



Sacavin Courier



NO. 81 Summer 2022

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The assembled company at Pouilly-Sur-Loire

Spring Luncheon and AGM

Brasserie Blanc, 9th April 2022

On a bright sunny morning 44 members and guests met at the Brasserie Blanc in Belvedere Road near the Royal Festival Hall. This was only our second outing since the relaxation of Covid restrictions. Everyone was pleased to see old friends again. After the vin d'honneur the Sacavin members adjourned to the private restaurant area for the AGM.

Our Grand Commandeur, Felicity Bellamy began by asking everyone to stand and observe a minute's silence in memory of Sacavins Laura Garner and Chris Mote, whose obituaries appeared in the recent Sacavin Courier.

After giving apologies for those unable to attend, the minutes of the last AGM were presented and accepted, being proposed and seconded by John Foley and Martin Hart respectively.

Our Trésorier, Philip Wood reported that the accounts were in very good shape. They were accepted without demur by those assembled and passed with acclaim. We recognise the excellent work that Philip does in keeping our accounts in good order.

Felicity then gave the yearly report of the work the committee had done under her stewardship. 2021 had been a challenging year, but Sacavin had kept going - in no short measure due to the Zoom wine tastings, of which there were 6 well-attended virtual meetings. This had been a good way for members to get together as a group during the lock-down.

The committee were then asked to stand to receive the applause of their fellow Sacavins in appreciation of their tireless work during the year. As there was currently one vacancy on the committee, she asked for anyone interested in filling it to speak to a committee member. The reason that we had had to move from our usual venue was a dramatic increase in the cost of remaining at Queen's Club. She hoped

that this meeting and lunch would prove the Brasserie Blanc to be a successful alternative.

We were then advised of the events taking place in 2022. After the postponement of our previous plans to visit the Loire in 2020 and 2021, this year we were looking forward to visiting the Sancerre region in May.

Two further visits, both in the UK, have been arranged. Duncan Burnett has organised an excursion to Charterhouse, and a three-day visit to Essex, organised by Sid Price will follow in September.

Our Chapitre will be held in Vintners' Hall on November 23rd, and the Hall has already been booked for 2023.

On his retirement from the committee, John Ingram was presented with a



National Garden Token, as thanks for all his hard work during the past 20 years.

Indeed, his workload was such that it is now being shared by three people!

The committee was re-elected, with the addition of David Longstaff to its membership. Richard Edwardson kindly agreed to continue to act as our auditor.

Under any other business, we were told that a new membership list was in preparation. There was also a request for a Sacavin lapel badge.

With that, the AGM concluded and the members were joined by their guests for what proved to be an excellent repast. It began with a grace given by John Ingram: one specially written for such an occasion by John Braun.

*“Lord, Bless this food and Anjou wine,
Bless Sacavins and Guests who dine
Beneath this warm and friendly roof –
Your Spirit be with us – Full Proof”*



During the first course John Muggleton described the wines he had chosen to accompany the meal.

<i><u>Vin d'Honneur</u></i>
<i>Lidl Crément de Loire Brut, NV</i>
<i><u>Menu</u></i>
<i>FISH SOUP</i>
<i>~*~</i>
<i>Domaine des Géraudières, La Coulée d'Or</i>
<i>AOC Muscadet Coteaux de la Loire, 2018</i>
<i>~*~</i>
<i>DUCK LEG CONFIT with CITRUS SAUCE</i>
<i>Slow-cooked Barbary duck leg, citrus sauce,</i>
<i>Candied orange, French beans, carrots and</i>
<i>Dauphinoise potato</i>
<i>~*~</i>
<i>Aguilas-Domaine Gaudard, Les Vauguérins,</i>
<i>AOC Anjou, 2018</i>
<i>~*~</i>
<i>PINEAPPLE and MANGO CRUMBLE</i>
<i>With fresh fruit coulis, citrus crumble and mango</i>
<i>sorbet</i>
<i>~*~</i>
<i>COFFEE</i>

After lunch was over, some Sacavins repaired to the Baserie Blanc bar area for further conversation and merriment.

