

Commanderie de Grande-Bretagne de la Conférie
des Chevaliers du Sacavin d'Anjou



Sacavin Courier



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Chapitre de St-Georges et le Dragon, (page 3)

*Loire & Alsace
at the National Liberal Club, (page 6)*

Bristol in June, (page 9)

The very first Courier, (page 12)

Forthcoming Sacavin events, (page 13)

Audrey Thompson, (page 14)

Dates for your diaries, (page 16)



SS Great Britain, launched 1843, Sacavin luncheon venue 2007

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Le Chapitre de St-Georges et le Dragon

Wednesday 29th November 2006



Newly inducted Chevaliers Sarah Hawkes, Robert Aitken-Sykes, Francesco Cusimano, Julia Bellingham, John Foley and Stuart Craggs gather round Commandeur Daphne Mackenzie for a photo with members of the Committee

For a second year, the premises of the Worshipful Company of Armourers and Brasiers provided the setting for our annual Chapitre. Not only did this give us another chance to enjoy this most elegant of livery halls, but also gave the opportunity to provide an English balance to the previous occasion's Scottish theme. With the Company's silver "George" statue proudly on display, we had St. George, with his dragon, as the focal point for our 2006 Chapitre, in succession to St. Andrew in 2005.

Dinner, as usual, was preceded by the customary formalities. It was clearly with real pleasure that Grand Commandeur Derek Sheen asked Officier Daphne Mackenzie to please come forward. In his hands he held a Commandeur's collarette. With a Sacavin connection going back to 1969 when her late husband, long time Grand Commandeur Col. Hector Mackenzie, had joined the Commanderie, Daphne had demonstrated a loyalty and contribution to all matters Sacavin that has been a great example to us all. Expressing such thoughts, Derek placed the collarette around her neck.

Then came the induction of our new members. Six in all this time, starting with Robert Aitken-Sykes, a surveyor from Hampshire, already know to many of us from

the 2005 summer weekend run by Alastair and Julia Bellingham. Alastair's citation highlighted his world travels to antipodean vineyards, as his wife worked with British Airways, (she is also keen on the precious liquid!) and mentioned that he'd first realised Robert's bacchanalian interest when demolishing a rather good bottle of Chablis together.

Julia Bellingham needed no introduction, having attended many Sacavin functions already. Keith Lockyer, her sponsor, had noticed Julia's wine interest coming out when she worked for him at the Royal College of Pathologists and judged her to be good Sacavin material from the part she played in selecting the wines for college dinners.

Stuart Craggs, proposed by Colin Grant, (although apparently not of the “Brightlingsea Mafia”!), had accompanied us to Burgundy together with his wife Sue, so was already a familiar face. Evacuated from Singapore on the last ship to leave before the Japanese arrived in 1942, life had taken him from managing stores for Woolworths to his own wholesale jewellery business. His prowess at rugby, squash, skiing and sailing showed him to be a keen sportsman but his attraction to the Sacavin came as an experienced and accomplished wine drinker.

Concerns over the growth of a rival “Sevenoaks Mafia” may have emerged with John Ingram’s introduction of another from that town, John Foley. However, he was originally a Liverpoolian, as is his wife Marie, the girl he first met while at school. A career in marketing, with ICI, Marley and Columbia Ribbon, convinced them to start their own company, Britsales, which is still going strong although John now takes more of a backseat role.

From Tessa Hollingsworth we learnt that Sarah Hawkes, a cousin of her husband David, is a Dorking solicitor with an array of leisure interests, from backstage at Croydon’s Ashcroft Theatre and secretary of the National Trust’s Croydon Centre organising trips and holidays, to her membership of the Social Committee of the Surrey Law Society.

Hazel Sheen then presented her son-in-law, Francesco Paolo Cusimano. Originally from Sicily, he had long ago found his way to Cambridge, where he had acquired both his wife of more than 25 years, Pippa, and, via a career in the hotel business, a comprehensive knowledge and interest in food and wines. As Butler to the Fellows of Emmanuel College he had, to the envy of every Sacavin member, responsibility for selecting the wines from the very extensive College cellars.

We were also able to give a welcome to Jane Berger from Berkshire, already a Sacavin member by virtue of her induction at Angers

seven weeks earlier. She had been sponsored by Christian and Agnès Papin of the Domaine de Haute Perche at St-Melaine sur l’Aubance, neighbours for a numbers of years when she was living in France.



