

SACAVIN



COURIER

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

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Autumn/Winter 1999

The Sacavin year is approaching its end, leaving us with many good memories and some unfinished business. In this issue we review the biennial visit to the Loire, we can sail a little further up that river with Robert Wills and our Grand Commandeur's review of the Chapitre and induction ceremony. We look forward as well. There are some details of a new venture; a weekend workshop in Essex. Finally dates; 2000 is going to be a busy year for many so we are giving you dates now, for the year. So you can savour the year to come, and be sure to be there. But first an account of the biennial trip to the Loire. Chevalier John Whitcutt takes you through a few days close to our aims and the Confrérie's raison d'être.



SACAVIN VISIT TO ANJOU 23 – 27 SEPTEMBER 1999

I felt honoured as a relatively new Chevalier to receive an invitation in mid-summer from the Chancelier to act as "Ecrivain" [trans. Hack-writer] for the forthcoming trip to the Loire Valley - then I searched through my "Sacavin" file and read up the splendid piece by the Sénéchal of the 1997 visit, which he had also organised expertly. What an act to follow! - but I was assured by the Management Committee "to do my own thing" whatever that means!

Halberdier Audrey Thompson, with the help of her husband Julian, had volunteered to organise the 1999 Visit and well in advance of the March 1999 AGM she had. With her usual efficiency, a paper was circulated setting out preliminary details, which was regularly updated throughout the Summer until further details were finalised.

Thirty or so Chevaliers, partners, friends and relatives duly arrived at St Hilaire-St Florent on 23rd September to be welcomed by the effusive and

ever considerate Monsieur Delias at Les Clos des Benedictins for the third time in six years - only to find that a advance party headed by our ubiquitous Grand Commandeur had arrived the day before.

We started the proceedings that evening as usual by assembling in the Hotel's Salon where we enjoyed a Vin d'Honneur 1998 Saumur Brut A.C.-Bouvet Ladubay and welcomed the Grand Maître Maurice Escher resplendent with his gold chain of office, the Past Grand Maître Emille Besnier and Commandeur Michel Leterme. We then had a splendid dinner of five courses. Monsieur Delias had promised me a menu but recollection of detail is now confined to the wine served, Chateau de Villeneuve 1998 A.C. Saumur-Champigny! After dinner we were reminded by Audrey that the programme commenced early next morning with a visit to Chateau de Brissac for a wine tasting with the coach leaving promptly at 9am.

Of course, everyone was on parade outside the hotel on a rather misty morning under the watchful eye of Julian Thompson. At around 8.55 am. an apprehensive silence became noticeable until Audrey telephoned the coach operators. It appeared that Jean-Marie had *always* collected the Sacavin party at 9.30 am in the past and had not fully checked his copy of our programme. Following his profuse apologies, we set off at 9.20am in his luxuriously appointed coach resplendent with a "Clochemerle" facility. We travelled south-west from Saumur to the Chateau at Brissac-Quincé, an impressive Renaissance style chateau set in parkland adjacent to the town square. It transpired that the Chateau vineyard was situated two kilometres away. An obliging local in a small car offered to guide Jean-Marie there. We eventually arrived at Domaine de Bablut- Famille Daviau, vigneron since 1546, where we enjoyed a tasting of AC Anjou Villages red wine in the tasting cave which had once been the base of an old windmill.

The vendange had commenced the previous day but young Christophe Daviau took time out to welcome us and explain the operations of pressing which were in progress. Having made our purchases, we were off to the small town of Rochefort-sur-Loire (which actually lies on the Louet). An excellent "light" lunch was served at the period "Grand Hotel" consisting of three courses. The main course was rabbit wrapped in ham on a bed of mixed vegetables, accompanied by a copious amount of Clos de la Cerisarie 1997 AC Anjou Rouge and Clos du Papillon 1996 AC Savennières.

The weather had improved so we walked through the town past the vast Abbey Church in the town square to Domaine Baumard. In an immaculate tasting room at the far end of a beautiful period house, we enjoyed a tasting of some eight different quality white wines - Crémant, dry and sweet, - by Monsieur Florent Baumard's assistant before he joined us outside and explained the significance of the "terroir" which produces Quarts de Chaume A.C. - one of the two great sweet wines of Anjou. He was particularly proud of the fact that his domaine's Quarts de Chaume A.C. 1995 was listed not only as No. 14 in the 100 Best Wines in Wine Spectator 1998/9 - but was also selected as No. 1 in that list for dessert wines. We then discovered that he had been to St. Boniface's College in Plymouth in his late school days where Chevalier Ernest Lee had once been a visiting professor! Small world!

