

10th GRAND CHAPTER & GALA DINNER in INVERNESS

The Confrerie in Scotland celebrated its **10th Grand Chapter** in style in the impressive surroundings of the Great Hall in the Town House in Inverness on **Saturday 11th May 2013**, the function attended by many Scottish confreres with numbers swelled by international representation from **France, Germany** and the **United States**.

Expectation rose as the skirl of the pipes heralded the entrance of the Conseil Magistral d'Ecosse, duly robed, as they proceeded to the podium where **Connetable Nicol Manson** welcomed members and guests before inviting the German and French Conseil delegates to the podium, their entrance again accompanied by our piper. New members to the Confrerie were welcomed and duly inducted and their number was swelled by promotions for both Scottish and French confreres.



Being inducted as the sole Damoselle was **Carol Macrae** (Inverness) and as Ecuyers were **Loik Le Guern** (Rouen, France); **George McIvor** (Aboyne); **Derick Macrae** (Inverness); **Andrew Sheerin** (Bransgrove, Dorset); **Alan**

Stewart (Linlithgow) and **Dan Weisman** (Indianapolis, USA). Promotions to the grade of Dame were granted to **Brigitte Enguerrand** (Rouen); **Odile Poulingue** (Rouen) and **Jean Slater** (Inverness) while promotion to the highest rank of Baron went to **Grant Manson** (South Queensferry).

The accolade of Noble Dame d'Honneur was granted to a lady who as **Grand Maitre du Palais** in Rouen has done much work for the Confrerie, not least in organising trips to and fostering friendships with embassies in Germany, Italy and the US, not to mention here in Scotland and it seemed entirely fitting therefore to honour **Janine Bigot**.

Following a reception in the Town House, the party were whisked by coaches to the Drumossie Hotel for a champagne reception prior to entering the function suite for the Gala Dinner.

The dramatic invitation to enter the suite was heralded by the pipes and drums of the **Queens Own Highlanders Association**, silhouetted against a fog of swirling mist.....as someone said "makes you proud to be a Scot!"



Following a welcome by the Connetable, a response by **Manuel Chanavaz**, Grand Maitre des Ambassades and a short speech by Noble Dame d'Honneur **Janine Bigot**, our Maitre de Cave **James Sheerin** and Bailli **Dick Beach** gave a humorous discourse on the wines which we were about to enjoy.

The five course Gala Dinner commenced with an imaginative Confit Chicken, Fois Gras and Baby Leek Terrine, which was accompanied by a 2012 Lanate Fiano from Sicily, aromatic and fresh with a crisp finish. This was followed by a Tomato Consommé with handmade Crayfish Tortellini, Petit Pois and

Herb Garnish, appealing to the eye and certainly on the palate, accompanied by the bone dry, salty tang of a Manzanilla La Guita sherry, refreshing with a lingering, satisfying aftertaste.

With a nod to our Confrerie's Norman roots, a Calvados Sorbet was served and as we savoured this, the cabaret took to the stage and the one hundred and thirty members and guests were held in rapture by the purity of voice of ten year old **Peigi Barker** who performed two Gaelic songs, accompanied by her brother **Duncan** on the piano. Peigi Barker? None other than the young girl who sang the opening lyrics to the blockbuster Disney-Pixar film "Brave"! The duo walked off to well merited and thunderous applause.

Executive **Chef Kenny MacMillan's** main course was a beautifully textured Braised Blade of Scottish Beef with Fine Beans and Orange & Coriander scented Carrots, the meat just melting in the mouth. Over the years, Kenny has never let us down with his expertise and imaginative presentations and this year yet again proved his credentials. To go with the beef the Conseil tasting panel had chosen a 2006 Chateau Cissac from St. Estephe, decanted some seven hours previously and displaying all the complexity, flavour and long finish of a classic Claret. Instead of a cheese board, Chef Kenny had suggested a Baked Warm Clava Brie which elicited some surprise at its presentation, but nevertheless, different and certainly tasty and to accompany this was a 2007 Norton Privada from Mendoza in Argentina, aromatic complexity with notes of fruit, spice, chocolate and hints of smoke while the palate was rich and concentrated.....moreish even! The Dinner rounded off with a Dark Chocolate Casket with a Milk and White Chocolate Mousse, served with a Bramble Compote and Blood Orange Sorbet.....truly decadent.....and harmonised with a 2011 Chateau de Stony Muscat de Frontignon, sweet and highly perfumed with rich honey and orange marmalade fruits, quite floral on the finish.

As coffee was served, the **Strathnairn Ceilidh Band** struck up and the dance floor filled as the music flowed, a well orchestrated mixture of tempo ensured a popular finale to what had been an excellent evening of ceremony, mouth-watering dining and captivating cabaret.....as they say in Central Scotland "pure, dead brilliant.....by the way!"