

SACAVIN



COURIER

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

No. 40

Winter 2001/2

This is the fortieth issue of the Courier. Number one was circulated in 1980. Robert Cointreau sent a note to mark the first ten years. It recorded the handover of the Hanap, still used at the ceremonies. Hector Mackenzie was appointed from France. Newsbriefs began in 1983. The first of those spoke of the Chapitre de Chanson at The Café Royal. A very enjoyable evening was promised "with a choral contribution under the direction of Chef de Protocol George Wilks"! The AGM was to have a seminar – a very unusual tasting. Perhaps more of this in a future Courier.

This Courier contains pieces from Chevaliers and Tessa Hollingsworth, who looks back to September, an account of "Sacavins to Sancerre" - the biennial visit to the Loire - written by "La Scribe" called as so by the Grand Maître who was impressed by her diligent note-taking. I am grateful for her commitment and hard work through the trip. It needs commitment to take notes when all around are chatting, tasting and eating. She asks for apologies if her information is not always correct. So, in her own inimitable way, she starts here.

If you go over to France today, you would not believe your eyes

If you go over to France today, you are sure of a huge surprise

For gathered down in the Val de Loire

*Are some forty odd British folk come from afar,
To eat and quaff and have the time of their lives.*

On the evening of Friday 21st September, the Hollingsworths and others arrived at the Hotel Ibis in Angers - more by good luck than judgement. It was good to see the smiling face of Ernest standing by the hotel desk. "Yes, you are in the right place and here is a new set of instructions for the weekend". It turned out that Angers was to have a "no traffic" day on Saturday in the centre of the town. We were very pleased that we had arrived on Friday.

Saturday: the morning dawned bright and sunny and after breakfast some of us went off to the Flower Market then to explore Angers. The Bouch's arrival signalled those who were expected that day. We found good coffee in the Place Frappel watching others of our party wandering by. From there to La Ferme - a super restaurant -

for lunch at seven pounds a head, four courses with three bottles of house white and red wine. What is better than the Saturday French luncheon – to mid afternoon.

Some of the party retired to rest up before the night's outing and others to look at the marvellous tapestries in the Chateau. In the evening we met at the Mansion Godeline greeted by the Grand Maître Pierre Aguilas, Michel Aterme and others of the Angers Confrérie, who guided us up a spiral stone staircase. We found ourselves in a room, which looked somewhat intimidating. Furnished with round islands, each holding six small basins with taps and glasses, having the look of an operating theatre but it is a very serious wine tasting and training room. Our Grand Commandeur was presented with a black wine apron with "Noble Terroir de France" and "Les vins du Val de Loire" printed on it. Derek received this looking slightly apprehensive as though he might be asked to do the washing up; but then upon being handed a bottle opener, he relaxed and wore the apron with great aplomb for the rest of the evening.

We were asked wine questions and four wines to taste - a Chenin Blanc from Domaines des

Grand Maître. A second sweet white wine with fragrances of mushrooms and honey. Manoir de Versille, Chateau Rousset at 12% and finished up with a Crémant - Chateau de Passavent 98. As the evening went on, tastings and questions were superceded by sociability drowning both questions and tastings. But this was why we were there. Friendships were forged.

We were surprised at the mixture of avoir du pois, imperial and metric. We ended with a buffet meal and were taken out to our transport, which turned out to be a small train, beloved of the French. It took us around floodlit Angers showing us all the tourist sights with a useful commentary for all the party to keep their interest. We, ourselves made a great show for the good citizens of Angers. And so to bed.

Sunday: we took breakfast in the Estaminet. We were at leisure until midday when we gathered outside the hotel for taxis to take us off for lunch with our hosts at La Romanerie, a delightful restaurant built in 1649. The weather was beautiful, and the ambience was perfect. There was a good start with a Vin d'Honneur of Chateau Soucherie Coteaux de Layon 13.5%, an unusual vin d'honneur but beguiling. We were welcomed by the Grand Maître. Our Grand Commandeur Derek Sheen replied in English and French speaking of new bonds of friendship and better understandings of the Commanderie and the Confrérie. We enjoyed the reception and an excellent lunch, which was complemented by a white wine Chateau de Brauil 1999 then by Anjou Villages from M. Aguilas. The coffee was served in the garden in the soft autumnal afternoon. A Chateau des Rochettes accompanied the cheese and a Crémant de Loire followed, Dehaeiller Domaine de Varinelle Brut at 12% to round off a very enjoyable meal. We were collected together at 5 o'clock and returned to our hotel, happy and full.