Martin Hart



Wine Tastings 13-15

Even though we are now able to meet face-to-face, Zoom continues to play an important part in our fellowship, where Sacavins may air their (sometimes opposing) views on the chosen wines, and go with the flow of convivial conversation.

Tasting 13, hosted by Felicity Bellamy on February 3rd, featured a Loire Sauvignon Blanc and a Chilean Carmenere Appassimento, both from Majestic Wine Warehouse.

On March 23rd, Tony Moore introduced a Pouilly Fumé and a Valpolicella Ripasso at

Tasting 14. Both wines were available from Aldi. **Tasting 15** was held on July 7th. Felicity chose a rosé from Côtes du Rhône and a Chilean Pinot Noir. A breakdown in internet connection prevented her from giving full descriptions, but the wines spoke for themselves most eloquently!

Visit to the Sancerre Region

Monday 16th to Saturday 2 May 2022

Twenty-nine members, partners and guests took part in this long-awaited visit to the Central Loire, arriving at the hotel Relais de Pouilly on the outskirts of Pouilly-sur-Loire on the afternoon of Monday, May 16th. Sixteen had travelled by coach, having left England the previous day, with an overnight stop at the Hotel Ibis, Compiègne. They were joined by thirteen more, who had journeyed independently by car. We gathered over a vin d'honneur of kir provided by the Relais, before an inaugural dinner. Over the next four days we were to visit seven vineyards in the appellations of Pouilly Fumé, Sancerre and Menetou-Salon. Martin Hart takes up the story of Tuesday 17th: -

We left the hotel at 10.00 am in our coach driven by the skilful, irrepressible Marc, whose cheerful and helpful demeanour played such an important part in the success of our trip.



The first vineyard we visited was **Domaine de Maltaverne** at Tracy-sur-Loire for a tasting and barbecue lunch.

The vines are planted either side of the motorway, connected by a tunnel under the road. Two different types of soil - Chalk (Caillottes) and Flint (Silex) - support mainly sauvignon blanc grapes, with 25 rows of pinot noir at the edges. Our guide Matthieu told us that the first row of pinot noir is often eaten by wild boars, who get very drunk and have been known to wander onto the motorway, with disastrous consequences!

Having visited the production area and seen the first of many stainless-steel vats, we were offered three types of wine to taste and buy. They were: -

Pouilly Fumé 2017,
Pouilly Fumé 2019 and a red
Pinot Noir.

Tables for lunch were laid out under the shade of an open-sided barn. We were joined by the vigneron's family in a deliciously memorable lunch of spit-roasted lamb, pâté and potatoes, accompanied by generous quantities of wine.



Afterwards, the first of our trip's purchases were loaded into the coach's capacious hold and we set off on our second visit; to the **Domaine de la Perrière** at Verdigny, situated on the opposite side of the river Loire, close to the small hilltop town of Sancerre. Sacavin has visited here once before, in 2010.

The soils were similar to those of the Domaine de Maltaverne, but their wines came under the Sancerre appellation, rather than Pouilly Fumé. The vines are grown on a steep hill and are again sauvignon blanc and pinot noir. The group was then shown around by a very knowledgeable young lady called Ava.

The vineyard's red, white and rosé wines are produced in limestone caves where, again, we saw many stainless-steel vats. The white wine is made in the vats, whilst the red is made and allowed to mature in wooden casks. The rosé is a mixture of both red and white grapes, the skins being removed at an early stage, to avoid too much colouration. After our tour, we tasted three wines: - **La Perrière 2021 white**, **La Perrière 2019 rosé** and **La Perrière 2020 red**. Returning to the Relais with our purchases, we were able to rest for a while before regrouping for a vin d'honneur taken outside in the evening sunshine.

