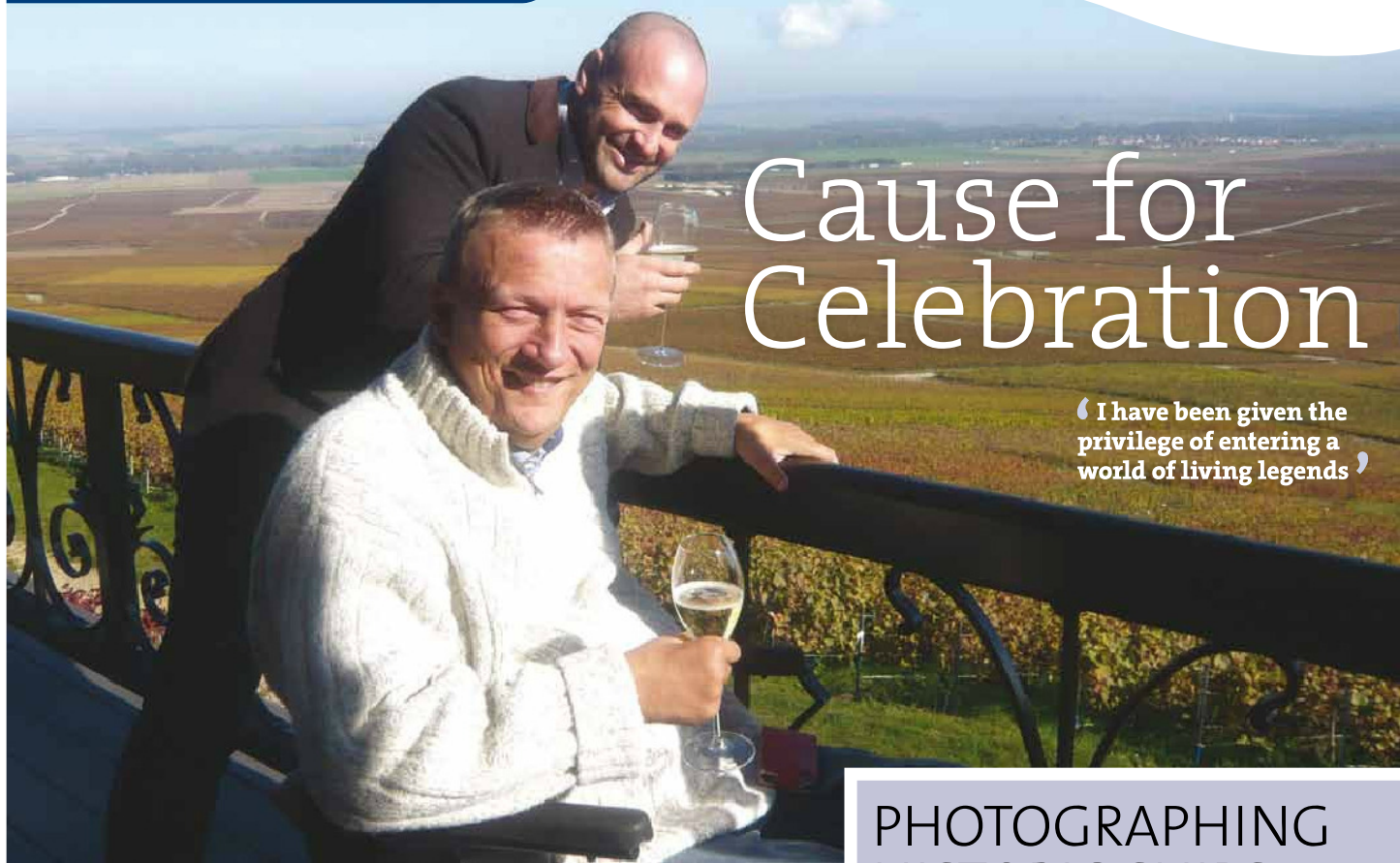


# GEOFF HOLT

YJA YACHTSMAN OF THE YEAR 2010

The former professional yachtsman who was paralysed in a swimming accident and inspired sailors when he became the first quadriplegic to sail the Atlantic.



