

## WHAT'S ALL THIS?

It's the January 2010 Newsletter. Well, it was January when we started writing it. But history is being made today. This newsletter is the shape of things to come.

We hope you will like it and find it useful.

## WHAT'S IN THIS NEWSLETTER FOR ME?

Well . . . news, really. Like this:



## What's happening?

We have some printing in the pipeline. First of all, we have produced this newsletter.

Second, a new up-to-date register of Members is in the final stages of production by Geoff Stickler, Le Délégué de Fishguard. The previous pocket-size format will be used again.

Third, the 60th Anniversary Brochure of the Order produced in Nantes is a very glossy and impressive document that contains a lot of interesting information about the Order. It also explains things that hitherto some of us have only been able to guess at, such as the actual duties of the various officers, and whether they are really supposed to wear their uniforms like that, especially the hats.

It is however available only in French. An English language version is now being looked at - at the very least we shall be producing and circulating an English translation of the French text, together with a reproduction of the main pictures from the original.

We have to admit that a Welsh language version is not currently being looked at, but if anyone feels moved to volunteer . . . . . dewch ymlaen.

## What's in our programme for 2010?

Our Annual Chapter will be at Fonmon Castle on 21st March. Other Bailliages are being invited, and in particular we hope to have some visitors from Italy and France. The Wales v. Italy match is that weekend, and the programme for the weekend is as follows:

### Friday 19th

Arrival of visitors at Holiday Inn, Cardiff  
19.30 Dinner at Le Garcon, Cardiff Bay £35

### Saturday 20th

10.00 Tour of Cardiff Castle available  
12.00 Lunch at TA Centre £15  
14.30pm Wales v Italy Tickets £65  
19.30 Dinner at Fig Tree, Penarth £35

### Sunday 21st

Fonmon Castle  
11.00 Muscadet Reception  
11.30 Chapter  
13.00 Banquet £50

Not all of us can attend every part of the programme, but come whenever you can, and please try to make at least the Fonmon Chapter dinner. Please let your Bailli know now which parts you are able to attend.

*And a word in your ear, dear Chevalier:- This Chapter in March traditionally includes an intronisation or two, and Chevaliers are always encouraged to recommend suitable candidates. With boundless respect to our existing membership, and whilst fully acknowledging that the Muscadet and the hair dye together keep them all looking remarkably young and vigorous (especially the Halbardiers), your Bailli would be pleased to have, just occasionally, some proposals for a slightly younger class of Chevalier if possible. Your nominations please to bailli@hotmail.co.uk*

# What else will be happening, either at home or abroad ?

## At home :

Our Midsummer Dinner will be on Thursday 24th June at the Coed y Mwstwr Hotel. Details are under discussion with the hotel management, and we look forward to another glorious summer evening there, every bit as successful as on our last visit.

The Cardiff Food & Drink Festival in Cardiff Bay will be on July 9th/10th /11th this year. Note the dates - more details of our involvement later.

The Bailliage Summer Garden Party will be on Sunday 22nd August, and since this is to be his last year in the office of Bailli, Peter has proposed that he and Diana should host this summer's function, at their home in Penarth.

The Mac Thomas Golf Tournament will be held at Radyr Golf Club on Thursday 23rd September, with the dinner afterwards open to all, whether golfers or not. See the report on last year's event in this issue.

Lunch at Holm House, Penarth is proposed for later this year.

Our Vendange Dinner will be on Thursday 7th October, probably at Le Gallois restaurant, which can give our group a private evening provided that we are more than 40 diners. Details have yet to be sorted out.

Our Christmas Dinner, by popular acclaim, will be held again at St David's Hotel in Cardiff, on Thursday 2nd December. Last year's function was marred only by the absence of some of our number who were at the National Museum & Galleries Patrons' Christmas Happening. This year our Sénéchal, Mike Salter, is going to tell the Museum not to pinch our date again this time; so that should be all right.

## Abroad - the International Programme for 2010

Alcester Chapter - We are invited again to the annual Alcester Chapter on Sunday 18th April. For those who have never attended, Alcester is a very picturesque little mediaeval town east of Worcester (which makes it part of our International Programme) and forms a most attractive setting for the uniformed parade and Chapter. The Chapter is held in the beautiful and ancient Alcester Town Hall. Modernised in 1620, the Hall is so atmospheric that, as you nod off during the second intronisation speech, you could believe you were actually transported back into some mediaeval period yourself.