Chevaliers John & Joan Bintliffe

Then to dinner. It is for its white wines that the Loire is chiefly known, so this year our Chef de Cuisine, Des Holland, had chosen for us an all fish menu to accompany them. A decision which appears to have been met with broad approval judging by the favourable comments received during the meal. It was, of course, sadly the last time that Audrey Thompson, so long the custodian of our wines, was able to introduce them.

MENU

Vin d'honneur: Vouvray Brut Monmousseau

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**Chamberlains Fishcakes**  
with Crispy Thai Salad and Sweet Chilli Sauce  
*Anjou Blanc 2003 Domaine de Montgilet Lebreton*

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Pan-fried Sea Bass
with Buttered Spinach, Wild Mushrooms &
Champagne Froth
Saumur Blanc 2005 Domaine de la Guilloterie

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**Selection of Cheeses**

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Dark Chocolate Tart
with Cinnamon Cream & Cointreau Syrup
Coteaux du Layon 2003 Château du Breuil

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**Coffee – Petit Fours**  
*Cointreau or Dalmore 12-yr old Single Malt*



*Chevaliers Arthur Prince & Michael Hatton*

The wines included a Coteaux du Layon produced by Marc Morgat, who had been present the previous year. This time round Grand Commandeur Derek Sheen welcomed three guests from Angers, our “Liaison Extraordinaire” Michel Leterme, together with Elizabeth Peroz once again and also, for the first time at Armourers’ Hall, Yves Lambert. Gallantly taking up the banner for St. George, Derek deplored the hijacking of England’s national flag by the far right, football hooligans and the like. A move to re-establish Englishness was long overdue, he argued, as evidenced by the attitude of the DVLA, who accepted Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as country of birth when applying for a driving licence, but insisted on United Kingdom for anyone born in England. Even the Scots amongst those present seemed to be in agreement here!

Then it was the turn of Michel Leterme. Grand-Maître Pierre Aguilas had sent his sincere apologies, he said, detained in France by his professional commitments. Michel touched on a current problem: there is more great wine than ever but, alas, too few consumers to drink it. But leaving that aside, he continued with an anecdote: he had been browsing in Waterstone’s bookshop and had come across the book written to accompany the Oz Clarke/James May TV tour of the wine regions of France. The catalogue reviewer had recommended it thus: “This is a must for those people who, like me, find French wines overpriced and often disappointing.” Looking closely at the book, Michel discovered that it was on offer at a discount of £4. So much the better, he thought, confirming that the book was also apparently overpriced and disappointing!

Another lovely evening together, for which we were extremely grateful to Des Holland for organising it, Audrey & Julian Thompson for supplying the wines and Owen Collins, as Chef de Protocole, for his smooth handling of our ceremonies.

*We are grateful to Elizabeth Holland for the photos used in this report.*





*A Tasting of wines from Alsace and the Loire followed by dinner.  
A joint presentation by  
the Confrérie des Chevaliers du Sacavin d'Anjou  
and the Confrérie St-Etienne d'Alsace  
at the National Liberal Club on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2007*

This event was certainly popular. Partly this must have been due to the price. £41 was clearly perceived as affordable. The National Liberal Club provided a fascinating setting and teaming up with the Confrérie St-Etienne was an added attraction. However, this collaboration put a limit on numbers and even though we added one extra table, increasing places from 80 to the maximum the Club could handle, 88, both organisations were left with waiting lists. And, unusually, nobody dropped out!

On the night itself, we did get concerned about, of all people, our Grand Commandeur and his wife. Normally so punctual, when we started the tasting they were nowhere to be seen. However, as we reached the third wine on the list, Derek and Hazel arrived, expressing exasperation at GNER who had cancelled two trains from Huntingdon and delayed a third.

Our partners in this event, the UK branch of the Confrérie St-Etienne d'Alsace, are clearly great lovers of wine and their collarettes colour-coded according to oenological expertise. They are younger than us too, with a number, by appearance, in their twenties and thirties. Their enthusiasm for wine was infectious, and extended to singing, at the completion of each individual tasting, a little refrain: "Sehne eins? Trinke eins! La la la la," (or something very like it!).