The Grand Commandeur then gave an effusive vote of thanks on behalf of the Group. He commented that after many wine tastings, this had to be ranked one of the finest. That was echoed by all of us. After meeting Florent Baumard's young family we walked through vineyards, where huge bunches of grapes were about to be hand picked, down to the winery with its modern equipment. This enabled the staff to assemble the wine we had selected, some for Chapitre stocks! and Florent obliged delivering this personally to our coach parked in the town square.

Back to "Les Clos" for a quick change and an apéritif, "Crémant de Loire Reserve", Domaine Langlois Chateau followed by another excellent six course meal, the main dish being "Gratin des poissons aux jeunes poireaux", accompanied by half bottles of Saumur Blanc A.C. 1997 which Monsieur Delias explained gave the wine greater depth than when in the full bottles. The Grand Commandeur addressed the party after dinner and in particular thanked Audrey and Julian for organising the visit in such an excellent fashion.

Saturday morning and we were off (on time!) to Benais, a small village in the Bourgueil appellation for a wine tasting at La Domaine Druet. A combination of the vendange and uncertainty as to the precise location of the domaine, we were not able to complete the visit. But the ever resourceful Jean-Marie drove us back to St. Nicholas-de-Bourgueil to the Domaine du Bourg in the village centre, produced an impromptu tasting in the domaine's courtyard thanks to the proprietor Jean-Claude Mabileu. We were able to watch grapes arriving and being sorted prior to pressing. A highlight of the visit was a quick drop (literally!) by open electric hoist into the cellars below which had been carved out of the tufa stone in 1893. Our coach, considerably heavier than on arrival departed with a beaming Monsieur Mabileu saying "au revoir" in the knowledge that a six figure windfall in francs had just gone through his till!

On to La Maison des Vins in the centre of Bourgueil, a traditional old stone built town where Monsieur Audebert gave an erudite explanation of the "Terroir des rives et terraces" in the appellation - illustrated by the tasting of three separate vintages of A.C. Bourgueil. Monsieur Audebert, is the Grand Maître de la Commanderie de la Dive which controls this appellation. He is a large producer and négociant in this and adjacent appellations. Following a succinct but polished vote of thanks from Ch. Geoffrey Wheal, we

walked through the old town to an old hostellerie, L'Ecu du France, for an enjoyable three course lunch. Madam was horrified when some of our party declined the main course of duck due to an excellent first course.

After lunch a short walk out of town brought us to L'Abbaye du Bourgueil, a vast Royal edifice with origins in 990 AD largely developed by Eleanor of Aquitaine in the 13th Century. Since 1828 the abbey has been the home of Benedictine nuns. We were met by Sister Marion Feeny, an Englishwoman who has been with the Order for many years. She acted as interpreter to Monsieur Paul Moisy whose family appear to have held the position of official guides for several generations. Having inspected the Royal Chapel - now converted into a cinema and lecture hall - we climbed an unique open dog-leg stone staircase - entirely self supporting over three storeys to a small museum in what had been a suite of rooms for senior members of the abbey. Monsieur Moisy demonstrated the Abbey clock's 4 o'clock chimes for us. As it was then 3.45 pm, meant that the local workers downed tools early!

We left rather hurriedly to return to "Les Clos" to change and leave at 6 pm for the Chapitre at Angers. We travelled westwards along the north bank of the Loire and duly arrived at 7pm, the appointed hour, at the magnificent Les Greniers St Jean to find the Hôpital, where we assembled in darkness. However, Chevaliers and guests gradually arrived and we moved to the Chevaliers Salon where we found ourselves at the rear of the Salon having the advantage of the best view of the Officers Procession entering and leaving with our own Grand Commandeur accompanying the Grand Maître. After an induction ceremony which featured promotions and lengthy introductions for the twelve inductees, some English. We walked past the Officers of the Order forming a guard of honour to the main hall with its magnificent timber roof for an unusual aperitif of Coteaux du Layon and a varied five course meal accompanied by four wines including Anjou-Villages Brissac 1997 Medaille d'Or from the vineyard we had visited the previous morning!

