

# Late letters

## Fermenting for 9 years!

Mr. Harry G. Stout from Bridgeville, Pa., U.S.A. writes:

You may find the following a bit hard to believe. On 16th December, 1964, I started 3 gallons of wine using 4 oz. of Dold Kunstmostansatz, 6 lb. of sugar which I inverted with 21 gm. of tartaric acid, and S.V. Sauternes yeast. It began to ferment on the next day and has never stopped! It has never been racked, is quite clear, and the fermentation is fairly vigorous to this day. I'm letting it go just to see if it will ever stop!

## How sensible

National Judge, Mr. D. W. Lancaster of Alresford, Hampshire writes:

How sensible of the organisers of the Wales and West to award white badges to the short-listed wines in each class as a mark of their good quality. So often the difference in quality between the winners and the rest of the short list is very small, but unnecessarily disheartening for the competitors concerned, who have not been able to judge the wines for themselves.

I hope that the use of these badges will rapidly extend to other major competitions, especially the National.

The next step will be to mark those entries of such poor quality that they are virtually undrinkable, let alone of uncompetitive standard. This is not exaggeration and at times we judges fear for the health of the makers—or do they just keep them for competitions? Perhaps a black cap fitting over the bottle would be appropriate.

The ultimate step would be to quantify these awards and penalties when the entries qualify for a circle entry, for example bonus points for every short-listed bottle and penalty

points for those with the black cap. This is quite fair, for if the circle is seeking the honour of winning a cup in its name, it should accept the responsibility for seeing that what is entered in its name is of a reasonable standard. I see no reason why circles should not invite National Judges to do this if they cannot do it for themselves.

Although pride in the presence of several thousand bottles of home-made wine at a National Conference may have been justifiable ten years ago, some of us are more concerned that, although the number of entries remains high, the average quality remains low. This is nothing to be proud of.

## Hydrometers since 1805

Mr. H. R. Mein, Managing Director of Peter Stevenson Ltd., of Edinburgh sends this interesting letter:

We read Mr. Duncan Gillespie's article on W. H. Roberts book "The British Winemaker" in your October issue with particular interest, as the maker of the saccharometer that Mr. Roberts was so enthusiastic about founded our firm, back in 1805.

It may interest your readers to know that the Allan's Saccharometer referred to was the instrument approved for use by the Customs & Excise in 1816 (1st July 1816 Act 56 George III Cap 106 Sec 20) for "ascertaining the Gravity of Worts or Wash", and was a very popular saccharometer for many years.

Alexander Allan went into partnership with Peter Stevenson, after whom the firm is named, and was succeeded by him, and by his son and grandson. The firm became a limited company in 1926, but remained under Stevenson control until 1966, when it was taken

over by the present owners, the late Peter Stevenson having no children.

One point we would like to make in your pages is that professional brewers still refer to the hydrometer they use as "Saccharometers", and that the present day saccharometer is generally an extremely accurate glass hydrometer made to a particular brewery's specification, although a few (very few) metal saccharometers are still used.

