



Sacavin Courier



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Vintners' Hall: our November Chapitre beckons

Sacavin Zoom Festive Wine Tasting

15th December 2020

For our third Zoom wine tasting we decided to branch out with a slightly different theme. Commencing with a Vin d'honneur, members were offered a choice of three further wines: a white, a red and a dessert wine suitable for drinking at Christmas. We could taste all three, or just one or two. Members were encouraged to furnish themselves with appropriate nibbles to match each of the wines: such as smoked salmon, cheese, and mince pies.

Felicity Bellamy chose the Vin d'honneur:-
**Sainsbury's Taste the Difference
Crémant de Loire @ £11.50.**

This proved a great hit, especially when it was learnt that this Crémant was made by our dear friends at Bouvet Ladubay. You may remember we visited them in 2018 in Saumur. Martin Hart introduced our white wine: -
**Champteloup Muscadet Sevre-Et-Maine Sur
Lie 2019 @ 9.99, Waitrose.**

Sid Price followed with the red wine: -
**Brouilly Pisse Vielle Domaine Condemine
2018, The Wine Society @ £9.92**

Dr John Muggleton then spoke about the dessert wine: - **Torres Floralis Moscatel Oro,
50cl @ £8.99, Waitrose.**

The evening turned into a very happy festive occasion with plenty of the Sacavin friendship, chatter and wit on hand, even if it was all virtual.

Felicity Bellamy



A Tour of the Vintners' Hall

An outline history of the Vintners' Company and its treasures

In the spring I attended a Zoom tour of the Vintners' Hall, which has long been the spiritual home of Sacavin UK. Many Chevaliers who have attended our Chapitres will have wondered at the beautiful paintings and glasses on display there, not to mention the splendour of the main hall itself.

The Vintners' Company came into being in 1363 and still flourishes. The Company was granted a new Charter in 1973 authorising it to set up the new Wine Standards Board, to which the Government had delegated responsibilities for enforcing EU wine laws. The Wine Standards Board transferred to the Food Standards Agency in 2006 and the Company's association with it ceased. It then entered a partnership with the Wine & Spirit Trade Association.

The Company's interest in trade does not end there. Having been instrumental in setting up both the Wine and Spirit Education Trust and the Institute of Masters of Wine, the Company devotes a proportion of its resources to furthering wine education. In 2007, the Company provided funds for the "Vintners' Room" as part of the Wine Studies Centre at Plumpton College in East Sussex, which

now has its own Wine Studies Degree to further wine education. In addition, it supports two schools in Stepney, including Arts Bursaries. The Company donates to many London-based charities, especially those concerned with alcohol.

Tradition is not forgotten: swans play a part in Company life, not only when they are marked during the Swan Upping week in July, but also in the support given to swan sanctuaries on the Thames.



Teams of skiffs surround, capture and mark the swans

Vintners' Hall plays host to the Company's social occasions and also to charitable fund-raising events, other Livery Company events and a large number of corporate and private functions.

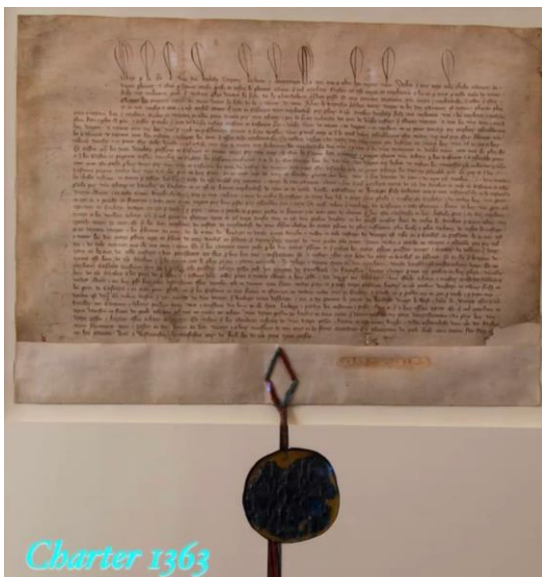
The history of the Vintners' Company is a fascinating story of trade, charity, politics and companionship. Although medieval, possibly Saxon origins of London guilds remain unknown, there is no doubt that in medieval London the Livery Companies, including the Vintners, exercised immense power in

economic, social, political, and religious spheres.

