



Sacavin Courier



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A Guard of Honour at Vintners Hall

VENDANGE 2007

AND RELATED MATTERS...



To be making wine is an uncertain business. Always at the mercy of the weather, even more so now with climatic change, a vigneron also has competition from New World producers and adverse publicity relating to health concerns to think about. Faced with all this, it's good to find our Loire friends as resilient as ever.

Amongst the ways we have to follow their fortunes, the internet offers the newsletter website <http://vinsdeloire.info/> (note: there is no "www" in the address). This summer it put in figures a problem we have all experienced, too much rain. "Between May 1 and July 25, Tours suffered 253mm of rain, that is to say 100mm more than normal, which represents an exceptional rainfall. The year nearest for rainfall being 1977 with 219 mm during the same period. However, from Nantes to Sancerre, the climatic situations do vary from one area to another".

The same article continued: "Throughout the season, the vine growers had to fight against the diseases of the vine, black-rot, oïdium, mildew and botrytis which attacked leaves and bunches of grapes. Because of the rainfall at the time of flowering of the vine, the vine growers also noted important "coulure": flowers which were not transformed into fruits".

However, an article at the end of September sent by Michel Leterme had a more optimistic tone: "Overall, the vignerons of the Loire are pleased with the vendanges of 2007. They predict that 2007 will turn out to be a "normal" year, unlike 2003, 2005 and 2006. They had their problems with threats of mildew, but they were able to overcome them. There were also fears of over acidity, but a late

period of sunshine will remedy that problem with the resultant production of sugar in the grapes. The vendanges for chardonnay and muscadet began in mid-September, while cabernet and chenin have been postponed to early October".

A late period of sunshine? Yes, it seems to have materialised. Another internet search in November picked up www.jancisrobinson.com quoting Charles Sydney, passionate advocate of Loire wines and wine broker based near Chinon, describing the last few weeks of the harvest in the Loire: "We're pretty gobsmacked by the quality of the Muscadets and Sauvignons - where the growers got it right, it looks like 2007 should be similar to 2002, which also relied on a sunny September to save the vintage. And it's infinitely better than we expected at the end August! Now the reds and the Chenins are pretty well in too, with just a few rows of Cabernet Sauvignon in the Anjou and a few final selective pickings in the Layon to watch out for".

In the words of Corporal Jones, the moral seems to be "Don't panic!"

The British commanderie looks forward to the 2008 visit, to sample the 2007 vintage and to attend the Chapitre des Vendanges of the confrérie in Angers.

Turning back to the article Michel sent, it included an interesting aside: "In Ludovic Boucart's cellar in Roisin (a Belgian village close to the French frontier) you can see quinces, rhubarb, cherries, strawberries and raspberries piled up in barrels, while there are stainless steel vats and traditional oak barrels (each with a capacity of 228 litres) nearby. Ludovic has all the equipment of a winemaker, except the raw material: he is not producing fruit juices, however, but wines. The alcoholic strengths of the wines he produces from a range of fruits vary from 11° to 12.5° and he has no difficulty in marketing them, in Belgium and further afield, though he can't call them wines in France! In France wine is defined "as a product derived by alcoholic fermentation from fresh grapes"."

"There is a move in the wine bars away from "heavy" wines to lighter, fruitier drinks, e.g. the wines of Vincent Pugibet which he produces in the Hérault. His wines are

constructed from a "cocktail" of Grenache, syrah and/or chardonnay and reach a strength of 9°, instead of 13° and above like the typical wines of the region."

"Another modern fashion is for the resurrection of ancient grape varieties, e.g. "le chatus" in the Ardèche. Even champagne is not immune: Michel Drappier, for example, has created "Quattuor", using white grapes exclusively (l'arbane, le petit meslier, pinot blanc and chardonnay). In the Loire, Ackema-Rémy Pannier has revived the taste for bubbly made out of chenin noir" (also known as "pineau d'aunis"). Gratien-Meyer recently sold 20 hectares of vines producing table wine in order to concentrate on producing sparkling wine, for export. It is worth mentioning the developing taste for "mini bottles" of champagne, containing 30 cl - a taste exhibited by foreigners, not the French!"

