

Gnome de Plume

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DUNCAN PALMER ELECTED PRESIDENT FOR 2008



Loughborough-born internationally recognised hotelier **Duncan Palmer** has graciously accepted to be our President for 2008. Your Committee is thrilled that very busy Duncan has agreed to step into the particularly huge footprints left by his immediate predecessor, **Andrew Hirst**, who said "thank you for entrusting Hong Kong with this prestigious event", in reference to the last outstanding **Hong Kong** based reunion. When not at his day job as **Managing Director of The Langham Hotel in London**, Duncan can be found in salubrious Englefield Green in Surrey or at his hideaway in Cornwall. In line with many others in the hospitality world Duncan enjoys travelling and has extensive contacts around the globe both professionally and personally. He is a keen tennis player, enjoys golf and has a strong passion for good restaurants. Born on Prince Charles' birthday, Duncan was educated at The Leys School in Cambridge, before joining Westminster Hotel and Catering College where he obtained an HND with Honours. He also attended a thirteen week Harvard Business School Programme for Management and Development. His early hotel days, prior to graduating from **Westminster**

College, were spent gaining experience at Whitbread's, the Royal Lancaster Hotel and Marks Tey Hotel in Colchester. This was followed by time at **Brown's** in London's Mayfair on a year's graduate training programme and ultimately, in Food and Beverage administration which led to his appointment as Assistant Food and Beverage Manager. A six month stint at **The Dubai International**, in the UAE, as Assistant Food and Beverage Manager followed. This was clearly an exciting chapter in Duncan's quality career as, whilst he had decided to go to the Far East as Food and Beverage Manager, he agreed to stay on inter-regnum until he left in June 1983 to join the 438 room **Mandarin Oriental, Macau**, as Food and Beverage Manager. This was the first of his many distinguished roles within this iconic hotel group. It wasn't long before he was promoted to Resident Manager; a post he held with distinction until 1986. Duncan moved as Manager to the **Mandarin Oriental** in difficult **Manila**, where he oversaw a US \$15 million refurbishment of all public areas and rooms over a 15 month period until July 1988 before moving to **The Oriental, Bangkok** as Resident Manager, under legendary **Kurt Wachveitl**, who took such good care of Gastronomes in February this year. During this time the hotel collected numerous global awards. In 1989 Duncan moved again to the 450 room **Mandarin Oriental, Jakarta** as General Manager and the hotel was voted as 'One of the Top 25 Hotels in Asia' by the highly rated American Institutional Investor magazine. But **The Savoy London** beckoned, and Duncan returned to work for Ramon Pajares, as General Manager, and again under his watch our Alma Mater collected

a string of accolades. He then moved to Mayfair as General Manager of the then Blackstone owned **Connaught** until 2002. It wasn't long however before the Far East caught his eye again and he happily returned to **Bangkok** to run the stunning Sukoithai Hotel. In 2004 Duncan was made Managing Director of the oldest hotel in London, the 429 room **Langham**, where he is responsible for the overall strategic approach for this property, as the flagship of Singapore based Langham Hotels. He orchestrated and managed the handover of the management of the hotel from Hilton in May 2004. He is currently involved with a complete redevelopment of the hotel for all public areas, restaurants, bars and banqueting space and all bedroom accommodation. This multi-million pound project will be completed by the Spring of 2009. Duncan's passion for the industry is exemplified by his **numerous awards** including the Dom Perignon Award for Excellence from the Academy of Food and Wine Service, the Chevalier de l'Ordre du Merite Agricole (British Equivalent of the MBE) from the French Government. He is a Master Innholder of the Worshipful Company of Innholders and was their Chairman in 2001. He is an Honorary Academician to the Academy of Culinary Arts and a Member of the European Hotel Management Association and a Fellow of the HCIMA. He places huge value on his membership of our Amicale as witnessed by the Langham generously sponsoring the Savoy Gastronomes Olive Barnett Award. His current year as our President will undoubtedly be remembered as one of great pleasure both for him and the Amicale. If you would like to contact Duncan directly his address is **Duncan.palmer@langhamhotels.com**

The Savoy Archives

by Susan Scott Archivist of The Savoy

Since The Savoy closed at the end of last year, there's been some concern about the fate of the Savoy Archives, which many of you will know were principally kept in a storeroom in the Directors' Corridor. Some of you will, I hope, remember me, the last and indeed longest serving of the Savoy Archivists. You'll be pleased to know that The Savoy continues to value its history and has a genuine commitment to the archives. Towards the end of last year I oversaw the removal of the entire collection from the hotel to secure offsite storage, so for the moment I can allay any concerns as to the safety and integrity of this unique resource. My understanding is that there will be a new archive store in The Savoy when it reopens, which I've already been asked to advise on, and we are also hoping to install a permanent historical display in the hotel.

I hope this sets minds at rest regarding the fate of the Savoy Archives and the continuity of their care. I should add that I continue to work for The Savoy on a freelance basis, and although it isn't possible to do new research in the archives at the moment, I am able to provide a skeleton service. So if you happen to have any general historical enquiries, you can still contact me on susan.scott@fairmont.com.

Our newer Members - where are they now?

The closure of the Savoy in December brought about a migration of many of our new members across the globe. Many of the Front Office Team at the time of the closure have stayed within Fairmont and as such will be a valuable resource to them and us for establishing links with the Reception team when the hotel reopens next year.

Ex-Committee member **Asta Brandes** joins fellow members **Marie Koehler** and **Uli Schwerr** at The Plaza in New York. This landmark hotel is due to reopen this year with 282 rooms including 152 pied-a-terre suites.

The Orient has attracted two new members also with really exciting opportunities for **Ronald Dooremalen** working with Fairmont in Singapore and **Natalie Cockayne** opening the new Fairmont Beijing. **Ollie Ormond** can be found surfing the waves at the dreamy Fairmont Hawaii.

We wish them all the best in their new roles.

Movers and Shakers

Past President for 1994 **Christian Duffell** is working for TISSI, outside Aylesbury, - a privately owned UK based company, but operating globally, supplying very user friendly EPS systems to the hospitality sector. Do call him on his office number 01296 681413 or on his mobile 07790 670328 and he'll tell you more.

Committee member, **Rachel Angell**, who came to Hong Kong with her sister Carrie, has moved on from the Dorchester and taken up her new position as Senior Events Manager at the Mandarin Hyde Park in London. Rachel kindly gave Afternoon Tea for two as a raffle prize.

Laetitia Pardo and her partner Christos have moved back to Belgium, where Laetitia takes on the exciting new role of Director of International Sales for Dolce hotels.

After a year in Milan, **Stefano Leone** moved in November to take on the General Manager role at the Bagni do Bormio Spa Resort in the Italian Alps.

We wish them all the best in their new and exciting roles and look forward to seeing them at future events.

Bon mots received by the Committee following our 37th Annual Reunion in Hong Kong

"I just wanted to drop you a note to say thank you for all the hard work you must have put into the wonderful and exciting time we had in H.K, whilst making it appear so effortless. The programme was so well thought out giving sufficient time for the all important shopping, each item of which we got back home intact. Lynne and I enjoyed all the organized meals but I think our favourite was the seafood lunch on Lamma Island, which was full of fresh flavours. Perhaps we enjoyed that meal so much

because we had worked up an appetite with the leisurely 'hiking' across the Island.

It was a great opportunity to revisit old haunts and to renew acquaintances from more than thirty years ago. Peter French, in particular, was a great pleasure to meet again and catch up on the gossip, some of it a little indiscreet!

Although the group was smaller than on the Venice trip I found this gave me a better opportunity to meet more Gastronomes and guests than previously.

I look forward to seeing you at the next meeting but I really wanted to say thank you on your return."

"I think you may all still be soaking up the sun in Bangkok, but I wanted to write to say thank you for a fabulous trip to Hong Kong. I know how hard you all worked, and it definitely paid off. Carrie and I had a great time, and we were both touched by the welcome she received from all - in proper Gastronomer spirit!"