The Vintners' first charter (15th July 1363) was a grant of monopoly for trade with Gascony. It gave far-reaching powers, including duties of search throughout England and the right to buy herrings and cloths to sell to the Gascons.

The wine trade was of vital importance to the medieval economy – between 1446 and 1448, wine made up nearly one-third of England's entire import trade. Through their first charter in 1363, the Vintners presided over this trade. The Vintners' Company was placed eleventh out of the Twelve Great Livery Companies in the order of precedence of 1515.

St Martin is the patron saint of the Vintners' Company, and the church of St Martin Vintry stood northeast of Vintners' Hall: its site is under Upper Thames Street. The site of the Hall was bequeathed in 1446 and used for



Charter 1363

over 200 years until it was burnt down in the Great Fire of London in 1666. Rebuilding began almost immediately, and it was back in use by 1671.

On entering the Hall, at the far end of the foyer there is a 17th century limewood carving of **St Martin dividing his cloak with the beggar**. St Martin is purported to have introduced Chenin Blanc to the Loire.



The Court Room is one of the oldest continuously used rooms in London, where the Vintners' Company holds its meetings.



In this room the Master Vintner, Sir Thomas Bloodworth, is believed to have met General Monck on 12th April 1660 to plan the restoration of the monarchy a few weeks later.

Most of the fabric of the room dates from the rebuilding in 1671 after the Great Fire. The many fine pieces of furniture include the Master's Chair dating from the 1770s, and the marquetry-cased clock from 1704. There is a fine painting of St Martin and the Beggar attributed to Van Dyck.

When the Hall was burgled 40 years ago this painting was stolen, but fortunately it was

discarded on the pavement outside and recovered the next day!

Beneath the Court Room is the **Red Wine Cellar**, dating from 1671. It is rarely open to visitors and holds some of the Company's finest wines. Vintners' Hall stores 20,000 bottles of wine in its cellars.



The 17th century staircase is a fine and almost complete example of its period. It was carved by Woodroffe (Sir Christopher Wren's Assistant Surveyor) in 1673 at a cost of £38.19s.6d.

The Livery Hall was also rebuilt after the Great Fire. The room still contains late 17th century carving.



The ceiling dates from 1932, to replace the former one which was collapsing due to death-watch beetle. It was modelled on the Old School Room at Winchester College. As the ceiling was made of concrete and steel, it saved the Hall from almost certain destruction by German incendiaries in 1940. In 2013 the ceiling was repainted by Dolby & Taylor.

The coats of arms around the ceiling commemorate distinguished members of the Company, including 11 Vintners who have served as Mayor or Lord Mayor.

There is a wooden Sword Rest from 1705, made to accommodate the City Sword when Sir Thomas Rawlinson (Master 1687) dined at the Hall during his Mayoralty. Vintners' Hall is the only Hall in the City of London with its own sword rest.

The chandeliers date from 1874 and were originally lit by gas.



Some of the Company's plate is displayed in alcoves. Most of the early plate was sold after 1666 to pay for the rebuilding of the Hall.

The engraved window at the north-western end was given by Paul Wates of Wates City Ltd to commemorate the partnership of his firm with the Company in the building of Vintners' Place. The engraving links the Vine and Winemaking with Joy and Charity as in George Herbert's poem.

The Drawing Room is where we hold our induction ceremonies. It was rebuilt after the



Great Fire. There is a fine collection of enamel and porcelain wine labels here, and 18th century glass is displayed in the alcoves at the far end.



