



Sacavin Courier



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Just some of the intrepid Sacavin Zoomers who took part in our first online Wine Tasting.

Sacavin Zoom Wine Tastings 1 & 2

The love of Loire wines remains undinted amongst our members despite being unable to meet in person. About 40 of us gathered online for our first Zoom wine tasting on 16th October. It was plain to see the delight on people's faces as they met up, albeit virtually, with friends over a glass of wine.

Our Grand Commandeur, Felicity Bellamy conducted the first tasting, where we tried two Sauvignon Blancs from Sainsbury's 'Taste the Difference' range, both 2019:-

Sauvignon Blanc, Touraine, France,
Chainier
and
Sauvignon Blanc, Valle de Casablanca,
Chile, Santa Rita.

A few members had similar wines as they had been unable to buy the suggested ones.

Felicity had researched the wines in depth and gave us some interesting details about them. . We learnt of the innovation of biodegradable corks made from sugar cane, for example. We were also told that Santa Rita had donated a vine virus-detecting machine to help with Covid virus analysis.

She spoke about each wine in turn and then we tasted them. After that, more animated conversation followed, and the Sacavin buzz of voices was soon apparent over the internet, from Devon to Essex via Wiltshire, Kent and London!

Our Echanson John Muggleton conducted the second tasting on November 11th. We tried two Waitrose reds, from the Loire and Chile respectively. They were:-

Les Nivières,
Cabernet Franc, Saumur, 2018
and
Torres, Las Mulas,
Organic Cabernet Sauvignon, 2019,

John gave us an excellent detailed description and plenty of background on the wines, especially with reference to the particular grape varieties, and history of the two wineries, with members enjoying discussing them at length afterwards.

It was stressed that if the suggested wines were difficult to come by, or if one drank only reds not white, or vice versa, then members would be welcome to drink a wine of their choice, and would still be able to embrace the Sacavin spirit of enjoyment over a glass of wine.

We all thoroughly enjoyed both evenings, and your Committee has promised to run a monthly Zoom tasting until such time as we are able to meet in person.

Felicity Bellamy



The Sevenoaks Six

Keeping the Sacavin Flame Alight

As Wednesday 30th September dawned, the outlook was pretty bleak. The news overnight was of the Trump/Biden “debate” descending into chaos, plus the expectation that Prime Minister Boris Johnson would announce further dire measures at his afternoon Covid briefing. If that wasn’t depressing enough, we faced the onset of multiple Autumn storms. Nevertheless, in such situations Sacavins have a way of coping. Encouraged by our Grand Commandeur to continue meeting locally while national gatherings are on hold, six from Kent, the maximum allowed by government diktat, met for dinner at St. Julian’s Club near Sevenoaks.



A confession is in order though; actually we were seven! Yes, we were accompanied by one who first made his appearance in Angers at the Chapitre du Baptême du Petit Sacavin on 20th September 1969. Now residing in England, the Petit Sacavin himself was honouring us with his presence. The photo shows John & Marie Foley, Chris & Jan Powis and John & Valerie Ingram with, held carefully in Valerie’s hand, our miniature Sacavin, appropriately robed for the occasion.

There was another reason to meet that evening. As the rain poured down in the dark outside, we, warm and dry inside while tucking into our dinner, celebrated John and Valerie’s 48th wedding anniversary. Needless to say, as we raised our glasses to mark the event, the wine they contained was French.

The menu included gingerbread coffee, which intrigued your reporter, whose appreciation of the barista’s art has advanced little since Lyons Corner House. So, as dinner ended, he gave it a try and was pleasantly surprised.

Rather than offer here the traditional comment on the wines, he can tell you this beverage was creamy with, as expected, mild flavours of both coffee and ginger, but also various spices, including possibly cinnamon. Almost malty, reminiscent of Ovaltine, those looking for something unusual might give it a try.

Time passes far too quickly on these occasions and we had something of a shock when Katie, our waitress, came to remind us that the government curfew was only 10 minutes away.

