

Show Us Your Wares!

Roy Ekins, National judge and roving reporter, gives his verdict on the shows available to winemakers . . .

In the dim and distant past of 1959 a group of winemakers got together and staged the very first national amateur wine show at Andover. This was a one-day show, attended by 170 enthusiasts from all over the country.

From this nucleus grew the National Association of Winemakers, a title later changed to The National Association of Wine and Beermakers (Amateur), more commonly referred to as NAWB. Beer-making at home has grown to an amazing extent and justified the change of name; no less than 16 of the 56 bottle classes in this year's National are for beers of various sorts.

The first Chairman of the Association was Cyril Berry, founder of the 'Amateur Winemaker' magazine (now 'Wine-maker and Brewer'), who was succeeded by a series of other famous names that form virtually a roll of honour for the hobby. Many well-known winemakers and brewers have given unstintingly of their time and labour for years as committee members, and it would be unfair to select individuals for mention among such a plethora of praiseworthy workers.

The main, obvious, activity of NAWB is to stage what is almost certainly the world's biggest amateur wine and beer show. To do this calls for year-round work and extensive travelling by a small committee made up of members from all over the country; the average member travels about 200 miles for each meeting, so meetings are all-day affairs held quarterly to keep down overhead costs.

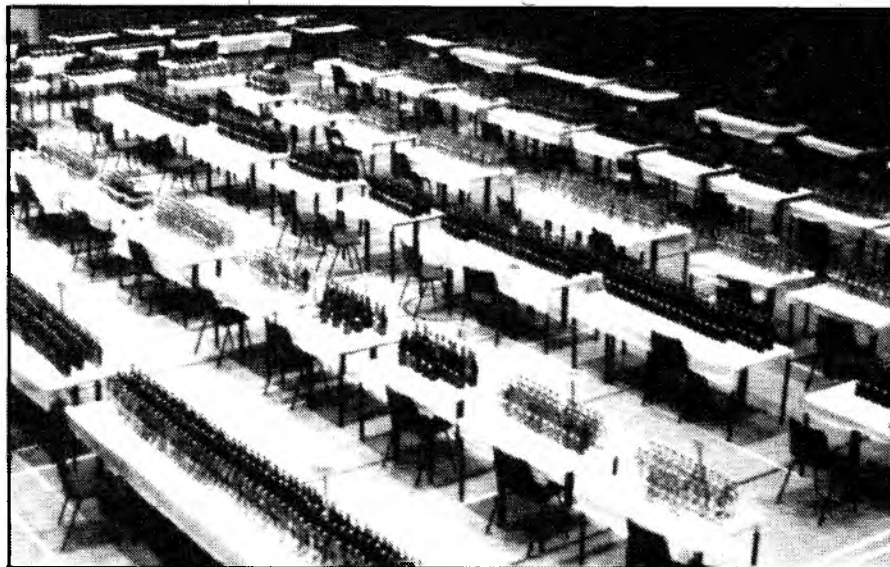
As NAWB's membership is scattered throughout Britain, the Annual Show & Conference is held at a different venue each year. Varied places have been used — universities, holiday camps, conference towns and coastal resorts — so all parts of the country can in turn play host. This year NAWB is visiting Scarborough, as guests of the Mayor and Corporation and the show takes place on April 11th-13th.

1987 will see our first visit to Wales, when we shall be visiting Llandudno, that suntrap near beautiful Snowdonia. Last year's show was at Eastbourne, and the preceding year at Nottingham.

Moving the show round this way means that all members have at some time an opportunity of attending the Conference, which forms a part of each show, without having to travel long



Wine and beer shows are usually good fun, here can be seen the pirates at Eastbourne!



A show is often considered 'big' when an entry of 1,000 is achieved. Many have much more than this, though, and this picture shows an entry of 4,036.

distances. Also, the local liaison and hard work assisting in setting up the show — and a 4,000-bottle show takes a lot of physically hard endeavour — does not keep falling on the same local wine circle members.