"Just a quick note from Anne

and myself to say thank you for such a wonderful time in Hong Kong. I know you and Maggi worked very hard organising the trip and it went without a hitch from our point of view. The accommodation, the food and the company were all brilliant, and we can't wait for the next one!"

"On behalf of Maria and myself thank you so much for organising such a great trip we really enjoyed ourselves. Please also note that on our last day at the Oriental Bangkok I asked

Maria for her hand in marriage and she said yes...!"

"Thank you for your very kind words of appreciation to my team. It has been our pleasure to welcome The Savoy Gastronomes, such a wonderful and exclusive assembly of hospitality experts. Rest assured your kind words will be passed on to Wallace and his team. Meanwhile, I hope that your horse will be soon up and running again so that we can see you at the winning circle."

Press Coverage in Hong Kong



Through the great efforts of the charming Stella Leung Director of Public Relations for the Excelsior Hotel, and the Mandarin Oriental Public Relations team, the local and regional media soon got wind of our visit and the following is a literal translation from Mandarin of an article written by a journalist who tailed us. The full page colour article appeared in the *Sing Tao Daily* on Tuesday, 19 February 2008 and is in our archives. *The South China Morning Post* also carried a flattering diary piece on the Amicale. *Editor's note: In order to preserve the flavour of the article no editorial corrections have been made.*

EXCLUSIVE REPORT:

International gourmet in search of culinary delights in Hong Kong

For someone who was born and raised in Hong Kong, it is hard to say what is so attractive about this city. Dubbed as the "Gourmet Paradise", Hong Kong has attracted a group of veteran hoteliers who have previously worked for the renowned Savoy Hotel in London. During their 5-day trip, the group tried all local culinary delights. This exclusive report follows the footsteps of the group to their cocktail party at The Excelsior and a seafood meal at Lamma Island.

Annual gathering

Hailing from London, the Savoy Gastronomes organizes an annual gathering in different corners of the world to enjoy great food from around the world. This year, the gathering was held in Hong Kong and was the first to be staged in Asia. Throughout the trip, the group of 60 has been to The Excelsior for the spectacular Victoria Harbour view on 34th floor of the hotel; Felix at The Peninsula for breakfast; China Club for a Chinese banquet; a cruise to Lamma Island for seafood. They unanimously said that they like Chinese cuisine, especially seafood.

Complement the palate of tourists

The group went to Rainbow Restaurant in Lamma for seafood lunch featuring the restaurant's award-winning dishes. The hoteliers all praised for the high quality of the food. Previous general manager of The Savoy Willy commended the attentive service. "When they served the scallop, I told the waiter that I don't eat garlic. He said he will replace it for me. I thought he may just remove the garlic and serve it to me again, but he really made a new one for me."

The manager of Rainbow Restaurant said that about half of their customers are tourists and

therefore the restaurant offers a wide range of dishes that cater to their tastes. Besides a good selection of dishes, all prices are listed clearly with currency conversion rates.

Enjoy Hong Kong Skyline from the top

Julian of Savoy Gastronomes was impressed with Hong Kong's characteristics, "The buildings in London are mainly low-rise whereas in Hong Kong, buildings are of different heights and looks more interesting." No wonder the group chose to host a cocktail party and dinner at The Excelsior's 34th floor TOTT's for the spectacular views over Victoria Harbour. Having both worked in Hong Kong previously, Julian's son and daughter-in-law said that "Hong Kong is more beautiful than before". At TOTT's, the group tried the signature cocktails and dishes including duck breast and Bailey's cheese cake. While these are not Chinese cuisine, they do reflect the international flavour that Hong Kong embraces.

The Savoy - Top class hotel in London

The word Savoy may not ring a bell to everyone. It is one of the top hotels in London and it was said that people who have worked in The Savoy before could easily land a job at any hotel. The Savoy Gastronomes was founded by Nicholas who used to be Reception Manager at the hotel. The aim is to gather a group of friends who have also worked in The Savoy before for some good wine and dine experience. The group has since grown to over 2000 members with its annual reunion held in different countries, different cities including Jerusalem, Geneva, Dubai, Russia, New York. This year's organizer Julian said that the most memorable reunion was a party in an Arabian desert where even the camels were dressed up. Another memorable experience was having dinner in an 18th century castle in St Petersburg.

Would the last one out please turn off the lights?

The day the Grand Lady closed her doors.

Something I will always remember; marking the closure in the Savoy's Front Hall with colleagues and guests assembled together, as we raised our Champagne flutes to mark this very special moment.

Tears and smiles were seen simultaneously, but one thing was for sure; the amazing atmosphere that I will remember forever.

I can't wait to see the restored Grand Lady in 2009!

Written by **Ronald Dooremalen** now in Singapore.

The Savoy 2009

As the doors finally closed on the Savoy in mid-December 2007, steel-toed boots and hard hats walk the corridors instead of the brogues and bonnets of visitors gone by. Fairmont have committed to use the £100 million plus to create "an Edwardian-inspired, classic English look harking back to its late 19th-century origin and the thirties art deco influence that followed on".

They have some exciting plans such as a new Royal Suite, the re-launching of the River Restaurant, the new Beaufort Bar to challenge the American Bar and the reinstatement of the Glass Ceiling Thames Foyer. There are other more contemporary plans such as the new Savoy Tea Shop complete with bijou gifts and a Patisserie.

Fairmont have appointed Siobhan Doran, a photographer, to document the refurbishment on a

weekly basis to capture the bare bones of the building. Her images, along with Savoy Gastronome and General Manager **Kieran W. MacDonald's** online monthly newsletter both provide a fascinating and illuminating read. You can read all about the plans for the reopening at <http://www.fairmont.com/savoy> then click on renovations and it takes you to www.savoy2009.com. On the left handside of that there is a tab "General Manager's Diary". There is another tab with "subscribe" and you can complete the details to receive updates. The photographers account is within "Savoy News". The Committee look forward to welcoming Mr MacDonald to one of our future events, to getting to know him and to hearing first hand about his enormous task. Meanwhile **Count Peter**, still astride the courtyard entrance, watches over it all unchanged.

2007 Summer Reunion in Kew Gardens

Many Gastronomes enjoyed a splendid sunny day in the Pavilion at Kew Gardens on Saturday 14th July. Delectable gourmet picnics were provided by member **Hugh Wainwright**, presented in very smart picnic rucksacks, accompanied by Lanson Champagne and nicely chilled white wine. Once the last of the Gastronomes had been dragged kicking and screaming from Kew's "summer beach" next to the Pavilion we caught the Kew Express train for a tour of Kew Palace. The Palace, built in 1631, was the family home of King George III and was a sanctuary for the King, Queen Charlotte and the Royal Family during his illness. The Palace, completely and lovingly restored in 2006, was the spectacular setting for a private 80th Birthday celebration for **HM The Queen** in April 2006, hosted by her family. It was another very happy Gastronomes event and shows that unusual locations that have not been visited before by Gastronomes individually, are absolute winners. **The forthcoming Summer 2008 reunion in the Kitchens of Windsor Castle is a prime example.**



London's Café Royal to be given six star makeover in £90m deal

I hear that the historic Café Royal is to be transformed into a six star hotel after the Regent Street building changed hands recently in a £90 million deal. Israeli developers Alrov Properties plan to turn the site into a 160 room hotel after signing a 125 year lease with the Crown Estate. The Café Royal has been a London landmark since 1865 and was the haunt of such figures as **Oscar Wilde** and the location for boxing matches. Its patrons included **Edward VIII** and **George VI** and more recently **Prince Philip, Prince Charles, Princess Diana** and the **Queen Mother**. Current General Manager of the **Jumeirah Carlton Tower, Gastronome Derek Picot**, is also rumoured to have been seen there. The deal is part of the regeneration of Regent Street being undertaken by the Queen's property company. Alrov is in the process of buying landmark buildings around the

world to create a new brand hotel. It already owns hotels in **Amsterdam** and **Jerusalem**.

Our web site.

Secretary **Anna Coakley** does her level best to keep the site updated so if you have anything you'd like her to put up please contact her directly at annajc38@hotmail.com

Missing members

Please take a moment to consider the whereabouts of members who may be missing and let us know. Members for whom we do not have contact details are listed in your handbook.