During his speech Derek reminded us that on that very day there was a memorial concert in the Purcell Room at the Royal Festival Hall for Leonard Salzedo, our revered Chef des Beaux Arts who died in the June of last year. He was one of the founding fathers of the Commanderie and composed many musical pieces to enhance our meetings including the Trumpet Fanfares still used for our Chapitres. It was sad that we were not able to attend but Commandeur Raymond Harris attended in London. Leonard provided us with music in our meetings. Derek proposed a toast in his memory.

Monday: we departed the Ibis Hotel for a fairly long and very pretty drive through wooded country to Sancerre and Hotel Panoramic. We found the remainder of our party ensconced in the lounge, already partaking of Sancerre wine at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. We were all checked in ready for the Vin d'Honneur at 7 for 7.30 dinner.

Derek welcomed all those who had not been at Angers, and reminded us of those who were missing on this trip. George Wilks had decided that this was a Loire trip too many. Brenda carried his love to all who knew him. Derek mentioned Robert and Sheila Wills - Robert is very ill. Fay Landau who is poorly with heart problems. Diana Whitcutt is having medical treatment this week. Gaynor Hatton has heart problems. He mentioned Roy and Mollie Clements. Mollie continues to deal with her health problems. He proposed a toast to 'absent friends'. And so to dinner where we all missed George and his flowing and entertaining grace before the meal. However, Owen managed to make up for it in his own erudite style.

Tuesday: our coach picked us up at 10.15 am - a truly civilized hour. We drove to visit the cave of Domaine de la Perrière easily seen from the Hotel windows. Some of these caves were natural and some dug out to form their caves. Some of the rocks had been used to build Bourges Cathedral. We began by looking at the presseoir where 60% of wine is machine pressed lightly and 40% hard pressed. From this, some of the rubbish is turned into marc. We saw the bottling and labelling. Apparently labels are not put on bottles until they have an order as the humidity would take off the labels. We then saw their Musée de la Perrière, full of artefacts and also a strange but beautiful exhibition of sculptures by Christian Mass. We passed on to the second wine stage of fermentation. Then it was decanted into stainless steel vats, eventually into bottles. A late gathering produces a better wine with most Sancerre wine being dry but the very top quality is sweet. Then we tasted a red Pinot Noir and a white Sauvignon 2000. Perhaps the Sauvignon might be improved by a little bottle age.

Lunchtime arrived a cold buffet, but first of all a Kir to drink, then a white and a red Coteaux de Giennois at 12.5%. After luncheon, Galia and Laila - volunteered to be baptised by a metre of wine and received a diploma - "Baptême avec Diplôme". Valerie Ingram and Michael Crowther Watson stood as their Godparents. Bacchus surely smiled on this ceremony. After lunch we had a

leisurely tour of the vineyards by coach, during which many revered heads were nodding gently. To end the day, a visit to Joseph Mellot caves was arranged. Wine people from 1513 from father to son and Consultant to Louis XIV. We were given another talk upon aspects of wine making by Alexandre Mellot, Chief Executive of Joseph Mellot and then a tasting of Sancerre Pouilly Fumée - young and from stainless steel vats and then a Sancerre from wooden casks, slightly older, some of which were bought.

We were told that 1st October is likely to be the beginning of red wine picking and 3rd October for white this year. 80% of production is white and of the remainder, 5% is Rosé and 15% is red. We were told that blanc de blanc is white from white grapes and blanc noir is white from red grapes. We ended by a ride back to our hotel for a rest and a quick turn around before we enjoyed our vin d'honneur.