It had been good to get together again after so long but, reluctantly, we had to say “Au revoir”

and leave, to splash our way back through enormous puddles to our cars.

John Ingram

Horsenden - A Vineyard in the Making

Chevalier Adrian Macintosh and his wife Sheila are active members of a group of three allotments in North Ealing. One of the sites, Horsenden had a large area which had fallen into disuse, its steep slopes proving unsuitable for cultivation. In the Autumn of 2017 the plot was cleared of brambles by volunteers and a spectacular view over Horsenden Hill was revealed. Someone suggested it would make a good vineyard.....

With the aid of £10,000 from the Mayor of London's fund for community projects and from Ealing Council we were able to pay to have the site cleared and to remove the terracing.

Soil analysis suggested Regent (red) and Solaris (white) as the most suitable vines for the plot. They have good resistance to mildew and botrytis and, being grafted onto American rootstock, are less likely to succumb to phylloxera.

We ordered 150 bare-rooted vines from Germany and began the long process of preparing the ground. They arrived in Spring 2018 and were stored until conditions were right for planting.

Then Sheila and I had to cut and lay heavy sheets of a weed-suppressant fabric, making holes for the vines. Struggling to control 30 metre-long sheets in a high wind, we very nearly ended up in divorce!

With hardcore and old road surface chippings donated by demolition firm Grey Star, and a hired electric road roller, we made an access roadway down the steeply-sloping site. We then started constructing two wooden cabins, one for storage and the other for educational purposes.

When the time came for planting the vines, we had a volunteer weekend with 30 helpers, including Council members, allotment holders and local people turning up at 10 am. They were given instructions on how to plant the vines, a trowel or spade, canes and ties to fasten the vine to them, plastic protectors and topsoil to fill the holes.

After a couple of hours we were amazed at the number of vines planted and an enjoyable time was had by all.

Planting was completed the following day, in spite of the hot weather.



The first year, we pruned the vines back to a single stem to encourage strong single vertical growth. The next major job was to order metal uprights and wires to support the vines.

We hired a hand-held pile driver to ensure they were firmly bedded into the ground.



Apart from our plot manager, who was a builder, we were all new to the game and were learning by the minute. I for one was amazed at how professional it all looked when we finished the rows.

Following advice from vineyards we visited in Kent, we pruned using the single Guyot system. This retains the main stem and a single side-shoot. Vertical stems grow and the grapes develop from this structure.

So far, all grapes have been removed in order to allow the roots to become stronger.

The coming year will be the first time we hope to have a small crop.



As you may imagine, we are way behind because of Covid, but it is satisfying to look at what was a derelict piece of waste land transformed into something pleasant and productive.

We hope that we have encouraged the people of North Ealing to see what can be achieved by working together.

Adrian and Sheila Macintosh



From the Archives ...

Part of a sermon by the Bishop of Mainz, as reported by Goethe

The following extract was discovered in issue 27 of the Sacavin Courier, Winter 1993/94 and will resonate with all Chevaliers today, even though the sermon was given 200 years ago.

The good Bishop's warnings to his flock about the dangers of intemperance and the need for each to be aware of his capacity for indulgence is delivered in all humility: a shining example to us all.

May whosoever feels bemused, after the *third or fourth Jug of wine*, that he can no longer recognise his wife, his children or his friends to the point of ill-using them, let him confine himself to



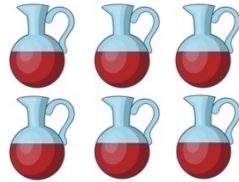
two jugs, lest he wish to give offence to God and scorn the Hereafter.



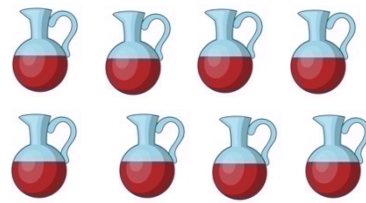
But may he who, having drunk *four or five or six*, is still in such state that he can do his work and hold to the Commandments of his Ecclesiastical and Secular superiors, fulfil in all humility and with Avowal the Part which God has ordained him



to take: let him take care not to pass beyond the limit of *six measures*, for it is rare that the Lord, in his infinite Goodness, grants to one of his children – *the favour that he has bestowed upon me*, his unworthy servant.



