

SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No. 24

Winter 1991/92

In spite of the warmer weather at the beginning of March, the later return of Winter is a reminder that Winter has gone on for longer than it should in the secretariat for this is the 'Winter' issue of our "Courier"! Many apologies for its lateness, the secretary has become a student so it is less easy to find time for all other responsibilities. Hopefully, this will be unusual and it also allows us the unusual opportunity of beginning with our Spring event, the:-

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held on Monday 23rd March, at the Savile Club, London W1.

In between the time that the Agenda and other documentation for the AGM was sent out at the beginning of February and the Meeting itself, our very dear Tresorier - David Burroughs - died on 13th February. This was a great blow to us all. It also necessitated a new nomination and a Revised Agenda for the AGM was presented to Members at the Meeting. There was no time to circulate it to all Members in advance but the two charges were that Robert Wills thankfully agreed to take over the responsibilities of Treasurer, with Peter Bouch accepting being the 2nd Halberdier - or, as he put it, the new 'axeman'.

Grand Commandeur, Chris Wilkinson, conducted the Meeting, supported by approximately 35 members and guests. He began with a Eulogy for David Burroughs, emphasising the devoted and praiseworthy way he had carried out his duties as Treasurer. It was a great pleasure, though tinged with sadness, that Lis Burroughs, in spite of her bereavement and the fact that she, herself, had only just left hospital after an operation, had come along to the Meeting to be with us all. The Obituary for David is included at the end of this Newsletter. The Minutes of the Meeting will be circulated to all Members within the next few weeks. Suffice it for the moment, therefore, that we confine ourselves to letting the Members know, in advance, that the Officers and Members of the Management Committee for 1992/93 are:-

Senechal
Delegue General
Ecuyer
Chancelier
Tresorier
Chef de Protocole
Chef des Beaux Arts
Chef de Cuisine
Chef de Voyage
Chef d'Historiographie

Derek SHEEN
Roy CLEMENTS
Raymond HARRIS
Frank COE
Robert WILLS
George WILKS
Leonard SALZEDO
Malcolm HARRIS
Nick KYRIAKIDES
Pat SALZEDO

1st Halbderdier
2nd Halberdier

Owen COLLINS
Peter BOUCH

with the Grand Commandeur, Chris Wilkinson, appointed by the Grand Conseil in France.

The Minutes, however, will not include details of the AGM Vin d'Honneur and Dinner, both of which were thoroughly enjoyed by Chevaliers and guests alike. After sipping a really fine sparkling Saumur and catching up with the many friends one only sees on these occasions, an excellent meal was enjoyed, accompanied by wines from the Savile Club's own cellar. We toasted our Queen and Le President de La Republique Francais and we sent a message of sympathy and commiseration to our Grand Commandeur, Chris Wilkinson, who, having gallantly supervised the actual AGM in spite of being extremely unwell, bowed out of the Dinner and went home to recuperate. Fortunately, we have since heard he is now fit and well again.

Instead of an 'after-dinner' speech, Raymond Harris gave some very interesting details of the Savile Club, of which he is also a member. It is a superb building with the grand sweep of the marble staircase into the restaurant which, with its gilt, chandeliers, pictures of cherubs set in a blue and white background and magnificent windows, dark against the sky, resembles a 'Winter Palace'.

This AGM, like its predecessors, was a wonderful reunion of fellow-members and friends and the Commanderie's very great gratitude is due to Chef de Cuisine, Malcolm Harris, who made the arrangements with the Savile Club for the rooms and the food, and Chancellor Frank Coe, who organised the wines.

Thought of wines is a reminder of the Commanderie's latest excursion to study the wines of France and new Treasurer Robert Wills gives this account, covering the end of September/beginning of October, of the:-

VISIT TO ALSACE

True to form, Nick Kyriakides, our Chef de Voyage, had positioned himself prominently in the Heathrow Departure Lounge, anxiously counting off the other 18 Sacavins, relatives and friends, as they arrived to start the 5-day Visit to Alsace. Being seasoned travellers, we were, of course, in good time for the 12.30 Air France flight to Strasbourg and quickly fell into that pre-flight torpor of touring the duty-free shops, queuing for coffee, staring forlornly at the departure indicator terminals and idly watching the drifting mass of fellow travellers all doing the selfsame things.

