

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

The Confrérie Club

The club in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland
for members of the **Confrérie du Sabre d'Or**
This is the twentieth Annual Report of your Club

REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN

In normal times this report dwells entirely on the club's activities in the past year with an indication of our intentions for the following one. This year has ended on such a sorrowful note for us all that it is difficult to look back on the whole joyful year without the awful darkness of the last month of it putting a shadow on the brightness of our Twentieth Anniversary year.

Nonetheless, we are grateful that the spring, summer and autumn went without any hitches and we could in January look back on 2019 as one of the best in our brief history. The club year started off with a Spring Gala Dinner at **The Royal Overseas Club** in Saint James's for 100 members and their guests. **Champagne Joseph Perrier** was the theme and the sabrage included 2 new Grands Commandeurs. As usual, we had several new Chevaliers and promotions of Officers and Commandeurs.

The year continued in the same vein with an enjoyable Summer Party, Champagne Tastings, the most remarkable Commissioned Members' free party with Grand Cru Champagne. Before Covid 19 hit our shores we were able to put in our much favoured **Chinese New Year** banquet in February at **The Phoenix Palace** with **Champagne Georges Vesselle** and a comprehensive wine tasting in the same month at **Smith & Wollensky**. Since then, we have been in lockdown.

Caveau Events

We also managed to open four new Caveaux in the year:-

Xenia Hotel, South Kensington

Cricklade House Hotel, the Cotswolds

Middlethorpe Hall Hotel, York

Grantley Hall, Ripon N. Yorkshire

and we welcomed back **Le Vacherin**, now under new ownership and direction. We carried out much sabrage at these places and investitures of new Chevaliers. In addition, we had two events with the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs - dinner at **Danesfield House Hotel** and a Champagne and Food Pairing at **Hotel Xenia**. I also managed to make a return visit to **The Shelbourne** in Dublin in September.

The Anniversary Ball

The highlight of the year was our 20th Anniversary Gala Ball which we held at **The Millennium Gloucester**. 250 members and guests filled the Orchard Suite in the hotel for a wonderful dinner with Champagne only served in large formats- Magnums and greater sizes. This followed the Grand Processions of Echevins, Connétables and Maître-Sabreurs and then the Grand and Embassy Councillors and finally a third parade comprising the new Officers and Chevaliers. All

of the processions with a piper leading them. The sabrage of 5 new commanders with jeroboams and 5 new knight or dame commanders and their methusalems added to the spectacle as well as providing us all with copious champagne.

So often there is a downside to counter the upside and, sadly we are unable to continue this huge display into this year, for some time to come. However, I know that all of us will be positive and look forward to reopening the club's activities and I wish that you will all jump at the first opportunity. More about this will be circulated to you in the summer and autumn months.

Membership

For the club, the major downturn has been the membership drop out. During 2019 we were regularly having new members join us and many of them became chevaliers last October. Also some were due to become chevaliers at the April Spring Gala and Chapitre that we have had to cancel. Well before the arrival of Coronavirus we advised notice of subscription renewals and more than 55% of members had done so before February. During the February to mid-March weeks as result of sending out reminders we suffered a considerable number of resignations. We have also had to assume many other resignations as some members have failed to reply to any of the three letters/ emails we sent out. I am disappointed with the exit of 61 members, albeit that those who did respond stated that there was no question of dissatisfaction but had enjoyed the club very much.

We now need to look seriously at increasing the membership even though, at the present time, it would seem a low priority. I ask all members to consider recruiting from amongst their contacts who would be suited to our unique take on life. We will make a great effort to make this worthwhile for you to introduce potential new members.

The Executive Committee

I have continued as Chairman, ex officio- as appointed Ambassador for the UK and Ireland by the Grand Council in Champagne. The Club committee during the year has been unchanged- Judy Tayler-Smith, Justin Rhodes, Dominique LARGERON, Sam Rhodes, Vic Laws MBE, David Herbert and Julian White (Ambassador Emeritus, the Club treasurer). I have added my comments in the notes to members that would have been stated at the AGM.

The Accounts

Our Treasurer has added comments in the notes to members that he would have stated at the AGM.

Finally, after you have read my comments that I would have added at the AGM I wish you all~

Santé Bonheur...Champagne !



**Minutes of The 19th Annual General Meeting
held at The Millennium Gloucester Hotel, Harrington
Gardens, London SW7 on
Friday 7th June 2019**

Present: Gerard O'Shea (Chairman) and the committee: Judy Tayler-Smith, Justin Rhodes, Sam Rhodes, Vic Laws MBE, Dominique LARGERON, David Herbert and Julian White and 82 members.

Apologies for absence :Ken Chapronière, Pam Court, David Court, Mark Fox, Julie Fox, Tom White, Joanna Amand, John Brown, Otto Hinderer, Fred Bain, Gino Nardella, Peter Scrafton, François Ginther and Steve Braund.

1. The Chairman welcomed all members to the 19th AGM. The Minutes of the 18th AGM had been circulated and as there were no matters arising they were approved.

2. **Chairman's Report.** The Chairman had circulated his report. He stated that the 20th Anniversary Gala Ball seating was a maximum of 300, and not 400. He stressed the importance of this event, outlining the ceremony and the dinner with large formats of Champagne and Red Bordeaux. He announced that the booking form on line would be available the following day of this Summer Party (8th June).He continued that, as result of our efforts, to make this a very special event, the Grand Council might consider having the Grand Chapitre International in a future year here in the UK, and in other parts of the world instead of always in Northern France.The Chairman recapped on the dates of other forthcoming events, chiefly-

1st August - Commissioned Members' Party at Smith & Wollensky, WC2. Booking Form will be on line on 17th June. **8th August - Champagne and Food Pairing** at Xenia, and that he was going to Dublin later that month to The Shelbourne Caveau. He summed up by emphasising the need for all to look regularly at the Club website for details of future events. The Spring Dinner was announced as 24th April 2020.