The members of an interesting and lively 3 piece band were looking a little crestfallen until Leslie and Laura Garner opened the dancing. During dinner, a protracted raffle was conducted by the Chef de Protocol - which curiously produced a winner on each table! Speeches were given, including an appreciative and fluent one by our Grand Commandeur in French thanking the Grand Maître and the Order for their hospitality. We left

at 12.30am a little later than Derek's plan, with the party in full swing. On the return trip to "Les Clos", Julian Thompson announced that due to the long day our coach driver had to collect us an hour later than planned, which was heartily approved.

On Sunday (Culture Day according to Julian) we said goodbye to Derek and Hazel who were returning early to England because of their move from Surrey to Huntingdonshire in mid-week. It was only a short drive to the Château de Saumur but the journey was enlivened by getting mixed up with a horse drawn carriage rally through the old town. We had an interesting conducted tour of the apartments in the Château and obtained a strong impression of life there for the nobility at least, in the Renaissance period. A fortification existed on the site in Gallo-Roman times and King Henry II of England held his Christmas Court in a small castle on the site of the current courtyard in 1188. The tapestries and period porcelain in the Chateau were particularly interesting.

A short journey upstream on the South bank brought us to Montsoreau where we had lunch at the Hotel de la Loire. I took the "light lunch" literally and tried all four different dishes of mushrooms which then turned out again to be just a starter!. After another two courses we left to visit the privately owned Château Montsoreau constructed in 1450 by a noble in the Court of Charles VII. From there we enjoyed magnificent views over the Loire before returning for the last time (this trip) to "Les Clos".

The aperitif that evening was Framboisine made by and served with the compliments of the Delias family following which, group photographs were taken with the party in hilarious mood. Commandeur George Wilks gave another of his entertaining graces before dinner, much to the astonishment and delight of other hotel guests before another excellent five course meal was served accompanied by Saumur Rouge 1998 Cabernet A.C. Domaine Château du Beauregard.

Goodbyes were said in unsettled weather next morning as we all left on varying routes back to England. Everyone will have their own special memories of the visit but mine is of a nonagenarian Chevalier sitting on the hotel terrace quietly sketching Le Chateau du Saumur in the early morning mists - magic!

JBW 29.10.99

My thanks to John for all his hard work, his detail and application, often leaving the fun to check names, labels and where we were. My apologies to him, for carving out pieces of his work to suit the exigencies of the Courier's page length. Some brief notes about the 1999 inductees follows.

Trevor Harris was proposed by Chevalier John Whitcutt. He is a Londoner, and has retired from accountancy. He was educated at Latymer then articled to a City Chartered Accountants. After a number of appointments he was invited to join a company making surveying equipment manufacturers as Managing Director. This gave him the opportunity to travel, acquiring knowledge of wines and food. He has two children both following professional careers while producing three grandchildren for Trevor and Margaret. Family holidays for many years were spent in France where their taste for French wines developed with familiarity.

Ray Lindley proposed by Chef de Protocol Owen Collins was born and bred in Colchester, and claims it is the oldest town in England. After service in the RAF he discovered that the war was long finished he concentrated on cricket and rugby. After a number of senior management posts he finally joined a Danish company as UK director and was able to travel world-wide. His interest and enjoyment of wines was encouraged by our Chef de Protocol. He stayed with him at Chevalier Emile Mercier's house in the Loire, and was able to attend a Sacavin Chapitre at Angers in the company of the Grand Commandeur. His interest in Loire wines was cemented by that trip.

Julian Thompson graduated from University of London, and obtained professional qualifications in due course becoming FRICS. He established his own business in 1957. As a Chartered Surveyor he acted as a consultant to an RAF team lecturing on house purchase. He acted as consultant to many organisations dealing with the elderly and infirm. He was prominent in Round Table and Rotary, including two spells as president. With his wife, Officier Audrey Thompson, and Julian have owned a home in France for more than thirty years. He is President of the British American church in Dinard. He enjoys representing St Bartholomews in local events and recently organised the visit to that church in October 1999 of TRH the Earl and Countess of Wessex. He believes that his love of French wine started before the Battle of Hastings. In more recent times as a result of Audrey's membership of Sacavin, his taste has been refined and he takes great pleasure in drinking the wines of Anjou, particularly the dry whites, the fuller red and those of the Methode Champenoise. Following the sterling support he gave to Audrey in the Loire this year some of his friends suggested that it was time to make him an honest Chevalier.

