



National Association of Amateur Winemakers

News and Views

Occasional

May, 1969



"If you win an award at the National, it means you are a pretty good winemaker. If you win the first prize, it means you are lucky."

Dr. Webb speaking at Southport.

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DEAR MEMBER(S),

For once I am going to write only a small fraction of this newsletter myself. After all, you have read (and apparently agreed with) my personal views in the previous letters, so I felt it high time that you read the views of other members. I will thank now the four "volunteers" who have written the middle pages of this bumper issue for me, and I thank in advance those who are going to put pen to paper for me in the near future.

As you see, the Newsletter has started to grow up. After a year of trial and error, I have received enough encouraging replies to warrant this doubling of size of the Newsletter, and I hope I shall be able to continue filling it in the future, both with up to date news and also with critical comment on the affairs of the Association. In addition, this letter is intended as a SERVICE to members, and we do hope that some of the requests for help, both from individuals and from circles can be answered in these pages. More of this service on page 7.

The NEWS this time is all of Southport. I have purposely written nothing about Southport myself,— it is far better to have this news from an unbiased reporter rather than from any member of the Executive. But I must include here, for the benefit of those not at the Show, the names of this year's TROPHY winners :—

The Eric Malin Trophy	Mr. V. Owen (Reading)
The Bastin Cup	Mrs. I. Chambers (Birmingham)
	# Dr. P. Dransfield (Mid-Cheshire)
The Vina Trophy	# Dr. P. Dransfield (Mid-Cheshire)
Marconi Club Trophy	Twickenham A.W.A.
The Shaw Porter Cup	G. Holt (Epsom)
The Andrews Cup	Mrs. P. Lee (Liphook)
The Roycroft Cup	Mr. & Mrs. F. P. Russell (Totnes) +
Southern Vinyards Trophy	Mrs. M. Gregory (Twickenham)
The Loftus Cup	W. Shand (South London)
Hidalgo Trophy	→ Mrs. M. Gregory (Twickenham)
The Bournemouth Master Winemakers Cup	G. Holt (Epsom)
The Hill Cup	Mrs. R. Dodds (Wickford)
	Mr. J. George (Bexley Heath)
The Turner Trophy	Mr. D. Bowler (Derby)
Atcherley Trophy	Mr. G. Collyer (Pressed Steel Fisher)
Cedric Austin Cup	Mrs. S. Hill (Merseyside)
Wilf Newsom Cup	Mr. & Mrs. F. Russell (Totnes) —
The Temple Tankard	Mr. D. Moon (Harrow)
The Lucas Cup	Mr. F. Benton (Bournemouth)
Gordon Instone Cup	Mr. G. Purton (Southall)
The Beall Trophy	→ Mrs. M. Gregory (Twickenham)
and	
The Amateur Winemaker Shield	

EPSOM DOWNS A.W. CIRCLE

We all add to the congratulations that these winners are probably still receiving.

FROM MR. DON SAYERS, (BEXHILL & HASTINGS)

I am becoming increasingly concerned at the unsatisfactory situation which exists with the supply of wine yeasts available to the average winemaker.

I have recently conducted some controlled experiments using a standard starter bottle solution under constant temperature conditions—and I really do mean constant. With many of the yeasts generally available, they appear to be stale and take anything up to 4 or 5 days to show any sign of activity compared with a fresh yeast which will produce full activity within 24 hours.

Further, my suspicions are aroused by my experiences with shop assistants. (I am loth to let this pass without comment, but I must! Editor). When asking for this yeast, the assistant after a cursory look says "We have'nt any of that type" but, on being asked to make sure, rakes round in a drawer and finds a packet somewhere at the back of the pile.

Surely the time has come when the shelf life of wine yeasts should be clearly stated on the packet or carton in order to protect the growing number of amateur winemakers against doubtful starters. The larger retailers would, I am sure, be sympathetic as they are used to handling many commodities within their range which have a similar limited shelf life.

Following the receipt of this letter, I have asked a number of manufacturers and retailers for their comments. To date, the replies received include:—

"We do not supply yeasts for wine manufacture, but we do supply yeast for home brewing, on which we have over the years done considerable work to ensure its viability over a reasonable period of shelf life. It is difficult to say exactly how long this would be because of the many variances in storage temperature, etc. On the other hand, our products remain viable for at least twelve months. In addition, we would say that over the last fifteen years we have, as yet, not received one single complaint."