Le Chapitre de l'Echanson



**Tuesday 20th
November 2007**

For the 12th time since the British Commanderie was established in 1969, our annual Chapitre was held in Vintners Hall. What better place to confer upon our old friend from Angers, Michel Leterme, the title "Délégué Angevin". As he said himself, Bakers' Hall, Butchers' Hall, all quite splendid, but what have they to do with wine? There were promotions too, Trésorier Michael Forster to Commandeur, for such masterful control of our finances and Sénéchal Geoffrey Wheal likewise, for his considerable contribution in both that rôle and as our former Chef de Cuisine. We are indebted once again to Shirley Zangwill for providing us with the following report.

This year we were privileged to hold our Chapitre at the Vintners Company whose history is a fascinating story of trade, charity, politics and companionship. Although the mediaeval, possibly even Saxon, origins of the London Guilds remains somewhat unknown, there is no doubt that in Mediaeval London the livery companies, including Vintners,

exercised immense power in economic, social, political and religious spheres. The Vintners Company received its first Charter in 1364, which granted the Vintners the exclusive privilege of trading in the wines of Gascony. This was eight years after the English were victorious at the battle of Poitiers in 1356 and three years after the second major occurrence

of the plague in 1361 in the reign of Edward III, who claimed the French Crown in 1337. However Edward was prepared to abandon his claim and to ransom John II, the French King, captured at Poitiers, in return for practical concessions (Treaty of Bretigny 1360)

The Vintners Company is fortunate amongst livery Companies not only because its ancient trade continues to flourish but because a substantial number of its members are drawn from its trade. Swans have always played a part in mediaeval feasting and the Vintners Company has the privilege, within the gift of the Queen, to the right of a 'Game of Swans' on the Thames. The custom of the Company is to confide the care of their 'game' to the junior warden who is called the Swan Warden and it is his province to see to their safety and to direct the Swan Marker. Swans and certain other creatures, such as porpoises, sturgeon and peacocks, were all highly prized and reserved for royalty and great noblemen, to feast upon. A favourite piece of showmanship was to skin and roast a Swan then sew it back into its plumage, the head and tail being secured by skewers to hold them in place. The beak and plume would be gilded and a golden collar or garland placed around the neck. Sometimes a piece of cloth soaked in spirit would be placed in the mouth and lit so the Swan would appear to be breathing fire. There was nothing so elaborate at our dinner but the meal was beautifully presented and the various tastes were a delight.

Venison was in mediaeval times always a meat to be enjoyed at a feast. *'Seeing my darling is absent, I can do no less than to send her some flesh, representing my name, which is hart flesh for Henry, prognosticating that thereafter, God willing, you must enjoy some of mine. No more to you now at this time, mine own darling, but that a wish I would we were together an evening. With a hand of yours. H.R.'*

So wrote Henry VIII whilst in pursuit of Anne Boleyn. His gift of Hart flesh is Venison and this luxurious red meat is a potent symbol of love but there is more to this note than that.

Word play was the language of the cultivated person in Tudor times. Shakespeare in Twelfth Night has the lovelorn Duke Orsino playing on the words Hart and Heart and their connotations of chaste and chased. For more information on the history of feasting read the most fascinating book Charlemagne's Tablecloth by Nichola Fletcher.