PFB

Now to our Loire explorer. If you have not read the first part in the Spring issue of "Courier", No. 35. A call is enough to receive an offprint. Robert Wills resumes his research in the Nantais. When we last heard from him he had in his hand a glass of Chateau La Touche in his hand. Presumably he finished it before he took up his quill. (Probably the bottle?)

Before we venture further up the Loire, mention should perhaps be made to the three VDQS status wines produced in the Nantais area. The Gros-Plant du Pays Nantais, made from the Folle Blanche of Charente, here called the Gros-Plant, is a sharp, acidic, dry white wine. Sometimes it is bottled sur lie and the amount of wine produced yearly, makes this the largest VDQS in France. The grape is often used as a base for the region's sparkling wines and great quantities are also sent to Germany for use in their sparkling sekts. The average Gros Plant can make Muscadet seem an opulent wine for it is very thin and light and one wonders for how much longer the sheer volume of Gros-Plant produced can be sustained. I am trying hard to find something good to say about the sur lie 1997 Chateau la Forchetiére, I'm sipping as I write, but it's no good, I much prefer Muscadet. And I am not alone, for growers in this area have a saying: "Gros-Plant is

my bread, Muscadet is my wine". Or, as one of the Gros Plant leading producers once declared, "Gros Plant is thin, straightforward, brisk and clean. Like an old gentleman"! Which I think, just about sums up the quality of this low-alcohol highly acidic, basic wine. A wine not to my taste.

Fiefs Vendéens VDQS vineyards, south of the Loire in the Vendée, produce red, white and rose wines from a number of grape varieties. Producers make their wines to be drunk young and they are deliberately vinified to be fresh, fruity and aromatic, ideal for light summer meals, salads and grilled seafood. These ancient vineyards produced wines that were firm favourites of Cardinal Richelieu.

Coteaux d'Ancenis, north of the Loire between Nantes and Angers, uses the Gamay, Cabernet, Chenin and

Malvoisie varieties to produce white, rose and red, VDQS wines. The Pinot Gris, or Malvoisie as it is known here in France, was once grown extensively around Ancenis but it is a variety that is prone to degenerate and as it also crops unreliably, only one or two vineyards now stock this grape. A pity, because the wines produced can have widely differing characteristics, depending on locality, soil and climate. In Italy it is known as the Pinot Grigio. In Germany a strain of Pinot Gris is called the Ruländer, in Alsace the Tokay d'Alsace, while in Hungary a sub-variety is known as the Szürkebaret, or 'grey monk'. The wine is low in acidity, with a certain spiciness of aroma and it can be dry, light and spritzy or, if kept to a late harvest as here in the Loire and in Alsace, it can have an intense bouquet of apple and fruit and be honeyed, rich and long in the mouth. Pierre Guindon continues to make Malvoisie as a tribute to his great-grandfather and it is a wine well worth sampling. It took a glass or two, but I like wine made from this grape and I know that our Chevalier Robin Yapp of Mere, always has some in stock at about a fiver a bottle.

There is no surprise to hear that Chardonnay is having an ever increasing appeal to Nantais growers and a group have combined in the Pays de Retz to establish a quality level of production with the aim of attaining an AOC standard.

The renaissance Château de Haute Goulaine, is the home of the fourth oldest wine fraternity in France, the Chevaliers Bretevins, named after the celebrated Anne of Brittany, that fierce defender of Breton identity, affectionately known by the Bretons as 'La Petite Brette'. It is the proud boast of the Goulaine family that they have owned land in the region for over 1000 years and lay claim to be the oldest family in Europe, still holding vineyard properties in their own name.

Leaving the Nantais, the Anjou wine region begins just beyond Ingrandes, the border between the Duchy of Brittany and Anjou. Up to the time of the French Revolution, wines entering Brittany down the Loire for export via Nantes, had to pay heavy taxes at the customs office here. Wine tax was a valuable source of income for all of the towns along the Loire and it is said that Saumur was rebuilt following the ravages of the 100 year war, from taxes levied on the transport of wine downstream. But the heaviest of the taxes was here at the border. It can be argued that such taxes forced growers to produce better quality wines, to justify their export prices, since wines from Anjou or Touraine were inevitably more expensive than wines from the Nantais. Perhaps that is why Ingrandes marks the change from the Gros Plant and Muscadet downstream, to the nobler varieties grown upstream and above all, it is the classic Chenin Blanc that defines the Anjou region.