The area abounds with good hotels, one of which hosts the Chapter Dinner. And why are there Chevaliers based in a tiny place like Alcester ? - largely because Alcester has for many years been twinned with the Bretvins stronghold of Vallet, near Nantes.

As in previous years transport will be arranged if numbers are sufficient

Namur, Belgium - It is the 40th Anniversary Chapter of the Bailliage of Belgium, and their anniversary will be celebrated in the very attractive old town of Namur over the period 13th/16th May 2010. An email giving the programme and costs, etc., has been circulated and is probably still in your email inbox, if you have not checked recently.

Portsmouth - The Bailliage of Great Britain will hold its 40th Anniversary Chapter in Portsmouth on 12th and 13th June. An unusual and attractive programme is arranged, and details are being circulated by email as above. This should be a really good outing.

The Golden Bottle Award in November will be presented by the Grand Maître to this year's foremost Muscadet producing town, to the accompaniment of suitable quaffing and dining. The winning town in the Nantes region will not be known until nearer the time, but we are all invited when the time comes. Find out below how to see a picture of the Golden Bottle itself.

# Report on the Champagne trip 2009



**E**vans Coaches Yard at Llantwit Fardre at 6.00 on 10th. September, a Thursday morning, was not the most promising start to a Bretvin virgin's first trip comprising three Champagne Houses in three days – but we knew that things were going to be just fine when the first glass of bubbly arrived as we approached the Severn Crossing.

From then on the gliding Edwards star cruiser just glided even better. On board there were strange rituals to be understood – like how the whole contents of Waitrose, M & S and Sainsbury's biscuits and nibbles counters could be somehow accommodated on the cruiser, and what was the trigger for another glass to be poured.

Dover soon arrived, then Calais and finally in the early evening Rheims – a bit different to Llantwit Fardre.

Friday morning saw everyone bright eyed and bushy tailed – well, in most cases - and ready for the off to our first House, Chateau de Bligny. Then disaster struck, when the star cruiser “clipped” – well half annihilated - a little French car parked very poorly on a narrow street in Rheims. Wayne Smith our excellent driver was distraught (his first bump on duty in 20 years he claimed) and of course there was no driver of the car to be found. The Bretvins however put up a good effort to keep the show on the road, as our five or six lawyers on board came up with varying advice ranging from quoting the darker chapters of EU and French law, to just leg it, but salvation was at hand with an engineer's practical advice of finding a piece of string to tie the wheel arch panel back on, leaving a note on the car - or what remained of it - to ring Llantwit Fardre (can you imagine that call!) – and then leg it.

Chateau Bligny was a treasure; it was as if you were going around somebody's ancient home, right down to the willow pattern WC's. There was a suppressed roar from the Bretvins when our hostess during the tasting of three or four different Bligny champagnes advised that a certain one was suitable for “drinking in the afternoon” – that's our girl!

On Saturday we visited the Martell House in Rheims and explored their labyrinth of caves under the city, some of which dated from Romano-Gallic times and which had been taken over by the champagne makers as providing the perfect production environment. The buying afterwards was subject to a timely tip from the Brigadier on value for money (the Charles du Roy) and everyone who followed the tip is still thanking him for it.

The highlight of the trip was a visit to the Jacquart House at Château Thierry thanks to an old friend, Chevalier Honoraire Mamadou Gueye, who is now Marketing Director (U.K. and Ireland) for Jacquart. The evening started with a mesmerising drive across the rolling countryside where the only sign of life now was a glimpse of a TGV on its way to Strasbourg, but where just under a hundred years ago some of the fiercest battle of the First World War were fought out.

At Jacquart we were privileged to be able to see the first pressings of the harvest taking place and then to be taken around the modern production part of the House before once again descending into their historical caves. After a short tour we enjoyed a magical dinner deep within in the caves, accompanied once again by different champagnes for each course.