What recession?

Now we all know that Square Milers are partial to a tippie or two, but Champagne lovers will certainly want to take their time savouring every last sip of premium bubbly brand Krug's new offering. Only 3,000 bottles of the Clos d'Ambonnay 1995 vintage, Krug's first new champagne for more than two

decades have been produced from the vineyard - and the **Connaught Hotel's Coburg Bar** will be the only place you can buy it by the glass. At an **eye watering £780** that glass doesn't come cheap, but the Coburg which opened in January has done its best to spin out the experience a little. For their money connoisseurs will be greeted by a Connaught host, escorted to a reserved table in the bar and offered canapés and a glass of Krug Grande Cuvee, before moving on to the main event itself, the glass of Clos d'Ambonnay. One Capitalist I know almost choked on his glass when hearing that £80m worth of the finest Bordeaux 2005 was about to land on these shores. Furious trading has taken place in anticipation of the wine's arrival. In one week alone Berry's (the old established London wine merchant) has sold more than 1,700 cases, worth £6.8 million - an average of £4,000 a case. Cheers!

MARATHON RUNNERS

On Sunday 13th April 2008 three very courageous Savoy Gastronomes took on the challenge of the gruelling 26.2 miles of the 28th London Marathon run under appalling weather conditions. Joining a 35,000 throng of runners we hope their preparation has been worth it.



Andrew Barham

"After 20 odd years of watching the Marathon on television from the comfort of the sofa saying "I want to do that", I feel it's now or never and have put my money where my mouth is. Training has been steady and, for someone who hated running and thought 30 minutes of it was a lifetime, the 2.5 hour runs (so far) on winter nights have actually proved to be quite cathartic!" Congratulations to Andrew who raised over £2,200 for St. John's Ambulance and was to be heard at the finish line vowing never again!



Julian Payne pictured nearing the finishing line

Zoe Clarke and Simon Gale

Another first timer for the Marathon, Gastronome Zoe Clarke and husband-to-be Simon ran together raising nearly £4000 for Leukaemia CARE, two weeks before getting married. They did it in a great time of 4:39 and were spotted several times along the course looking like true professionals with even a hop skip and a jump from Zoe at Parliament Square. Many congratulations on a great



achievement and on your forthcoming wedding. We hope the weather treats them a little better than!

Julian Payne Jnr

Running in memory of his Mother who passed away in 1999, Julian ran with two colleagues for the charity Children with Leukaemia and raised nearly £3,000. Julian was spotted by his family and friends watching from The Mint and completed the Marathon in 4:29 - a most commendable time. Julian has entered the ballot to participate in the 2009 Marathon.

Welcome to Baby Louis Kempe



Many congratulations to **Hilary and Jerome Kempe** on the arrival in August last year of their first son Louis. Within 5 months he was already clocking up the air miles with Mum and Dad to meet Hilary's family in Melbourne, Australia.

A tale from the bush (see picture page 5)

A former 1970's General Manager of **Block Hotels** in Kenya, **Tony Elliott**, recounts a tricky aborted visit in early 2008 to a beautiful country now riven with strife. "I cancelled Kenya - stories of nine hundred plus people being "hacked to death" and tourist buses being stoned rather put me off. Interestingly enough they were not sufficient reasons for my travel insurance company to compensate me for cancelled non-refundable flights and pre-paid hotel accommodation. Instead I spent these two weeks exploring the **Garden Route** and **Winelands of South Africa** which is beautiful. I stayed with fellow **Gastronome, Peter Thomas** and his partner, Angie, in their lovely home in **Hermanus** overlooking the **Indian Ocean**. I also found other friends who I had not seen for over thirty years in **Plettenburg Bay**."

Michael Cederwell

We have received a letter from Mrs Caroline Cederwell advising us that after a long illness Michael Cederwell passed away on the 2nd September 2007. We extend our condolences to her and her family.

ARRIVEDERCI NATALE

Just to mention the **Cipriani** is to dream of Canaletto's pink-hued St Mark's in the bottom of a fresh Bellini. It's a legend unto itself. But legends need to be created and **Natale Rusconi** is an hotel industry legend; a friend and generous host to many Gastronomes. He has run some of the greatest hotels in the world, most notably the **Cipriani in Venice** where the Gastronomes have held two staggeringly opulent Annual Reunions. Incredibly he remained at his post until he turned eighty-one last year. What a wise owner to keep such talent in place for so long. When the Cipriani closed as usual, at the end of last year's season, Natale retired too. It was truly the end of an era. A door gently and very carefully closing; with a nod to what had passed, and a wish for the future. Along his colourful elegant way Natale became a confidant to the stars. Opera singer **Maria Callas** became a close friend; he poured champagne for **Gina Lollobrigida** ("she was very beautiful" he tells me) and he welcomed endless princes and princesses. Even the notoriously difficult critic Sunday Times critic **Michael Winner** heaped praise on Natale. Natale began his hotel career at his family's hotel in Milan during the fifties, listening to his Mother promise that one day all this would be his. But after five years he couldn't stand it any more. His Mother was wonderful but she wanted to do everything herself and didn't delegate anything. Natale recounts how one always learns from the errors of one's parents. He fled to London - to the **Savoy** as "number three" on the Reception desk where he was told that he wasn't to be seen in public! His job was to fill the fountain pens every morning, do all the cleaning and to type on a big old typewriter. Needless to say he quickly became "number two" and then in a few months "number one." From then on his career took a meteoric rise. He joined luxury hotel group CIGA, then owned by the **Aga Khan**, and became Resident Manager of the **Gritti Palace** in Venice - the favourite hotel of **Ernest Hemingway**, and then General Manager of the **Grand in Rome**. It was here that he first met **Maria Callas**, the world's great soprano, who made her last public appearance in 1974. Natale recounts that she could be difficult and complained that her staff were not being accommodated in rooms worthy of their status. The following morning Natale was having a quiet cappuccino in his office, reflecting on how to solve the problem, when La Divina stormed in. He was so emotional that he poured the whole cup of hot coffee down his jacket. She was so moved that poor Natale was drenched that she became a good friend of both him, and Natale's Philadelphia born wife Connie, until her lonely death in Paris on 16th September 1977, as a virtual recluse on an emotional