The Chenin Blanc, or Pineau de la Loire as it is known here, has been cultivated for over a thousand years in the Anjou region. Its wine has a marked acidity, yet with the right soils and climate it can make exciting

and long lasting rich, sweet wines. The top wines, sweet or dry, can be somewhat ordinary when young, but with age they become unforgettable. It is here that we start to hear the words, 'moelleux' used to describe wines having a perceptible level of residual sugar and 'liqueureux' for a wine that is sweet but not syrupy.

There are four basic appellations;

- 1 Coteaux de Layon, Bonnezeaux and Quarts-de-Chaume
- 2 Coteaux de l'Aubance
- 3 Anjou-Coteaux de la Loire and
- 4 Savennières

Coteaux du Layon takes its name from the narrow river Layon, which rises at Cléré-sur-Layon, flows towards Saumur and then swings north-west to where it joins the Loire at Chalonnes. It is an attractive valley, with wine covered hillsides crowned with windmills, fruit trees including walnut, plum and peach and the small villages of the wine growers, clustered around châteaux in various stages of repair.

The schisty soil imparts a unique 'mineral' flavour to these medium-dry, sweet or dessert appellation wines, that are becoming better known after a period of neglect. It is a peculiarity of all the Côte de Layon wines that some years they can be semi-sweet, almost dry, yet in other years they can be liqueureux. We Chevaliers regularly enjoy these wines at our AGM and Chapitre dinners and some of us remember with affection, visits to the Domaine de la Roulerie, then owned by Dominique Jaudeau.

Coteaux du Layon was granted its AOC in 1950 and within that appellation, six villages may put their names on the label as Coteaux des Layon-Villages wines. The two cru wines of Layon are those of Chaume and Bonnezeaux.

The hamlet of Chaume, in Rochefort-sur-Loire has some 40 hectares of vineyard that was granted its own AOC in 1954. Possessing a unique microclimate, hotter and drier than anywhere else in Layon and protected from all but the south wind, the vineyards are often found bathed in fog from the river, encouraging the onset of botrytis or noble rot. In feudal days, the local aristocratic family used to reserve a quarter of the annual wine production here for themselves. Naturally the wine was from the best section of the vineyard and that is still commemorated in the name, Quarts de Chaume, which quite rightly is regarded by many as the most famous of all the wines of Anjou. Some Chevaliers can no doubt still recall the 1959 Chateau de Suronde by P. Laffourcade, served at the 1985 summer tasting at Chough Cottage, the home of Chris and Hilary Wilkinson. At £27 a bottle, 'each golden droplet being of pure delight'. More recently, Chevaliers on the 1999 visit to Saumur enjoyed a delightful visit to the Domaine Baumard at Rochefort-sur-Loire. An afternoon of lovely wines and a fascinating discourse by Florent Baumard on how his

wines were influenced by the soils and position of his vineyards and their differing micro-climates, was crowned by a tasting of his 1997 Quarts de Chaume - expensive at 245F a bottle but truly gorgeous.

Bonnezeaux, given its AOC in 1951, lies about 20k south of Anjou and its vineyards cover three south-west facing hills, above the Layon and the village Thouarcé. Both of these splendid appellations, regularly produce wonderfully rich, golden coloured, concentrated, dessert wines that are worthy of keeping for several decades in bottle - if you have the strength of will. I can still remember enjoying a 1964 Bonnezeaux, Chateau des Gauliers, by Mme Fourlinnie, generously presented by Flo and George Wilks at a luncheon at their home in Redbridge, some 10 years or so ago. It was superb. Limited production and in vintage years, the gamble of hand picking selected grapes over a period of several weeks, inevitably means that these crus wines can be expensive; one can pay anything from £15-£40 a bottle and upward! But these are in the premier division of the world's sweet wines and as such, still represent very good value for money.