La Terrine de Poisson sauce cocktail
Le Filet Mignon de Porc sauce moutarde
Lassiette 3 fromages sur salade
La tarte Abricot pistache

WEDNESDAY

We woke to another clear blue sky, hoping for a cooling breeze, (writes Sid Price). No respite to be found on this front. Even the magnificent Aspen at the back of the hotel barely managed any movement: and not for nothing is the Aspen's Latin name "populous tremula".

After a good French breakfast, we boarded the coach, making a short journey to the **Domaine Eric Louis, Les Celliers de la Pauline** in Thauvenay.

The Domaine must have been the inspiration for Doctor Who's Tardis: the building was fairly modest on the outside but of cathedral proportions on the inside. The overwhelming impression was just how clean everything was. We were most ably conducted around the premises by Mathilde, and to our surprise, we were the first party she had shown around, having taken up her post only two weeks earlier.

The Domaine possessed 34 hectares of vines falling within the Sancerre, Pouilly Fumé, Quincy, Chateaufumé, Reuilly and Menetou-Salon AOCs. The Domaine was established by Mathilde's grandmother. Interestingly, the pinot noir for the red



wine was not pressed but stamped in the steel vat using a large mechanical stomper,

which does the work of many feet.

The red wine was stored in French oak barrels for ten months. Admittedly there were a few dozen barrels, but the angels' share still amounted to 4 litres per week.



The other noticeable feature of the Domaine was that alongside

the traditional use of cork, they used screw caps and, a first for me, glass stoppers.

We then settled down at a long table for a lunch of cold meats, lentils and a coleslaw-type vegetable, but without the tartness of salad cream. This was followed by a delicious fruit tart and coffee.

We were then off on a short drive to the **Domaine Dominique et Janine Crochet** in Bué. The first challenge was for Marc, turning off a narrow road on a very sharp bend into the Domaine. It comprises some 12 hectares: 8 of sauvignon blanc, used in the making of Sancerre Blanc, and 4 hectares of pinot noir to produce Sancerre Rouge. The wine is exported widely throughout Europe, China and Japan, but

not a great deal to the UK. Dominique manages the Domaine, having been widowed some ten years ago. However, the Cave had photographs of her handsome son on his wedding day, so hopefully there will be family members to keep up the winemaking tradition.

Returning to the Relais for a brief interlude of rest and relaxation, we met again for vin d'honneur on the hotel lawns. Another delicious dinner rounded off a very pleasant day.

Le Petit pâté Berrichon
(feuilleté aux pommes de terre)
Le Suprême de volaille sauce forestière
L'Assiette 3 fromages sur salade
La coupe de glace Vanille framboise

THURSDAY

John Foley's account begins with our morning drive to Menetou-Salon, which is about 30 kilometres west of Sancerre. There are records of wine production here back to the 13th Century.

This region lies at an altitude of between 800 to 1000 feet, on soil which is largely limestone and gravel, but without any of the flint substrate which is found in the Sancerre area.

The **Domaine de Coquin** is owned by Francis Audiot and his wife. They have about 150 hectares of farmland (about 300 acres), but only 16 hectares (32 acres), spread over several parcels, are given over to vine cultivation. Local Government planning restrictions do not allow free exploitation of land for vines, so any increase in vine area is strictly controlled. We first met Francis back in 2019 as he was painting the inside of the local tourist office, and discovered he was

chairman of the local independent wine producers in Menetou-Salon.

We arrived at the Domaine to be greeted by an older man with white hair. Marie and I thought the owner must have aged a lot in the last 3 years, but he turned out to be John



Higgins, a Welshman originally from Cardiff. John had lived in France for the past 16 years and acted as interpreter. Francis and his wife soon came out to greet us and bring us into their barns. Francis, as the chairman of the local vintners, organises the sharing of the expensive equipment for the harvesting and initial processing of the grapes

before he brings the resultant product into their compact, modern factory for processing in the temperature-controlled stainless-steel vats.