Richard Norton, their "UK Delegate", was formerly Head of Languages at Haberdashers Askes' School in Elstree. For many years he took parties of his students to Alsace each summer, an area of France he had evidently fallen in love with. So much so that he bought a house out there, spending many a happy holiday eating and, in particular, drinking the region's produce. In the latter's respect, he became good friends with the Mann brothers of vignerons Wunsch et Mann of Wettolsheim, 5 km south-west of Colmar. It

was when he retired from teaching that they asked him to help cultivate an interest in Alsatian wines in England. An earlier UK presence by the Confrérie St-Etienne had folded and Richard willingly took responsibility for effecting its resurrection, the success of which was obvious from the numbers attending this event.

The Confrérie itself owes its 16<sup>th</sup> century origins to a festival that took place each year on the day after Christmas, the highlight of which was a tasting of the year's wines. St-Etienne and our own St Stephen the Martyr are, of course, one and the same, celebrated on 26<sup>th</sup> December. Jacques Mann, who gave this little introduction, has 3 brothers also in the business, a family concern since 1793. He went on to talk about the 7 grape varieties of Alsace (Sylvaner, Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Muscat, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir and Gewurztraminer) and to introduce 4 wines all from Wunsch et Mann, named according to the custom of the region, and in contrast to that of the Loire, after the grape involved.

- 1) Muscat Cuvée Speciale 2004. Muscat is always dry and crisp in Alsace, in contrast to the sweeter versions found further south. Light and easy to drink.
- 2) Riesling Steingrüber 2003 Grand Cru. Riesling he referred to as the King of Alsace wines. Steingrüber is the hillside this

example comes from, but the characteristics differ noticeably between different parts of the region, producing both dry and medium examples and, with a late harvest, some good sweet wines.

- 3) Gewurztraminer Hengst 2003 Grand Cru. Gewurztraminer is almost the opposite. A wonderful grape variety, easy to drink either with food or without. Intense full-bodied and slightly sweet. In Alsace frequently drunk in the afternoon instead of coffee following a good meal. With a spicy, almost gingery taste, it accompanies strong cheese very well, Foie Gras and also North African dishes.
- 4) Pinot Gris 2002 Vendange Tardive from the Joseph Mann Collection. Pinot Gris used to be called Tokay d'Alsace. This was a late picking, November 2002, ensuring plenty of sugar but preserving a nice level of acidity. The saying is, so we were told, that this wine "makes women happy.....when men drink it!" It should keep 10 years or more.

Des Holland introduced his talk with a tale about an American lady who, many years ago, had come to interview for a position with his company. She had with her 40 Woolworths notebooks in which she had recorded her views on every single wine she had ever tasted! That she was given the job is testament to the point Des was making: to be serious about wine it's important to register what you see, smell and taste. After an initial white tasting, he used the occasion to present three reds, to demonstrate that the Loire does, in fact, produce some quite palatable ones.

- 5) Domaine du Closel Clos du Papillon 2004, AOC Savennières, Chenin Blanc. Used now all over the world, Chenin Blanc can, in specially favoured corners of the Loire, be coaxed into producing wine that is not just good, but great. This was one example. The complex geological aspect of the soil and the advantageous south and southwest exposure gives the Savennières appellation

its distinctive personality. The vineyard here has the shape of a butterfly with open wings, hence the name. An extremely elegant dry Savennières with lingering fragrance and aromas of smoked roasted almonds, apricot and white flowers.

- 6) Domaine de Loye Menetou-Salon 2004 AOC Menetou-Salon, Pinot Noir. Pinot Noir is often described as a minx of a vine and variations of the finished wine are large. At Domaine de Loye, clayey limestone soils, along with good sun exposure allows production of very aromatic wines. These are full bodied, refined red wines and are ideal served with game.
- 7) Domaine de La Butte 2004 Mi-Pente AOC Bourgueil, Cabernet Franc. Outside of Bordeaux, Cabernet Franc is the major red grape of the Loire. The Mi-Pente bottling at Domaine de la Butte comes from 50 year old vines and is one of the greatest Cabernet Francs made in the Loire valley, described as profound, powerful and brooding.
- 8) Domaine des Roches Neuves 2002 Marginale AOC Saumur Champigny, Cabernet Franc again. Marginale is made only in the very best years from the ripest grapes and aged in new oak for up to two years. The yield for this intense wine is typically no more than 25 hectolitres/hectare. A grand wine, powerful yet elegant, structured like a top Bordeaux.