The 'Wills' rarely have dessert wines at table, but Layon wines are ideal as aperitives or simply for the pleasure of drinking by themselves. But beware, there is quite a lot of uninteresting Layon about and it pays to buy wines labelled as coming from Saint-Aubin de Luigne, Rabley, Beaulieu or Faye-d'Anjou, even though they will probably cost upwards of £8 per bottle.

To the east of Layon and south of Angers, lie the ten communes comprising the Coteaux de l'Aubance. Granted in 1950, the AOC takes its name from the small river Aubance, hidden between low hills. The wines here are considered to be lighter and less alcoholic than those of the Layon, although in vintage years they can be every bit as lush and rich. Chevaliers who enjoyed the 1998 summer event at Red Hall, will remember with pleasure, the excellent Domaine de Montgilet 1996 that accompanied the strawberries and cream. Victor Lebreton reorganised this domaine in 1984 and his painstaking approach to wine-making has made his the benchmark for Aubance wines.

Anjou-Coteaux de la Loire covers an area of 50 hectares or so. Classified as an AOC in 1946, these vineyards lie in an arc north of the Loire, between Ingrandes and Chalonnes. The Chenin here produces wines that are said to be less elegant than those of the Layon and Aubance. The best are considered to be from the Domaine du Fresche and the Domaine de Putille.

The Savennières vineyards, again north of the Loire and only 10km or so south-west of Angers, can be said to push the Chenin to the very limits of dry. Yet when it received an AOC back in 1952, Savennières was noted for its demi-sec wines. After 1960, as the demand for sweet wines declined, vigneron started to

produce the steely, bone dry wines, that with ageing become wines of discovery. It has been said that Savennières is one of the world's most cerebral wines - a wine for reflection - not for the uninitiated. Grapes on this side of the river rarely ripen as fully as those in the Layon, but a small amount of demi-sec is still made. Savennières must be made from natural wine juice having a minimum sugar of 212g per litre and this explains why these dry wines are so richly flavoured, full bodied, well structured and powerfully aromatic. For Chevaliers, Savennières means the Clos de la Coulée de Serrant, the seven hectare vineyard of the redoubtable Mme Joly and her biodynamic son Nicholas. Wonderfully situated with a steep south-west facing slope to the Loire, this has often been called the Yquem of Anjou, but received wisdom now has it that its wines do not quite live up to their potential - despite a price of £20 or so a bottle! I well remember looking out over this vineyard to the spot where, tradition says, a party of Plantagenet knights were ambushed and killed by the French. Sacavins will also recall with pleasure, the welcome given to us by Mme and M Jessey in their historic chateau, hidden behind high walls near the village medieval church. Madame was, and happily still is, a large woman with an imperious manner and a high penetrating voice. For some reason I can't recall her husband! She inherited the Domaine by way of her great-grandfather, Comte Las Cases who was Chamberlain to Napoleon 1st and her wines are now highly recommended by Savennières enthusiasts everywhere. We happily enjoyed her 1995 Domaine du Closel, at our Syon Park tasting in the summer of 1997 and her wines have regularly accompanied the cuisine at our Chapitres over the years.

Well, we are now well on our journey up this enchanting river. It is often said that most of the wines of the Loire region are not those that can be described as 'great', in the sense that fine Bordeaux or Burgundy can be capable of maturing in bottle and developing in complexity. But nevertheless, the range of its wines is unsurpassed and in the next issue, the Editor permitting, we will continue exploring the wines of that area well known to all Chevaliers du Sacavin - Anjou.

RRW

In another life our Trésorier would wish to remind Chevaliers that the Sacavin year closes at the end of December. If you do not use a banker's order to pay your subscriptions please consider doing so. It saves you time. It helps Robert and gives him more time for his invaluable research. Considerable telephone and post activity is needed to collect subscriptions. If you have a banker's order, please change it to the new amount. Either way please pay in good time

The editor will be delighted if Robert does complete his saga. I suspect that there would be an outcry should he not. So in the next "Courier" we will be able to contemplate Anjou in the Spring and enjoy more seductive memories of the vineyards. Finally the Chapitre and the induction ceremony.



CHAPITRE DES FERRONNIERS 1999

After last year's somewhat disappointing event the Committee had been determined to make an improvement this year and a small sub committee consisting of Chancelier, Peter Bouch, Chef de Protocol, Owen Collins and Trésorier Robert Wills researched a number of locations, mainly Livery Halls. The final choice of Ironmongers' Hall proved, in the event, to be an inspired one and the general consensus was that the 1999 Chapitre des Ferronniers was one of the best for years.