MENU

*Vin dhonneur: Bouvet Saphir AC Saumur
90% chenin 10% Chardonnay*

*Pan fried sea bass, saffron vegetables, sauce vierge
Chateau de la Roulerie Les Terrasses 2005 AC Anjou
Blanc 100% Chenin Blanc*

*Fillet of highland venison, root vegetable dauphinoise,
sprout tops, juniper sauce
Domaine des Roches Neuves 'Terre Chaudes' 2005 AC
Saumur-Champigny*

*Selection of cheeses: Lincolnshire Poacher,
Cashel Blue and Stinking Bishop*

*Duo of cassonades with almond tuile
Domaine des Sablonnettes 'Vielles Vignes' 2004 AC
Coteaux du Layon Rablay*

*Coffee and Chocolates served with Cointreau or
Dalmore 12 year old Single Malt*

We were fortunate to have three new members inducted this year with much ceremony, beautifully orchestrated and organised by our senior members, under the direction of our Grand Commandeur, Derek Sheen, and our most able Chef de Protocole Owen Collins. The trumpets sounded and the ceremony commenced.

The new members were introduced as follows:

Brenda Wheal

Brenda is, of course well known to us all as the wife of our Sénéchal, Geoffrey Wheal. As a Home Economics teacher whose training had included as a special



subject "The Grape and its many uses in cookery", which naturally included wine, Sacavin membership was a foregone conclusion. If her culinary skills impressed Geoffrey, so also did her membership of Yorkshire Cricket Club, so it's not surprising that they married.

Marie Foley

Marie has also become a familiar face, attending a number of recent functions with her husband John. She was born in Liverpool of an English/Irish father and a Scottish mother. As a child she was educated in North Wales. Thus she can be considered truly British. Convent educated with degrees from Liverpool and the Open Universities, she taught in a variety of schools across the country, finishing her career in Sevenoaks, Kent. Her marriage to John has brought her great happiness, four wonderful children as well as, now, 10 grandchildren.



Stewart Francis

Stewart has had a long and distinguished career in education, ending up as the Headmaster of the prestigious Colchester Royal Grammar School. Even now, he is not fully retired and acts



as a Consultant for Ofsted. From a young age he had a fondness for both France and wine instilled in him by his mother and the first thing he looks for in a friend is their appreciation of good wine - the second would be their love of cricket.

In 2003 Stewart and his wife Valerie bought a house in the Poitou Charente region of France and have made many friends there. They now divide their time between France and their home on Mersea Island, there is plenty of wine in France but not much cricket.

As if to prove their dedication to the cause, last September Stewart and Valerie hosted the quarterly meeting of the Brightlingsea Wine group, to which several Sacavin members belong, at their home in France.

Much to our delight Michel Leterne, and his companion, Monique Christiaens from Angers were present, and we look forward to returning their visit at their Chapitre in Angers October 2008.

All the members had a wonderful evening, good company, good food and wonderful surroundings, what more could one ask? Our grateful thanks go to all the people who helped to organise this absolutely super Chapitre especially Des Holland for his wonderful choice of wines, which can be savoured again just by reading his descriptions of them on the beautifully presented menu.

SZ

We are grateful to Fouad Ghali for the photographs appearing on this and the following pages.