Mercifully our plane was on time and, after an uneventful flight, landed at Strasbourg at 15.30 French time. A rapid collection of luggage and the party was aboard the coach, heading south to Colmar, through the wide agricultural plain between the Rhine and the Vosges mountain range. Showers and a darkening sky disappointingly veiled the more distant views, but we occasionally glimpsed the ruined towers of castles silhouetted on the eastward facing hillsides and the journey was enlivened by Terry Hatton reading to us snippets of historical interest over the PA system as we passed through our first Alsatian villages.

We reached Colmar after a 90 minutes drive and quickly settled into the 3-star Park Hotel. Initial impressions were mixed, the general feeling being that the place was somewhat basic and lacking in character and charm. Although claiming to be only five minutes from the Centre-Ville, less active members later found it to be a bit of a trek to reach the old quarter of Colmar. Spirits were quickly restored, however, when the Chef de Voyage welcomed us formally to Alsace with a glass of Edelzwicker, a very agreeable blend of Pinot Blanc, Sylvaner and Chasselas grapes. A highly popular wine in Alsace, our particular table that evening felt obliged to make a more serious study of this noble mixture by ordering a large bottle!

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We made a civilised start to Friday. Our first visit was to the village of Bennwihr just north of Colmar, where we were to be the guests of the Viticulteurs Reunis de Bennwihr. The village was totally destroyed in the 1939-45 war but, such was the determination of the people to rebuild, that they were given the sobriquet 'Mondfanger' - 'mooncatchers' - meaning nothing is impossible. The Commune got together to build the large Cooperative, which now handles some 320Ha of vines. We were soon reeling under a deluge of figures. Ten containers to receive harvested grapes, allowing a selection to be made of grapes according to place of origin and quality; six pneumatic presses, each capable of processing 600 tons of grapes per day; seven vats of 8,000,000 litre capacity; seven cellars holding up to 5,200,000 bottles; 2 belt bottling plants - and so on. It was a relief when we finally reached the sampling and learnt that the wines of Alsace are not known, as all German and most French wines are, by the names of vineyards or villages. They are always identified by the grape variety from which they are made and the name of the maker. The grape varieties used therefore are all important. Tasting of Reisling, Pinot Gris, Muscat and Gewerztraminer all revealed a high, indeed a classy, standard of winemaking, evidenced by a fine balance of fruit and acidity and a good long finish. It was hoped to dine at the winery but, unfortunately, the restaurant was found to be fully booked, so we went on to Hunawihr up in the Vosges foothills. We were too early for lunch and, with the coach having to leave, some of the group set off to explore the village some 1.5 Km up the road. Hunawihr proved to be a typical Alsace vineyard village with a most interesting 15 Century fortified church. Beguiled by its charm, the views over the plain, with storks wheeling above a well stocked stork reserve, we were loath to leave, the more so when a charming little restaurant in the village was found that could accommodate us for what proved to be a very pleasant lunch.

The mood of euphoria was punctured, however, when, on rejoining the coach, we found that the Chef de Voyage and the remainder of the group had spent most of their lunch hour awaiting our return for an ordered lunch! A complete misunderstanding of a phone call had occurred and it was a somewhat subdued coach party that set off for the second visit of the day to Domaine Schlumberger in Guebwiller. The village lies some way south of Colmar and we were a bit late for our appointment. Fortunately our new hosts had a more cavalier approach to punctuality and Jean Winter gave us a most charming welcome. Domaine Schlumberger is a very old established winery, housed in a mix of old and new buildings, and is by far the largest estate in Alsace. Making use of a large scale photograph of their holdings, Jean Winter showed how fortunate the area was in terms of its situation, soils and micro-climate. These sheltered vineyards give distinctly softer wines than those from the more northerly slopes of the Vosges and Schlumberger was amongst the first favoured sites to be awarded the use of the appellation Alsace Grand Cru for certain of its wines. After a most interesting tour of the winery, we were invited to taste five wines.