The supper was excellent, roast duck in large portions. For dessert we were given the choice of fruit salad or a plate of cheeses. The helpings of cheese were huge, so much so that in some cases the unthinkable was requested, a "doggy bag"! To accompany the meal, we had the choice of a 2005 Pinot Blanc from Alsace and another Cabernet Franc, this time a 2003 from Le Domaine de Beauséjour, Chinon.



*Alastair Bellingham with St-Etienne's Richard Norton*



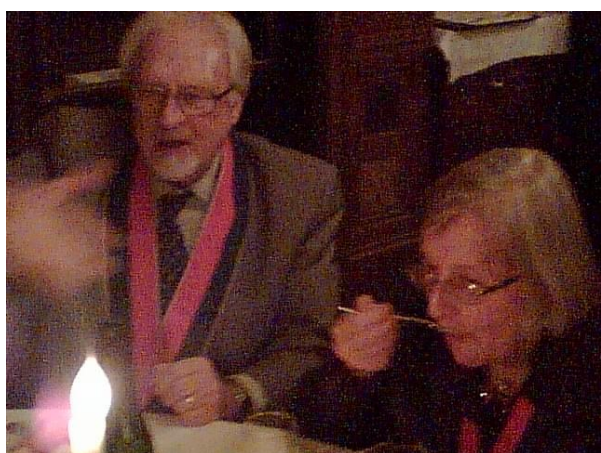
*Gillian Ridler, Margaret & Trevor Harris and Michael Forster*



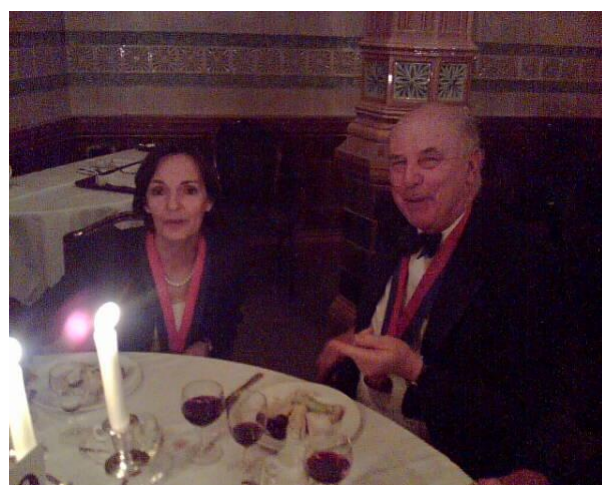
*Jacques Mann speaking, Richard Norton's brother Peter & sister-in-law Margaret listening*



*Geoffrey Wheal pours wine for Veronica & Frank Halliwell*



*Easily recognisable, Ernest and Krystyna Lee*



*Janine Harris with Charles Slingsby*

The Victorian glazed tiles that covered the walls of the Lloyd George Room are worthy of mention because of the extraordinary effect of the colour scheme used, similar to the cream, brown and biscuit colours of those old Pulman

carriages. With light from the chandeliers reflecting on the highly glazed surface, it was easy to imagine having dinner in that same room 100 or more years ago. A cast iron kitchen range is built into one wall of the



room, so presumably Liberals of so long ago could sit and watch their food being cooked.

The brainchild of our First Halberdier Alastair Bellingham and St-Etienne's Richard Norton, the occasion was indeed a high point in the history of Sacavin events. So, our grateful

thanks to them for turning a good idea into reality and to Des Holland and Jacques Mann for their comprehensive presentations of the wines.

## **An Account of the Sacavin Visit to Bristol/ June 1st to 3rd 2007 OR**

### ***The Day our intrepid Tower Climber, Fay, disappeared down the Funnel***

Our weekend was arranged by our member Richard Ridler and his charming wife Gill in the historic City of Bristol. Bristol has a long and interesting history dating back to Anglo-Saxon times when a settlement grew up between the rivers Avon and Frome known as Brigstow (a place of settlement by the bridge). Bristol has a rich and interesting maritime history trading with many countries including Spain, Portugal and Iceland. Ships also left Bristol to found new colonies in the New World. In the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century Bristol became England's second biggest port. During this time Britain became flooded with goods imported into Bristol. These imports were the products of the slave trade, which included rum, sugar, tobacco and cocoa, not forgetting the human cargo of slaves.

By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the port of Bristol was in decline, however the arrival of a new chief engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel helped to attract new investment. Brunel's work did more than anybody else to shape the face of modern Bristol as it is today. This extraordinary man planned and built the Great Western Railway from London to Bristol, Temple Meads Station and the very famous ship the SS Great Britain, so indeed, it was possible to buy a ticket in London straight through to New York.