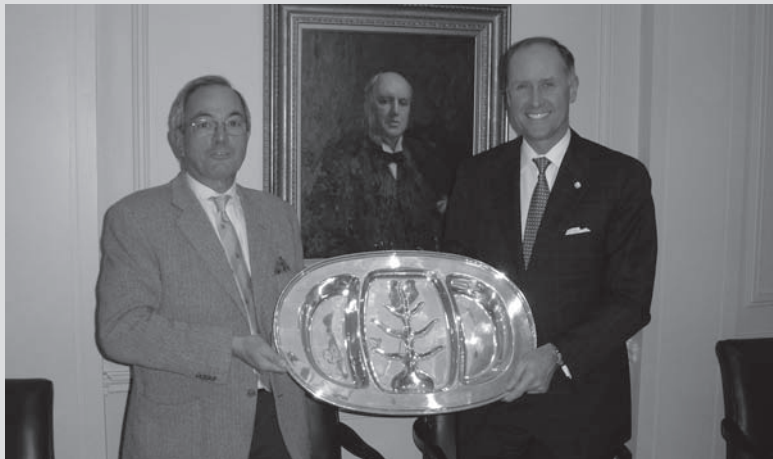
roller coaster, aged 53. She was born Mary Anna Kalogeropoulou to Greek émigrés in New York but grew up in Athens and made her name at La Scala in Milan. Co-incidentally the late and much missed Australian **Gastronome Peter Stafford** was a great friend of Miss Callas and visited her many times in Paris. Apropos of nothing, **Julian Payne Snr**, whilst not claiming to be "a friend" waited half the night in the old **Savoy Grill** having served Miss Callas and **Aristotle Onassis** in 1962 hoping for a tip. Nothing was forthcoming! Natale also has a special affection for his very long term client **Nicole Milinaire, the Dowager Duchess of Bedford**. A lady with great style and the hotels' connection with the Bedford family continued for many years with special weeks devoted to "**The Ritual and Romance of English Afternoon Tea**" - enter **Michael Bentley** stage right - for Michael choreographed these very successful events on behalf of Natale for a long time at the Cipriani, and replicated the magical formula elsewhere. It was, in fact, **Anna, Duchess of Bedford**, wife of the **7th Duke of Bedford**, who in her residence at **Woburn Abbey** first launched afternoon tea as we know it today, starting a fashion which became a most elegant habit during the early Victorian era. But perhaps the person for whom Natale nurtures most respect is **Jim Sherwood**, who revived the **Orient Express** train service to Venice and in the process acquired the Cipriani in 1976 from the great **Guinness** brewing dynasty. Such was the reach of the Irish family, with so many Debrett's titles under their belt they became known as The Beerage! Enter Natale as General Manager. Mr Sherwood, founder of Sea Containers, a Bermuda based company engaged in marine containers, asset leasing and ferry and port operators, and Natale, together with Mr Sherwood's wife Dr Shirley Sherwood, made a powerful symmetrical force in restoring the distressed fabric of the Cipriani after years of under-investment. **The Venice Simplon Orient Express (VSOE)** brand grew quickly and now has more than thirty hotels, trains, cruise ships and game parks in twenty two countries, under its ownership or management. It was Natale's eye for detail that made him such a formidable operator. Now **Maurice Saccani**, who trained under Natale, has taken over the running of the Cipriani in its 50th year - a lucky man to have such a legacy in place. Meanwhile Natale's son Pietro is working for Gastronome **Paolo Biscioni** General Manager down the canal at the relatively new **Hilton Molino Stucky** which is a former flour mill on Giudecca island.

We indeed wish Natale and Connie many happy years in his retirement.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held at the Excelsior Hotel in Hong Kong on Tuesday 12th February 2008 during a wonderful reunion hosted by President Andrew Hirst.

With thoughts of a marvellous reception at the Mandarin Oriental and dinner at the China Club ahead of us, the Gastronomes present convened to discuss affairs close to their hearts. The consensus was that the Amicale is in very good shape and that the committee do indeed have a firm grip on the comings and goings of members, particularly during the closure of the Savoy.



▲ Duncan Palmer receiving the President's Platter from Chairman Jim Sarton under the watchful gaze of ??? (who is it?) (see page 8)

regarding the future of the Amicale in light of the Savoy's closure. The Committee are confident that with the influx of nearly 20 new members in the last few years and the enthusiasm they share for the Hotel and its history will help maintain the membership. It is also essential that already established communications are kept with The Savoy during its closure to ensure the new Reception team are aware of The Savoy Gastronomes and what they represent from the outset.

*The Presidents' Platter travelled with us to Hong Kong too and now must be the most travelled piece of silver flatware in use anywhere. Any Gastronome who would like to donate a lasting modest piece of silver, pewter or china to the Amicale is encouraged to do so.

The formalities were conducted by Chairman Jim Sarton, with his Chairman's Cup* on display, who gave his report detailing some of the recent events, committee retirements and appointments, subscription updates and the accounts. Julian Payne Snr provided an update on the current sponsorship by Lanson and Virginia Masser briefed the meeting on the continued success of the Olive Barnett Award.

The meeting drew to a close with a discussion raised by past President and Savoy General Manager **Willy Bauer**, and **Zdenka Bauer**,

NEW HONORARY SECRETARY - Anna Coakley



After nine years of time consuming service to the Savoy Gastronomes Committee as Honorary Secretary, Virginia Masser stepped down from her role in January this year. Her dedicated efforts for the Amicale led to the success of many events and the re-establishment of the Olive Barnett Award, with **Tony Elliott**, as a widely recognised and respected industry award. Certainly for many members she was and will continue to be an oracle for all things Gastronome!

Looking at the plaudits and achievements of my predecessors in the role it is with a certain amount of trepidation and awe that I take on the role as **Honorary Secretary**. I hope to help ensure the spirit of the Savoy Gastronomes continues for the years to come by being a point of contact for our newer members. Many of our newer members are at very transient times in their careers and it is important to keep in touch with them. I look forward to working with the Committee to enhance the communications to members but also to retain

the personal touch that is so important to the Amicale.

I joined The Savoy in 1998 as a Receptionist as part of my Hospitality Management degree. It did not take me long to realise how special a place it is and always will be, mainly due to how much people loved to stay there and the pride people had in working there. I stayed at The Savoy for the next eight years, made some great friends, saw three very different owners and worked for six different General Managers.

My first contact with The Savoy Gastronomes was in 2000 when the 30th Annual Reunion took place at The Savoy and the whole Reception team was on full alert with all these VIPs! The role of the Savoy Representative on the committee became available and with the lure of an occasional glass of Champagne I happily signed up! Little did I know what was in store for me; I have been on the committee now for seven years and have really enjoyed being part of a unique Amicale.

In 2006 it was fresh starts all round for me. I married Robin, moved home and finally left The Savoy to take on a new challenge within Corporate Reception Management in the City. Being part of the Savoy Gastronomes however, keeps me in touch with both the hotel industry and more importantly with the friends I made within it.

In my new found evenings and weekends I have been able to take up playing the flute again in local music groups and I am reluctantly enjoying being encouraged to join the gym.

BONJOUR NORMANDY

Founder member and long-time friend to many Gastronomes **Tony Elliott** upped sticks early in the year and has now settled in Normandy. He sent this electronic snapshot of his early days there.

"Life here is great - Francesca, Jonathan and the tribe (Tony's daughter, son-in-law and family) are getting settled next door and we are all adjusting to the wonderful laid back French life. Everyone we have met here has been helpful, extremely kind and very patient with our halting French - but we have managed, with help, to get the utilities, phone and internet connected - houses and cars insured - bank accounts opened - credit cards issued - schools organised - etc. Despite being in a very rural area, everything is very efficient, there have been some delays but it has all been much less of a hassle than moving within the UK. We have adjusted to the fact that shops close for lunch and are not open on Sundays, other than the

occasional supermarket that opens 'till noon and of course, and most important the baker. This week we hope to have the TV's connected to Satellite so we can catch up with the news in the UK and in my case Mr Wogan. We have already had a number of visitors (and very welcome they were) with many more booked in this summer, please do come and see us. We can offer peace and quiet, good food (we will be able to provide fresh eggs as we get our "flock" of chickens next week) and wine and lots to see and do in the area; or just a staging post for those going further south or travelling to Blighty."

Tony's new contact details are: La Moinerie, 50150 Sourdeval, Normandy, France a.m.elliott@hotmail.co.uk mob: +33(0)6 09 35 23 95

New Committee Members Paul Brackley



Currently General Manager at the Crowne Plaza London the City, Paul joins the committee as the newly named 2007 IHG General Manager of the Year for the UK and Ireland.

Congratulations are not only due for this achievement but also for his recent engagement to his partner Maria while staying at the Oriental in Bangkok, during our reunion.

An ex-Savoy Group Management Trainee Paul has worked on both sides of the Atlantic being moving from Front of House and Revenue Management, to overall hotel operations, also being actively involved in the re-branding of The Britannia and managing the transition of The Pierre Hotel in New York to a Taj Hotel. I hear that the Intercontinental Hotel Group, the world's largest hotelier shrugged off the credit crunch jitters with a 22% jump in first quarter profits. IHG has a target to open 50,000 - 60,000 new hotel rooms by the end of the year.

Paul enjoys playing squash and golf in his spare time and having hung up his rugby boots is now an enthusiastic spectator.

Terry J Foreman



Following his 1954 Graduation from the then Ealing Hotel and Catering College and two years National Service, Terry completed a five-year management training programme with the Savoy Company. In 1965, after a

period with Grand Metropolitan Hotels in London, he moved to New York to join the management team of the Sheraton Russell Hotel on Park Avenue.

