



Sacavin Courier

NO. 42 MAY 2002

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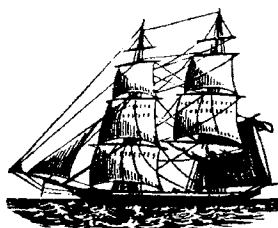
Most know that Sénéchal Robert Wills died in June 2002 after a long and tiresome illness. He was a vital part of the Commanderie's backbone and we miss him still. Robert's unrelenting work for the organisation was always willing. His sense of humour was always in every thing he did, with that laugh! In early 1999 he embarked upon a saga on the Loire. He wrote about the river itself, the bridges, chateaux, towns, the history and the mythical stories which abound, and of course the wines. He wrote on time and presented his writing impeccably.

Robert's illness denies the satisfaction of reading his finished work. As he wrote in the first piece, he said he would get near the source. I suspect he would have arrived there! I have the last piece he sent to me. It is not printed yet. As a tribute to his work in the Confrérie, I have added a few sentences from the Courier 39, to complete a piece of Rob's last piece of writing. Only one of the many things we miss. So read on from page 2

PFB

Robert Wills, December 1927-June 2001

Requiescat in pace



Dates for your diaries

A tasting and supper, Coin Street London – **Thursday 23 January 2003**
 Calling letters will be posted early December 2002

Management Committee meeting **6 December 2002** at
 The Kings Arms Buckingham Palace Road at 11 am



The Supper and AGM at The Queens Club – **Saturday 15 March 2003**
Calling letters will be posted late January 2003



Loire trip 2003 – **Monday September 22 or 23 Tuesday to Saturday September 26 or Sunday 27**
These dates are not yet firm. Further details are enclosed with this Courier



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, please ring me on 01306 884032 and I will send you one. 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



Saint Martin and others by Robert Wills

Saint Martin was one of the most popular saints of the middle ages. Born in Pannonis now Hungary, around 316, he followed his father as a soldier in the Roman army. Tradition has it that whilst quartered in Amiens, he tore his cloak in two to clothe a

nearly naked beggar and shortly afterwards, a vision of Christ appeared before him, wearing the cloak he had given away! He was baptised shortly after, imprisoned and discharged from the army. He became a monk at Ligugé and his piety as a committed Christian eventually

years episcopate was marked by the founding of other monasteries, which he saw as a potent means of converting the more 'conservative' rural pagan population to Christianity. He quickly attained a growing reputation for the healing of lepers, the raising of a dead man to life and the destruction of heathen temples and sacred trees. One story has him ordering the felling of a pine tree dedicated to a heathen god. Angered, the pagans tied him to the tree, on the side which the tree was supposed to fall. But a mighty hurricane blew up, the tree fell on to its opposite side and the sight of this miracle caused a prompt conversion of the locals! *(The new work starts from here).*

Saint Martin died in Candes in 397, (not 1397 as was incorrectly printed in Courier No. 38). His tomb at Tours quickly became a principle place of pilgrimage. Churches were soon consecrated in his honour throughout Western Europe and in Britain, from early times he became a patron of churches, such that by 1800, some one hundred and seventy three ancient churches bore his name. St Martin encouraged the planting of vines in the Touraine to provide wine for religious and medicinal purposes, and he has since been adopted as the patron saint of the wine world. Interestingly, the name 'chapel', which we recognise as a small intimate place of worship, was originally given to the shrine in which the kings of France preserved the capella or cape of St Martin. This sacred relic was carried about by Frankish kings on their military campaigns and gradually, over the years, any sanctuary housing a relic was called a chapel and its priest capellanus or chaplin! Well I thought it was interesting.

Tours was once Plantagenet property and Henry II of England built a castle here, of which only two towers remain. The tallest tower, called the Tour de Guise, was named after the fifteen year old Duc de Guise. The boy was imprisoned on the top floor for three years, following the murder of his father at

Blois in December 1588. So strict was his imprisonment that he was only allowed to leave his cell to attend Mass in the chapel, and even then he was closely guarded. But a laundress somehow managed to smuggle in a rope and the next time he left the chapel, he challenged the guards to a race back up the stairs to his cell, hopping on one leg! Young and supple, he got well ahead after the first spiral and when out of sight, raced to his cell, bolted the door and slid down the rope to freedom. Stealing a baker's horse he rode away to join the Catholic League.... or so tradition has it, But enough.