So, on the evening of Friday 1<sup>st</sup> of June the very sociable members of the Sacavin met for dinner in the Brigstow Hotel. (Remember why it is called Brigstow). The presentation of the food was delightfully pretty. The first course was Parcel of asparagus wrapped in Palma

Ham with chive hollandaise sauce. This course was decoratively arranged on the plate and tasted as good as it looked. The main course was Corn fed chicken with fondant potatoes and a basil pesto sauce. Again beautifully presented and tasty. The dessert was a delightful Cherry parfait with Chocolate shortbread. Followed by coffee.

After being well fed and generously supplied with wine we retired for the night to our very comfortable and modern rooms. (Well it is not every hotel where you have a T.V. in the bathroom and a very well appointed separate shower).

Following a very ample breakfast on the Saturday morning we wandered the few yards to our private ferry (no mixing with the peasants for us) to take us on a tour of the

harbour and then to the SS Great Britain. The Captain of the Ferry gave a most interesting talk pointing out all the old warehouses which are now transformed into waterside apartments, some more interesting than others, some preserved well, others less so. Then the moment of seeing, for the first time, in my case, the SS. Great Britain.



*Brunel's SS Great Britain*

As we left the ferry we were met by Bob our personal guide. He entranced us all with his dedication, enthusiasm and knowledge of the SS Great Britain, never seeming jaded or bored although he must have guided thousands around the ship. There did not seem to be anything he did not know about the ship from her inception to her present position. Our enthusiastic member, Fay, was immediately given the use of a wheelchair, which she accepted gracefully. We viewed the

first class, second class and steerage accommodation, the kitchens and museum and the first class dining room. Whilst we had to climb up and down numerous steps Fay went up and down the funnel in a lift!! We enjoyed a delicious finger buffet with wine, which was just right for the occasion.



*Lunch on board*

The story of the SS Great Britain is well worth reading and can easily be found on the internet. To give a short summary. She was built in 1843 and made her maiden voyage on 26<sup>th</sup> July in 1848. She was the fastest ship of her time and the forerunner of modern shipping. She has come to symbolise the inventiveness of the Victorian era, international travel and communications.



*A lesson in maritime history, with full marks for attentiveness*



*Our guide Bob, and Richard Ridler*

We returned to the city centre by private ferry and made our way to Avery's for a wine tasting. A delightful young French girl explained the different wines to us and we had a jolly time quaffing and eating the goodies Avery's provided.



*Marshalling all the senses in Avery's Wine Cellars.*

The wines tasted were:

- 1 Château Manoir la Borie Sauvignon Blanc Entre Deux Mers AOC 2006
- 2 Château Tour de Bardes Saint Emillion Grand Cru 1999
- 3 Château la Gorce 2000
- 4 La Cuvée Secrete Haut Medoc 2004
- 5 Château Peyruchet Cuvée Jean-Baptiste 1eres Cotes de Bordeaux 2005

After a delightful short walk back to our hotel we passed a wonderful building constructed in Bristol Brick. (If you do not remember what Bristol brick is and do not remember the meaning of the phrase 'Ship Shape and Bristol Fashion' find out or you will be punished by having to drink an extra glass of wine at the next meeting of the Sacavins).

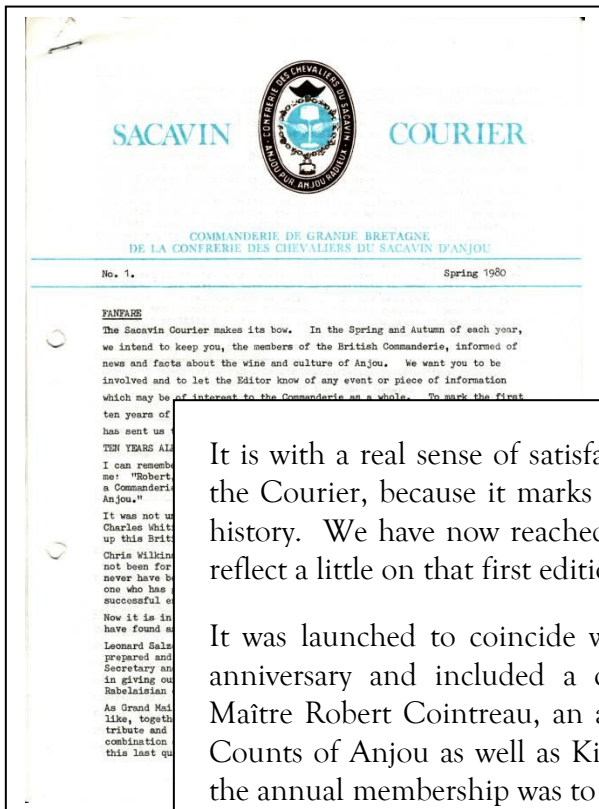
At 7-30pm we met at the Aqua Restaurant, next door to the Brigstow, a lively and modern restaurant. Again, one could not fault the presentation and cooking of the food. All the members had made their own selection of food, which the restaurant coped with admirably. Naturally, the wine flowed. We retired to our rooms at about 11-30pm content with our trip to Bristol.