An intended stay of two years in the USA expanded to thirty, including a stint abroad in 1973 as resident manager of the new Excelsior Hotel in Hong Kong. Returning to the United States in 1975 he joined the Fairmont Hotel Company in Dallas. In 1982 he joined Club Corporation of America, a resort hotel and private golf club management company. In the roll of management 'troubleshooter' with CCA he travelled the USA and Caribbean.

The last stop in the USA was a management position with Station Hotel and Casino Group in Las Vegas before returning to London in 1997. Retired since 2004, Terry is studying art history with the Open University, is secretary of the Old Metronians' Association and a volunteer at the Hospice of Saint John and Saint Elizabeth in London.

Claire Austin



Having been away from the 'Savoy scene' for some time, Claire says it was wonderful to attend the Members' Dinner in October 2007 at Threadneedle's. Claire is living in Royal Windsor, and was delighted to become engaged to Erik earlier this year. She loves her involvement with art and design, and is a member of The Chertsey Artists. In January 2008 Claire joined Portico as a Reservationist for Dresdner Kleinwort in the City and says that it is great to be working with Anna Coakley again, after all this time since leaving the Savoy in 2003.

The Savoy Gastronomes Archives

If any member would like to peruse the fascinating old menus and memorabilia that we have accumulated please contact Anna Coakley and she will lead them to you. Over thirty eight glorious years we have such gems as telegrams (remember them?), faxes (well yes, just), and other fine pieces of print that represent our heritage rather nicely. They are kept in three bound albums in Central London.

Payne II scrambled up 1,344 metre Ben Nevis, Britain's highest mountain, at the end of Loch Linnhe above Fort William, as part of a team building exercise he put together for his team at cool **Threadneedle's Hotel in the City**.

President **Duncan Palmer** was spotted at the **Lord Mayor's Show** in the City of London on the second Saturday in November 2007 enjoying this 800 year old spectacle for the first time. Incidentally, the Members' dinner this year is the day before the Lord Mayor's Show so Gastronomes who are in town might like to witness this wonderful pageant at that time.

Going . . . going . . . gone

Many members were spotted mooching around the **Savoy** prior to the **Bonham's** auction in mid-December 2007 of vast quantities of furniture, soft furnishings and all manner of kit, most in rather a sorry state. It was rather like visiting a once favourite aunt who had fallen on hard times. One wished one hadn't gone but the need to go was there all the same. It is alleged that at least two members of the Amicale snapped up a little *je ne sais quoi*. The sale raised **£1.8 million** - petty cash to the owner **Prince al-Walid bin Talal**, a member of the Saudi royal family, whose fortune is listed by Forbes as the world's 19th richest with a cool £11 billion under his belt.

Lanson Sponsorship



Paul Beavis, Managing Director of **Lanson International**, has kindly agreed to continue the sponsorship of the Gastronomes web-site. As a result of this the Amicale receives £500 and in addition considerable liquid support in the form of Champagne and wines for our events. We are indebted to Paul and his team. Please contact Paul or his Sales Manager Jessica Scarrett on 020 7499 0070 if you wish to stock Lanson or any of their brands.

Annual Subscriptions

If you have not already done so please let us have your annual subscription. Your cheque should be sent to the Treasurer maggi@gofishingworldwide.co.uk at 4 Paxton Road London W4 2QX

Change of Address

Please let us know if you are moving so that we may keep in touch with you.

Peter Tyrie's Berners Hotel to re-open in mid 2009

This property north of Oxford Street is undergoing a £100 million refurbishment. It will reopen as a 155 room luxury property to rival the very different in style terms Sanderson, diagonally opposite. Peter is overseeing the project and explains that it is a very traditional old building not dissimilar to his highly successful flagship Threadneedle's in the City of London where **Julian Payne Jnr** is General Manager. Berners has been vacant for more than two years and Peter plans to open it with some style. The property, built in 1835, as five town houses, was converted to an hotel at the turn of the 20th century. Peter says that it will be renamed as Berners does not have good connotations. A preferred name is apparently undergoing research. The re-opened hotel will have a stand alone restaurant with about 120 covers; a private dining room with about 22 covers; a conference room able to accommodate about 220 people for a meeting or 170 for dinner; a small gym; sauna solarium and treatment rooms make up the mix. Builders have found a traditional black and white marble floor in the lobby, ornate baroque ceilings and marble panels all of which are being restored. Part of the lobby will be a tea lounge. The public spaces will be very grand and will come back to their former glory. Rooms, apparently, will be "classic contemporary." GA Design are responsible for the design, headed up by **Martin Goddard**, with hotelier and former **Hyde Park Intercontinental Hotel** executive **Werner Aeberhard** at the helm. Watch this space.



Zoe Ties the Knot

Savoy Gastronome and ex-committee member **Zoe Clarke** and fiancé Simon Gale made their wedding into a truly memorable weekend for family and friends in East Sussex. With the wedding taking place on Friday 25th April, the happy couple were able to relax and enjoy the sunshine on the Saturday topped off with an impromptu BBQ for everyone before departing the following day for their Honeymoon in South Africa. After their efforts in the London Marathon we think they deserve a rest!



▲ **Tony Elliott and Peter Thomas** in Hermanus, South Africa. January 08

South Africa based **Peter Thomas** flew over to London over for the Members' only dinner at Bonds Restaurant in Threadneedles. (See story page 3).

THE CONNAUGHT REOPENS

After a £70 million refurbishment the Connaught reopened to the public in December. With the majority of the room stock due to be reopened by the end of the summer the public spaces have been creating a stir in Mayfair with their contemporary design subtly retaining the hotels unique charm.

Stephen Alder of Maybourne says "We have appointed the most talented design teams to bring this Mayfair gem into the 21st century while preserving the authentic elegance and distinct personality so beloved by its guests, and the results are truly remarkable."

The Maybourne Group kept the staff employed within the group to provide a reassuring welcome home to those regulars dazed and confused by the facelift.

France's most controversial female Chef and Author **Helene Darroze** opens her new Restaurant within the hotel in June, also taking on the job of catering for the Room Service and Private Dining which is reported to be the deal-breaker of the Ramsay connection with the property.

Monday being a normally quiet night in Dedham, **Jim and Wendy Sarton's** 25th anniversary of opening **Dedham Hall** was a modest low key affair nevertheless celebrated with a very fine glass of Prosecco. Jim has a terrific wine cellar - what might be called by some wags as a liquid pension.

Former President **Henry and Mary Lou von Ferstel** high tailed it to Venice, through the intervention of Michael Bentley, to celebrate their joint birthdays in November.

Blakes Hotel in Kensington has been re-sold to Guest Invest for £1m profit after just one year of ownership (again) by **Anoushka Hempel**, the Australian born wife of **Lord Weinberg**, who changed the date of her birth on her passport when marrying his Lordship so that she appeared older.

Gastronome **Mark Norris**, the majority shareholder of very successful global recruitment company **Profile**, based in Maiden Lane London, reports very strong growth particularly in India and China. Profile, celebrating thirty years' trading this year, has become a leader in the very competitive recruitment industry. When not at his desk or travelling, Hampshire based Mark, and his wife Gail, can be found enjoying his favourite sport - sailing. Mark has created a most informative industry wide newsletter called "Leaders" which can be viewed on www.profile-recruitment.com



▲ **Andrew Hirst** accepts the Presidents' Platter from **Peter Tyrie** at Threadneedle's

2007 Members' Dinner at Threadneedle's in the City of London

President **Andrew Hirst** flew into London specially to host last years Members' dinner arranged at Bond's Restaurant in Threadneedle's hotel, through the kindness of **Peter Tyrie** and his son Nick, who is the Food and Beverage Director for the Eton Collection. Head Chef, and former fisherman, **Barry Tonks** and his brigade did great job. The quality and attention to detail by the service staff was exemplary and commensurate with many other members' occasions. The menu was both delicious and innovative with the freshest Crab followed by gently pink Partridge. With nearly forty attendees some from overseas, **Michael Holland**, **Peter Thomas** and **Henry von Ferstel** included, plus five new members, the event began with a Lanson Champagne Reception and official handing over of the Presidents' Platter by Peter Tyrie to the year's President **Andrew Hirst**.