Steve Tamcken proposed and David Lazenby CBE seconded the acceptance of the Report

3.**Treasurer' Report.** The Treasurer had circulated the Income & Expenditure Statement for the year ending

31st March 2019. He drew attention to the greatly increased surplus that is due to the January subscriptions coming in during the final quarter of the Club year. All sections of the Club's activities are profitable or self-accounting except for, obviously, the events which include the free party annually and thereby cost more than the income. He added that such promotional income was going to be valuable in the present year as the magazine will need this support, as will also the recruiting effort for new membership.

Ajay Nehra proposed and Paul Herbage MBE seconded the acceptance of the Report and Accounts.

4. **Election of the Executive Committee.** The Chairman proposed that the existing committee being also the Embassy Council be re-elected, adding that the team was prepared to continue in their appointments. **Simon Tayler-Smith seconded the proposal and it was accepted nem con.**

5. **Julian White**, Ambassador Emeritus, addressed the meeting on the subject of correct dress for Gala events, specifically the regalia. He stated that the continued excuses by a number of members who arrive with only one set of regalia, be that either the UK or the French variety, or, worse still, with neither is letting down the image of the Order and the Club. Most if not all societies and liveries make it mandatory that regalia is worn. He showed the meeting pictures of the correct orders to be worn. In answer to a question that these images should be on the website David Herbert, the Maître de la Communication, reminded the meeting that they already are and have always been so. Julian White ended by saying that members now have more than 4 months to locate these reliquaires and medals and ensure they are worn on 25th October.

6. **Simon Tayler-Smith**, Connétable de Londres, proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman and his committee for the work they do and their efforts for the Club enjoyment.

Seconded by Peter Alvey and accepted Unanimously. There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.16 pm.

Income & Expenditure Statement 31st March 2020

Income	2020	2019	Expenditure	2020	2019
Members' Subscriptions	23,675	27,746	Events	86,241	62,844
Investiture & Sabrage fees	5,994	5,232	Promotion	14,216	12,976
Events Revenue	76,690	54,635	Embassy Equipment and regalia	999	2,480
Magazine and Advertising	11,883	16,791	Printing, Postage and administrative costs	2,297	3,504
			Travel and Caveaux support	4,649	3,738
			Golden Sabre Magazine	10,555	11,040
			Bank/Go Cardless charges	462	263
			Surplus Income(loss)	-1,277	7,559
	<u>118,192</u>	<u>104,404</u>		<u>118,192</u>	<u>104,404</u>
			Surplus Income(loss)	-1,277	7,559
			Surplus Income b/wd	26,336	18,777
			Total Surplus Income	25,109	26,226

Here is a 'Summary of Items' that would normally have been raised at the AGM, in accordance with an Agenda together with comments from the Chair and the Committee.

1. The Accounts

The Treasurer makes the following comments on the Income & Expenditure Statement:

- a. Subscriptions are lower due to resignations mentioned in this Report.
- b. As expected, the Anniversary Ball was more expensive than usual and expenditure over income generally is higher.
- c. The reserve remains healthy at over £25,000

2. The Committee

Statement by the Chairman:

"Whilst 2019 has been a good year for our club, we do understand that 2020 is, after the Pandemic, going to be tough for us all. Your committee worked very hard and very successfully to make 2019 a great success and until the present situation we had arranged a great party for the Spring Gala Dinner with Champagne Taittinger at the Royal Over-Seas League. Around 80% was the booking take up. Following that were the arrangements for May and June and our usual diligence to make all events equally memorable. I also want to express our thanks to, firstly, David Herbert whose constant hands-on with the website keeps us informed and knits together all aspects of the club and liaison with others. Secondly, Vic Laws, our Maître des Festivités, who adds the 'je ne sais quoi' to our events with his skills in hospitality and catering. My team will be sorely needed. For this and other reasons, I am asking you to accept my team as your committee for another year. All of them have offered themselves for re-election"

3. Statement by The Chairman

On the current situation as it affects the Confrérie Club and the future. This will be as at the date these documents are sent out by email and may change as determined by government guidelines and the instructions from HQ La Confrérie du Sabre d'Or.

"I am mindful of the subscription situation and the fact that a proportion of the club year will have passed without the enjoyment of a return on that. I am addressing the full (Commissioned) membership fee of £80 which is, after all, a relatively small subscription, compared with most other organisations and we are centred around Champagne - not a cheap commodity. Of the £80, you will know that we settle the International Quarterage (called 'cotisation') of about £20. In past years we have spent £50 or more on a free party and, as such, very little has been available for other club expenditure.

"Very sensibly, we have harvested a reserve over the past 20 years which is reflected in the Surplus Income carried forward of more than £25,000. My predecessor and his co-founders built this up against a 'call to arms' such as forfeiting deposits and now - an international disaster! We are happy to plunder some of this reserve to reinvigorate the Club. To do this, we should in my view reciprocate by continuing as normal with our annual subscriptions payable in January 2021, as, otherwise, we would make future years very difficult for those who come after us.

"Therefore, I propose some events that are hugely subsidised by our reserve and your attendance would be at a low cost. I am asking you to come to these events and to bring new members and for that you will be rewarded, as indeed also will the Club be reinvigorated. I will be putting this about as soon as we have arranged post-pandemic events. I can assure you that the Team will be working on this to every members' advantage."