I drink eight Jugs of wine a day and *nobody* can say that he has ever seen me delivered over to



unrighteous choler, to harm my parents or acquaintances.

May each of you, my brethren, fortify the body and gladden the spirit with such quantity of wine that the Divine Goodness has willed that you may be permitted to absorb.

[From a contribution to 'Le Sacavin', the Confrérie's newsletter, translated from the French by John Braun, one of our founding fathers.]

British Sacavin's Trips in France

One of the highlights of Sacavin's programme is the biennial trip to the French vineyards. Over the years we have visited most parts of the Loire Valley to discover and enjoy the great variety of wines in France's longest wine-growing region. The Loire, France's longest river, starts life up in the Ardèche's Massif Central, about 30 miles west of Montélimar, and finally meets the Atlantic at St Nazaire, a journey of over 600 miles.

The most notable wine producing areas start from Sancerre and go downstream to where the Loire bends westward past Orléans to the Touraine and on to Bourgueil, Chinon, then to our home region of Anjou Saumur before reaching the Muscadet wine region near Nantes.



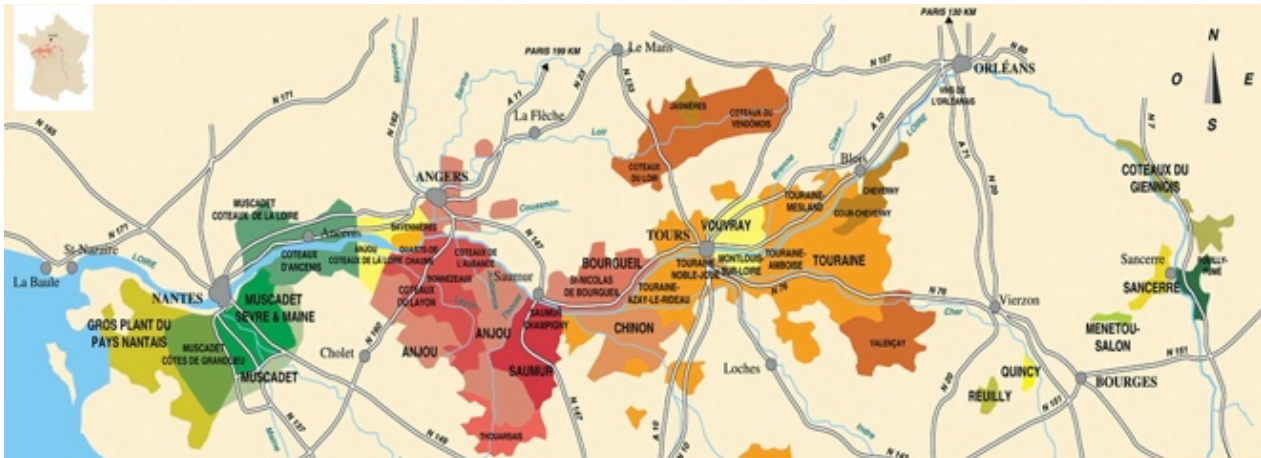
Several years ago Sacavin would go in October so that we could also attend the Chapitre des Vendanges in Angers if we wished to extend our trip. Unfortunately, this often meant wine growers were reluctant to have a large party visit their vineyards because they were very busy with the harvesting and starting the production processes. The weather too could be much less predictable than in late Spring, so we decided to change to May.

Our most recent expedition was to Angers Saumur in 2018, our 50th Anniversary year, when our French associates welcomed us in a very memorable way.

Previous destinations over the last ten years have been:-

Bourgueil and Chinon in 2012,
Muscadet and Pays Nantais in 2014
Touraine and Loire in 2016.