Our three inductees



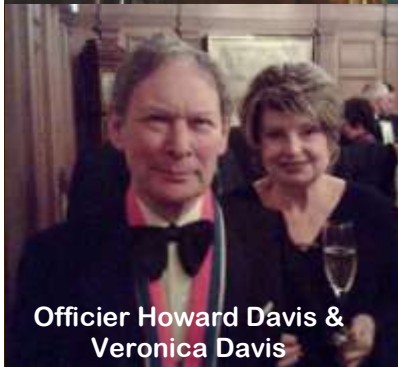
The Chapitre de l'Echanson is under way



The Stairway to Dinner



From Angers, Commandeur Michel Leterme & Chevalier Monique Christiaens



Officier Howard Davis & Veronica Davis



Chevalier Elizabeth Holland with Rab Peck



Chevalier Barry Collins & Penelope Collins



Officier John Ingram & Chevalier Valerie Ingram talk with Guy Temple



Chevaliers Terry Hatton & Krystyna Lee, with Commandeur Ernest Lee & Paul Mellor



**Chevalier Madeleine Forster
with Richard Hawkes**



**Chevalier
Tessa Hollingsworth**



**Officier John Whitcutt
toasts "Absent Friends"**



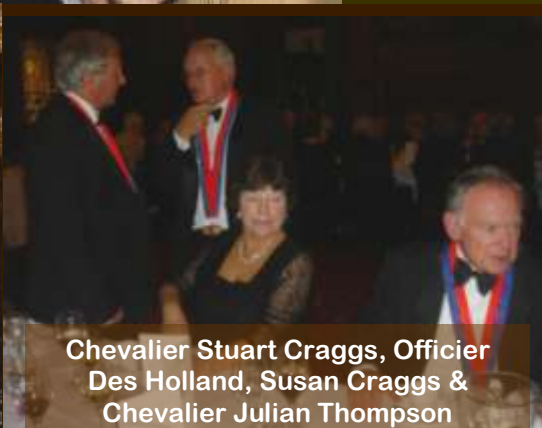
**Chevalier Julia Bellingham,
James Bellingham
& Tanya Sheridan**



**Commandeur Owen Collins with
Chevalier Brenda Collins**



**Grand Commandeur
Derek Sheen**



**Chevalier Stuart Craggs, Officier
Des Holland, Susan Craggs &
Chevalier Julian Thompson**



**Janet Macfarlane & Chevalier
Graham Macfarlane**



**A small group from the Chef de Protocole's
party: Richard Williams, Jocelyn Creighton,
Matthew Collins & Amanda Stirzaker**



There were some at this year's Chapitre who asked where they might procure the wines served with dinner. Those returning from a holiday in France, or merely taking a day trip to Boulogne, should be able to find them in the Boulogne branch of wine-merchants Le Chais. Details are as follows:

DIRECTIONS

From Boulogne

From Speedferries, follow signs ‘Boulogne centre’, when you cross the river follow signs “Brequereque”, go under the railway bridge and turn left after “Marché Plus” supermarket.

From Calais

Take the A16 motorway towards Boulogne,
exit at junction 31.

Turn right, follow signs “Centre Hospitaliers”.
At the hospital, you follow signs “Boulogne”.
At the first traffic light down the hill, cross the
road and turn left immediately.

BOULOGNE-SUR-MER



They have been in business for more than 3 generations and are very helpful, with free tasting from a selection of something like 800 different wines. Our Chef de Cuisine says if you're buying in size it might be worth mentioning "Sacavin"!

One can pre-order via their website.



From Organic to Biodynamic

Only a few years ago, 'Biodynamic', organic vine growing taken a stage further into realms of the cosmos, as inspired by Rudolph Steiner, still looked distinctly cranky. But the end of the nineties saw some of France's top growers in Burgundy and the Rhône taking an interest, and some have taken the plunge - parts of the famous Domaine Leflaive in Puligny-Montrachet have already completed the seven year road to conversion. (Seven years is the length of time demanded by the rules of Biodynamie for the soil to clear itself of residual weed-killers, chemical fertilisers and synthetic crop sprays.) But Biodynamie is much more than soil management and crop treatments of animal and plant origin (manure, dandelions, camomile, nettles and so on) and avoiding clonally bred vines.

Its most important function, to quote one of its most impassioned disciples, Nicolas Joly of Coulée de Serrant in the Loire, is to 'support the life of the soil by reinforcing its links with the solar system and its cosmic background' - i.e., what is actually happening in the sky.

In practice this means working the vineyards and the wine according to the moon and stars. Cranky? French growers have been doing this to some extent for generations, bottling wine in the spring in accordance with the phase of the moon, for example.