The Domaine production is about 66% white from sauvignon blanc grapes and 33% red wine from pinot noir. After production and maturing, the wine is sold mostly direct to some large and many small retail customers, who are attracted by the excellence of the product. The taste of the white is quite fruity, and the red has a rather light colour; both are delicious. Our group enthusiastically bought many bottles.

Menetou-Salon Blanc (€8.20) and
Heloise Menetou-Salon Blanc (€9.20)
 were deliciously good value!

After the morning tasting and purchasing, we arrived at c'heu l'Zib for lunch. This is a quaint restaurant renowned for delicious local dishes, and run by Dorothee, assisted by her daughters, who all look like her.



After a sumptuous lunch and glasses of white and red Menetou-Salon wine, many of us repaired to the lovely garden, decorated with local artefacts and pictures. There, shaded from the hot sunshine, we waited for the wine we had bought to be transferred to the coach.

The afternoon had been intended to be a free one, perhaps to be spent looking around Sancerre town. After the long visit and lunch, we all decided it was better to go back to our hotel to recuperate before enjoying a convivial vin d'honneur and dinner.

*La Tarte fine à la provençale
La Raie aux Câpres
L'Assiette 3 fromages sur salade
La Salade de fruits*

Many of us then transferred into the verandah area to chat and socialise.

FRIDAY

Felicity Bellamy describes our final day of the trip: -

The day dawned hot again as we drove to **Domaine Joseph Mellot** in the morning. This is a family-owned wine estate with origins back to 1513. It has become a specialist in producing some of the finest wines in the area. It was the largest producer we visited during the week. It is present in all the Central Loire Valley appellations : Sancerre, Pouilly Fumé, Pouilly-sur-Loire, Menetou-Salon, Reuilly, Coteaux du Giennois and Chateaufumeillant.

55% of their production is sold outside France, with the UK being the second highest importer of their wines. They have 3000 hectares of Sancerre, and 1500 hectares of Pouilly Fumé.

One of their most interesting trio of wines was from Reuilly, where they produce white, rosé and red. The rosé is made with 100% Pinot Gris. The wine was very pale in colour, and delicious in the glass. It made a hit with several of our members. It was interesting because not many of us had come



across this wine before and we certainly enjoyed it at the tasting.

They lost 40% of production in 2021 because of the weather. Hailstorms and late frosts can often create havoc with the vines.

The wines we tasted included

Reuilly rosé

Quincy white, and

Crémant de Loire

We learnt about the barrels used for ageing their wines. They are made from new oak sourced locally and renewed after three years. Oak gives structure and aroma to the wines. The smallest size costs around €900! We had a quick tour of the winery, which was very busy with the bottling line running, so health and safety was to the fore.

After that we repaired to the Joseph Mellot restaurant in Sancerre for another superb "light" lunch! A few of us had a quick wander round the beautiful little town perched on the hilltop. I visited the church,

and several of us took in the wonderful views down to the river Loire below.



Then it was back to the coach for a short drive to **Domaine de Breugnon**. This was a very much smaller producer, who only made Pouilly Fumé. Bernard Robineau began this Domaine in 1988, with his daughter Severine joining him in 2005. They have 10 hectares under vine. Bernard very proudly showed us some of the machinery he uses. This included an amazing bit of kit called “tow and blow”. It circulates air over the vines to stop the frost penetrating the vines below. You might well spot a picture of your Grand Commandeur helping to stop the frost!

We had a marvellous last day, and as we dozed on the coach back to the hotel, we knew we could look forward to meeting our very special French friends that evening. Véronique and Alain Jérôme travelled from Angers to be with us for dinner.



We had a wonderful reunion with them, as well as enjoying a superb Gala Dinner for our last night.