Wednesday: on a crisp morning we made an earlier start today. We met with the urbane Bruno Mineur of Guy Saget. He joined us on the coach for a most instructive tour of the vineyards, explaining that there are three kinds of soil types. Clay, calcium/chalk and stone and flinty stone and sandy soils. This year it is a late harvest with rain in the summer and is not the best year. He also said that if the roses at the ends of the rows show mildew then it would be one week after that. When the vines show mildew and the leaves are turning brown, the vines would be no good.

We stopped at La Ramandiere and looked at the flinty stones and saw grapes on the ground, having been picked off for the benefit of the birds. Travelling along La Loire we came to a fishing village - Les Loges, where small growers with four or five hectares take their grapes to the co-operative for pressing. Sauvignon vines last for thirty years and are then replaced. In olden days, they had special flat-bottomed boats to take the wines down the river. This was because of the difficulty of navigation as the sandbanks move and are dangerous. The boats are now historical remains of the past. This part of the Loire is a protected park for fish and birds and is often a stopping off point for migrating birds. The new power station when built raised the temperature of the river by 5 degrees which helps the vines. Small windmills have been introduced in the middle of the vineyards, which help the flow of air through the vines. This is also a hunting area for wild boar, rabbits and birds. In winter about 4 - 6 am if a frost arrives, M. Saget is woken by an alarm. At a beautiful old mill owned by brothers

Saget, one a wine grower the other a man of commerce, we stopped and had a most delightful tasting in their superbly decorated reception room. These were Pouilly Fumée, the sauvignon grape. Pouilly sur Loire, Chasselas grape and Pouilly Fumé Lechers - Prestige 1998 at 12%. These were all delightful wines. The first one was given a gold medal and is to be drunk young. The second improves with keeping for two to three years. The third was superb and more costly. After this we went to the Saget shop and our purchases were stowed into Alain's coach. We can now look forward to the wines for our Chapitre. We enjoyed a light lunch with four courses and good wines at Le Relais de Pouilly.

The afternoon was spent with Mme. Sophie Guyollot who was an excellent guide to her cave. She is the tenth generation of the family since 1648. They have a new and sanitised cellar which is electronically controlled, built in 1991 with air controlling temperature and humidity, Mme. Sophie is proud of their achievements. She invited us to taste her wines. Some bought her wine and we added it to Alain's hoard. So we returned to the Panoramic, for baths, some swimmers and some tea drinkers before the vin d'honneur, and another convivial evening.

Thursday: this was our longest journey to Pouilly and Quincy. We were all on the coach by 8.30 am. What a grand effort! This was a morning visit to the Giens Pottery. Ernest gave us an interesting talk on the way, on French history. At this point I should like to thank him for all his expeditious translations into English during our trip. The pottery museum is on the site of an old monastery founded by Thomas Hall. We had a guided tour including a very decorative clock built for the 1906 exposition. The clock is precisely correct at least twice a day! It was decorated with faïence. Back on the coach, we were swept off for lunch near Quincy. Once again - a light lunch; Kir to start, smoked salmon and Quincy wines. Domaine Meunier Quincy, Appellation Controllee 1998. Pouilly 2000 with our veal casserole..

Our afternoon visit was to the Chai de Poilly Co-operative created in 1937 for a tasting and discussion whilst tasting. "Qu'est vins?" we were asked. The answer was soil, climate, people, grapes. The wine produced is 10% Rosé, 30% red and 60% white. White Sauvignon, Rosé, Pinot Gris and Red Pinot Noir. The previous Friday, they had begun the vendange. They have pressed the Pinot Gris. Tuesday 25th September will be the white and the following days will be for the

Pinot Noir. Again, small pieces of information were gathered. "Qu'est vins?" we were asked. Answer, soil, climate, people, grapes.

Small pieces of information were gathered:-

Always Rosé from white grapes.

The locals prefer Rosé.

Best drunk young.

5 year old Pinot Gris goes well with desserts.

Daphne McKenzie thanked our hosts their courtesy and for their time. After purchases were made, we left for our last evening at the hotel. We assembled for Vin d'Honneur at 7.30 pm and those who should wore their collarettes. We enjoyed another a very good and long dinner during which our Grand Commandeur asked to meet the Chef and hotel staff. He also thanked Ernest and Krystyna for their hard work in organising this trip and others who had contributed so much to its success through the preceding months. This was a super trip, arranging it in the two separate centres We managed to visit our Angers confrères with some success but discovered and enjoyed wines and places higher on the Loire. This was a decision

that has been vindicated. We all look forward to the next trip. On Friday morning we said goodbye to one and all and some of us went north, others south and others off to different parts of France.