The format of the National Show is continually under review to ensure it is kept up to date with the constant changes in the hobby, and it has thus

become a model to be copied by many other federations and circles. All wine and beer entries are judged by members of the National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges, a body set up under the auspices of the National, and formed as an independent Guild in 1964, with Mr. S. A. Andrews as Chairman. Close links with the Guild have been maintained ever since.

Other Major Shows

Although the National is easily the biggest amateur wine and beer, show, attracting winemakers' and brewers' entries from all over the country (and even, this year, from Australia), there are of course many other large shows to attract both the home wine and beermaker interested in showing, and those hobbyists whose primary interest is the social side of the fancy. This is a hobby big enough to cater for all types of enthusiast; the great range of interests of the people within the hobby is one of its great attractions — health foods, bee-keeping, bottle collecting, touring vineyards, photography, country dancing — you name it, we've got it; all part of the rich tapestry known as wine and beermaking.

I will give, in the following paragraphs, a broad outline of a selection of the major shows held each year. It cannot be definitive; what criteria can you apply that would include regional shows such as the Scottish and the Northern Ireland shows, neither of which as far as I know has topped 1000 bottle entries, without including many other more localised shows that do have a greater number of entries? So this list is a personal selection, most of which I have visited at some time. If your favourite show is not among them, then please accept that these below are a representative selection by the writer. And if the omission offends, then the solution is simple — invite me as one of your judges next year! Have glass, will travel!

Pre-eminent among shows are those that cater for winemakers — for brevity, this term should be taken to include beer brewers, liqueur blenders, rhyme writers, flower arrangers, cooks and chefs, stand builders, label designers, and all the other assorted competitors, as well as their friends, family, guests, lovers, and various relatives and associates that enjoy shows and show weekends — winemakers, as I was saying, from a region, not just from one or two local groups. Most of the Federation Shows are of this nature, and as there is such a show held three miles away from my home each year I will deal with that one first.

The North Western Federation Of Amateur Winemaking Societies

This is an association of about 120 circles, from Douglas, IOM, to Mexborough in Yorkshire, from Chester, and Bognor in N. Wales, to the

Solway Circle in the north of Cumbria. Each year the Federation holds its Conference and Show at Pontin's Holiday Village, Ainsdale, Southport, and attracts about 800 or more residents and over 2,000 entries.

A full weekend is planned, with children's fancy dress, a dance and wine princess competition on Friday evening, demonstrations, circle stands and trade stands, an 'Any Questions' panel, and a carnival dance on Saturday evening with the most incredible collection of fancy dress you will see outside of Mardi Gras — whole

circles dress up as one theme, and the effect is stunning. Sunday morning brings a well attended talk by some person of note within the hobby, followed by the distribution of the many awards.

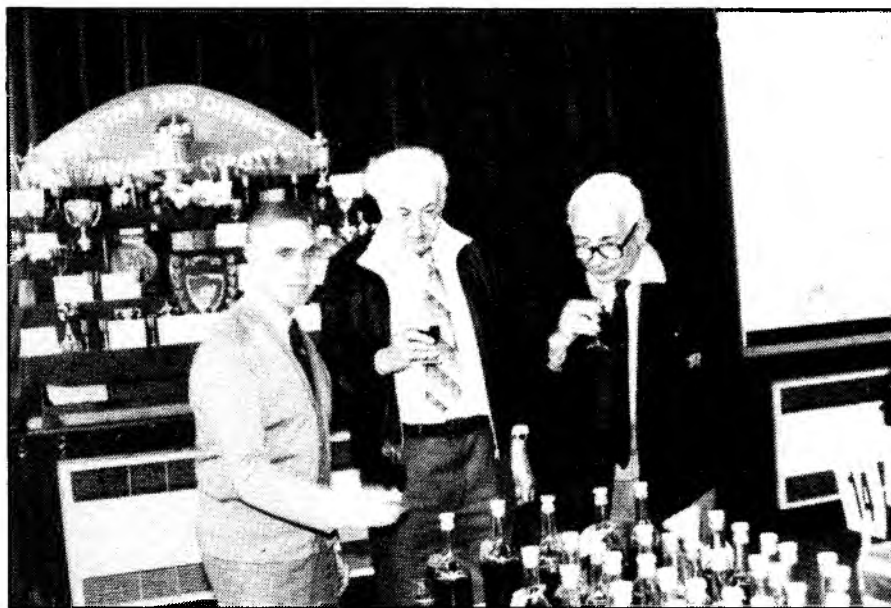
Many families attend this show weekend, and judges and competitors come from all over England and Wales, as far apart as Tyneside and Kent. Altogether a remarkable event; 1986 will be its nineteenth year, the show being held on October 10-12.