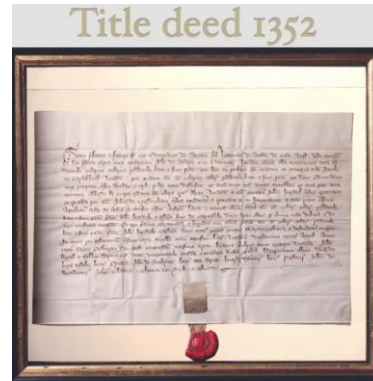
Early 18thC baluster glasses



Late 18thC faceted

Chapitre in November.

They also bear the 15th century seal of the Company showing St Martin and the Beggar. Over the Bouille cabinet hangs the oldest surviving deed of the Hall site, dated 1352.



One of the witnesses of this deed was the prominent vintner John Chaucer, father of Geoffrey Chaucer,

who wrote the Canterbury Tales.

The Roll of Honorary Freemen includes Margaret Thatcher, inducted in 2000; one of only 27 Honorary Freemen since 1834.



A finely embroidered hearse cloth, one of only a dozen known to exist, was given by a former Master in 1539. It was intended to be used at funerals of Company members. In 1609 this hearse cloth was sent to Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire for the funeral of vintner Michael Hipwell. He had made it a condition of a bequest to the Company that 20 gowned liverymen should accompany his coffin, with the hearse cloth lying upon it. This cloth was used for the last time in 1931.

The motto of the Vintners' Company is Vinum Exhilarat Animum or Wine Gladdens the Spirit. Our Commanderie certainly agrees with that sentiment, as we look forward to our Chapitre at Vintners' Hall on 17th November 2021.

Felicity Bellamy

The 2021 AGM Report

27th March 2021

For the second year running, Covid-19 restrictions prevented us from holding our Spring Luncheon and AGM at Queen's Tennis Club. This year, given the available technology and the success of Sacavin's Zoom wine tasting events, members were invited to attend a virtual AGM held on Zoom. To improve the sense of occasion, attendees were encouraged to wear their collarettes and the Committee wear their robes. It was gratifying to see many complying with this request.

Grand Commandeur Felicity Bellamy welcomed Chevaliers and their guests: 25 screens, equating to around 40 persons. Proceedings commenced with the playing of the Sacavin Trumpet Fanfare, recorded by our Chef des Beaux Arts for the occasion.

Certain items had been held over from last year's AGM - viz,

1. Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 13 April 2019
2. Report of the Management Committee for 2019
3. Sacavin Charity Giving .

Items 1 and 2 were approved on the proposal of Ruth Wyman, seconded by Graham Macfarlane. It was agreed to hold over the issue of charity giving to the 2022 AGM.

Our Trésorier, Philip Wood, reported on the audited accounts for 2020, commenting that it had been a very quiet year with only one official function held. The January "Which Wine was That?" dinner had been so well organised by John Muggleton that it resulted in a profit of 0.11p! The Trésorier also clarified the following figures in the balance sheet - £1287 carried forward to 2021: this sum represents (i) the expenses incurred by our Chef des Expeditions in 2019 (£812) in respect of the proposed visit to Sancerre, now postponed to September 2021 and (ii) expenses (£475) incurred by the Committee which have since been reimbursed in 2021. The Trésorier also advised that due to the strengthening of

sterling early this year, in February the Committee decided to liquidate the Euro account and convert the funds to Sterling. As Sterling continues to strengthen, this decision seems justified. The audited accounts had been approved by the Committee prior to the meeting and there were no questions from the membership. The Grand Commandeur thanked Philip Wood for his efficiency and hard work on behalf of Sacavin.

The Grand Commandeur delivered the Report of the Management Committee for 2020 circulated prior to the AGM and reviewed the events of the past year. Although we had been forced to cancel all planned social gatherings, the five Zoom wine tastings held between October 2020 and March 2021 had proved invaluable alternatives.

Future events in 2021: proposed visits to Charterhouse, the biennial trip to Sancerre and November's Chapitre at Vintners' Hall were outlined by Duncan Burnett, John Foley, and Sid Price respectively.