Let us resume our wine journey up the Loire river with a stop at Vouvray, on the north bank of the river opposite its sister town of Montiouis, separated by the river, joined by a railway, but with the nearest road bridge, ten kilometres away to the west, at Tours! Granted their appellation d'origine c ntrole on December 1936, Vouvray wines are very dependent upon weather pattern during the year and hence can range from dry following cold, to gorgeously sweet, after warm summers. Good Vouvray wines need to be aged well, especially the sweeter, finest moelleux wines that can be kept for a hundred years or more! But all Vouvray of a reasonable quality will repay bottle ageing. Acidity is the key to these wines. Because the Chenin Blanc is such a late ripener, picking the grapes rarely takes place before the end of October and indeed harvesting in November is by no means uncommon. The Vouvray vintage is normally one of the latest in France, as it is important to obtain as much ripeness and consequently as much sugar in the grapes as possible. To this end great emphasis is placed on the summer pruning of the leaves, to free the young bunches of grapes to every bit of available sunshine. Rabelais likened the texture of Vouvray to 'taffeta', searching perhaps to describe the layers of acidity, sweetness and the sheer depth of its taste. Every style is catered for here, ranging from sparkling mousseux, through crisp and dry to

rich, unctuous, golden-brown moelleux all derived from this one, extraordinary grape variety. The river Loire has, over the millennia, cut her way through the soft limestone rock to leave cliff-like banks, ideal for the cutting-out of cellars and troglodyte dwellings. Many growers have impressive tunnels and cellars that stretch for miles beneath the vineyards above, some dating back to Roman times, ideal for the storing and ageing of wines, in a constant climate. There are many fine, well respected vigneron here and every lover of these wines will vouch for their own particular favourite. Most, I like the wines of Huet-Pinguet, and I think those of Marc-Bredif, are particularly good value for money. Indeed as I write, I look with longing at a bottle of Marc Bredif 1998 - enticing, but no, - it will repay keeping for a bit longer yet. This vigneron's cellars at Rochecarbon, are

entered through the entrance of an impressive 18th century mansion - except that a glance reveals that its facade has side walls that are only three to four feet wide. For this 'mansion' has been hewn from the solid tufa rock, as an entrance to the many miles of tunnels behind.

Good quality Vouvray wines are made to be treated with respect. Be prepared to pay though, just that bit more, for such delights.

As mentioned earlier, just across the river, facing Vouvray to the north, is Montlouis. Granted its AOC in 1938, it takes an expert at a blind tasting, to tell the difference between wines from these areas, although Montlouis wines are said to be more rounded and perhaps softer, than those from across the river. For sure, their good quality wines will age just as beautifully as those of Vouvray.



Once again Audrey and Julian Thompson arranged for our delectation a Sacavin summer luncheon. Not this time at "Red Hall ", but by courtesy of their friends Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Jenks we were invited to use the large barn in the grounds of their home. Little Sarrat Hall, which is deep in the Hertfordshire countryside. This ancient barn has been splendidly restored, the great oak cross beams are grey white as only oak can age with the centuries. High at one end they have constructed a minstrel gallery, but, although we expected a *damsel with a dulcimer* to appear, we gazed in vain.

The spacious lawns provided at one part ample car parking space and before the entrance to the barn an area for the chevaliers to gather to greet each other and to partake of an aperitif of sparkling Saumur wine. Audrey had enlisted the assistance of the wives of the committee members to produce one or more of the platters and dishes that constituted our Summer luncheon. Each of the six tables that provided seating for the forty-eight people attending was hosted by a committee member, they acted as the wine waiter producing at the

appropriate moment each of the wines that accompanied our four course meal.



Officier Howard Davis, who has three fifths of his Master of Wine qualification, kindly agreed to give a tutored presentation of the wines. Howard had arranged that we taste a range of wines from Penfolds who are one of Australia's great and famous producers of wine. As we prepared to help ourselves to the first course, a platter of smoked salmon and prawns beautifully decorated with lemon

wedges, cucumber, tomatoes and mayonnaise, Howard was called upon by Grand Comm-
andeur Derek Sheen to speak on the first
wine. We were then enthralled by joining the
voyage that sailed in 1797 in the wooden
ships that carried the convicted felons in the
first fleet to Australia. The commander of the
fleet Arthur Phillips had been told to land at
Botany Bay but he found the anchorage
shallow and vulnerable to the East wind. He
found seven miles north a gap named by
Captain Cook Port Jackson and as he passed
beyond the heads he found a wonder of a
harbour. He named it Sydney after the then
Home Secretary who ordered the
transportation of these poor miscreants. Very
soon vines were planted at the Sydney
settlement, they did not thrive but ideal
conditions were found further north in the
Hunter valley. Dr. Christopher Penfold
Lawson came as a free settler to some four
miles north of the present city of Adelaide. He
is the founder of the Penfold Company now
famous for their wines throughout the world.
Dr. Lawson died in 1870 and is buried in the
Barossa valley. Our first wine was Penfolds