I leave you with this small prayer:-

La Priere du Vigneron

Mon Dieu!

Donnez-moi la sante pour tres longtemps

De l;Amour regulierement

De l'argent suffisamment

Du travail moyennement

Mais, du bon vin tout mon comptant

And from "La Scribe",

In all of this land, there's nothing so grand

As having a glass of good wine in your hand

And we all know this kind of a wonderful feeling.

Au Revoir

TFH



New inductees must wonder why the Commanderie's escutcheon is the winged goblet. The hanap goes back to medieval times and the shape is peculiar to the Anjou area. Here Laura and Leslie Garner will enlighten you – to some. How and when did the wings fly onto the hanap?

It must have been in the early 1970's that news of the International Aerial Rally of wine, flowers and chateaux of Anjou reached our ears and quite a number of aircraft were already making the trip before we took a serious interest in the Rally.

According to the information we have, the Rally Aérien was launched in 1947 and enjoyed great success each year in spite of bad weather reducing the chance of flying to the famous aerodrome of Angers - Avrillé. The occasion was obviously supported in France by the town of Angers, the Council of Vins d'Anjou, the Confrerie du Chevaliers du Sacavin, the departmental Committee of Tourism, the Societé Kleber-Columbes, the horticulturist M J H Gaignard, the Company La Foncière, Air France and the Company of Liqueurs Cointreau.

Organised by the Aero Club de l'Ouest de la France, it was obviously an important event in that area of France.

The rules applying to the event were sent to us in English although sometimes it would have been clearer in French! For instance, the method of marking the competition was as follows:

"The effected distance minus the declared distance plus 100 for the number of stops over 100 kilometres apart multiplied by the maximum weight allowed when taking off and divided by the nominal motor of the aircraft. A warning statement that "it is compulsory to pain the sun" was sent with the application form!

However, disregarding these rules, we tried to follow the requirements and were asked to find three chateaux at which signs were displayed nearby and for those marks were awarded. It was sometimes alarming to join a number of aircraft circling these chateaux and trying to answer the questions.

The arrival time was fixed for each aircraft and we found it was a good idea to land at Alençon aerodrome, enjoy a picnic and estimate the amount of time needed to arrive at Angers.

The final test was a most enjoyable wine-tasting competition.

After that we were well looked after, taken to hotels and later to the Chapitre at the Greniers Saint-Jean. The hall was always decorated with potted hydrangeas which made a wonderful sight. Also we were presented with one of these and were flown home by us.

The next day involved more drinking and a buffet lunch either at a cave or al fresco.

Some of us tried to organise an extra night at Angers, not being in the best condition to fly home. Some take-offs looked rather unsteady but seemed to make a safe departure.

The requirement for being inducted as Chevaliers was to attend the Rally as competitors for at least three years. This was quite an achievement as well as great fun.

There must be more names than the ones known to the British Confrerie. We were all entered in the Golden Book at Angers but possibly some are difficult to trace. Perhaps the French Confrerie has a collection of documents gathering dust somewhere? It would be wonderful to track down more of these.

Anyway, we hope that members have enjoyed this chapter of the history of the Confrerie du Sacavin.

L&LG



Our Chapitre this year, was L'Impereur to note the Napoleonic ambience and décor at the Café Royal. During the Committee's discussions there was the possibility of naming the Chapitre for Rabelais our patron. But there was some discussion about Rabelais' birth date. Ernest Lee decided to find out more about the patron. Read on

Rabelais was in the vanguard of the Renaissance - a sea change in social, moral and artistic thinking which gave birth to the modern world.

He was born (in 1493 or 1494) and brought up near Chinon. After initially preparing for the priesthood - the conventional route to Higher Education - he studied medicine at Montpellier University. He became a doctor and also occupied a number of ecclesiastical positions (the conventional route to a steady income). He died in 1553.

