



August 29th 2022

Christian de Billy (1928-2022)

Maison Pol Roger pays homage to Christian de Billy, who died on 26th August at the age of ninety-three. Born at Epernay in 1928, a historic and auspicious vintage year in Champagne, he devoted more than seventy years to the direction of the family enterprise founded by his great-grandfather, Pol Roger, in 1849.

Throughout his life, Christian de Billy worked tirelessly to preserve the family character of the business. The Maison owes him a huge debt in terms of the preservation of both its reputation for excellence and its independence. This legacy of Christian de Billy will continue in the hands of his three daughters, Laurence, Evelyne and Veronique, who sit on the *Conseil de surveillance*, and of his son Hubert, member of the *Directoire*, while his grandson Bastien occupies the role of *Secrétaire General* of Pol Roger, to which he was appointed in October 2020. In this way the Billy and Pol-Roger families will lead the company forward with the same resolve that was applied at its foundation six generations ago.

Grandson of Maurice Pol-Roger, who was Mayor of Epernay at the time of the Great War, Christian de Billy joined the heart of the family enterprise in the centenary year of the Maison. Appointed Export Director in 1953, he became *President Directeur General* in 1977. He created the *Conseil de surveillance* in 1998, of which he became President, before handing over the reins to his daughter Veronique in 2019. Still deeply engaged in the family business, he has been retaining a seat on the *Conseil de surveillance* until the end.

Christian de Billy's long career was distinguished by a number of key decisions which were to form the enduring "model" of Pol Roger. In order to ensure the independence of the House, he took the decision to significantly increase the size of the family-owned vineyard, thereby enabling Pol Roger to draw up to 50% of its supplies from its own production. Convinced of the need both to refresh the image of the Pol Roger brand and to diversify the offering, he launched the Rose vintage *cuvée* in 1961 and the Blanc de Blancs vintage *cuvée* in 1965.

Keen to nurture the links with the family of the "Grand Lion", he masterminded the creation of the *cuvée* Sir Winston Churchill and presided over its launch on the market in 1985, twenty years after the Statesman had passed away. And finally, he oversaw the creation of Pol Roger's UK subsidiary in 1990, with a view to consolidating the presence of the brand on its leading export market. This action had significantly contributed to obtain, in the early 2000's, the Royal Warrant delivered by her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II.

Deeply committed to local affairs, Christian de Billy brought his energies to bear on both the region and wines of Champagne through a wide range of voluntary activities, among them the *Chambre de Commerce*, the *Comité Champagne*, the *Ordre des Coteaux*, and the *Mairie d'Epernay* where he was appointed as municipal councillor. His exceptional courtesy, his deep knowledge of the vineyards and his warm personality contributed richly to the promotion of the appellation, whether in France or abroad. Following the loss of Christian Pol-Roger in December 2020, another of Champagne's foremost ambassadors has left us.



Picture 1: from left to right: Winston Churchill (grandson of Sir Winston Churchill), Mary Soames (daughter of Sir Winston Churchill) and Christian de Billy at the launch of the Sir Winston Churchill vintage at Blenheim Palace in 1984

Picture 2: Mr Christian de Billy

Picture 3: from left to right: Evelyne de Billy, Bastien Collard de Billy, Véronique Collard de Billy, Christian de Billy, Hubert de Billy and Laurence de Billy

Pol Roger is a family house that has remained fiercely independent for more than 170 years and after 6 generations.

This very traditional Champagne House, internationally acclaimed by lovers of fine wines for the quality of its products, is also famous for being Sir Winston Churchill's favourite champagne.



Contacts presse

Diane Galland et Brigitte Barron

VIVACTIS PUBLIC RELATIONS

Tel : 01 46 67 63 44 – 06 95 12 09 33

b.barron@vivactis.fr