

SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No. 34

Winter 1998

This Courier should have been the Autumn 1998 edition. Due to a number of problems – not those of Sacavin – the heading must be Winter 1988. Since our summer event at the home of Audrey and Julian Thompson your management committee have met twice. We have talked of the Chapitre and the programme for 1999. This will be an “odd” year and we will be visiting Anjou once again in the autumn of 1999. We have decided to take a careful look at the Commanderie, it's past, it's present and most important, it's future. We aim to make that a sound, sociable and meaningful future. What could be more appropriate than a piece from Cyril Saper, remembered by many for his spell as Chef de Cuisine. He was inducted in our first year, at the second induction. His membership is GB 19! He writes to us regularly and without too much persuasion has agreed to reminisce for our entertainment.



Bon Appetit et Large Soif

In 1971 I joined a party of members of the Solicitors Wine Society for a visit to the vineyards of the Loire, and it was there in Angers that I met John Braun who had previously visited this beautiful area.

John offered to prepare me for membership of the newly formed Commanderie de Grande Bretagne de la Confrerie des Chevaliers du Sacavin d'Anjou, and I was very happy to accept this great honour in all humility. I was inducted later that year and I was at once instructed by Charles Whitfield to organize a visit to the Loire as I had some knowledge of the terrain. It was a small but enthusiastic party and we covered a large area and received a most cordial welcome.

At that time the catering, the menus, the banquets and other functions were the responsibility of Bill Lacy, a well known and extremely talented Chef who owned a restaurant called Lacy's near

Goodge Street, London, with a lady wine writer, Margaret. Unfortunately Bill Lacy had to relinquish his appointment as Chef de Cuisine due to pressure of work. To my utter astonishment and surprise Charles Whitfield sent for me and asked me to take over the catering for the dinners and other functions, including the negotiations with Livery Halls, restaurants and caterers as Chef de Cuisine and to ensure that the Commanderie did not lose money. I accepted this challenge in 1972 and I was fortunate from the beginning to have the tremendous support of all managers, caterers and hotel general managers, who invariably were able to meet my requirements and enabled the Commanderie to operate without loss.

I have fond memories of many restaurateurs, maitre chefs, catering managers and executive chefs without whose guidance, suggestions, expertise and generosity the content of the meals would perforce have been much simpler and without the delicious hors d'oeuvres, canapés and amuses-bouches which were offered as an aperitif,

often with the compliments of the chef. As an example of cooperation during my period of responsibility I met regularly with the Executive Chef of the Café Royal who took a personal interest. Together we created some outstanding affairs.

I discovered that the Café Royal possessed a Baron Grill on one of the upper floors, - a rotisserie or rotating spit especially created to roast almost half an ox. The Executive Chef, with the blessing of the Manager agreed to offer this wonderful dish - to be described on the menu as "Le Roi Ecosse" and to be marched around the room in a procession headed by a piper in full fig, following by myself in robes, the Executive Chef in toque and vest brandishing two enormous knives and several sous chefs carrying on high on a wooden stretcher the Baron of Beef. We paused in front of the Grand Commandeur, Colonel Hector Mackenzie, who pronounced it to be "a braw wee beastie", and ordered the piper to play non stop until all were served.

The sight of a huge chef with black beard wielding two knives and cutting the delicious beef at breakneck speed, with waiters taking away the plates without pausing, was truly a marvellous sight to be long remembered.

It became almost a tradition for the Annual General Meeting to be held at the Café Royal. They included, for a very modest sum, afternoon tea, the Annual General Meeting, a lecture by a well known wine person or someone of repute, a wine tasting and a supper.

The supper invariably comprised a home made potage, an enormous steak and kidney pudding, stilton and cheddar cheeses and Kent apples, which had been stored in a clamp by the executive chefs, coffee and our own wines. We only ceased to use the Cafe Royal as a venue when we were required to pay corkage which our very tight costings could not absorb.

Always seeking new ideas, new locations and novel attractions, I made enquiries to find if I could include a Baron of Beef in a menu for the Commanderie. I found that the City caterers Ring and Brymer had the ability to provide this great dish at a banquet at Vintner's Hall. They could

find the personnel to carry the Baron shoulder high around the dining room - no mean effort for such a heavy load up from the kitchens. The menu was settled accordingly, the invitations were sent out and every place was filled. Suddenly an unforeseen snag was discovered. I had, on a previous City of London occasion, experienced the spectacle of the procession of the Baron in Guildhall, and had assumed that the beef arrived piping hot. I learned four days before our dinner that the beef was always served cold as there were no facilities to keep it hot until the carving commenced.