We would like to thank Richard and Gill for all their hard work in organising this visit; it really was a grand success.

*We are grateful to Shirley Zangwill for this report. Thanks also to both Des Holland and Shirley for supplying the photos.*







## *The first Courier*

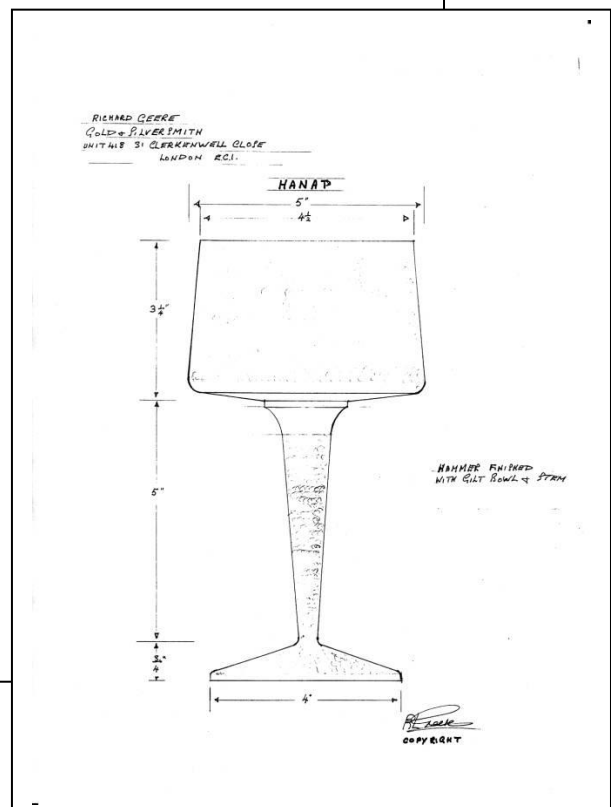
It is with a real sense of satisfaction that we publish this edition of the Courier, because it marks something of a milestone in Sacavin history. We have now reached issue No. 51, so we should perhaps reflect a little on that first edition, back in the spring of 1980.

It was launched to coincide with the British Commanderie's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary and included a congratulatory message from Grand Maître Robert Cointreau, an article on the Plantagenets who were Counts of Anjou as well as Kings of England and notification that the annual membership was to increase from £2 to £5. Yes, 250%!

It also described the Commanderie's first commissioned piece of plate, the hanap, presented at the Decennial Dinner at Vintners' Hall the previous November.

Made in silver and gilt by goldsmith Richard Geere, it is part spun and part hammer raised with a planished hammer finish. The weight is approximately 20 ozs (622grams). On the base has been engraved a simple inscription, which will be seen as the hanap is raised for drinking: "Commanderie de Grande Bretagne de la Confrérie des Chevaliers du Sacavin d'Anjou 1969-79".

We still have the original specification in the Sacavin archives, and reproduce it here.





## FORTHCOMING SACAVIN EVENTS

### Chapitre des Vendanges 2007

Old Hands amongst us will be familiar with the Chapitre des Vendanges held at the end of each summer at the Greniers St-Jean in Angers. In past years we have managed to make the last day of our biennial visit to the Loire coincide with this event, so that we could attend. More recently this has proved difficult and the last occasion when the British Confrérie was present in any number was for the Centenary celebrations in 2004.

This year, the Chapitre is being held on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October. Our Grand Commandeur and his wife intend to go and will make a weekend of it, along with one or two others. This is not an official British Sacavin excursion, but anyone feeling they might like to attend is welcome to contact Derek (Tel: 01480 450867), both to co-ordinate the purchase of admission tickets and to compare travel and hotel arrangements. Prudence would suggest this is done by the end of July.