DH



SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Trésorier's Note

- Subscriptions are due on January 1st. The rate stays the same at £15, or £22.50 if your spouse is also a Chevalier.
- Most of you pay by bankers order so there is nothing more for you to do but accept my thanks for making my life simpler.
- If you prefer to pay by cheque, please send this to me, Michael Forster, payable to Sacavin, rates as above at:- The Clearing, Deepdene Wood, Dorking, Surrey. RH5 4BQ



Michael Hatton



It is with profound sadness that we record the death of Michael Hatton. As a loyal member of Sacavin since 1992, who regularly attended our functions, there will be many who were touched by his generosity of spirit, his sense of fun and his love of good wine. He will indeed be sorely missed and we extend to his brother Terry and sister-in-law Gaynor our sincere condolences. From Terry's words at the funeral comes this brief résumé of Michael's life.

Born on 10th February, 1926 at Westcliffe, Essex, the family moved to Manor Park, London two years later. There, two girls were added to the family. Completing his education with an M.Sc with honours from London University and a Diploma in Radio and Physics, he obtained a post at Woolwich Polytechnic as a lecturer in Mathematics. Soon afterwards he became a senior lecturer at Battersea College of Advanced Technology, was appointed to the committee responsible for seeing the college's transformation into the University of Surrey and eventually became Head of Department.

It was there that he met his wife, Joan, also a lecturer. There followed a blissfully happy married life in Camberley, marred only by the death in 1959 of their son, David Nicholas, who tragically lived for only one day. They loved entertaining their large family and their friends. However, Michael still found time to write two textbooks on mathematics, but to

publish them he went to Robert Maxwell and so had few royalties.

Sadly, Joan was stricken by cancer in 1984, dying the same year after a brave fight. Michael's spirit is such that he made the best of the 23 years alone since then. His warm and generous nature brought even more friends. He belonged to a theatre group. He had his bridge circle. He loved to spend time in art galleries both in London and Paris. He was a member of a weekly French conversation group. And, of course, he got particular pleasure from his membership of Sacavin. He in no way confined himself to drinking the many wines from the Loire, but all the wines of the world required to be tasted and he was proceeding with great success on this mammoth task. He drank life to the lees. He gave to each and every one of us who called him friend a cup of kindness. May he rest in peace.



Janine Harris



Just as this Courier was being put to bed, we heard of the passing of another long-standing member of our organisation, Janine Harris, the wife of Raymond, on 27 November following a long struggle with cancer. Together they have regularly attended Sacavin functions over many years. Their presence has become a welcome and familiar feature at our gatherings and her death at the age of 65 will be a shock to many.

Born in Angers, Janine was unique as the only genuine Angevin in the British Commanderie. She was a graduate of the University of Angers where she studied Natural Sciences. By profession she was a teacher of biology.

She came to England on a visit in 1966 and stayed with the Harris family, but Raymond's first wife was already suffering with cancer herself and died shortly afterwards, leaving him with an 8-year old daughter.

Janine returned again at Christmas to help look after the daughter, an undertaking which had fortuitous consequences because 8 years later she and Raymond were married.

Janine was quick to adopt the passions of her new country, particularly the game of cricket. She became a Lady Taverner and was a member of Middlesex County Cricket Club, one can't get more English than that. She took Raymond to Lords as her guest to attend Denis Compton's 70th birthday party. And when it came to Sacavin, it was the British Commanderie she joined, in 1984 at London's Cafe Royal, along with five other ladies, the event being christened Le Chapitre des Jolies Dames.

Both charming and amusing, it has been our privilege to have known Janine and we extend our deepest sympathy to Raymond on his sad loss.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

Management Committee meeting **Tuesday 29 January 2008** at
The National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place at 11.30 am



Tasting with supper at the National Liberal Club **Wednesday 30 January 2008**
Calling letters to be posted before Christmas



AGM at Queens Club **Saturday 19 April 2008**
Calling letters will be posted in early March



Excursion to the Loire **Tuesday 7 to Sunday 12 October 2008**
(Includes Chapitre des Vendanges in Angers Sunday 12 October)
Calling letters will be posted at the end of March

*With this Courier come warm wishes from the Management Committee to all Commandeurs,
Officiers, Chevaliers and their families for this Christmas and the coming New Year.
Rabelaisian greetings to you all!*