Itona Products Limited

"We would point out that we strongly recommend our liquid yeasts, which are, of course, date stamped. The dried yeasts . . . have a shelf life of two years from manufacture and we have not had a single complaint concerning these products."

Grey Owl Laboratories

"We can assure you that, due to the stock control systems and the rate of stock turnover in our branches, there is no likelihood of any dried yeast remaining on our shelves beyond its shelf life. The latter is extremely difficult to determine, but all our suppliers, who are well known reputable companies, guarantee a minimum shelf life of two years."

Boots Pure Drug Company Limited

FROM MR. G. E. W. STYLES (YORKSHIRE)

The National Association's new class of Associate membership appears to bear the hallmark of misinformed thinking, based on the premise that if the Association is not to stagnate, a few crumbs must be fed to the hungry multitude.

At a very conservative 20 members per Circle, and with 400 circles in the country, organised winemakers will number at least 8000. It is reasonable to put the figure very much higher. I would like to see them all becoming members of the National Association as of right on equal terms, and I believe that a larger number of them would wish to have that opportunity at a cost which they can afford. How can the situation be remedied, and all organised winemakers be brought into the National Association? Certainly not by the introduction of the new class of Associate membership with all the anomalies which can flow therefrom.

The last few years have seen a tremendous increase in Amateur Winemaking and a large number of new circles have been formed. More recently the trend has been towards groups of circles joining together to form District, County or Regional Federations, be it only in some instance for the purpose of intercircle competitions and social activities. The National Association should actively stimulate this trend and capitalize on it.

I believe that it is in this field that the future of the National Association lies. This trend should be harnessed and organised to create a truly national body. I visualise the National body being comprised only of delegates selected by Federations, who would attend Executive Committee Meetings and AGMs to speak to mandates which would represent the collective views of the members of the Federations they represent, which views have been formulated after full discussion at Circle and Federation levels. Subscriptions and voting rights would be on a per capita basis thus achieving equality of contribution and equality of voting rights by representation.

I accept that much work would have to be done to achieve a national body constituted in that way, but I believe that the day is not far distant when most, if not all, winemaking circles will be members of County or Area Federations.

Until that stage is reached, Circle membership would be part of the constitution, with again delegate representation, and subscriptions and voting rights on a per capita basis. Individual membership would be abolished.

Federations and (for the time being) Circles would be responsible for subscriptions to the National Association based on current membership and per capita payment in respect of each member would need to be of small proportions only.

Winemakers in this country owe a great debt to the small band of enthusiasts who conceived and formed the National Association and who put in, and continue to do so, a tremendous amount of work in organising the National Show and Conference. But is it not time the Association grew up and faced up to the reality that its present hotch-potch constitution is outmoded and that it cannot on the basis of its present membership make a valid claim to being the National Association of Amateur Winemakers?

Radical changes in the constitution are needed if the Chairman's desire to make the national organisation a truly national one which can speak with strength in the future, is to be achieved.

In place of direct factual report on the National Conference and Show this year, I found a charming young lady (aren't they all) ? who volunteered the following account of her impressions.

"It was an enthusiastic talk on the 1968 'National' given by a Derby member, that first fired me with the idea that this was a must for me. Later, a friend suggested that the ideal way of learning about Wine Judging was to offer one's services as a steward. This I did and to my great joy I was accepted.

Travelling to Southport on Friday, thoughts of red and white wines gave me less concern than the Red Emperors and Cabbage Whites that were fluttering in my tummy!

My first impression on attending the briefing was the size and splendour of it all. It was overwhelming, but I was soon put at ease by the friendly atmosphere and the superb and relaxed efficiency of Mr. Andrews in dealing with the briefing. On Saturday I reported for duty to my judge, to whom I am greatly indebted for the advice and help she gave me, including allowing me to taste the 'condition' of some of the entries. One mild criticism I would make following this session was the delay before lunch, though this did give me longer to enjoy the company and make new friends.

