

## 49<sup>th</sup> Confrerie Chapitre in Rouen November 2016

by Ormond Smith

Despite the cancellation of the add-on visit to Champagne (due to cost), a small number of Scots made their way to Rouen in Normandy in mid November for the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Chapitre in the home of the Confrerie. Joining Connetable Nicol were Narrateur Ormond Smith, Maitre du Palais Christina Cameron and three new inductees, Mike and Jacquie Grantham and Dr Caroline Duncan who had opted for induction in Rouen having been unable to attend our own Chapitre in Inverness in May. Adding to the party were members of the Goustevin in the Mosel, Wilfried Wesch, Urban and Irmhild Lamberty and our wine growing friends, Ann and Harold Junglen whilst arriving from Donzere in the Rhone valley was "ecosse-ophile" Francoise Chalbet.



**L-R :- Caroline, Jacquie, Francoise, Jean-Pierre Avenel, Nicol, Mike, Christina, Sonia Leroy, Dominique Delaveau and Ormond**

Having booked into the Best Western Gustav Flaubert Hotel in the old quarter, we hit the Vieux Marche for dinner, foregoing La Couronne (France's oldest inn – atmospheric but pricey) and picked out the Gill Cote' Bistro, an offshoot of the 2 star Michelin Gill restaurant on the rive-droite of the Seine nearby. We were not disappointed! Friday morning dawned grey and chilly and the Scots ambled off for a saunter around the old quarter (well worth a visit if you have



**"Le Gros-Horloge"...the 14th century astronomical clock in the old quarter of Rouen**

never been before) prior to meeting up with three of our Confrerie Grand Magistral colleagues for a most satisfying lunch in the Vieux Marche at Le Terre-Neuvas, a well-known seafood restaurant. The afternoon took in a guided tour of the old quarter accompanied by Sonia Leroy, Dominique Delaveau and Jean-Pierre Avenel from the GM who chaperoned us extremely well.....thank you! Although we'd been to a number of the "sights" in the morning, the detailed information from the guide was most interesting and indeed, even Nicol and the writer who

have visited Rouen on numerous occasions, were suitably impressed. In the windy chill of late afternoon as the sun set, a visit to Dame Cakes, a very chic tea shop on the narrow Rue Saint

Romain beside the Notre-Dame Cathedral seemed an eminently sensible idea where we enjoyed delicious coffees and cakes before heading back to the hotel prior to our evening adventure.

Collected by Sonia and Dominique, we were whisked across the Seine to the rive-gauche (the left bank) and after an unscheduled sightseeing trip (!) we duly arrived at Le Veau d'Or, ([www.restaurantleveaudor.fr](http://www.restaurantleveaudor.fr)) the restaurant owned by our old friends Patrick and Jacqueline Etienne. This restaurant (complete with "Margaurite" the dairy cow at the door!) is famed for its tripe dishes as well as traditional French cuisine and we were not to be disappointed. Patrick had

arranged a traditional dinner (no....not tripe!) accompanied by Beaujolais Villages Nouveau 2016, fruity, light on the body but very drinkable! Meeting up with old friends from the Confrerie, we took our seats having enjoyed some very tasty "amuse bouches" before partaking of the opening dish, a Vol au Vent with crayfish and leeks.....mmh! The main course, following an "obligatoire" Trou Normand (Calvados!) was a very traditional dish, calves kidneys in a mustard sauce.....delicious! The meal was rounded off with an apple tart and coffee before we were chauffeured back to our hotel.