Bin 202 Riesling Rawson's Retreat. No oak is
used so the wine has a clear finish with a
perfect marriage of fruit and acidity. Our
second course was Jubilee chicken,
remarkably like Coronation chicken except,
presumably, the chickens have celebrated
their Jubilee of fifty years, cold gammon slices,
accompanied with both Waldorf and green
salads. Howard had chosen for this course
Penfolds Adelaide Hills Chardonnay, which
ages well and Penfolds Coldstream Hills Pinot
Noir. He explained what an unruly grape and
how difficult it is to handle pinot noir, but
here was an example of the grape at its best.
Our third course was a cheese board with a
variety of cheeses and we found we were to
enjoy my favourite grape, syrah, known in

Australia as Shiraz. Howard had chosen a
Penfolds Shiraz Bin 128 vintage 1998. The
wine is from Coonawarra, a small area with a
supply of very pure water. The wine was an
example of Shiraz as one of the best in the
world.



Finally we concluded the luncheon with a
slice of lemon tart, lovingly created by the
hand and skill of ladies of the committee and
also a bowl of strawberries with cream. The
strawberries were grown by the master Essex
growers Tom and Annabel Glover whose
farm is hard by Thorrington Creek, near
Brightlingsea. With this dessert we experi-
enced the rare joy of a glass of Seppelts DP63
Rutherglen Muscat. Penfolds enticed in 1950
the splendid wine maker. Max Schubert as
their chief wine maker. His achievements in
the field of wine are quite equal to his
namesakes achievements in the field of music.
After some experimentation and an initial
failure he created Penfolds Grange Hermitage,
a wine sought after throughout the world by
rich connoisseurs. Seppelts began making
fortified wine in 1850 at Seppeltsfield. This
liqueur muscat is produced in the district of
Rutherglen in the State of Victoria and
demands a place as a classic dessert wine. One
could only think of nectar, the wine the gods
drank to make them immortal. At the end of
this wonderful luncheon so splendidly
matched with the wines presented and chosen
by Howard one thought of the words, written
some eight centuries ago but the Persian poet
Omar Khayyam, and translated into English
by Edward Fitzgerald.

*"The grape that can with logic absolute
The two-and-seventy jarring sects confute
The subtle Alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into gold transmute"*

(over)

The Grand Commandeur Derek Sheen suitably thanked Howard Davis for his informative tutored wine tasting and the history of Australian wine making. He thanked Echanson Audrey Thompson and all her *volunteers* who provided the feast we had just enjoyed. Once again Sacavin chevaliers have been privileged to enjoy a memorable summer luncheon.



The Chapitre du Jubilé d'Or, in honour of the Queen's Jubilee was held in Bakers Hall, the livery hall of the Worshipful Company of Bakers in the City of London. This was the confrérie's 44th Chapitre and the first to be held in this location. It should be noted that it is can be advantageous to hold a Chapitre in a livery hall, since some are able to serve our own wines, without being obliged to pay "corkage" on them!

After the vin d'honneur - a sparkling Saumur, naturally - Mr White, the Beadle of the Bakers Company, gave an address on the origins of the company and the history of its halls. Bakers were the second association - the Weavers having been the first - to be registered in the City, the date being 1155. In the 14th century, the "Brown Bakers" split off and formed their own company, being reunited with the "White Bakers" in 1645.

The 1666 Great Fire of London started in a baker's and the first Bakers Hall was destroyed in the conflagration. They have had three halls since then, numbers two and three being destroyed in 1705 and 1940, while the present hall was built in the 1960s. The Courtroom in which the inductions and promotions were held was there originally because the Bakers Company was responsible for disciplining its members. The ultimate punishment (after three "strikes") for an errant baker was to be banished from exercising his profession far from the City - being sent to Coventry, in

fact! The origin of the baker's dozen was also explained.