I was unwilling to accept cold meat and finally we hit on a solution. The progress of the entire evening from reception, induction ceremony and commencement of serving the dinner was carefully timed. The beef was cooked to perfection but it was not at Vintners Hall as it was kept at the caterer's kitchens across the City in Sun Street. At the last moment, as the dishes from the previous course were being removed the beef was carefully wrapped in three layers of insulation, loaded on to the awaiting van with the Chef in attendance and whisked across the City to Vintners Hall, arriving in convoy some ten minutes later. In the meantime I had put on my robes and stood anxiously at the back entrance to Vintners Hall and it was a great relief that all arrived on time. I was invited to insert my arm into this mass of beef to confirm that it was still hot and I was truly surprised and elated to make this discovery.

The parade of the beef was accompanied by the piper, the "Chef de Cuisine" and the bearers with the beef on an enormous silver tray. It was a great success and the chef was congratulated by the Grand Commandeur.

Looking back over my period of years as Chef de Cuisine, each occasion for the planning of an event was a challenge and certainly made a change from office routine. The happy atmosphere at Sacavin Board Meetings and ceremonial occasions was a contributory factor in the continuation of this organisation, and may the Commanderie continue to prosper under its skilled and hard working management.

Cyril lives now in Florida – no barons of beef there we imagine He visits the UK regularly and we hope that on a visit we can organise a luncheon with some of his contemporaries. Please let the Chancellor know if you would like to be included. He is recovering from surgery on his back. But he is making steady progress. The Management Committee decided earlier in the year, to make him an honorary member



Those who were at our Summer event will have memories of good food and wines, a wonderful venue and a very sociable day. Our Trésorier, Robert Wills looks back

The 1998 Summer Event

Although it seems that 1998 was a year when spring merged straight into autumn. (Whatever happened to summer?), but there was an event Sacavins can recall that shone through the gloom. It was of course the buffet luncheon, held at the home of Audrey and Julian Thompson at Rickmansworth.

On Saturday the 11th July some fifty Chevaliers and guests found their way to Red Hall, the Thompson's beautifully restored 16th century Elizabethan Hall House. Set in the hilly and undulating county of Hertfordshire, Red Hall was originally built about 1550 of timber framed construction, with brick nogging infilling, and wattle and daub plaster work inside and out. Over the years of course, various extensions and additions have been made to the building and two 16th century barns have latterly been converted into separate dwellings. The barns, plus the Groom's cottage added in 1830, form together with Red Hall itself, an inner courtyard that one approaches through the original threshing floor of one of the barns. These buildings are all Listed Grade II as of Architectural or of Historic Interest.

Parking was easy in a paddock by the outer courtyard and on our arrival we drank a glass or two of a Loire Crémant with the canapés which we were able to enjoy in the garden. The weather held fine long enough for all the guests to assemble, before we were invited to lunch in one of the beautifully restored brick and timber additions to the house. Spacious, light and airy, it was an ideal setting for a Sacavin luncheon.

Carefully seating myself in a corner of ancient timbers and an old brick wall, I found myself enjoying slices of whole carved salmon with

gammon, garnished with a choice of salads. Two helpings sufficed. All ideally accompanied by a glass or three of Menetou-Salon, Saint Ceols 1995, by Marc Lebrun. Produced in the Val de Loire, east of Bourges, this wine, greenish-gold in colour, had a lovely fragrance and flavour. I love Menetou-Salon and this example was very good indeed.

Then followed a cheese board of French brie and English farmhouse cheddar, accompanied by a glass or four of a choice of Chinon, Couly Gravieres d'Amador 1997, or a Touraine Amboise Domaine de la Gabillière 1995. Our table had the Chinon, bright, balanced and richly fragrant, this was a very smooth wine. Thanks to a gentlemen's agreement with a neighbouring table, I also tried the Touraine, a cépage of the Cot (42%), Cabernet Franc (42%) and the Gamay grapes. From a small appellation of only 150 hectares, lying on both banks of the Loire near Clos-Luce, where Leonardo da Vinci spent his final years, its wines are reputed to be full, round, not overly tannic and will age well. My one glass, has prompted me to carry out a current, more in depth study of this nectar.