The journey back on Sunday went quickly and without a hitch, and was naturally more subdued than the journey out. More than once the heretical comment was heard that “I could not face another glass of champagne”, and after ten or twelve different tastings over a very intense but great four days that was understandable; but the volumes of cases being unloaded at Edwards Yard that night suggested that that particular memory would soon fade. Many thanks to everyone who organised such a great trip, especially Peter and Rolf.

*[From Chevalier Mike Lawley]*



# Report on the Mac Thomas Golf Meeting 2009

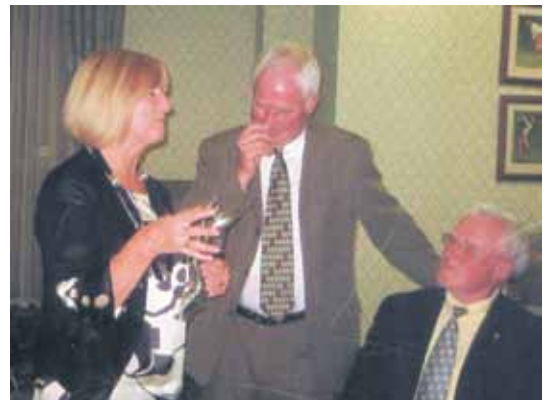


On Thursday 24th September last, this event was won in fine style by Jeff MacWilkinson, with 36 Stableford points.

An honoured guest was C. D. Williams, Vice President of Radyr Golf Club, who will be remembered as one of the Cardiff Rugby Club team of 1953 who famously beat the All Blacks. C. D. was intronised in France in 1982 when he was on a rugby visit - this must make him the oldest Chevalier in town!

Thirty five people were present, and the catering was excellent. A jolly good time was had by all.

*[from Vice Maître de Cérémonie  
John Morgan Phillips]*



## Report on the Chapter of the London Bailliage

On November 19th. 2009 the Bailli Peter Andrews and his wife Diana, Chancelier Andrew Parker and his wife Nina, Hallebardier John Edwards with his wife Sally, and our recently appointed Consul, Sir Brooke Boothby represented our Bailliage at the annual Chapter of the Bailliage de Grande Bretagne at the Arts Club in London.



The Bailli, as can be seen from the photograph, was resplendent in his new ermine trimmed robes, as was the Consul. The London Bailliage intronised four new Chevaliers.

Their Bailli, Mr John Cunynghame, outlined plans for their 40th. Anniversary Chapter to be held in Portsmouth in June 2010. The



programme involves a visit to HMS Warrior and the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes. Having attended a visit some 12 years ago, when Owen Aisher was at the helm, I feel that this is a trip not to be missed.

*[from Chancelier  
Andrew Parker]*

# Report on the 15th Anniversary Chapter in Saarbrücken

Between 26th. November and 1st. December 2009 three Chevaliers from Cardiff, The Bailli Peter Andrews, Mike Salter and Clive Johnson and their wives attended the 15th Birthday celebrations of the Saarbrücken Bailliage.

The party set out on the 26th, having decided to stop over in Ypres for the night. We stayed at the Novotel just round the corner from the Menin Gate and attended the most moving ceremony, which takes place every night at 8pm, to commemorate the fallen in the 1914-18 War.

The following morning we set out in three separate cars for Saarbrücken. The weather, traffic and road conditions were appalling (as they had been the evening before) and I really would not recommend this route through Belgium to future travellers, especially if like me you were following the car in front with the Sat Nav, the whole way. (My thanks to Clive for making it as easy as possible!)

We eventually arrived in Saarbrücken where we were met by Alain and Benita Pecheur who made us very welcome with a glass of the local wine. Later that evening we had dinner in the hotel along with a sizeable contingency from France including the Grand Maitre. There were also representatives from Berlin, Belgium and Scotland (Bob and Agnes Macdonald). John Cunynghame, the English Bailli, and his wife Marjatta joined us the next day.

On Saturday morning we visited a new geology museum entitled "Gondwanaland", complete with working model dinosaurs and special effects such as a flash flood! The museum was built on the site of a reclaimed coal mine - an idea for South Wales? We were then taken to a typical Saarland restaurant run by Alain's brother. The size of the dumplings on our plates reminded me of tennis balls (and we were told that they had scaled the meal down in view of the evening's festivities).