Five candidates presented themselves for the induction ceremony that preceded the Chapitre meal:

Chris Bouch, wife of the Chancellor, proposed by Brenda Collins. Brenda spoke of Chris' love of sailing and art history studies, together with work for OXFAM.



Colin Grant, proposed by Ray Lindley, who spoke of Colin's academic studies (in America), where he developed an interest in sports, which he maintains as a marathon runner. He has set up an Estate Agency in Colchester and is interested in beer as well as wine.



John Moon, sponsored by John Whitcutt, First Halberdier. John is a former Master of the Bakers Company and a longstanding friend of the Grand Commandeur, both sharing a love of cricket. He has spent his life in the

construction industry and gives time to work for the Samaritans in Eastbourne.



Robert Timperley, sponsored by Shirley Zangwill. Robert is a dental surgeon who has also practised his profession in the army. He joined our visit to Sancerre in 2001, being an established fan of the wines of the Loire.



Sheila Wills, widow of Robert, proposed by the Grand Commandeur. She is from a family engaged in the wine trade and has had an interesting career. Her training as a nurse was interrupted by being summoned to war service - in telegraphy at Bletchley Park, which is

where she met Robert. She has worked for the NHS and has been a Samaritan volunteer for 10 years. Her interests include walking and sailing.



Additionally, four Chevaliers were promoted to Officier status: Michael Forste; Tresorier Ernest Lee, Second Halberdier; Geoffrey Wheel, Chef de Cuisine; John Whitcutt, First Halberdier.



As Chevaliers filed into the dining room, they were able to admire an exhibition of the company's silver collection. A traditional delectable menu was provided, consisting of:

Bakers bread roll selection and butter

Asparagus à la crème presented in filo pastry panniers

Fresh crab timbale presented with roasted cherry tomatoes

Accompanied Sancerre la Chatellenie 2000

Sliced roasted fillet of beef with crispy onion rings.

Duchesse potatoes and seasonal vegetables

Cheeseboard

Accompanied by Crozes-Hermitage Les Launes 1999

Raspberry and redcurrant filo tart with whipped cream

Coffee/tea and mints

With Seppelt Rutherglen Muscat, and Cointreau

A commentary on the wines was supplied by Audrey Thompson, Echanson

In the speech that closed, the Grand Commandeur said that the news from the Loire was that 2002 would produce a very fine vintage. He reviewed the events of the past year and reported that, in addition to the AGM, two events were in the offing, a meal with tastings at RSJ Restaurant and the 2003 visit to the Loire, the Muscadet region.

John Moon spoke on behalf of the new inductees and Chevaliers and their guests in good spirits.

The Management Committee sends to all Commandeurs, Officers and all Chevaliers, warm greetings to your families, Seasonal and Rabelaisian salutations. We look forward to meet you during 2003. We start in January, so we will look forward to meet you there.



Our visit to the Loire 2003.

2003 – an odd year. So we are planning to go to the the Western Loire:(and Sèvre/Maine), the base hotel being in Ancenis.

It is planned that visits will be paid to the following vineyards for degustations and purchasing, while the chateaux will also be worth viewing:

Chateau du Going (at Saint Fiacre)
Les Vignerons de Noelle (at Ancenis)
Domaine du Closel (at Savennières)

Chateau de Preuille
Chateau de Goulaine
Domaine Baumard (at Rochefort-sur-Loire)

The wines produced in these vineyards are:

Anjou Rouge
Anjou Coteaux de la Loire ;
Cabernet d'Anjou
Chinon
Coteaux d'Ancenis
Crémant de Loire
Muscadet de Sèvre et Maine
Muscadet Coteaux de la Loire
Quarts de Chaume
Saumur Champigny

Anjou Villages
Bourgueil
Chardonnay
Coteaux;de L'Aubance
Coteaux du Layon
Gros Plant
Muscadet de Sèvre et Maine sur Lie
Muscadet Côtes de Grand Lieu
Rosé de Loire
Savennières

and even Vouvray!

The trip will take place during the week beginning 22 September and it is hoped that Chevaliers will be able to proceed to Angers for the Chapitre des Vendanges, the target date for which is 27 September.

We will keep you in touch as the details are put together. Our aim is to have a nearly complete programme by the Supper and AGM at Queens on Saturday March 15, (probably). It is too soon for bookings now. At the March supper we will try to take provisional slips then post the calling letters including hotels, itinerary, firm dates, and of course, the costs.