*Le Tartare de la Mer
La Souris d'Agneau au jus de thym
L'Assiette 3 fromages sur salade
La Forêt noire*

Véronique recounted how Covid had proved difficult for Sacavin in Angers, as they were unable to meet. She is hoping to be able to come to our Chapitre in November at Vintners' Hall, possibly with Laure Pertus, the Grand Maitre.

The Grand Commandeur made presentations to all those who had helped make our trip such a very great success: John Muggleton, John Foley, Sid Price, Philip Wood, and our coach driver Marc.

Epilogue

And so, on the Saturday morning we departed the Relais de Pouilly, going our several ways: sixteen boarding the coach bound for the UK via an overnight stay at Compiègne; the rest making their own way home or prolonging their European adventure. They may well have stories to recount.

The coach party arrived at the Hotel Ibis in time for some afternoon relaxation. Some, kindly chauffeured by Marc, visited the town centre, where a festival was in full swing. Others raided the local supermarket for those French delicacies so hard to find in the UK. We completed our homeward journey the following day, despite missing our ferry due to a delay at Border Control caused by a shortage of sniffer dogs! (MRB)

VISIT TO THE SANCERRE



The Foleys arrive at Le Relais



The Inaugural Dinner



Santé!



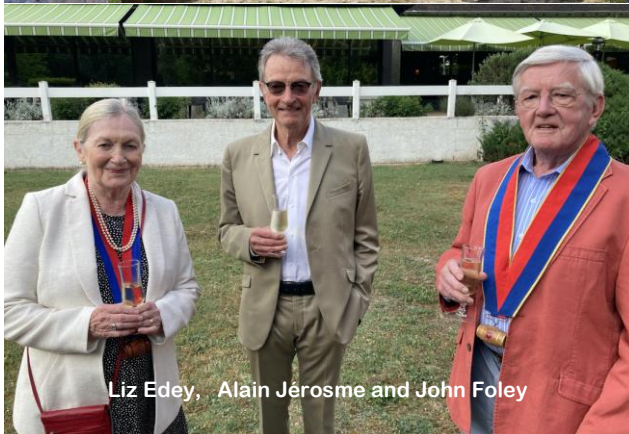
Tasting at Joseph Mellot



All ears at La Perrière



Linda, Cylvean, John and Robert – Excused Vats!



Liz Edey, Alain Jérosme and John Foley



A frost-free Grand Commandeur



Marc at play...

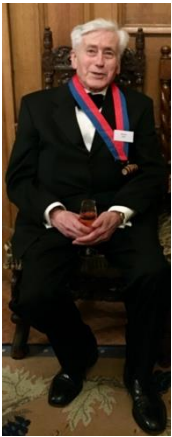
Sacavin Profiles

Chevalier Michael Gray

WEIN, WEIB UND GESANG

In 1958 I joined as a member of the staff at EMI's Abbey Road Recording Studios. As a youngster my interest had arisen in classical music, initially through listening to the radio and to my father's collection of 78s; later through the influence of the music master at Watford Boys Grammar School that I attended.

It was in the autumn of 1960 that I made my first European recording trip, which was to Vienna to record in the Musikverein, the concert hall made famous by the annual New Year's Concert, now broadcast worldwide. Sir Malcolm Sargent was one of the conductors for this group of recordings, whom the Vienna Philharmonic players found somewhat different in style to their European maestri. I remained in Vienna over the Christmas period, as we had not finished our schedule of recordings, and we were due to return in January. It was at a party on Boxing Day that I first met Ingrid, my wife to be, who with her friends was tasting the delights not of wine but of Blue Bols, which I considered to be very trendy and impressive, at the time!



Members of the recording team had introduced me to a Viennese institution during our free time – namely the Heurigen. Around two thirds of the city are the famous Vienna Woods (Weinwald), amongst which there are vineyards. They are open at allocated times during the year in order to sell their new vintages. One village well known to visitors is Grinzing, a tram ride away from Vienna's centre. My memory of such evenings affirmed an interest in wine,

which naturally continues to this day - not only the Austrian variety.