The Wales and West of England Winemaking Circles

This federation holds its annual get-together at another Pontin's Holiday Centre, Brean Sands in Somerset, each May. This, too, is a great family



The trophy presentation is an important part of every show.



Judging at the Preston Show. John Keeley (NGWBJ); Harry Pimner (NW Fed) and Fred Simpson (NW Fed).

occasion, with Federation members from all over the region, as well as many visitors from other areas; sixty-four circles took part in the 1985 show, from as far as London and Manchester.

This show has 51 different classes, including some unusual one such as 'An original cartoon depicting some aspect of wine or beer making', or, 'A set of six photographs'. As well as the dances there are talks and tastings, panels, and so on, with activities for the children, a swimming pool for the energetic, and other sporting attractions.

Last year the Wales and West attracted some 1,200 residents and about 3,000 bottles as entries for its 21st Anniversary Show, and there is no reason why this should not be exceeded in May 1986. The weekend lasts until Monday, as it includes a Bank Holiday (May 2nd-5th), and Pontins have a special tariff of £22 for this long self-service weekend.

The Midland Federation Show

This is held each autumn — this year on November 15th. It is not a residential weekend, but a very busy one-day show run for the members of the more than thirty circles in the region. The Midland Region Amateur Winemakers' Federation will be holding its twentieth festival this year at Lichfield, and I expect it will follow the usual pattern of several hundred entries being judged on the Saturday morning, followed by lunch, then Judges at the Bar, various trade stands, and a speaker. This year Sainsbury's, the nationally famous chain-store, are presenting a talk and free tasting of some of their wines. The day ends with a dinner dance, at which the trophies are awarded, and it is invariably a most enjoyable day out.

1986 is the second year at Lichfield, but the show usually visits a different venue each year, to give different circles a turn at the work it entails, and to allow all the member's circles to attend without travelling too far every year.

The Yorkshire Federation

By contrast, The Yorkshire Federation holds its annual show over a weekend, normally in June, at the Spa complex at Scarborough. Well over 2,000 bottles are benched in this rebuilt complex almost at the water's edge at the foot of Scarborough's cliffs. Friday evening includes the bottle reception and a social, with the judging on Saturday morning and various activities in the afternoon. Saturday evening sees the Federation as guests of the Mayor and Corporation for a very pleasing cabaret and dance. On Sunday a talk is given by some notable guest, and then the weekend ends with the presentation of the trophies. 1986 will see the Show come of age, with it's being staged for the eighteenth time.

The Sussex Federation

Sussex holds its annual show at Haywards Heath, at the Clair Hall, and can expect over 1,000 entries. The 26 member societies also enjoy a buffet supper dance in the evening, and the Federation organises various other functions during the year, such as seminars, coach trips, and a hotel weekend. Such events are, of course, arranged by most other Federations, and include tours abroad, camping weekends, and wine appreciation courses. You name it, and someone somewhere will be organising it.

Ireland

McKinneys Sugar sponsors the inter-club show held each year between the three circles in Northern Ireland; if you saw the fun and happiness at their social events you would never know Ireland had political problems. Hundreds of bottles are entered, with a standard equally as high as any found here on the mainland. Entries even come up from Dublin and Eire, so that grand spirit found among winemakers is evident in Ireland just as everywhere else, as indeed it should be.

And I have heard whispers of another spirit sometimes found among Irish home brewers, but I'm sure they'd do nothing illegal!

Scotland

Apart from odd reports in the Club News at the back of the *Winemaker & Brewer*, one hears little about the progress of the hobby in Scotland. It may be a surprise to some of we Sassenachs to know that there is a national wine organisation there, that runs the *Scottish National Association's* annual show. This is hosted in turn by member societies, and can produce around 1,000 bottles entered by members of more than twenty wine circles. It is obvious from the reports over the years that they know how to enjoy themselves on other than Burns Night and Hogmany, and it would be nice to hear more about the Scottish shows and socials through the pages of *WB* (write in to us! Ed.).