The first, a Pinot Blanc 1986, was fruity and rounded with a pronounced yeasty finish. The second was a Reisling Grand Cru 1986, a bodied wine showing its class. Then followed a Pinot Gris Grand Cru Kitterle 1989, a slightly sweeter, well-made wine. The fourth wine, a Gewerztraminer Grand Cru Kessler 1986 was a typical Alsace Gewerztraminer with a lovely clean, spicy finish. Finally, we were given a Gewerztraminer Cuvee Christine Schlumberger 1986, a sumptuously rich, spicy, full bodied (13.5%) wine. The temptation was to forget tasting and just sit back and enjoy these wines to the full. To mark our visit, Jean Winter distributed small tasting glasses and the Chef de Protocole warmly thanked our host for a first class and very enjoyable visit.

Saturday saw sixteen of us going by coach across the Rhine for a visit to Freiburg, Germany's southernmost city, an hour's run from Colmar. Fortunately, the weather stayed fair, with intermittent glimpses of sunshine through the layered cloud, ideal for exploring on foot. The party having split up, inevitably we were drawn first to the Cathedral with its beautiful 116M. high tower, topped by an open tracery pyramid. A colourful Saturday market surged around its walls and it was

a struggle to gain the entrance. A quick tour and refreshed by coffee and patisseries, we explored the Old Town, past fine historical buildings like the 'House of the Whale', for two years the home of the humanist Erasmus, and the Rote Baren, Germany's oldest known inn with its list of innkeepers going back, unbroken, to 1387. We just had time to sample delicious Zwiebelkuchen - onion cake - before rejoining the coach, at 14.30, returning to Colmar via a short stop in Mulhouse.

On Sunday we set off for a drive over part of the Alsace Wine Route. First to Riquewihr, a well preserved medieval walled town, up in the Vosges foothills. With its picturesque 16th-17th Century houses and courtyards, it was very much geared to attracting the tourist trade and the town was becoming crowded when we left for lunch at Ribeauville. Then on to the Haut Koenigsburg citadel, a huge 12th Century fortress, 2,500 feet up in the mountains with a panoramic view of the Rhine Valley. At least, we assumed that it did, for we found the castle shrouded in mist, rain and cloud! Despite the weather, the place was jammed with cars, coaches and people and, with general accord, we left early for Colmar.

It was with concern we learnt, on our return, that Nick Kyriakides had been taken quite ill and would be unable to take any further part in the tour. The news shadowed our thoughts for the remainder of our time in Alsace.

Come Monday, this particular lover of wine was more than ready to resume the arduous duties of wine tasting and was an early arrival for the coach to Kuentz-Bas at Husseren-les-Chateaux. 7Km south of Colmar, the village lies at the foot of the ruins of three castles and overlooks one of the most famous vineyards in Alsace. We were warmly welcomed in the narrow, flower bedecked courtyard by Jean Michel Bas and his son. Kuentz-Bas is a small family-based business and, as our tour confirmed, firm believers in combining the use of modern technology with the best of the more traditional methods in its production of wines. The clay, chalky soils impart a richness to the wines and, coupled with the care and attention given to their production, Kuentz-Bas wines have attained international acclaim. Care to such detail was evidenced by the elegantly headed tasting notes, honouring the visit of Sacavins to their establishment on 3 October 1991. All four wines tasted had that finesse and character now expected of Kuentz-Bas wines. The first, a Cremant de Alsace Brut Peronelle had lovely fruit and fine, long-lasting bubbles. A Riesling Sigille, awarded a commendation by the Confrerie de St-Etienne, dry, full-bodied and delicious, was followed by a Gewurztraminer Grand Cru 1987 Pfersigberg, with a fine, persistent, aromatic nose. Finally - the piece de resistance - a Gewurztraminer Special Cuvee 'Caroline' Vendanges Tardives 1985. This had the unmistakable character of late picked wine, the 'noble-rot' showing through on the palate, taste and smell. Full and powerful, but yet soft and rich in style, a gorgeous wine. Reluctantly, we had to draw the visit to a close, after the Chef de Protocole expressed well the feelings of the group when warmly thanking Jean Michel for a most splendid visit and tasting.