During my career as a recording balance and control engineer, I not only worked at Abbey Road but at other UK venues, including halls and cathedrals, and in Paris, Brussels, Rome, Madrid, Vienna, Berlin, Katowice, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.

In those days it would sometimes happen that if a conductor felt that some recording sessions had gone particularly well, then he (it was principally men at the time) would invite the recording team to join him in opening a sparkling bottle. Often, following a day of two three-hour recording sessions, the orchestral players would head for the pub for refreshment, and I would join them. After a long day's playing the conversation would centre on music and its interpretation.

It was in June 1962 in Vienna that Ingrid and I married. On return to England, we settled in Metroland in Pinner. We continued to visit Austria and I was to find out that members of her family had been winegrowers, and some were still in production, particularly in a small village named Roschitz in lower Austria, northwest of Vienna. On meeting the current vineyard owners, it was interesting to learn that their

antecedents had been glass blowers and had come from Bavaria.

Following retirement from EMI in 2001 I joined the Probus Club of Pinner and met many more local residents, including Geoffrey Wheal, who was also a Sacavin committee member at the time, before he became Grand Commandeur. He enthused about the delights of Sacavin, and so it was that I was inducted at the Chapitre des Frères Noirs at Apothecaries' Hall in November 2008, alongside five others, including Martin de Betham Hart and Philip Wood.

Over the years Ingrid and I have attended many Sacavin dinners at the National Liberal Club and participated in the biennial trips to France, travelling in our own car, so that wine could be brought back for home consumption. These trips were not only fun but always educational, meeting the vigneron and learning about their terroir, grape varieties,

and now, of the rise in treating the land with greater respect.

Due to the friendship and assistance of Sacavin members Adrian Macintosh and Max Brittain, I became a member of the Savage Club, and currently hold the post of Honorary Archivist. The club is about to move to new premises which all being well will be close to the old Kingsway Hall – well used by EMI and Decca in the days many felt were the pinnacle of classical music recording.

It is rumoured that Ludwig van Beethoven made the following observation about wine and music: "Music is the wine which inspires one to generative processes and I am Bacchus who presses out this glorious wine for mankind and makes them spiritually drunken."

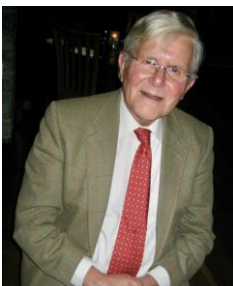
Well said, Maestro!

Michael Gray



David Hollingsworth FRICS 1932 - 2022

David died on 15th March, in his 90th year. He was inducted into Sacavin at the Chapitre de la Régence, held at the Royal College of Pathologists in 1998, but was previously well known to the Commanderie as a guest, particularly on the 1997 visit to Anjou. He continued to support Sacavin events along with his wife, Tessa and son Tim, until ill-health intervened. Boyhood friendships forged in the 1st Ilford Sea Scouts endured: the group in later life became known as "The Water Babies" and, along with Tessa, included Sacavins Owen and Brenda Collins, Peter and Christine Bouch, and Richard and Gill Ridler. Indeed, David and Peter were joint owners of a sailing boat in which they ventured to the Channel Islands and France.



David had strong connections in Chinon through his involvement in the Watford Round Table group, and particularly appreciated the wines of Anjou.

We extend our condolences to Tessa, Tim and the wider Hollingsworth family.



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*Our thanks to Martin Hart, Tony Moore, Chris Powis Tim Hollingsworth and Max Brittain  
for the photographs in this issue of the Courier.*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES



Sacavin Visit to Essex **Tuesday 6th to Thursday 8 September 2022**

*Calling letters were dispatched 29 June*



Chapitre des Vendanges **Saturday 15 October 2022**

Greniers St-Jean, Angers, France



Chapitre Platine **Wednesday 23 November 2022**

Vintners' Hall, City of London

*Calling letters to be dispatched early October 2022*