A sunny and bright Saturday dawned although tempered by a chilly breeze and we met up with our charming chauffeuses Sonia and Dominique who took us down to the banks of the Seine to visit Panorama XXL. To all intents and purposes, this looks like a very large oil tank from the exterior but inside.....!!!! Austrian born artist and architect Yadegar Asisi has created a 360 degree panoramic view of 15<sup>th</sup> century Rouen as visualised from the top of the Butter Tower of the Notre-Dame Cathedral, this amazing visual effect being an affinity between photography and painting, enhanced by digital image processing. The exhibition ([www.panoramaxxl.com/en](http://www.panoramaxxl.com/en)) reveals life in 15<sup>th</sup> century Rouen (as Joan of Arc is unceremoniously taken by ox cart to her death by being burnt at the stake), the effects being enhanced by lighting (day into night and back to day) coupled with innumerable sound effects, the howling wind, the crowing cockerel at dawn, dogs barking, stone masons and carpenters working on the Cathedral and the general hubbub of life in the streets below, and the overall effect is undoubtedly enhanced by the fact that you can view the presentation from three different levels.....absolutely amazing and if you are ever in Rouen, most highly recommended! Back into the "fresh air" and time for a bite of lunch nearby at Le Maregraphe restaurant, and then prior to a pleasant meander back to the hotel and along the rive-droite of the Seine, our wine maker friends from Zeltingen ushered us towards their car and quite remarkably, a degustation of Mosel Riesling wine took place....in the open air. Excellent!



**What could be more natural.....we are a wine confrerie after all !!**

After a pleasant stroll along the Seine and back to the hotel, it was time to change for the Chapitre at Chateau de Belbeuf, high on the escarpment to the south of the city. The Induction Ceremony



**The Grand Conseil members and Inductees about to swear the oath to "Monseigneur le Vin"**

would be held in a rather splendid hall on the second floor.....which meant a lot of steps had to be climbed, particularly as the podium party changed into their robes in an adjacent room and then had to descend to the ground floor before climbing back upstairs for the ceremony.....breathless?....not a bit of it! Six inductees were intronised, among them being Caroline Duncan and Mike and Jacquie Grantham with the Baron d'Honneur being Senator Thierry Foucaud, representing the Seine-Maritime Department on the French Senate, indeed he is the Vice-President of the Senate of

the French Government. It was unfortunate the French Grand Narrateur's accent was very difficult to follow when introducing the Scots Inductees in English. Ceremony completed, the podium party mixed with the eighty odd members and guests for a champagne reception, before changing and gathering on the first floor to enjoy a seemingly endless supply of extremely tasty canapés, whilst catching up with old friends.

Soon the call came to take our seats for the Gala Dinner in the suitably decorated first floor hall, the opening dish being a fillet of mullet with a lobster soufflé and champagne sauce.....rather tasty! This was accompanied by a Pouilly Fume', dry, flinty and a perfect match with the dish. Main course was braised veal on a mushroom jus with onions, zucchini and eggplant on a pastry base and served with potatoes mashed with chopped olives and cream, and for accompaniment, a 2011 Chateau Labegorce, a Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel from Margaux, a wine most pleasant on both the nose and the palate but in the writer's opinion, drinking just a wee bit early with noticeable tannins. The cheese course which followed had some excellent Brie and was "married" to another offering from Bordeaux, a 2012 Chateau Sarget de Gruaud la Rose, the second label wine of the celebrated Second Growth Gruaud-Larose from St Julien. Again an excellent "marriage", fruity, well bodied with a lingering aftertaste but also drinking probably two or three years too early.....perhaps the writer is getting too picky!!



**Our three new members:- Jacquie and Mike Grantham and Dr Caroline Duncan celebrate their induction**

The evening culminated with a disco which soon had the floor full of eager exponents of "tripping the light fantastic", the hours slipping by before carriages were summoned (ok....taxis if you wish to pedantic!!) to whisk us back to Hotel Gustav Flaubert in the heart of Rouen's old quarter. It was a damp Sunday as our new members took their leave for return to Inverness while the others took the opportunity of catching up with old friends over what could only be called a typical and sumptuous French lunch.....about three hours long with mouth watering cuisine and wines to die for! A most pleasant afternoon was enjoyed!!

Looking ahead to 2017 and it is the Confrerie's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Rouen and following the celebratory Chapitre there is a visit planned to Bordeaux.....this is a trip not to be missed and will be well worth the costs involved! And don't forget, 2017 also marks the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Goustevin Scotland so keep your eyes on our website for updates and info on this event. Well, they say life is for living and with next year's programme.....we'll be doing some living – we hope you can join us!