He is famous for his vast fantastic - fantastic in every sense of the word - novel chronicling the adventures of Gargantua and Pantagruel. In Book 1 we learn that Gargantua (a legendary giant) is the son of Grandgousier. To thank Frère Jean des

Entommeures for his help in the war, Gargantua and his father build this Abbey of Thélème for him: the watchword of this abbey is "Fais ce que voudras". (Gargantua is famous for his massive appetite: this has given us the adjective 'gargantuan').

In Book 2, Gargantua has a son, called Pantagruel. Rabelais sets out his educational theories in a letter sent to Pantagruel by his father. In Book 3, Panurge has become the inseparable companion of Pantagruel and he seeks advice on whether he should get married - advice from the Sybil of Panzoust, the poet Raminagrobis, the magician Her Trippa, the doctor Rondibilis, the philosopher Trouillogan and the madman Triboulet. Triboulet advises Panurge to consult the oracle of the "Dive Bouteille".

In Book 4, Panurge and Pantagruel "travel" to a series of mythical countries/societies, in search of an answer to Panurge's problem - a literary device that would be adopted nearly 200 years later by Swift in Gulliver's Travels. These journeys enable Rabelais to satirise social structures that he dislikes, including:

The Isle of the Chicanous (police and officials in courts of law)

The Isle of the Papefigues (protestants)

The Isle of the Papimanes (catholics)

The Isle of Messire Gaster (the abode of Epicureans).

In Book 5, the travellers visit the Isle of Sonnante (Rome), enabling Rabelais to satirise lawyers (les Chats Fourrés), and other societies, before finally reaching Le Pays de Lanternois, where la Dive Bouteille oracle resides. Her advice consists of one word - Trink (Drink)!

In his recital of the adventures of Gargantua and Pantagruel/Panurge, Rabelais was able to offer a commentary on the society of his day. His basic message was that he rejected traditional values and lifestyles: he deplored the Church's negative attitudes to the body and its appetites and he was

opposed to the medieval constraints on the exercise of human intelligence.

On the positive side, he praised "nature" and indulgence in pleasure; he was in favour of the exercise of "free thought" and he advocated appropriate educational strategies to prepare people for it. The regime of the Abbey of Thélème (see the summary of Book 1) was Rabelais' prescription for a good life - "Fais ce que voudras" (Do what you like).

He presented this serious philosophical programme in the form of a fantastic comedy in order to avoid confrontation with the theocrats who occupied positions of power - and were not afraid to exercise their power by burning dissenters at the stake!

The advice of the Dive Bouteille oracle, incidentally Trank - Drink! - was allegorical, not mere crude hedonism. Rabelais' readers were being advised to drink not only the fruit of the vine but also to drink deeply at the fount of knowledge.

Optime!

EVL



The Trésorier's Note

Subscriptions are due on January 1, £15 for one. £22.50 if your spouse is a Chevalier. If you pay through a bankers order there is nothing more for you to do.

This is the preferred way and will be the way as new inductees join us.

If you would like a bankers order, ring me on 01306 884032 and I will send you one from now on - and this saves both you and me a lot of time. The Bank is HSBC, 168 High Street, Guildford, Surrey GU1 3YU.

The sort is 40-22-26. The account number 21802208.

To: Michael Forster, "The Clearing" Deepdene Wood, Dorking Surrey, RH5 4BQ





Dates for your diary

Visit to Vinopolis – **Saturday 26 January 2002 at Vinopolis.** Details enclosed.

Management Committee Meeting - **Thursday 31 January 2002.** "Media,Media" at 11am

Supper and AGM - **Saturday 16 March 2002** at The Queen's Club. Details to come.

Peter Bouch, Chancelier 6 Mill Paddock Abingdon Oxfordshire OX14 5EU (01235) 520143

email:peterbouch@cyberpop.fsnet.co.uk



The Management Committee send all Chevaliers, their spouse, and families Rabelaisian Greetings, Happy Christmas and a healthy New Year, We look forward to enjoying your company and fellowship in 2002

Peter Bouch Chancelier 6 Mill Paddock Abingdon Oxfordshire OX14 5EU (01235) 520143