Looking further ahead, Sid Price also gave details of a possible two/three-night visit to Essex in May 2022. This event is described more fully elsewhere in the Courier.

The current Committee were prepared to serve for another year and were elected unanimously en bloc; proposed by Adrian Macintosh and seconded by Chris Powis.

Martin Hart and Jan Thurlow were also elected to the Committee. Richard Edwardson has kindly audited our accounts

and is prepared to serve for another year, which was confirmed. The meeting ended officially at 1pm but continued for about another hour allowing

Sacavins to socialise and enjoy Vin d'honneur together.

Duncan Burnett



Wine Tastings 4 & 5

On January 24th, forty-four Sacavins and guests gathered via Zoom for our fourth wine tasting, run by Felicity Bellamy, our Grand Commandeur. She chose the following wines: a white and a red, both available from Sainsbury's:

Vouvray 2019 Pierre Chainier, France @ £9.00

Pinot Noir 2019 Oyster Bay, New Zealand @£11.00

The Chainier estate in Amboise consists of more than 250 hectares of vineyards. He is one of the best producers of Vouvray, which is made with Chenin Blanc. The wine was rich and full-flavoured, with apricot notes and a hint of minerality.

The excellent Pinot Noir was also very well received. It won a Gold Medal in the 2020 International Wine & Spirits Challenge held in

the UK.

Now in its 38th year, the IWSC is accepted as the world's most rigorous, impartial and influential annual wine competition.

The wine is aged in French oak, and the finish was spicy, savoury and long. Sacavin camaraderie and chatter flowed during the tasting, with members enjoying a New Year get-together to enliven the gloom of lockdown.



Our fifth tasting on Zoom, was held on February 13th to celebrate the Valentine's weekend. John Muggleton our Echanson chose a sparkling rosé from our old friends at Bouvet Ladubay, and a red wine from the Languedoc Roussillon area, both available from Majestic Wine Warehouse.

Bouvet Saumur Rosé Brut, @ £13.99 for a single bottle, or £11.99 as part of a 'mixed six' case.
Château de Pennautier, 2017 Cabardès, @ £12.99 for a single bottle, or £10.99 'mixed six' price.

The delicious sparkling rosé proved very popular and several of the 35 members and guests present said they would buy it again. The little-known appellation of Cabardès, where the Atlantic influence meets the Mediterranean, is one of the youngest AC areas in France, only gaining this status in 1999. We enjoyed tasting a red wine from this relatively unknown region, and, in this case, a blend of four grape varieties.

From the Archives

To taste wine...

Issue 15 of the Sacavin Courier, Summer 1987, contains the thoughts of Pierre Poupon, wine writer and Beaune négociant, (1917 – 2009), on tasting wine. The translation from the French is by John Braun.

To taste wine is to read a book slowly, phrase by phrase to draw out its marrow

To taste wine is to listen to a concerto with the deepest concentration.

To taste wine is to contemplate a work of art, sculpture, or monument, letting oneself bask in its colours and forms.

To taste wine is to feel one's body open out on the sand of a sun-soaked beach.

To taste wine is to be available to all - it is to be master of one's self, of the whole universe.

In brief, to taste wine is to live. So let us live!



Future Events

Positive thoughts...

The Chapitre de Bonne Santé will be held at Vintners' Hall on 17th November 2021. This will be a wonderful occasion to celebrate Sacavin's full return to reality from a virtual world. We hope to induct some new members into our Order on that evening, as we need to keep Sacavin thriving in the UK. Please do think about any of your friends who might be interested in joining Sacavin and let our Chancellor Duncan Burnett know. We also have some fine ideas to uncork for 2022.