In 2020 our trip was to be to the Sancerre and Menetou-Salon regions but, because of the Covid outbreak, this has had to be postponed until May 2021, we hope!



In the upper Loire lie the Sancerre and Pouilly Fumé areas. Their main grape variety, Sauvignon Blanc, produces the most delicious white wines famed for their freshness and grassy or gooseberry taste. This variety is also the white wine grape in the Touraine region and in the far north of the Loire valley (Jasnières). Touraine offers such famous wine as Vouvray, made in a variety of tastes from dry to sparkling. Other well-known white wines in this region are Mesland, Azay-le-Rideau, Chinon and Amboise.

The white wines of the Anjou Saumur region are generally produced from Chenin Blanc. The famous sparkling wine of the region, rivalling Champagne in taste (but not in price) is also produced from Chenin Blanc, particularly around Saumur. Sweet wines also come from the Chenin Blanc grape and are mostly produced in the Layon valley, south of Angers. These are delicious 'pudding wines' but our French friends often offer these as an aperitif instead of sparkling wine. Muscadet and Gros Plant are the white wine grapes in the far western region of the Pays Nantais, where they are well adapted to the more maritime climate and where the wines are

often left on the lees (sur lie) before bottling to enhance their creaminess. These wines are an excellent accompaniment to the region's famous seafood.

For the delightful light red wines of the Anjou Saumur region the grape variety is Cabernet Franc to which sometimes is added Cabernet Sauvignon. Gamay is also commonly used in red wine production as well as in Anjou Rosé. The relatively new appellation of Anjou Villages shows the best of the red Anjou and for this only Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon are used. Among such wines is the delicious Saumur Champigny.

In the Sancerre region Sancerre Rouge offers a delicious, light, slightly perfumed red made from Pinot Noir or even Pinot Gris grapes. So, with this great abundance of wine varieties and regions, how does your committee decide where to go in two years' time? Well, it is largely a matter of asking ourselves: 'Where have we not visited in the last few years?' 'Would members, particularly the newer ones, like to discover this or that region?' Then the work begins.

We first see what areas of a particular region we wish to visit, preferably somewhere we have not visited in an earlier trip.

The first priority is to research hotels. These must be well-located for the vineyards, be able to accommodate about 40 persons in good comfortable, single and double rooms and have good parking for cars and a coach.

Preferably they should have good dining facilities so that after a hard day's wine-sampling we can enjoy a good dinner without having to travel further afield. Of course, they must also be within our budget.

Fortunately, with a group of about 40 people, hoteliers are able to offer reasonable terms as long as the group is visiting outside any peak periods, for example, French school holidays or national holidays.

This is why we usually choose a mid-May week, when the schools have had their Spring holidays and France is not taking a long weekend for Whit or Trinity. May is also a lovely time for visiting France : most blossoms and many flowers are out and the sun is shining but it is not too hot. Importantly the vintners are less busy and so can give us more time to show off their vines, production facilities and give us a tutored tasting of their best wines.

The second priority is to research the vineyards. Naturally, the main purpose of our trips is to visit the chosen area's vineyards and discover their wines. Consulting the many wine books and manuals is a great help here, since there is such a wide choice of vineyards and only four days in which to visit. Once this home research is done, we can go to the area and meet the vintners. Most are pleased to welcome a large group of visitors, since there is a good likelihood that many bottles of wine will be purchased.

In this case they often do not charge us for the visit. Some are simply too small to take a group like ours. Other big concerns are more interested in high-volume sales and so do not

encourage group visits. We found this particularly with the bigger producers in the Sancerre / Menetou Salon areas.



The view from Hotel Panoramique, Sancerre

Our aim is to cover as many different wines as possible in the short time available but normally two to three visits per day is the maximum.

The third priority is to find good, reasonably priced restaurants where we could enjoy good French cuisine with local wines at lunch and sometimes, if the hotel does not offer restaurant facilities, for dinner.