The meal ended with a dessert of English strawberries and cream, and with this we were treated to a Coteaux de l'Aubance, Lebreton, Domaine de Montgilet 1996. Made from the Chenin, this is a small appellation to the west of Saumur, producing sweet white wine from very old vines, that will improve with bottle ageing.

As one can imagine, the noise level of fifty or so very happy people grew as the afternoon progressed. It took a loud rap on the table from the Grand Commandeur to bring the room to

attention so that he could express thanks to our hosts for organising such a splendid function. As he did so, the patter of the long expected rain on the roof grew in intensity and with much regret, it was decided that the planned walks around the garden and the afternoon tea would have to be abandoned. So it was that the party gradually made their farewells and set off for home in a veritable downpour.

Nothing however could dampen our spirits after such a feast. My only regret was missing the chance to thrash somebody at croquet on the immaculate lawns that I had seen on my arrival!

A postscript from Robert

. . . . do you remember the summer of 1988? Yes it was wet and disappointing, although not as miserable as this years apology for a cricketing season.

The summer event that year was held at the Brightlingsea home of Brenda and Owen Collins. The weather was kind on the day and Chevalier Noel Rooke conducted a tasting of six Loire wines before we demolished a wonderful summer luncheon prepared by Brenda and her daughter Lorraine. Peter Wilks had organised a number of outdoor pursuits including archery and croquet and it was very much a family occasion with George Wilks adding his inimitable wit to his role of paterfamilias and Chef de Protocol for the day.

Another memorable day was that in the garden of Tony and Pat Morris where due to Tony's diligence we tasted not just English but Hampshire wines to the point we could try no more. Pat's efforts were the ideal complements. Another beautiful garden and a sympathetically restored house.

Thanks to the enthusiasm of Sacavins over the years, the Commanderie has built a tradition of summer visits. If any member would like to host such an event in the future, please contact the Chancellor, Peter Bouch. Be assured that the committee would give you every assistance in setting it up. Peter would be delighted to hear from you.



1998 The Chapitre de la Régence

We decided that this was the right time to move from Butchers' Hall. We have enjoyed our events at Butchers' particularly on the evening on which we celebrated our twenty-fifth anniversary. The move from Smithfield was a challenge to Tony Morris our Chef de Cuisine. We were fortunate to have Chevalier Keith Lockyer to introduce us to the Royal College of Pathologists in Carlton House Terrace. Numbers were low. Only sixty people against our usual eighty or thereabout. Several of our stalwarts were not able to join us

for a multitude of reasons. We inducted seven new members this year.

Professor Alastair Bellingham CBE, the immediate past president of the College. He has had a career in haematology and has held the chair of haematology at University of Liverpool where he gave the annual student wine lecture for many years, and the chair at Kings College London. He has a long standing interest in viticulture and wine making as well as drinking it for health. He grows vines in Cahors. He tells us that his favourite

Our thanks go to Audrey and Julian for inviting us to their home and for brightening what could have been a typical 1998 summers day. Our generous and attentive hosts also deserve our heart-felt thanks for the care taken in the appellations selected to accompany the well chosen dishes and for reminding us once again that the Loire is unique in the range and quality of its wines.

I for one, found some unknowns that will merit further tasting.

wines are from the Haut-Médoc, but he says we might be able to change that preference! He looks forward to getting to know more about Loire wines.

Alannah Cripps is a writer and consultant to Chevalier Jerry Schooler. She lived on the Continent from an early age, exposed to the French culture which included the vocabulary of French food and wines. Having lived in many countries she has retained that longing which is expresses in her writing. Since her return to England her enthusiasm for France has not diminished. The beauty and depth of French wines continue to capture her attention, particularly those from the Loire.

David Hollingsworth FRICS recently retired as senior partner in a practice covering Watford and St Albans. David is well known in the Commanderie, as a guest, particularly on the 1997 visit to Anjou with his wife Tessa. He has strong connections in Chinon, a friend of Pierre Couilly, a name to conjure with in the Loire region. During Round Table exchanges, (both Chinon and Watford share the Table No. 112), he learned to appreciate, particularly those of Anjou. His son has now forged a friendship with Pierre's son – wise man!