A quick return to the Park Hotel for lunch and we were away again on the coach to Kientzheim for our last tasting of the tour, Paul Blanck et Fils. The gateway to the town has a huge gargoyle over the town gate, at the sight of which the coach refused to go any further and we walked to the cellars. We arrived at 15.00 hours but they were not expecting us till 16.00 hours! Busy with the harvest, they could not take us round the winery and a somewhat makeshift tasting was hurriedly arranged in the small reception area. I cannot recall much about the wines, but the tasting was hilariously conducted by the cellar master, clad in green overalls. He instructed us in the 'correct' tasting procedures and ensured everyone appreciated the nose of each wine, first with the left, then with the right nostril. The jokes fell thick and fast and we were indebted to Panos Nathanail for his careful translation of the more risqué bits that enlivened what could have been a disappointing visit.

Thanks to the entrepreneurial activities of some of the party, in particular Frank Coe, Terry Hatton and his brother Michael, we dined that evening at the delightful Hostellerie 'Le Marechal' in Petite Venise Colmar, one of the Romantik chain of

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hotels. A splendid meal with good wines and entertaining company brought the tour to a fitting conclusion.

Tuesday morning allowed the more active of us a final quick tour of the charming old town of Colmar, before making an early start to Strasbourg for a last spot of shopping before the flight home. There was time for us to see the buildings that house the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, plus, for some, a quick tour of the Cathedral with its extraordinary astronomical clock. At the airport we thankfully greeted the sight of Nick Kyriakides being tended in the medical centre, before boarding the flight home. There was a time when we had wondered whether he would be fit enough to travel.

Short though it was, the tour did give Sacavins and friends the chance to see something of Alsace and to sample its cuisine and wines but, as could be expected, there were a number of organisational lessons to be learnt from this, the first Sacavin wine tour outside of the Loire. Happily, any future tour will benefit accordingly. It need hardly be said that the friendliness and tolerance shown by everyone on tour helped in a large measure to overcome the odd annoyance and misunderstanding. As always, a few days spent in good company, sampling wines known and unknown, makes for a very, very pleasant interlude.

Where to in 1993 Sacavins?

Robert R Wills

In answer, we can confirm that the Management Committee have decided upon a return to our own region for the biennial Visit to France in 1993, perhaps echoing the sentiments of the translation, from the French, of Joachim du Bellay's 'Les Regrets' :-

HOMME QUI, COMME ULYSSE

Happy the man like Ulysses, his journey done,
Or like that other hero who purloined the Fleece
Who, service over, worldly-wise, returns in peace
To dwell among his kinsmen, in life's setting sun.

Alas, when in my little village shall I see
Once more the smoking chimneys, at what time of year
Will the surroundings of my humble home appear,
Which means so much more than the whole wide world to me ?

Better the home built by my forbears long ago,
Than Roman palaces with bright facades aglow,
Better than hardened marble is my splintered slate:

Better my Gallic Loire than Latin Tiber's chine,
Better my Liré than the mount of Palatine
And the soft air of Anjou than the ocean's spate.

John Cromer
29/1/92

As our Members are aware, this is the pen name of our very eminent Chevalier and one of our three Founding Fathers, John Cromer Braun.

Not just the months but the years slip by and soon it was November and time for the Annual Induction Ceremony and Dinner that was also commemorating the twenty-

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one years since the Commander de Grande Bretagne de la Confrerie des Chevaliers du Sacavin d'Anjou, affectionately always referred to as 'Sacavin', was founded:-

LE CHAPITRE VINGT-ET-UN

was held on Monday 4th November at the Hotel InterContinental, Hyde Park Corner, London W1. Choice of venue was an acknowledgement of the very fine way the Commanderie has been treated by this hotel and its sister in the group, the InterContinental at Portman Square on past occasions. Expectations were high and were fully and generously met, the ambience was excellent and the meal memorable.

Events began with the Vin d'Honneur, greatly enjoyed by Members and their guests, together numbering almost seventy. The Induction - carried out by Grand Commandeur Chris Wilkinson, ably assisted by Chef de Protocole George Wilks in his delightful and inimitable way - welcomed the following new Chevaliers to our ranks:-

Marie-Therese DUNN-HILL - French-born but London-based as Administration Manager/ Accountant for the Wine and Spirit Association of G.B. and N.I., therefore reflecting the inspiration of our great Plantagenet and Anjou forbears.