It was a highly successful evening and a great opportunity for members of the Amicale to see old friends and make new ones.

Forthcoming dates for which further information will be sent in due course

Summer Reunion - Saturday 12th July 2008

Private Tour of the Kitchen at Windsor Castle and Picnic Lunch

Members' Dinner - Friday 7th November 2008

Dinner at Artisan, The Langham Hotel, London

Annual Reunion - Friday 20th - Sunday 22nd March 2009

The Langham Hotel, London

John Iversen, former custodian of the one time Savoy-owned charming **Lancaster Hotel** in Paris, was over in England for a milestone birthday celebration at his sister's home near Wadhurst

French-based **Kirk and Sally Ritchie's** son Edward is working for a shipbroking firm in St James's Street. Now 6'3" tall Edward is determined to have an Aston Martin by the time he is 30! It seems to me that his Father also had a certain penchant for classic cars too. Their daughter **Annie** is now working for a venue called 24 London as an Events Manager and by all accounts seems to be loving it.

The Ritchie's are more settled in their house now and would really love to welcome **Gastronomes** feeling like a little break in the Tarn - they have the most stunning views of the Pyrenees from the garden and the sun is out.

Chicago based **Michael and Gisela Duffell** are planning an old fashioned sort of European Grand Tour this August starting in Paris. Heading first of all to Lake Constance to visit relatives, and then going south to see **Michael and Christine Holland** in the northern Italian Lakes, before turning back on themselves and meandering through France to call in on recently relocated **Tony Elliott** in Normandy. Sounds fun.

The 37th Annual Reunion Hong Kong and Bangkok

Much below normal weather temperatures did not dampen the spirit of the occasion and we are all hugely indebted to **Andrew Hirst** and all his **Excelsior** and **Mandarin** team for their wonderful hospitality. Detailed pre-planning with thousands of emails flying around and one or two conference calls all paid off as members assembled in Hong Kong, Black Ties at the ready. Table plans, dietary requests, individual foibles, room allocations, gifts, photographs, menu printing, speeches, transport, dress codes and local etiquette had all been taken into account by the Committee. The resounding success of the Reunion as echoed by messages subsequently received made it a Reunion to remember.



▲ The Savoy Gastronomes 37th Annual Reunion - Hong Kong

The Hong Kong sector as warmly remembered by Committee member Victoria Smalley

The Savoy Gastronomes 'went global' once again with a jam-packed visit to our International Hotelier and President of the Amicale, **Andrew Hirst's** resident city, Hong Kong. The 37th Annual Gastronomes Reunion lifted off on Sunday 10th February 2008 starting with a four night stay at The Excelsior Hotel and continuing in Bangkok, for the very lucky, with a three night stay at the legendary Mandarin Oriental.

My journey East began leaving London in a mad rush after work on Friday night, and heading for my overnight flight to Hong Kong to arrive with a full twenty four hours before the official Welcome Reception on Sunday night. Needless to say, I visited many of the local establishments before our tour began!

The **Excelsior Hotel** made us all very welcome. **General Manager Amanda Scott** and all her team were extremely hospitable - from our tour guides, to (very) late check outs, not to mention the array of gifts in our rooms to aid our four day adventure come rain or shine.

With the last few arrivals making a mad dash to their rooms for a quick freshen up, the **Welcome Dinner** began in TOTT's - '**Talk of The Town**', The Excelsior's chic contemporary thirty second floor bar and restaurant with spectacular harbour views.

After sumptuous welcome canapés and nicely chilled **Lanson** we enjoyed their finest cuisine - Beef Carpaccio, succulent Duck, and frozen berries with warm white chocolate sauce to name but a few of the many delightful dishes - washed down with some grassy pungent New Zealand wine. It was a jaw-dropping start to the Reunion and you could feel the excitement and momentum building up ready for a three day feast of activities and culinary delights.

Waking to the fabulous views of a 'hazy' Kowloon, we started Monday with a vast buffet breakfast with huge choice from homemade muesli, pancakes, 'eggy bread' and pastries - again the choice was endless. Eagerly awaiting us were our two coaches for the



▲ David Wardle and friends inspect their soon-to-be-lunch

day, with Norman and Maria at the helm, first stop - **The Peak**. After the steep incline on the Peak Tram that has been transporting tourists since 1888, we made it to the top of the Peak and could not help but be impressed with the unique spectacular views of the city, if indeed a little hazy.

After climbing down the Peak and in the warm comfort of the coach, our next stop was **Aberdeen** - possibly as cool as Scotland, but that's where the similarity ended. It is famous to tourists for the boat people living in the harbour and the floating seafood restaurants such as the impressive Jumbo Floating Restaurant, which we admired from our own boat which took us around the harbour taking in the sights and smells!

En route to our next destination, **Stanley Market**, we passed through **Repulse Bay**, a lavish seaside suburb of Hong Kong. Here we learnt about the good karma created by the large hole in one of major apartment blocks to allow the fire breathing dragon to pass through the building also known as Feng Shui.

Stanley Market can only be described as a one stop shop for souvenirs!

It was finally lunchtime - and we had built up an appetite and were ready for the local delicacies of the **Jade Garden restaurant**, possibly the biggest Chinese restaurant I had seen, full of large Chinese families soon to be joined by the Gastronomes en masse.

Aided by the brilliant invention that is the Lazy Susan, we

enjoyed the never ending plates of dim sum, chicken, rice, vegetables, shrimps and somewhat interesting 'soups'. After lunch we were left to explore, shop, or return for a well earned snooze before the evening's culinary banquet.

Led by Angus, we walked to our evening's destination, **Tai Wong Seafood Restaurant**, where we were greeted by the management and escorted to our private dining room, passing our supper along the way in an array of tanks! Here we were wined and dined with another selection of local delights, including some chicken's feet, which on my table a certain young lady was brave enough to sample!

Dinner was followed by a tea pouring competition, one recruited Gastronome from each table went head to head and their years of 'hospitality' training was put to the test. Needless to say, there was a tiebreaker and the restaurant very kindly gave a local tea set to the winners and job offers were also on the cards!

of the harbour and skyline, where we enjoyed a delicious continental **breakfast** and for some, a tour of the magnificent public areas.

The rest of the day was at leisure in preparation for the **Annual General Meeting** and an exciting evening ahead at **The China Club** in the Old Bank of China Building.

Members gathered in The Marina Room for the AGM. The Chairman began with a warm welcome and continued by introducing **Paul Brackley** and **Terry Foreman** onto the committee and saying farewell to **Tony Elliott** who is moving to France with his family. We continued with some productive discussions and it was then time to hop back onto the coach. This evening's first special cocktails at the exquisite **Mandarin Oriental** and to be welcomed by a fleet of its management and colleagues who escorted us to their new **M Bar on the 25th floor**. Welcomed by charming Irish **General Manager Peter French**, we



▲ The waiter presents the fish intestine soup to Catherine and Julian Payne Jnr and the Angell sisters

An excellent first day, rounded off in TOTT'S with their innovative cocktail list, live entertainment, and some funky moves on the dance floor. It was all agreed that in a few hours' time we were very much looking forward to the next action packed day ahead of us.

We travelled in style to the Big P - or so we thought - but in view of their fleet of fourteen Rolls Royce all finished in signature Peninsula Green, we were all but a little 'green' with envy ourselves. Escorted to the **28th floor of The Peninsula Tower**, we arrived at the **Felix Bar**, with its floor to ceiling double aspect sweeping views

toasted the 37th Annual Reunion with magnums of more **Lanson** and endured truly decadent canapés. The Foie Gras lollipops and succulent shrimp with a 'pipette injection' of Marie Rose sauce were some of my favourites.

The lobby stairs of The Mandarin Oriental were an ideal location for our **group photograph** and aided by our talented 'tour photographer' (a.k.a. Robin Coakley) we have some wonderful pictures of the whole group and of the committee headed up by our President and host Andrew Hirst.