John and Valerie Ingram came they say, from opposite ends of the earth. Valerie after living a large part of her life in India, came to study as a nurse at Guy's. There she met John. They were married in 1972 and their son Nicholas arrived a year later, followed three years later by Alexandra. With their children they have explored and developed a liking for France. Alexandra spent a year of her degree in Lyon. Their liking for French wines was increased when attending a Chapitre as a guest. John has had a back problem which stopped him from joining the 1997 Loire trip, but Valerie came with us. They have been with us for over a year now and we are delighted to have them as Chevaliers.

Tony King has spent most of his working life in university libraries. He read classics, then became a National Serviceman in the Royal Fusiliers. He then embarked on a series of librarian appointments to medical schools, a general hospital and a Medical School. This gave him the opportunities to travel meeting fellow professionals. He has a passion for jazz, and cooking. He claims that his first wine was

Muscadet and since then he has developed a liking for Sancerre, Vouvray, Bourgeuil and Chinon. He was able to extend those discoveries in the Loire last year.

Daphne Olorenshaw met Sacavin at work in July's summer event. She describes herself as a retired International Civil Servant. She was introduced to France and French wines by her parents in the 1930's and has retained that love of both the country and it's wines.

Over the years she has been able to visit the Loire frequently and to enjoy the whole of it's length, particularly the charms of it's wines. Daphne has considerable knowledge of wines. She will enlarge her experience with her friends who are already Chevaliers.

So we moved to dinner. The first course was "on the hoof", canapés with a sparkling Saumur. The plan was to provide more opportunity to move about and get to know others and to meet old friends. Perhaps not the best idea, with hindsight. Following the induction ceremony, we were hungry!

After the meal, the Grand Commandeur addressed the Chapitre, first expressing our thanks to the College for opening their doors to us. He thanked Tony Morris, Chef de Cuisine for the hard work he had put in and Keith Lockyer for his support. He thanked too, Chef de Protocole for setting us on the right procedural route and a worthy successor to George Wilks.

Derek welcomed the new Chevaliers, speaking particularly about Alastair Bellingham as past president of the College and Daphne Olorenshaw whose membership was No. GB 300. The 300th member of the Commanderie He spoke of the need for our new Chevaliers to support our programme and emphasised the need for all Chevaliers to make their views known. The best forum for that is the AGM in March.

We discovered this year that Angers, the home of Sacavin is twinned with Wigan. This year the Grand Maître Maurice Escher and some of his officers joined a twinning event in Wigan where he inducted three Wigan dignitaries. We were not able to support them on that occasion. A further three Wigan folk were inducted in Angers. We hope that they will attend our events and become active. Three have already enrolled with us and it seems likely that they will join us in the future.

The Grand Comandeur talked about Pat and Leonard Salzedo who retired from the management committee some time ago. Leonard's health has not allowed them to attend one of our events to receive a memento for their service to Sacavin. Recently a small group of committee members called upon Leonard and Pat who provided a delicious lunch and afterwards Derek was able to present them with a commemorative silver coaster suitably inscribed. They were both in good form and asked to be remembered to their many Sacavin friends. The Grand Comandeur then promoted Raymond Harris to

Commandeur. He spoke warmly of Raymond's contribution over many years – to Officier in 1989, after his induction in 1980. He praised his wise counsel and experience. He placed the collar on Raymond and pronounced him Commandeur. He then proposed the toast,

“our new members, may they enjoy a long and happy association with Sacavin”.

Alastair Bellingham spoke warmly and on behalf of the other new Chevaliers.
pfb



From the Chancellor

The March Supper and AGM will be at The Bleeding Heart on Saturday 27 March 1999. The calling letter will be posted at the end of January.

Now is the time to be involved in your Commanderie. At an extended meeting on January 13 the committee will be talking about the year to come and beyond. While we will be asking you to contribute at the AGM, it will help us to have your thoughts before the March meeting.

As yet we have no fixed plan for a summer event and we will be grateful for your ideas.

We are working now to find a venue for the 1999 Chapitre, possibly in the City. More of that at the AGM.

Remember once more to make your plans to join the trip to the Loire. Last year was outstanding as 1999 will be. No fixed dates but probably September

Please write to me, fax or telephone – even email me if you are of that persuasion.

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Please note that there is no longer a business number. I have decided not to work any more!

A very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year

The Management Committee look forward to your company in 1999