Maggie McNIE - an actress who became a Master of Wine after an astonishingly short period of study and now combines both talents as an extremely diverting lecturer upon wines, including those of our region.

Tony MORRIS - who, as a distinguished architect with a great knowledge of wines, makes him very welcome to our region with its fine buildings and outstanding vineyards.

During the Dinner, the Grand Commandeur promoted two members of the Management Committee in recognition of their contribution to the Commanderie:-

Malcolm HARRIS - who was a stalwart Treasurer for many years and is now Chef de Cuisine and benefits us all with the fine events he organises on our behalf, becomes a Commandeur.

Robert WILLS - who carried the 2nd Halberd with dedication and commitment for our protection became an Officier. He is now Tresorier.

Because this year's Chapitre celebrated our 21st Birthday, the well-known ditty "Twenty-One Today" accompanied the guests as they made their way to their tables for the Dinner - performed by Chef des Beaux Arts, Leonard Salzedo, on the piano assisted by our Trumpeters - Roger Hammond and Malcolm Godsden.

Leonard Salzedo is a founding member of the Commanderie and has been present at every Chapitre since the first in 1970. To commemorate the twenty-first such event, he gave his own account of memorable occasions he had attended during the intervening years:-

I arrived at the Vintners Hall in February 1970, not knowing what to expect. I was to be Inducted as a Chevalier by the then Grand Commandeur of the newly-formed British Commanderie, Robert Cointreau. This had come about through meetings and correspondence between the Grand Maitre in Angers - the legendary Marquis de Coustade, Robert Cointreau and our three 'Founding Fathers' - Charles Whitfield, happily with us this evening, John Addey and John Braun - with Hector Mackenzie and Chris Wilkinson also very active. So the first event of the British Sacavin - in 1970 - was a magnificent Inaugural Chapitre at the Vintners Hall, presided over by Robert Cointreau. It was a never to be forgotten occasion.

And now we are celebrating its 21st Anniversary, it seems a good time to recall some other outstanding occasions in our short history:-

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- 1975 The first Chapitre at the Cafe Royal with the piping in of the Baron of Beef which was paraded around before being superbly carved with great flourishing of knives under the supervision of the then Chef de Cuisine, Cyril Saper.
- 1976 The great Chapitre at the Guildhall with the March having to be extended so that all the Officers could cover the distance and get into position. This was superbly organised by the late Glyn Hardwicke, who was an important member during the early years.
- 1977 The 'Food from France' Chapitre when Tony Hern was attacked by muggers and had to miss his Induction, subsequently carried out later.
- 1980 The first issue of the 'Sacavin Courier' and the magnificent Lunch at Blenheim Palace with each member of the Management Committee acting as host of their table and carving the roast.
- 1981 The impressive Chapitre at the Butchers Hall, a venue arranged by the late Frank Moody, one of our greatest supporters during his lifetime.
- 1982 The one and only Northern Chapitre at Castle Howard with the Fanfares sounding superb as they reverberated around the double dome.
- 1984 The Reception at the House of Lords with Lady Phillips, a Chevalier of many years standing, presiding over the Sparkling Wine and the wonderful Canapes.
- 1985 Our first Chapitre at the Dorchester with Dinner supervised by Anton Mosiman, an Inductee, and the marvellous ice sculpture of our Logo.
- 1988 The intimate, almost family atmosphere of the Chapitre at the Green Park Hotel, making it a very happy occasion at the time though to become tinged by sadness as it was our last event, though not realised then, with our beloved late Hector Mackenzie as Grand Commandeur. On behalf of us all, I pay tribute to his memory and his enormous contribution to Sacavin.
- 1989 Our own celebration of the bicentenary of the French Revolution with the Chapitre de la Bastille, the first to be presided over by Chris Wilkinson, our enthusiastic member for many years and now Grand Commandeur.