With no time to spare we hot footed it over to the private



▲ (left to right) Michael Bentley, Maggi Smit and Julian Payne at the "Talk of the Town" in Hong Kong

Members Club, the China Club, for our much anticipated **37th Reunion Dinner** on the 14th floor, with its exquisite Art Nouveau-Oriental interior and it was here that Gastronomes enjoyed a fabulous evening of entertainment, fine wines and Chinese wares. We were entertained by guest speaker **Mr. Ritchie Bent,** Group Head of Human Resources for Jardine Matheson Limited. Before joining Jardine's, Ritchie spent several years with the Royal Hong Kong Police as Detective Chief Inspector with the Organised and Serious Crimes Group. Mr Bent entertained us with some amusing anecdotes and comical local pronunciations. The raffle draw followed swiftly, which **Anna Coakley,** our **Honorary Secretary** conducted with the assistance of **Suzannah Hirst,** who handed out the lucky prizes.

Lots of prizes were generously donated by fellow Gastronomes and friends, including an intriguing 'spinning class' and a fabulous overnight stay at **The Trump International** in New York. The committee is most grateful to all those who contribute to this fun part of our annual reunion.

With a last glass of bubbly on the roof terrace, we returned to the hotel ready for a good night's sleep in anticipation of our ferry trip and island walk the next day - finally an opportunity to burn off our 'g-astronomical' diet of the last few days!

Wednesday was quickly upon us, our final day. After another 'light' all you can eat breakfast, we excitedly followed our guides Norman and Maria out of the hotel and into the hotel car park! All became clear when we popped out on the other side of the bustling 'Gloucester Road' and were greeted by our **privately chartered glistening white**

"Rainbow" ferry to take us on our way towards **Lamma Island.**

The crossing was fairly smooth, if a little blustery, but offered some great photo opportunities for us all. We arrived at our destination about 45 minutes later - Lamma Island - and the sun appeared to be breaking through at last!

Lamma Island is 13 square miles, has 6,000 inhabitants and is a wonderful contrast to Hong Kong. It's peaceful, tranquil, has amazing scenery and there are no roads. It does have a significant and apparent Western population who have lived there for many years. We set off on our walk, passing friendly locals and taking in the peace and quiet, scenery and the somewhat 'fresher' air.

After a few rest points, we could see our lunch stop in sight, a restaurant called Rainbow - not before spotting some 'caves' on the path marked for tourists as 'kamikaze grottos'. Our ever knowledgeable guides informed us these were caves reputed to have been dug out by the Japanese during the War and, according to legend, to hide their kamikaze weapons!

Lunch once again was most welcome and enjoyable - plates of local delicacies, this time some closer to home - piping hot and aromatic, washed down with Jasmine tea or a thirst quenching glass of wine.

With the Rainbow boat waiting for us, tummies full and feeling contented, we boarded for the homeward straight - did we forget someone? Where is Julian Snr? He had spotted a photo opportunity too good to miss - picture taken and all accounted for we set sail.

Once home we had a few hours to relax and revive ourselves ready for the final evening's entertainment in Hong

Kong - **Happy Valley Racecourse.**

With a full lobby present at 6 pm, the Gastronomes boarded our coach for one last time and with wallets bursting, we headed for the vast **Members' Enclosure Private Box,** especially arranged for us by **Fritz Sommerau, Head of Hospitality Services at The Jockey Club.**

Hong Kong's main 'recreational' passion horse racing, is the only legal form of gambling and is extremely popular. According to a reliable source, the racecourse can pull several millions of dollars on one night - more than the whole of the Royal Ascot June meeting!

The international buffet was out of this world, the sashimi station and Boston Cheesecakes were personal favourites, but there was something for every palette, truly scrumptious, and of course, the wine was flowing and the evening in full swing.

There were indeed a few quietly confident race-goers amongst us, including Andrew Hirst himself, whose horse Sevens Heaven was sadly not running. However, like myself, pot luck was really what it was all down to and some members did walk away with heavier wallets than when they arrived!

The Races was truly a perfect end to a perfect trip

However, it was not the end for some Gastronomes, who were jetting off the next day to Bangkok, so after fond farewells most retired to pack ready for the early morning departure, but for the others, the draw of Lan Kwai Fong was an opportunity not to be missed!

To wind up my first Gastronomes reunion experience, I have to use a Berkeley Hotel phrase - it was **'above and beyond my expectations'.** One of my favourite hobbies is travelling and Hong Kong has always been on top on my list of places that I had wanted to visit. I am thrilled to have had the opportunity not only of visiting the magnificent city, but I also feel that I now know my fellow Gastronomes along with their friends and family so much better. Thank you.

EDITOR'S NOTE. *Space does not permit us to recount the add-on part of the reunion to Bangkok except to thank in particular Kurt Wachveitl the Managing Director of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel and all his team for wonderful and kind hospitality.*

Global traveller **Andrew Hirst** was spotted in **Washington DC** in February checking out the Mandarin operations around the seat of power.

Many congratulations to **Rupert and Jo Elliott** on the safe arrival of their first child, Poppy, born on 7th February 2008.

Hans Hanson's wife Louise was spotted behind a very good looking stall in the Drapers Hall at a charity fair in the City of London just before Christmas, selling like fury wonderful items from their thriving kitchen shop in Newark www.thecookspantry.co.uk. Word from the Square Mile is that Louise has been invited back to participate in this year's event. More recently I hear that Hans is not at all well so if you were a contemporary of Hans do call Louise on 01636 525768 and she will tell you more.

Former Savoy Press Office team member **Shelly Anne Claircourt** partnered the Chief Executive of the **Savoy Educational Trust Julia Sibley** to Hong Kong. They took off smartly to Dubai directly after the Happy Valley racing evening. It was nice to have Julia with us as the Trust plays such a pivotal role in the continuing success of the Olive Barnett Award.

It was great to see Harrogate-based **Anne and Alan Robinson** in Hong Kong, arriving via Paris, after an absence of some years. Alan clocks up thousands of car miles a year working for Elixir's Avenance group catering division. They had a wonderful holiday in Puglia recently and found it just to their liking. They had been hoping to make it to Edinburgh but sadly a family bereavement curtailed their plans.

As a token of our gratitude **Chairman Jim Sarton** presented **Andrew Hirst** with a very pretty set of Edwardian **silver enamel cufflinks,** and Amanda Scott with a very hard to find copy of **Stanley Jackson's** book of the Savoy.

Still the waste land of the Fens for a quality hotel after decades, I hear that **Mandarin** are still hoping to open in the glorious city that is **Cambridge.**

Former Lygon Arms trainee and home-based in Evesham, **Rachel Angell,** has landed a great new job as **Senior Events Manager** at the **Mandarin Hyde Park.** The Lygon, now under the control of Spanish Group Barcelo, is a very different place from that when it was known to many Gastronomes under the direction of Douglas Barrington and **Kirk**

Ritchie. Barcelo, a privately owned company that runs 140 hotels in 14 countries entered the UK market through its acquisition of Dawnay Shore Hotels.

Sartons add 4 new rooms. You would think that after twenty five years ownership of highly successful Dedham Hall that Chairman Jim and Wendy might wish to relax a bit but none of it! Onwards and upwards they go with a stylish addition of four rooms to add to their bombproof business of looking after art classes who return again and again and again.

Julian and Catherine Payne, logging up the air-miles with Air New Zealand, returned to HK after 9 years. At that time Julian was at the Mandarin and Catherine at the **Ritz Carlton** which sadly has now been pulled down. Such is Hong Kong. They met up with many old friends and stayed on a few days to catch their breath. A long time friends of the Payne's, affectionately known locally as "Smiler", came with them to Happy Valley and gave some Gastronomes winning tips. Likewise **Hugh and Lynne Wainwright** were on a nostalgic trip as they used to work at the Mandarin too. Hugh is now Group Events Manager for privately owned Oxford based Elegant Cuisine catering company and gave us wonderful picnic rucksacks at our 2007 Summer event at Kew; his former Claridge's housekeeper wife Lynne works for the HR division of the Oxford Constabulary.