The two-night **visit to Essex** being organised by our Chef de Cuisine, Sid Price is planned for 2022, during early September. A third night will be available for those wishing to stay longer in the area. Participants will

stay at the Wivenhoe House Hotel, built by a Huguenot family, and painted by John Constable. The trip will include dinner at the hotel, a visit to the Mersea Island vineyard and the West Mersea Oyster Farm, plus a tour of

Roman Colchester, with lunch at the Siege House, which dates from the Civil War and retains some original bullet holes from the seventeenth century.

Chancelier Duncan Burnett has been investigating the possibility of a visit to **London's Charterhouse and Gardens** located in Charterhouse Square. The Charterhouse was founded as a Carthusian Monastery in 1371 and, following its dissolution by Henry VIII in 1537, became firstly a Tudor mansion and then, in 1611, an almshouse and school. The school moved to Godalming in Surrey in 1872 and the Charterhouse now operates as an Alms house with more than 40 residents,

known as "brothers": the term also includes lady residents. Tours include the Great Chamber, Chapel, Cloisters, Museum and collections of paintings, prints, furniture and silver. Our intention is to combine a visit both to the buildings and the gardens, the latter being opened for one day each month between May and September.

Visitors are restricted to a maximum of 20 people, and although we would not be allowed to bring our own Loire wine, the venue does have an informal BBQ and bar. The Committee is not yet in a position to confirm a date for this event as the venue has a backlog of rescheduled cancellations to clear before reopening for new bookings.



Wine Tastings 6 & 7

Grand Commandeur Felicity Bellamy presided over our 6th Zoom Tasting on April 28th, which attracted a large gathering of Sacavins and guests. She chose the following two wines, both available from Marks & Spencer:

Pouilly Fumé La Tuilerie 2019, Cave de Pouilly-sur-Loire, France, £14.00

Valpolicella Ripasso 2018 M&S Classics No.6, Italy, £10.00

Pouilly Fumé is one of the Loire Valley's most prestigious white wines, and needs little introduction to our Commanderie. Felicity gave some interesting facts about the Appellation, including how the terroir makes such an important contribution to the wine's unique character. She also pointed out some of the differences between Pouilly Fumé and its great rival, Sancerre, all of which was very topical, in view of our impending trip to both regions of the upper Loire. The wine before us was awarded a Bronze Medal in the 2020 International Wine Challenge. The accompanying tasting notes promised 'Good intensity of mint, elderflower and cloves, citrus and grapefruit on the palate, with a bright finish.'

Sacavins and guests were not disappointed!

Valpolicella Ripasso is a form of Valpolicella Superiore made with partially dried grape skins that have been left over from fermentation of Amarone or Recioto. We heard that wines made by the ripasso, or 'repassing' method were first marketed on a commercial scale in the early 1980s, and how contact with the dried skins of the Amarone grapes adds extra layers of depth and flavour. This example was described as 'a ripe, rich, oaked red wine with flavours of dark cherry, plum and spices.'

Lively discussion and bright conversation followed the tasting, again proving how valuable these occasions are in keeping the Sacavin flame alight.

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**A**t the end of May we held our **7th Zoom Wine Tasting** with a good attendance, which was very pleasing. On this evening the wines were chosen by our Echanson, John Muggleton. He began his presentation with these remarks: -

*"It is a sad fact that, with few exceptions, Loire wines do not figure greatly on supermarkets' wine lists. This is especially true of red Loire wines. I hope that in these circumstances our friends in Anjou/Saumur will forgive me for not choosing any of their wines for the May tasting. Perhaps we should encourage the Loire wine producers to expand their presence in the UK market. So, for variety, in May we will have a white Austrian wine made from that classic Austrian grape variety, the Grüner Veltliner, and to balance this with something more familiar, we will have a Rioja from a well-known Spanish producer. The wines I have selected are:"*

**Domaine Huber, Grüner Veltliner, Single Estate, 2020, Traisental DAC @ £10.79**

**CUNE Rioja Reserva, 2016 @ £9.99**

Both wines were from Waitrose, although the CUNE Rioja could be found elsewhere.