Most of the restaurants chosen are not of the Michelin-starred type but are recommended locally or by food guides. In our 2018 trip to our 'home region' of Angers Saumur, our French colleagues were very helpful in recommending some superb places, such as 'Le Prieuré', overlooking the mighty Loire.

(We joked with the staff there that they should have chosen a different portrait in the dining room to Napoleon for a British lunch - perhaps Wellington's)



Awaiting a "light lunch"?

To escort us around these vineyards and restaurants we have in the past used a local French coach company and these have given us superb and safe service.

For our projected trip to the Sancerre region, we will be offering an almost door to door service with a British coach company. This has proved a popular choice, since it takes away any problem with driving in France and adds little to the overall cost. In fact, it is slightly cheaper than taking one's own vehicle carrying one or two people.

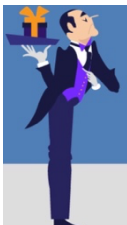
With Satnav it is easy for a British coach driver to conduct us to our chosen destinations.

As a relief from the perusal of stainless-steel vats and tasting of wine, we have also organised, where possible, visits to chateaux and garden exhibitions: for example, the International Garden Exhibition in Chaumont or the visit and river trip at Chenonceaux. This does depend on there being such attractions nearby at the time of our trip.

We are optimistic that we shall be able to re-plan our trip to the Sancerre region this Spring, once the current restrictions are modified. We hope to see you there!

John Foley

"Bin Ends"

- There's no doubting the strong link between wine and the popular song, according to Maxwell's Guide to Food and Wine. This rare and highly contentious publication cites Stevie Wonder's "My Sherry Amour", Bill Haley's "Rioja Round the Clock" and Doris Day's "Que Syrah, Syrah" as prime examples. Edwardian Music Hall and the 19th Century Hunting Field provide further evidence: "Boiled Beef and Claret" and "D'Yquem John Peel", to name but two.
-  The word '**butler**' dates from the 13th Century and probably derives from the Old French 'bouteillier'. Far from ironing the morning papers, or fishing Wodehousian dimwits out of 'the soup', his job was to keep the castle's wine cellar in good order, presiding over the **butts**, or barrels of wine in the **buttery**.
- "I drink no more than a sponge." – François Rabelais (Gargantua and Pantagruel)
- "If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarding gold, it would be a merrier world." – J.R.R. Tolkien
- "Bacchus hath drowned more men than Neptune." – rev. Thomas Fuller, (1608-1661)
- "A Musc-a-det keeps the doctor away". – anon.



Peter Bouch 1933 - 2020

Peter died in March, just prior to his 87th birthday. He was inducted into the Sacavin at the Chapitre de la Demi-Lune in 1989. Joining the Management Committee in 1992, he became Chancellor in 1993 and edited the Sacavin Courier until 2003. Ill-health forced him to retire from Sacavin in 2004.

Born in Woodford in 1933, Peter was too young to be evacuated during the Blitz, unlike Roy and Doreen, his elder siblings. He recalled watching planes overhead, the destruction of his auntie and uncle's house by a V1 doodlebug, and being chastised for failing to get home and shelter during that air raid. Peter went to school at The Ilford County High School for Boys and joined the 1st Ilford (North) Sea Scouts, where he made a strong circle of friends, which included Owen and Brenda Collins, David and Tessa Hollingsworth, and Gill and Richard Ridler.

As they left home and found jobs this group of scouts and guides became known as "The Waterbabies." The surviving members, now all in their 80s still meet every year, as they have done since the late 1950s. Peter was devoted to scouting, with a passion for camping, sailing, hiking and cycling. A chance meeting with David Hollingsworth at the Southampton Boat Show resulted in a shared ownership of a Moody 31, "Goldeneye", which was often sailed to France, the Channel Islands and on the Solent.

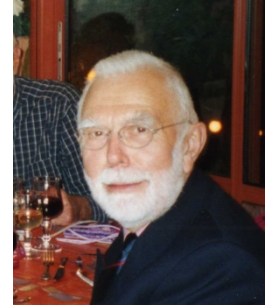
Peter met Chris (Christine) at Gants Hill Methodist Church, where they were married in 1956. After graduating at the London School of Printing, he served 2 years of National Service in the Royal Engineers as a Survey Printer. He was a skilled rugby player and narrowly avoided being drafted to Korea, as he was called to represent the Royal Engineers.