Every Sacavin occasion has its own virtues but, with those I have mentioned, I hope I have reminded long-standing members of past glories and encouraged everyone present this evening to continue supporting those being planned for the future which I know will be just as memorable.

Leonard Salzedo
4/11/1991

No organisation can dwell for long on past glories, though, so attention now turns to our programme for the rest of 1992, beginning with the:-

EARLY SUMMER WINE TASTING AND LUNCHEON

which, although final confirmation is awaited, is expected to be on SATURDAY 13TH JUNE at Denbie's, the new and extensive vineyard being cultivated near Dorking, Surrey, on the southern slopes of Ranmore Common and described as eventually being the largest in Europe. After a walk to view the long rows of the vines, there will be a conducted tasting in the wine production area followed by lunch at the delightful Burford Bridge Hotel. The programme will conclude with an afternoon visit to the National Trust property at Polesden Lacey. The Organiser for this Visit - our Senechal Derek Sheen - is putting the finishing touches to the programme and it is expected the Booking Form will be sent out to Members with the Minutes of the AGM by the end of April/beginning of May.

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A wine tasting combined with lunch at a pleasant out-of-door venue is a very attractive prospect during the Summer months and, with this in mind, the Management Committee are hoping to organise a:-

LATE SUMMER WINE TASTING AND LUNCHEON

for early in September, possibly in the London area. Further details will be sent to Members when ready.

Then we look forward to the final and most prestigious of our annual events, the annual Induction Ceremony and Dinner which, in acknowledgement of the significance of 1992 to all Europeans, is provisionally entitled:-

LE CHAPITRE Du MARCHÉ COMMUN

on MONDAY 9TH NOVEMBER at the Naval and Military Club, Piccadilly, London W1, popularly known as the In and Out Club because of the distinctive directions at its entrances. Chef de Cuisine Malcolm Harris and Chancellor Frank Coe and planning something very special in honour of Europe.

Nearing the completion of this 'Courier' is a propitious time, perhaps, to remind Members that, in order to receive future copies, the renewal of subscription as an Active Member became due on 1st January. The majority of our Active Members pay by Banker's Order but those who do not and, perhaps, have not yet renewed should now do so immediately by sending a remittance, payable to 'SACAVIN', to the new Treasurer:-

Mr R R Wills
14 West Meads
Onslow Village
Guildford, Surrey
GU2 5ST
Tel: 0483 62314

Subscription rates are £7.50 per Member but £10 'Spouse' rate when both husband and wife are Members.

All enquiries regarding subscriptions should be made to the Treasurer, Robert Wills, as above. All other enquiries, notification of Change of Address, etc., should be made to the secretariat:-

Mrs Pat Salzedo
363 Bideford Green
Leighton Buzzard
Beds, LU7 7TX
Tel: 0525 371126

OBITUARY

Major David BURROUGHS, who died on 13th February, 1992, aged 71 years. After a distinguished military career including active service during the Second World War, David was, for many years, Chief Executive of the Wine and Spirit Trust. It was during his tenure of office there that he devised and put into effect the various examinations that lead to the qualification Master of Wine. David was inducted into Sacavin at the Chapitre La Bonne Table in 1977. He joined the Management Committee as Halberdier becoming Delegate-General and, finally, a very able Tresorier. David was fully committed to the aims and activities of Sacavin and served each office he held with distinction. News of his death brought many letters of condolence, not only to his widow, Lis, but also to the secretariat. The mark of respect and the affection with which he was held was demonstrated by the congregation of over 300 who crammed into his tiny Parish Church for his funeral service.

We shall miss David very much and will always be grateful to have benefited from his wisdom and integrity. The Commanderie extends its sincerest condolences to Lis

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and her family but trust they will take comfort from the very high regard and true affection with which David was held by us all.

Sir John RICKS, who died in the early Winter, aged 81 years. Sir John joined Sacavin at the Spring Induction in 1976 and, until recently, had been a regular attender at events with his wife, Doreen, and will be greatly missed. Until his retirement, Sir John was Solicitor to the Post Office and was also a Member of the Solicitors Wine Society. The Commanderie also extends its sincerest condolences to Lady Ricks and her family upon their sad bereavement.
