanderie is indebted to Frank and Pat and, also, to Gaynor Ford, Brenda Collins and Howard Davis - and were so approving that the experience is being repeated in June next year.

LATE SUMMER TASTING

Whenever chance permits, the Management Committee organise a Tasting for later in the Summer and, at the time of writing, Chevaliers and their guests are now looking forward to a conducted Tasting, with Buffet, organised by our First Halberdier, Roy Clements, for Monday 3rd September, at the SAAB headquarters in Piccadilly. For this occasion, Barrie Howe, a director of Laurent Perrier, will be conducting a Tasting of champagnes but also including some red wines of the region. To add to the atmosphere, the Tasting is in a room which is a copy of Napoleon's tomb in Les Invalides.

This event is arousing such interest, it seems all 80 places are already taken. A full report will be given in the next issue of the 'Courier'.

Reminiscing on the Dunmow Tasting and looking forward to that at SAAB reminds us that our much-loved and greatly respected Chef de Protocole - George Wilks - was forced, through ill-health, to miss the former event. As proof of how poorly he felt, George actually lost his taste for wine for a few very worrying weeks! Fortunately, he has made a complete recovery - not only in health but in his enjoyment of wine, especially the good wine of our region - and he will be presenting a brief, and we can be sure, humorous, account of our Order as Introduction to the festivities on 3rd September.

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OBITUARY

Looking forward, as we are, to the SAAB Tasting, makes it even sadder to report, with the deepest regret, the very sudden death - on Sunday 12th August - of Margaret, the wife of our First Halberdier, Roy Clements.

It was always a pleasure to welcome Margaret to Sacavin events and we will greatly miss her.

The Commanderie extends its sincerest condolences to Roy and his family upon their very sad loss and our hopes that memories of happier times, some shared with Sacavin, will be of comfort in these dark days.

CHAPITRE DES ARTS

Our final event of the year, and in many ways our most important, is the annual Induction and Dinner, this year dedicated to the Arts. It is on Monday 5th November at The Arts Club, 40 Dover Street, London W1, with the Vin d'Honneur at 6 p.m., the Induction Ceremony at 6.30 p.m. and Dinner at 7.30 p.m.

Chef de Cuisine, Malcolm Harris, has arranged a superb menu with the Arts Club to which our Wine Master, FrankCoe, proposes to have served a wonderful sparkling Saumur, as Vin d'Honneur, two white and one red, from our region, during Dinner and concluding with Cointreau served with the coffee.

The Management Committee are assured this is excellent value and trust that our members will agree. The Booking Form is enclosed with this 'Courier' and we know our members fully appreciate that visitors are especially welcome.

With three very different ways of partaking of a meal as arranged for this year, 'en pleine air', an evening buffet and a formal dinner, gives the opportunity to present Raymond Harris's thoughts, to complement those of George Wilks, as given in our last issue, on:-

TABLE MANNERS DOWN THE AGES (2)

The 11th Chapter of Leviticus, probably written some 1500 B.C., is the first record we have of dietary regulations, as it discusses which foods are or are not permissible to eat. The prohibition on eating pork (because of trichinosis?) is well-known, but shellfish and molluscs are also taboo; even with modern refrigeration, it takes a brave man to eat such delicacies in the Middle East today, and current pollution problems makes us even more wary. Leviticus 11, 7-12, dealt with this quite clearly, and meat and milk are forbidden to be eaten at the same meal - an early warning for cholesterol-watchers! Although at the Creation, man was meant to be vegetarian (Genesis 1, 28-30), the sons of Noah were permitted meat on condition that they did not eat the blood (Genesis 9, 3, 4, and Leviticus 17.11). Wine is mentioned so many times in the Bible, one wonders that the book was written at all! The Bible even considers kindness to animals, as a man is forbidden to eat before he gives food to his animals (Genesis 24, 46, and Numbers 22,8).

One of the first books of etiquette was surely the Shulchan Aruch compiled by Joseph Caro and first published in Venice in 1555. The title actually means "The prepared table", and covers behaviour concerning diet based on original biblical precedents. Thus all meals must be preceded by a prayer, but before this benediction the hands must be washed; after the meal, grace is said, which means that hygiene is thought of, and one takes care of one's digestion; no rushing to a table, eating, and rushing off again. Here are a few of his other observations:-

"One should not eat or drink like a glutton, one should neither

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eat nor drink whilst standing, and even if one had but poor fare, still his table should be clean and nicely covered. One should neither grasp a portion which is as large as an egg and eat thereof, nor seize the food with one hand and tear therefrom with the other. One should not drink a glass of wine at one draught, for one who does so is a tippler. It is the correct thing to drink one's wine in two draughts, but he who finishes his wine in three draughts, behold he is haughty. If, however, the glass be extra large, one may finish it in several draughts; likewise, if it be very small, one may finish it in one draught.

One should not place upon the table, the piece of bread which he had bitten, neither should he give it to his neighbour, nor should he put it in the dish, as his neighbour may find it loathsome. One should not hand a cup, the contents of which he has partly drunk, to one's neighbour, as the latter may, through bashfulness, drink against his will. The utmost care should be taken not to drink of the leavings of the cup of which one's neighbour had partaken. When drinking water, one should turn one's face aside, but in drinking other beverages, one need not do so.

A man should not be hot-tempered at his meal lest the guests and members of his household be ashamed to eat, thinking that he rages and is angry because they are eating. One should neither stare in the face of a person who is eating or drinking, nor look at the portion set before him, so that he put him not to shame.

We do not talk while partaking of a meal, owing to the danger of choking arising from the simultaneous use of his windpipe and gullet. It is even forbidden to say 'Good Health' to one who had sneezed. It is the custom of God-fearing people, after having eaten the morsel over which they have said the benediction, to read Psalm xxiii, which is a psalm of thanksgiving, as well as a prayer for one's sustenance. At the conclusion of the meal, it is the rule on week-days to say (ps.cxxxvii) and on Sabbaths, Holydays and upon such days when supplication is not said, it is customary to say (ibid. cxxvi).

When two eat at one table, even if each one has his separate plate before him or if they partake of fruit and each one has his portion before him, it is meet for the elder of the two to begin to eat first and he who stretches forth his hand before his elder or superior, is a glutton. When two eat out of one dish, and one had stopped eating in order to drink, or for some trivial matter, it is polite for the other to wait until his companion resumes eating, but if they be three, the other two need not wait for the sake of the one.

It is the duty of one to whom odorous food and beverages, which whet the appetite are served, to give immediately thereof to the waiter, as it is injurious to the person who sees food for which he longs if he cannot eat thereof.

A woman should not drink wine during her husband's absence, even in her own home, and at any other place. Even in her husband's presence, she is forbidden to drink wine or any other intoxicating beverage. If, however, she be accustomed to drink wine in her husband's presence, she is permitted to partake of a little thereof during his absence.

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One who enters a house should not say, 'Give me to eat', but he should wait until he is invited to eat. It is forbidden to partake of a repast which does not suffice for the host, for this would be akin to robbery. Moreover, the host invites him to dine with him only as an act of politeness."

There are many other rules of behaviour in this fascinating book, but back to the Bible for a final quotation from Proverbs 15.17: "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted ox and hatred with it".

1991 PROGRAMME

With this year's events now organised, the Management Committee already have in hand plans for those to be enjoyed next year. Final dates await confirmation but members can look forward to activities in the following months:-

MARCH	AGM
JUNE	Summer Tasting and Luncheon at Dunmow
SEPTEMBER	Biennial Visit to France
NOVEMBER	Induction and Dinner.

SECRETARIAT

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