### London Chapitre Tuesday 20 November 2007

Our British Chapitre this year should be something very special. We are returning to our spiritual home, Vintners' Hall. Unfortunately, many of London's livery halls are now pricing themselves at the level which only the big corporates can afford, and Vintners is no exception. However, our Chef de Cuisine has used his considerable charm to negotiate a one-off deal which should enable us to set the ticket price at around £91.



*Vintners' Hall in Upper Thames St.*

The hall itself dates from 1671 following the destruction of the old building by the Great Fire of 1666. In 1822 Upper Thames Street was widened. The Hall lost some of its rooms but much of the original remains. The present facade and entrance date from 1910. Amongst many more valuable artefacts, a large painting in the entrance corridor depicts a Mr Van Horn, who is reputed to have drunk 35,680 bottles of wine before he died, aged 90. As to the quality, that wasn't mentioned but clearly a Sacavin member devoted to spending his or her retirement in search of that perfect bottle has nothing to fear.

If ever there was an opportunity to bring guests to a really first rate event, this is it. The hall can hold 152, so we should be able to cater for all but the most exceptional demand. The calling letter will be dispatched in September, so you have plenty of time to think of who, amongst your friends and relations, might benefit from what is likely to be an unforgettable Sacavin experience.



*The Banqueting Hall*

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## Our visit to the Loire in 2008

The Commanderie has received notification from Angers of the postponement (by one week) of the 2008 Chapitre des Vendanges. It will now be held on 11 October 2008 instead of the original date of 4 October.

The Commanderie's visit to the Loire had been timed to conclude on 3 October, to allow members to attend the Chapitre des Vendanges, so the current proposal is to postpone all visits by one week, viz:

*Tuesday 7 October – members assemble at designated hotel*

*Wednesday 8 to Friday 10 October – visits*

*Saturday 11 October – members transfer to Angers, to attend Chapitre des Vendanges in the evening*

*Sunday 12 October – dispersal*



## AUDREY THOMPSON

Our dear friend Commandeur Audrey Thompson passed away in late February after a long and very courageous battle against cancer. Audrey, with Julian always at her side, was a true stalwart supporter and active member of Sacavin.

Brought up in Harrow, she and Julian met as members of the Young Conservatives and were married in 1956. Adrian was born in 1960 and Sally in 1967. For many years she was on the management committee, and eventually chairman, of Croxley House, a local care home, during which time large sums were raised for improvements. In 1971 Audrey and Julian purchased a second home in France (Les Optimistes, naturally) and Audrey rapidly became interested in St Bartholomew's, an Anglican church nearby, within the diocese of Europe.

She was inducted into the Sacavin in 1990 at the Chapitre des Arts held in the Arts Club. She joined the Committee in 1996, was promoted Officier in 1999 and made Commandeur in 2004. For the last 7 years she held the position of Echanson, a title we borrowed from France but which, with Julian's help, gave her responsibility for buying our wines in France and, subsequently, storing them in their splendid cellar at Red Hall. Indeed one of the features of our special dinners was Audrey's erudite commentary on the wines which so admirably complemented the food.

Other notable contributions included our memorable visit to Angers in 1999 which Audrey planned and arranged and also two unforgettable summer lunches at her house, Red Hall, in 1998 and at Little Barratt Hall (just down the road) in 2002. It goes without saying that any task Audrey attempted was extremely well organised.

Her memorial service was held at All Saints Church, Croxley Green, on 1<sup>st</sup> March and attended by a substantial group of her Sacavin friends. Audrey herself had planned the form of service and the hymns she had chosen were popular and sung with a tuneful vigour which surely would have pleased her. Her courage in the face of a debilitating illness and its treatment and her determination to carry on as normal was an inspiration to us all.

DCS

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### DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

Management Committee meeting **Wednesday 18 July 2007** at  
The Kings Arms Buckingham Palace Road at 11.30 am



Chapitre des Vendanges in Angers **Saturday 6 October 2007**



Management Committee meeting **Wednesday 10 October 2007** at  
The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place at 11.30 am



Chapitre 2007 at Vintners' Hall **Tuesday 20 November 2007**  
*Calling letters will be posted in September*



Excursion to the Loire **Tuesday 7 to Sunday 12 October 2008**