Thank you

We are most grateful to everyone who kindly donated prizes (some quite creative!) to the Raffle which included two nights at the Trump Tower in New York, given by **Suzie Mills,** and the opportunity to play golf at Loch Lomond, donated by **Knut Wylde.** Treasurer **Maggi Smit** won **free parking,** and transfers, near Gatwick airport, with a car wash thrown in for good measure! Whilst guest, former Hilton in the Community Director, David Irving, won a **Walking Tour and Lunch in the City of London.**

Surely not?

I cannot confirm this but I hear HK\$60 million was fluttered at Happy Valley during our evening race meeting. Well done Gastronomes!

Former President **Yossi Heksch,** loyally participating with his charming wife Sylvia, divulged that he is diversifying by investing in coffee bars in Poland.

GARDEN TOUR

More often found in enchanting **Asolo** and the environs, old friend of many Gastronomes **Michael Bentley,** who was born in the **Marine Hotel in Troon,** and subsequently went on to serve breakfasts to **Joan Crawford, Bette Davis, Orson Wells and Charlie Chaplin,** was caught on camera staying at **Graham Bamford's Royal Garden Hotel** en route to have tea at **Woburn Abbey.** He was with a small group of very smart Italians he had been escorting through the finer parts of London.

Singapore born **David Wardle** is now working for his family business and developing modest property interests in Cuba.

Long time Arabian based **Guy Epsom** has moved within Hilton to **Abu Dhabi**. Guy gave us a very special Reunion some years back in **Dubai**, with a **vintage Lanson** tasting in the desert, a display of Falconry and much generous hospitality. A picture in our archives of former **Chairman David Ward in Black Tie** (of course) astride a disinterested camel in the middle of nowhere, draped in a Union Flag, remains synonymous with the wonderful 2002 gathering. As our **Guest of Honour, Her Majesty's Consul General for the United Arab Emirates**, said to me at the time "Do you think that is an appropriate use of the flag!"

The Savoy Educational Trust has taken temporary space in the British Hospitality Association offices during the closure of the Savoy. Their future location, once the Savoy reopens, remains unclear at the moment.

Terry Foreman, who was the first Resident Manager of the Excelsior Hotel in Hong in 1978, has taken control of the Olive Barnett Award following Tony Elliott's move to France. Virginia Masser will remain to work alongside Terry in re-evaluating the award and the way forward.

Herbert and Susan Sossna attended the reunion in Hong Kong, which is their home town so they didn't have far to come!

Ray Hodder, who keeps his head down in pretty West Dorset, is a very successful restaurateur in **Weymouth** but allegedly also spends some time consulting for his local Marks and Spencer. Ray is no doubt waiting with baited breath for the **Olympic** sailing teams who will sail into the bay in 2012.

Former President and now Dulwich based **Willy and Zdenka Bauer** arrived in HK via Vietnam.

Maggi Smit and friends went on a walking holiday to Burma whilst the **Payne's (Senior)** peeled off for a week's R & R to island paradise Koh Chang some 350 kms south of Bangkok.

Australian born **Ian Johnston** reappeared in Bangkok, after many years off our radar, and met up with us and in particular his former colleague David Wardle. It was very good to see him again.

Twitterers from my warbler on the river bank spotted glamorous **Anna Roberts** making whoopee at her recent birthday bash at **The Depot** restaurant in **Barnes** where riverside tables are in much demand. Anna is back working for the **Annabel's Group** under the new owner Richard Caring who bought this iconic club together with Mark's Club, Harry's Bar, the Bath and Racquets Club, and the most recent baby George's, just before the sudden death of creator **Mark Birley**. His death, and sale, sent shock waves through the staff and members alike and the jury is still out on the future direction of the group.

Mustique loses its mystique if you live at the end of a runway

The 2007 *Gnome de Plume* carried an exclusive story from this island paradise about the island's owners looking for a new CEO. I can now reveal that this retreat for billionaires which was looking to replace Brian Alexander, who had been in the job for 28 years, has got its self into a lather as the new incumbent is not a happy bunny. My billionaire on the beach gossips that Roger Pritchard (a former DHL exec) is very unhappy with the house he's been given. The new guy has been given a two up two down tin roofed job at the end of the runway. Cleared for take-off then.



▲ A youthful Willy Bauer and Gerard van der Veen taken at the Savoy in 1974.

Savoy Gastronomes Olive Barnett Award 2008

Much time consuming work is spent every year by Gastronomes **Tony Elliott** and **Virginia Masser** in making this award happen; and we should all be very grateful for their efforts. Miss Barnett would indeed be proud that The Savoy Gastronomes, an Amicale of which she was quietly very proud, had fostered her name so appropriately.

Eight inspiring young people, out of the seventy who entered, employed in customer-facing roles battled it out for the 2008 final at The Langham, London.

The finalists were chosen from a 500-word essay on the question:

'Climate change, the environment, 'going green' and being a 'good' employer, are increasingly on everyone's agenda, if you were asked to put together a strategy for your company to embrace these issues as part of a Corporate Social Responsibility programme, what would your top four priorities be and why? Explain how you would ensure that you were balancing the interests of the business with a more altruistic approach, particularly how you would demonstrate value to the customer?'

On 18th May the finalists met up at The Langham, for a training programme with Learnpurple and Ian Scarth of the Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne followed by a pre-final dinner. On the following day they presented their career plans to the panel, facing some tough questioning. The judges were looking for real commitment and excellence in the winner, who received an enviable prize package to help them continue up the ladder to success.

The winner, **Edward Viita**, was announced at a Champagne reception at Claridge's later that evening.

First prize is a career grant of £1,000 a year for the next three years, plus a place on the prestigious week-long Lausanne Executive Education - Summer Programme at the world-famous Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne. Second and third prizes include career development grants of £750 a year for three years, and £500 a year for three years respectively.

The 2008 finalists were:

Sabrina Hencke, 25, Graduate Trainee Manager, IHG, Crowne Plaza London - The City

Simon Houston, 24, General Manager, BaxterStorey - BBC Pacific Quay

Vivi Iladou, 29, Guest Relations Manager, Intercontinental London Park Lane

Sarah Ingram, 26, Operations Manager, Holborn Bars, De Vere Venues, London

Alice Yu, 24, Trainee Manager, Compass Group - Scolarest

Bee Chin Tan, 24, Front Office Management Trainee, The Rubens at the Palace Hotel, London

Edward Viita, 25, Deputy Bars Manager, The Langham, London

Tatjana Meyer, 29, Food & Beverage Operations Manager, The Langham, London

Will 20% off keep Americans wild about Harry's?

Former legendary hotelier and most generous host to the Amicale, **Natale Rusconi**, will have views, like perhaps **Ernest Hemingway** who would have been appalled by the implied insult to "poor" Americans: **Harry's Bar**, the Venice watering hole where he downed martinis, is offering a discount to Americans suffering from a weak dollar and the subprime mortgage crisis. My sleuth in Venice shared the screaming headline in *Corriere della Sera* "Dollar in crisis, discount for Americans" with me. About time too, some might say: the site may be prime, with the sound of the Grand Canal lapping just feet away, but the prices are so steep that you need a mortgage to pay the check, especially if you stand a few rounds at the bar then you stay to enjoy the menu (the discount applies only to those who eat as well as drink). The decision by Arrigo Cipriani, the owner, reflects growing concern about the weak dollar among tour operators in Europe - not least in Italy, there the number of Americans visiting is down by 5 per cent and officials fear more will stay away this year. Harry's Bar was founded in 1931 by Giuseppe Cipriani, Arrigo's father, then a barman at a Venice hotel. He named his establishment after **Harry Pickering**, an American who lent him the money. The Cipriani family company now owns restaurants and food shops in New York and Hong Kong and recently opened a branch near Bond Street in London. No discounts there though - at least not yet.

PHOTO CAPTION PAGE 3

The picture on page 3 hanging behind Jim Sarton and Duncan Palmer is a portrait by John Singer Sargent and is of the author "Henry James". This is a painted copy of the original which hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.

Please let us know if you have a story for Gnome de Plume which we can include in the next edition.

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