In many ways, the Hall was reminiscent of Butcher's but there seemed to be far more space and the rooms we used had a style and grandeur that surpassed the ambience of Butcher's. The vin d'honneur was taken in the Drawing Room which features William Morris tapestries and a theme of the Arts & Crafts movement. The induction ceremony, as usual, followed the vin d'honneur and was held in the spacious Court Room. Four promotions were conducted by the Grand Commandeur Derek Sheen. Before calling upon the trumpeters to signal the opening of proceedings he drew the attention of those present to the new tunics they were wearing made by Owen Collins' daughter Jocelyn. It was agreed that they added greatly to the style of the ceremony and the trumpeters themselves indicated that they would be happy to wear appropriate headgear to match their tunics.

Four promotions then followed. The Grand Commandeur called forward Chancelier Peter Bouch and Chef de Protocol, Owen Collins. Both these Officers were promoted Commandeurs. The Grand Commandeur paid tribute to Owen's impressive performance as Chef de Protocol, following in the footsteps of his greatly esteemed father-in-law George Wilks, bringing his own style of humour and dignity to the proceedings. His substantial contribution to the Committee's deliberations was also recognised. The Grand Commandeur turned to Peter Bouch, remarked on how he had taken over the reins of Chancelier, and the duties once performed by Pat Salzedo. No higher tribute could be paid than that he had filled her shoes with great distinction. The quality of information dispensed and the attention to detail

was admirable. More recently, in the absence of a Chef de Cuisine he had voluntarily taken on that duty and was primarily responsible for the evenings splendid arrangements.

The second part of the promotions related to the elevation of the first and second Halberdiers Lis Burroughs and Audrey Thompson to the rank of Officer. In addressing them both, the Grand Commandeur made reference to Lis' long connection with Sacavin, first in support of our former Trésorier and her late husband, David Burroughs. The Grand Commandeur also remembered with pleasure, a summer event at their home at Mannings Heath. Derek turned to Audrey Thompson and thanked her, in particular, for the part she played, with her husband Julian, in arranging the recent highly successful Loire visit. It was noted that her contribution to the work of the Committee was considerable and the summer event that she and Julian had hosted in their home and garden at Rickmansworth was recalled with great pleasure.

The promotions concluded with the presentation of collarettes, scrolls and the recording of signatures in the Golden Book.

Three inductions followed and these are dealt with separately.

After a short interval, the assembly was called to Dinner in the Banquet Hall with the three inductees greeted by a fanfare from the trumpeters.

The superb dinner which followed was based on regional dishes from the Loire valley and accompanied by the usual excellent complementary wines chosen by our Délégué General, Frank Coe. Between courses, Chef Nigel Smith and Frank Coe, respectively, commented on the food and wine in some detail and with humour.

speaking after the meal The Grand Commandeur in typical fashion, paid fulsome tribute to those responsible for organising the evening. He also expressed the pleasure of the company at the return of Sénéchal Roy and Mollie Clements both of

whom had been unwell during the past year. Mention was made of absentees who had undergone recent operations and good wishes for recovery were expressed.

As is usual, the Grand Commandeur remarked on the events of the year making reference to the Annual General Meeting at Bleeding Heart Restaurant, the Cyril Saper luncheon and, of course, the long weekend in Saumur. Each event had its

own special attraction and were in keeping with the long tradition of the Commanderie.

Finally the Grand Commandeur welcomed the three inductees to the Commanderie, singling out Julian Thompson for special comment, proposing a toast to their enjoyment of a long and happy association with Sacavin. Chevalier Julian Thompson replied suitably and with much appreciated brevity!
DCS.



SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - all 2000

Management Committee meeting	Thursday 3 February
Supper and AGM - The Bleeding Heart	Saturday 25 March
Management Committee meeting	Thursday 4 May
The Wivenhoe Weekend	Friday 2 to Sunday 4 June
Chapitre 2000 Vintners Hall	Thursday 23 November



The last word is usually for the Editor, but I will use it to send a message from the Management Committee.

A Christmas message to all Chevaliers and their families with our very best warm salutations, our wishes for your good health and Rabelaisian greetings

PFB