The afternoon Festival was an inspiring spectacle, but here, I felt, the publicity angle had been neglected—a little more publicity would have attracted many locals and visitors. The Trade Displays, while being very attractive, were far fewer in number than one would have expected. I think the suppliers of winemaking ingredients and equipment must be lacking in enterprise to miss grasping such an opportunity to display their wares.

Of the talks, and the 'panel,' I must say I wouldn't have missed one of them, and I learnt a great deal from them, but may I say that a talk on an aspect of *winemaking* would have made a better balance, as we had a lecture on beer brewing, and one on judging.

The day ended with a never-to-be-forgotten supper and dance, graced by the Mayor of Southport, after which the 17 members from Derby repaired to their hotel . . . and continued!

The presentation and closing ceremony were most moving, and here I am happy to report—(there's a whole lot of local pride included in the letter here. Editor).

I cannot close without complimenting all who had a hand in organising such a tremendous task, and the members of local circles for the speed with which they staged (and dismantled) the display.

I need hardly add that I am looking forward eagerly to the 1970 National."

Miss M. F. Disney

Editor's note

When I invited Miss Disney to write her impressions I had no idea whether they would be good impressions or bad ones. They happen to be pretty good. Now what about a page from one of you old hands, someone who's seen it all before many times, and who would like to pull it all to pieces. We shall only know what items require improvement if you write and tell us what is wrong.

FROM BERNARD LUCAS

"NO NEWS IS GOOD NEWS"

If this old adage is correct, News and Views Occasional is very good indeed. This is my reaction to our Editor's request for some constructive criticism.

A few years ago, the Amateur Winemakers National Conference became, in addition, the National Association of Amateur Winemakers. The change in name is possibly the greatest change that has taken place to it. N.A.V.O. is our only official organ, and should contain a diary of important events being arranged by Association Members, or their Federations. Conferences, social events, and shows with the number of open classes stated, can all be included: in each case with the address of the official from whom further details can be obtained. Organisers should communicate dates as soon as these are known, and N.A.V.O. would help to prevent important dates clashing.

A further useful service would be the publication of members' changes of address.

N.A.V.O. is also the medium by which important decisions and news from committee meetings should be communicated. Extracts from the minutes, but in more detail than those already included from the A.G.M. would be welcomed. For example, changes in the show schedule could be reported, and the donation of the Vina Trophy and the Temple Tankard ought to have been acknowledged, and would have made an interesting news item.

The "Views" part of N.A.V.O. could form the medium for discussion of such items as future development of the Conference, and how the Association should extend its activities to do more than just organise this. Contributions have been invited already, but the lack of response may well have been caused by the lack of topical news in the newsheet. If discussion ensues, and controversy develops, a lively forum could become a feature of the conference programme.

It has been suggested that N.A.V.O. should provide winemaking advice, and a critical evaluation of products. Winemakers already have sufficient instructional reading matter, and N.A.V.O. should only contribute if it can provide something better—which is doubtful. A product survey is a possibility. It would be difficult for yeasts, since so many variables are involved, (including possibly the hardness of the water), expensive for juice extractors and presses, but possible, though not easy, for low priced accessories. Members should consider whether they are prepared to pay an increased subscription to cover costs.

Improvements to the newsheet will make members feel that membership is something more than a free ticket to the Conference.

All members will be sad to hear of the very sudden death of Mr. F. G. Spark of Andover. He was a member of the Andover Circle for many years, a member of the Association, and a member of the National Guild of Judges. All our members will wish to extend sympathy to Mrs. Spark at this time.

CAN WE BE OF SERVICE?

The question is often asked—indeed I have at times asked it myself—What does the Association do for the non-competitive Circle?

And the Association replies by asking yet another question—What would the non-competitive Circles like us to do?

Two answers have come in from Circles in reply to this. One, a request for an up-to-date list of speakers on winemaking subjects. Two, any help we can give towards the organisation of a newly formed Circle.

Dealing with the first request. Although it presents some difficulties, we will try in this Newsletter to compile a list of speakers. If would-be speakers would send details to me I will publish the list of volunteers in the coming Newsletters, and I will undertake to keep it up to date by contacting all the speakers and renewing the list once a year. Would those speakers then, who are willing to help out our member circles, by travelling to them and talking on winemaking topics (for a nominal fee) please let me have their names, addresses, and telephone numbers, and also what special topics they deal with. If we can make this work—and there is no reason why it should not work—then we really are filling a need for some of our members.