## Cause for Celebration

‘I have been given the privilege of entering a world of living legends’

Amazon explorer Ed Stafford at the Moulin de Verzenay overlooking the vineyards

If Le Sabrage is not on your ‘100 things to do before you get old’ list then think again.

To open a bottle of champagne by a single blow from a sword is guaranteed to raise your testosterone levels and impress the ladies to boot.

OK, so it took more than one strike of my mighty sword before I popped my cork but the assembled guests seemed no less impressed.

In performing my Sabrage on the

steps of the imposing 19th century Chateau Mumm, I was partaking in an initiation ceremony into the esteemed Cordon Rouge club, an elite band of modern-day explorers and adventurers run by champagne Mumm’s delightfully charming Charlie Bell.

I have been given the privilege of entering a world of living legends; the likes of Sir Ranulph Feinnes, Ewen McGregor, David Hempleman-Adams, our very own Sir Robin Knox-Johnston,

Dame Ellen MacArthur, Dee Caffari, Mike Golding, Brian Thompson, not to mention Ben Fogle, Chris Bonnington, et al.

As part of the initiation treat, we were afforded 48 hours of the finest first-class hospitality in Reims, the heart of Champagne country in France.

After a journey from London to Paris by Eurostar and a car ride to Reims, we arrived at the Grand Cru of champagne chateaux, GH Mumm et Cie. Evening dinner, cooked by their very own chef was in the chateau itself, eating a champagne-paired menu.

Acknowledging my philistine roots, I had no idea how good the right wine can taste when matched with the right food. If you are looking for Holt’s top-tip I can thoroughly recommend the Mumm Blancs-de-Blancs with seared scallops.

The following day, we were given a tour of the extensive Mumm cellars, a staggering 25 kilometers of penicillin-mould covered tunnels carved out of the chalk some 50-feet beneath the surface of the chateau housing a thirst-inducing eight million bottles of champagne.

Amazon explorer Ed Stafford and I made the mistake of drinking, instead of “tasting”, our six different glasses of champagne at the tasting session and were summarily ticked-off for giggling like naughty schoolboys which, of course, only made us worse.

Our two-day treat ended with another

## PHOTOGRAPHING HISTORIC SHIPS

I HAD the pleasure of being asked to be one of the judges for this year’s 2011 National Historic Ships photographic competition which was announced in November.

I know what I like in a picture but that does not mean others will agree. Like any art form, photography is by nature, subjective and will mean different things to different people.

To be honest, I hadn’t fully understood the depth of appreciation that is required to choose a winning picture, made all the more difficult when confronted by so many, equally worthy, equally impressive images from “snappers” of all ages.

Composition, light, innovation, creativity and technical aptitude being just some of the criteria by which we had to judge.

Having whittled the entries down to a few dozen, six other judges and I combined our scores to determine the winner.

Aboard one of the UK’s foremost historic ships, HMS Belfast, on a bitterly cold, crisp, clear autumnal day on the River Thames, the overall winner was announced as Mike Garlick with his excellent entry, Maybird.

Congratulations to Mike and all the other entrants whose photographs captured a cross-section of Britain’s national historic ships and many of the traditional skills and the passionate owners that keep them afloat.

[www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/](http://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/)

champagne-paired meal, this time lunch at Mumm’s very own windmill, le Moulin de Verzenay, set on a rocky outcrop with views extending across tens of thousands of acres of Reim’s finest champagne vineyards.

It is a truly magical setting and, with a few more flutes of their finest vintage champagne accompanying yet more

delicious food, it was a great end to a magnificent mini-adventure.

The Chinese chicken curry we had when we got back home that evening seemed very ordinary indeed and, I can confirm, it does not pair well with a vintage 2000 champagne.

I knew I should have paid more attention at the wine tasting session.



Geoff Holt celebrating his award