**D**omaine Huber is one of Austria's leading white wine producers and has a history of ten generations of wine making. A Grüner Veltliner might be expected to have citrus and white pepper aromas with flavours of citrus, apple and a touch of honey. They can be matched with Asian cuisine as well as seafood.

John spoke in great detail about the wine, which was enjoyed by most of the members present.

The red was a classic Rioja Reserva from Spain. This went down very well. John gave us a most useful guide to the quality levels and differences between crianzas, reservas and gran reservas. Several members had other riojas which they spoke about afterwards.

Our Zoom tastings will continue to run on a fairly regular basis, probably with a summer break. We know they provide a great way to link Sacavin friends together over a fine glass of wine.



## "Bin Ends"

### **PASSING THE PORT**

**A**s every Chevalier knows, it is customary to pass the Port clockwise, that is, to the left, but how was this convention established? There are two widely accepted explanations - the naval tradition of 'Port to port', and the fact that most people, being right-handed, would naturally send the decanter in a clockwise direction.

**M**axwell's Guide to Food and Wine is typically "imaginative" on the subject. Although agreeing with the accepted explanations, this controversial handbook cannot resist the temptation to embellish.

It records a short-lived and financially ruinous attempt by an unnamed négociant to counter the 'right-handed bias' of society in general, and

port drinkers in particular, by marketing a rival fortified wine by the name of "Starboard". A lavish advertising campaign aimed at left-handed drinkers and the establishment of a 'Round to the Right' culture had some initial success, but sales quickly faltered. 'Field trials' conducted with a mixture of left- and right-handed diners soon revealed that, for Port and

Starboard to share the same post-prandial table, extreme care would be needed to avoid a potentially disastrous clash of rival decanters; especially after two or three convivial contraflow circuits! Thus, the ill-fated beverage



quickly 'sank without trace', to pursue the naval metaphor.

*[No corroboration of the above claims has been found, despite extensive research, and consultation with the Left-Handed Drinkers' Society. (Ed.)]*

- In "The Pickwick Papers", Charles Dickens' villainous confidence trickster, Alfred Jingle, has a colourful way of exhorting his naïve dinner companions to circulate the port as rapidly as possible:  
*"Beg your pardon, sir," said [Jingle], "bottle stands – pass it round – way of the sun – through the buttonhole – no heeltaps,"* and he emptied his glass, which he had filled about two minutes before, and poured out another, with the air of a man who was used to it.  
(way of the sun – East to West. through the buttonhole - on the left of a gentleman's coat heeltaps - the residue in a glass after drinking)
- "Dontopedology is the science of opening your mouth and putting your foot in it. I've been practising it for years." Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh
- "I must have a prodigious quantity of mind; it takes me as much as a week, sometimes, to make it up." Mark Twain
- "There is only one cure for grey hair. It was invented by a Frenchman. It is called the guillotine." P. G. Wodehouse



## A Message from the Editor



The Courier will gladly accept contributions from Sacavins on any subject of potential interest to our Commanderie, be it a wine recommendation, a restaurant review, an account of a visit to a vineyard, garden, stately home, etc, and even 'Letters to the Editor', (Disgusted, Datchet, or Outraged, Ongar, perhaps?)

Please remember, "The e-mail of the species is deadlier than the mail."  
 (Stephen Fry.)

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## DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



Management Committee meetings: **Tuesday 7th September 2021,**  
**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021, Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021, all at 11.00 am**



10th Zoom Wine Tasting **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021, 5.30 pm**  
*Invitations to be sent out shortly beforehand*



Monthly Zoom Wine Tastings Dates to be advised



2021 Chapitre de Bonne Santé **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021**  
Vintners' Hall, City of London  
*Calling letters to be dispatched in September 2021*



Dinner at the National Liberal Club **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022**  
*Calling letters to be dispatched early in December 2021*



Spring Luncheon & AGM **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2022**  
The Queen's Club, West Kensington, London W14 9EQ  
*Calling letters to be dispatched at the end of February 2022*