Coming to the second request, this is harder still, and I personally am not able to help at all. But I will ask now if any member reading this has any helpful advice to offer a newly formed Circle (and why not some advice too for the established ones?). Just let Philip know and I will pass on your advice to the circles.

And yet another service! For the competitive ones this time. I thought it high time we published a list of forthcoming events, not only to advertise them, but also to help prevent any clashes if we can. Any Federation holding a Show with a reasonable number of Open Classes is invited to publish advance details here. With the list below, I have included what details I know at the moment, but I regret it is far from complete.

Surrey County Show. May 26th. Guildford.

Bedford House, Bedford Road, Guildford.

Wickford Show. July 5th. Wickford.

Mrs. R. Dodds, 13 Cromwell Road, Southend.

Hull Show. August 1st & 2nd. Hull

Mr. A. Ackroyd, 23 The Parkway, Willerby, Hull.

Wales and the West Show. September 13th. Cardiff.

Mr. J. Toule, 40 Bromley Head Road, Downend, Bristol.

Middlesex Show. September 20th.

North Western Federation Show. October 4th & 5th. Morecombe.

Mr. D. Briggs, 31 Newlands Drive, Wilmslow, Cheshire.

Yorkshire Federation Show. October 18th. Cleckheaton.

National Honey Show. October 22nd. Caxton Hall.

Midland Region Federation Show. October 25th. Burton-on-Trent.

C. Chambers, 79 New Coventry Road, Birmingham.

And a final word of warning here. Although the Surrey Show is not until the end of May, the last date for entry is at the end of April—so it may well be that you receive this too late to enter. However, why not go to it anyway, for a day out. It's a good show, and an opportunity to meet friends. I intend to be there, but don't let that put you off.

POINTS FROM THE POST

Just a collection of views and items that are put forward to us from time to time. You are welcome to add to these, or disagree with them, at any time.

"I have persuaded our committee and members to include in our rules compulsory Associate Membership of the N.A.A.W., so our membership of this body will be 100%. I also try to get all our members interested in News and Views as it will make them really feel members of the National Association. Please may I have more copies?"

Mr. H. B. Outen.

(Incidentally, the Pressed Steel Fisher Association is not the only one with this aim of 100% Associate membership).

"The Newsletter could utilise spare space by giving a resume of coming events and dates *e.g.* Hull, Middlesex, E.W.F. and Kent, to mention a few"

Mr. Elvin Plant.

(O.K. Elvin, as you see I have started to do just this).

"The decision to include Associate Members is a move in the right direction."

D. Clitheroe, Kings Lynn.

"I was very surprised to learn that only a minority of Circles, (70 out of a possible 400) were members of the N.A.A.W. and therefore it must follow that the potential Associate Membership must be small."

Also from Mr. Clitheroe.

"Is the National as representative as it ought to be? This is a delicate subject, but it seems to me that any two one-circle members on the Executive is overweighting one small area."

"Many members who have just recently rejoined by paying their year's subscription will be horrified to learn that it's about due again."

Our Treasurer.

(He's dead right of course. Subscriptions will be due from July 1st, and, in case you didn't realise it, it pays to join at the proper time. You will get all your printed information on time so long as your membership is up to date. So don't leave it until just before next year's National. As an Association, we do not send special reminders, but, if you haven't taken the hint, this is the next best thing.

"I'm pleased to report that I've now fixed up the next weekend Summer School at Leeds, for next year." Mr. Bob Chandler.

And to finish the whole thing off, here is the only personal viewpoint I have put into these eight pages. It just struck me, while typing these other views about representation on the Committee, that many members visualise their committee as taking far-reaching decisions on the future of winemakers in the country. This is not really so. The decisions of importance are taken at the A.G.M. What the committee do is not so much debate, as to get on with a big job. Workers rather than talkers are our need, and if these are to be representative across the country, so well and good, but they should be willing to work for the Show at the same time.

Philip Delmon