After a short break we attended the intronisation ceremony at the magnificent City Hall. There were eight intronisees and, with one exception,



the introductions were lengthy. Clive held our flag with admirable skill and forbearance! It was interesting to note that only the officers of the German Order wore robes (by order of the Bailli).

The dinner in the evening was sumptuous and the highlight of the weekend. The meal took around four hours and was followed by a very good band and vocalist. The dancing went on into the early hours (well after your correspondent had gone to bed!)

The following day, after a late start, we were taken on a fascinating tour of the Castle Museum which is now devoted to the history of the area, warts and all. From there we went to the Christmas Market and enjoyed gluwain and hot dogs in the rain (the dogs are very long in Germany!) while we watched a Punch and Judy show. Later in the afternoon some intrepid Chevaliers went back to watch the flying Father Christmas gliding over the Market in his sleigh along a high wire, waving as he went.

On the last evening, while Peter and Diana were entertained by the Pecheurs, Clive, Sally, Mary and I were treated to a superb Chinese meal by members of the Saarbrücken Bailliage, including the Bailli and his wife. They were obviously delighted to have a delegation from Wales.

The next day we returned to Calais by a different and much easier route via Rheims and arrived back in Cardiff on the 1st December.

*[from Sénéchal Mike Salter]*

# Report on the Christmas Banquet 2009

This Christmas Banquet at the St David's Hotel was a very successful event, attended by eighty two people.

It was a very good meal, despite the head Chef Daniel Henry being away ill. His deputy, Mark Holland, coped very well. The wines were well chosen, and ran out as a result.

Richard Bosworth provided excellent posters depicting the Halbardiers John Edwards and Jeff MacWilkinson, surrounded by a collage of the 2009 year's events.

Once again we were well entertained by Meryn Williams and the Minnesingers who gave us a selection of Christmas music and Welsh songs.

During his few words Bailli Peter presented the "rearranged" Mac Thomas Golf Trophy to Jeff MacWilkinson and the Chevalier of the year award to Clive Johnson.

*[from Officier de Bouche John Skalitzky]*

## Have you seen La Feuille ?

The central Newsletter of the Order is called La Feuille de Vigne - The Vine Leaf. It is produced by Bretvins HQ in Nantes, appears once a year and the latest version is No.23 dated May 2009. You can see it at [www.bretvins.com.publications/fv23.pdf](http://www.bretvins.com.publications/fv23.pdf)

The current edition's editorial is followed by reports on St Vincent at Gorges, which is next door to Clisson; Expo Vallet - in Vallet, of course - which is in its 61st. year and was attended by some fifty chevaliers in uniform; Savona in Italy, and the foundation of the new Baillage there, including pictures of some of us at that gathering; Alcester 2009 with team photograph; the ceremony and dinner at the Chateau des Ducs in Nantes where the first three Dames de Duchesse Anne were intronised last May; and various other topics.

The most interesting photo is perhaps one of the Chapter at St Davids last June, where our uniformed parade unexpectedly came across a large posse of white-robed chaps who were quite staggered to see us all there, filing through their precinct without a word of explanation. How can you explain what a uniformed Chevalier Bretvin is, when you only have a moment or two ?

The previous year's edition of La Feuille de Vigne is still on the net - just change 23 in the above address to 22. Among other things it contains a photograph of the actual full-size Golden Bottle on its road-going wheeled carriage. Also David & Kathy Briant were there that day, carrying the flag for us, but they appear to be just out of shot to the left.

## The Marquis de Goulaine

On the day of going to print with this newsletter, we have learned of the death of The Marquis de Goulaine at the age of 76 years. Robert de Goulaine was Grand Maître of this Order from 1969 to 1982. Among the many good things that he did for the Order, he generously provided its headquarters in the Chateau de Goulaine, including the Tower, where the Order's archives are kept. Many of us will remember meeting him there.

His wide interests included all aspects of the natural world, especially his famous living butterfly collection and rural conservation matters in general. He wrote novels as well as publishing serious treatises on wine production, horticulture and wild life subjects. A warm host and a lively companion, his interest in all matters was clear to all who met him. He will be sorely missed.

Any text or photos you wish to contribute for future issues of this newsletter should be sent to the Hérault, Colin Ryland, by email please, because it saves a lot of retyping: [rylandnash@talktalk.net](mailto:rylandnash@talktalk.net)