Peter and Chris moved to the South Coast to take over a new print factory for Eyre and Spottiswoode in 1960.

They lived in Hampshire for many years, raising three sons, before moving to Abingdon in 1980 as the HR Director of the British Printing Corporation. The firm was bought by Maxwell Communications Corporation and Peter was appointed as Personnel Director. Working for Robert Maxwell was a titanic challenge, particularly as he confronted the inclusion of Maxwell family members as Pension Fund Trustees. Ultimately, this was a challenge too far and he left the firm to become an independent management consultant. Following the Company's collapse in 1991 he was called to give evidence in the fraud investigation that followed.

Peter retired in his early 60s to enjoy the golden years with Chris: - in his garden, on his yacht, taking his grandchildren on boat trips, and with Sacavin.

Sadly, for a man who enjoyed good wine and great company, he was forced to spend his last 9 years in care as aphasia developed and ultimately claimed his quality of life. Chris had pre-deceased him in 2016. He is survived by his older sister Doreen, three sons, six grandchildren, one great grandchild and many, many friends.



Richard Ridler



Looking Ahead

A Message from the Grand Commandeur

2020 was certainly a very challenging year for Sacavin, when we held only one of our planned events in January, well before lockdown.

Your Committee held their last face to face meeting in March. Our next one in June was via Zoom, and to date we are still having Zoom committee meetings, which seem to work very well now we have got used to being virtual experts!

Our first Zoom Wine Tasting took place in October, and we had another one in November. At both these evenings we had about 24 screens, with up to 40 members attending each time. I was thrilled to see how successful these tastings were. The atmosphere was very happy and friendly. Everyone enjoyed seeing friends, chatting over a glass of wine, and comparing notes about lockdown experiences good and bad.

We plan to run these monthly until we are able to resume actual gatherings.

Lockdown can be a lonely time, and the spirit of friendship we have within our Sacavin membership is hugely valuable, even via Zoom. I have received several notes of thanks from members saying how much they are enjoying the wine tastings.

Plans are very much afoot for us to have our AGM at Queen's Club on **Saturday 27th March 2021**, especially now we have news of a vaccine on the horizon.



We might even combine the AGM with last years' Chapitre, which did not happen. I think this would make a splendid occasion to announce that Sacavin is back in business.

I urge you to support our Zoom tastings if you can. They are a very good way of keeping in touch and lightening up our dark winter evenings. If you need help downloading the Zoom app on your computer, do ask a committee member to assist, so that you may join our tastings. Sacavin camaraderie was at its virtual best at both Zoom tastings, and long may this continue.



As the Courier will be through your letter box before Christmas, may I, on behalf of the Sacavin Committee, wish all our members and friends a Very Happy Christmas, and a Prosperous and Healthy New Year.



With my very best wishes and Rabelaisian greetings to you all for 2021.

Felicity Bellamy

Our thanks to John Ingram, Adrian Macintosh, Max Brittain and Richard Ridler for the photographs in this issue.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



Management Committee meeting **Tuesday 12th January 2021, 11 am**



1st Zoom Wine Tasting of the New Year **Wednesday 20th January 2021, 6.30 pm**
Invitations to be sent out shortly beforehand



Monthly Zoom Wine Tastings **Dates to be advised**



Spring Luncheon & AGM **Saturday 27th March 2021**
The Queen's Club, West Kensington, London W14 9EQ
Calling letters to be dispatched at the end of February 2021



Visit to Sancerre and its environs **Monday 17th May to Friday 21st May 2021**
(UK Coach Party departs 16th May and returns 23rd May)
Calling letters to be dispatched at the end of January 2021



2021 Chapitre **Wednesday 17th November 2021**
Vintners' Hall, City of London