Others

There are many other shows of some magnitude, such as the *Mid-Southern*, at Hayling Island, with its 21st show to be celebrated this year; the *Middlesex Festival* approaching 1,500 entries, and already 21 in 1985; *Kent Wine Guild*, again over 1,000 bottles, and with a visiting Dutch judge in 1984; there are several more, but there just is not room to mention them all.

Another range of shows of appreciable size will be found among the ranks of circle open shows, which any winemaker can enter in at least some of the classes. Many of these reach the same size as the smaller federation shows; two local examples are



NW Fed; John Toole presenting an award to Dr. Philip Dransfield.



Bottles being received for the National, at Eastbourne in 1985.

Southport Golden Show, and Ormskirk Gingerbread Show — which, despite its title, is a wine and beer show. That's two shows that top that magic 1,000 bottle-mark, less than ten miles apart, and there must be many more similar shows scattered all over the country; I could name half-a-dozen more around Lancashire with near or over the 1,000 mark.

If you are in the least interested in showing competitively, and like the idea of an unsurpassed social life if you want it, then join a circle — if you're not already a member — and take an active part in your circle's and your association or federation's events. You will quickly find yourself with a full diary, many, many new friends, and who knows, perhaps some valuable silver trophies to display in your home.

Note: The dates, venues, and persons to approach for details of most of the major shows and other events are usually displayed each month in the 'Diary Dates' column printed in the magazine. Secretaries and Show managers — do make sure you notify the magazine of relevant details.

Naturally, winemakers and brewers are a very sociable and gregarious crowd, and the 'National' weekend involves many social activities, talks, dances, wine tastings and so on. On a more (literally) sober note, it is also the occasion of the NAWB AGM (Annual General Meeting), where policy is determined, and every member can have a say in the running of the Association.

Non-members are welcomed to attend the weekend (except the AGM) and enter the 'open' classes; it is hoped that this will lead to their becoming members.

And what else does NAWB do? Because of the widespread membership, it has proved, so far, impracticable to run a mid-year social event, and local organisations do already cater fairly well for their members. But NAWB does play an active part in looking after the general interests of the hobby, watching home and EEC laws, combating unfair campaigning by commercial brewers and publicans, and generally acting as watchdogs for the hobbyist's needs.



Trophies are a tangible reminder of awards bestowed. Here, Mrs. Young (winner of the Year Trophy) receives

here award from Jack Pearce with Roy Ekins and Peter Wood in the background. (1983 at McKinneys.)



Susan Cliff, beautiful winner of the Wine Princess competition at the 1985 NW Federation Show.

NAWB also maintains good relations with the home-brew trade, through their trade association (Homebrewing and Winemaking Trade Association) and our Patrons, respected members of the trade. Each NAWB member receives a quarterly newsletter, News & Views, a booklet reflecting Executive Committee news and plans, members letters and opinions, gossip, trade news, book reviews and anything else the Editor feels will interest the membership.

Membership of NAWB is open to anyone. There are several hundred individual members, plus over a hundred wine circles and societies, and most of the regional federations. Membership is not expensive — individuals, circles, and federations pay (currently) £4.50 per year, with a £2 initial registration fee the first year. Married couples are encouraged by virtue of a joint membership fee of £8 per year. Application should be made to the Membership Secretary Mr. J. Chettle, 2 Denis Rd, Burbage, Leicester LE10 2LF, enclosing a cheque made payable to NAWB. Members can claim free admission to this year's Conference, non-members will be charged £5.50. As this April issue comes out in the last week of March, you might just be in time to get an application off, to arrive by 30th March, to Mr. D. Pulley, 43 Granville Rd, Bromley, Kent.

So that's the National. A forward-looking organisation, open to all winemakers and brewers, serving the hobby wherever possible and running the premier wine and beer show. We have the support of Patrons who are honoured members of the home-brew trade, and close links with most of the organisations within the hobby. Are you a member?

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