

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
AMATEUR WINEMAKERS

NEWS AND VIEWS  
OCCASIONAL

July, 1971

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Dear Member(s),

Following an unexpected delay of rather more than a year, NAVO has appeared before you once again, and it is the very earnest hope of all members of the Executive Committee that you, the Member, will welcome its reappearance, will read and consider its contents with pleasure, and will perhaps feel encouraged to contribute to the next issue. If we do get replies from you all, even if they are only strongly critical letters written in red ink, then at least it shows that our Association is still very much alive and that the members DO care.

The first meeting of our new Committee has come and gone, and the various individual responsibilities have been re-allocated. To the very great relief of all the other members of the Committee (who were afraid that they might get the job), I find that I have been appointed as Editor of this Newsletter for a further term. So now, having agreed once again to put down my hydrometer and take up the pen, I will do my very best to inform, to interest, to stimulate and to foster as far as is possible a truly national feeling among winemakers. That surely is a purpose of our Association - to foster a national feeling among all the thousands of winemakers that there are in the country. (My personal interpretation of article 2(a) of the Constitution).

In searching for a suitable opening gambit, I found one in a most unlikely place - our local Parish Magazine. The quote is lengthy but applicable:-

"Write of the things which have been, and of the things that are, and of the things that shall be hereafter".

Revelation I.

"Since this magazine first appeared, three quarters of a century have doubtless been enlivened by regular violent disagreements over its size, its price, its presentation, its paper, and its contents. It has battled on, obviously believing that it was serving some purpose..... etc."

I am sure that during the four years of our small Newsletter, many members have been enlivened by similar disagreements over its value, its presentation (no black lines on the front this time!) its paper and its contents, but it too is proud to battle on in the belief that it is serving some purpose.

"The Things which have Been"

Kingston upon Hull, 1971. A National worthy to be remembered among the other great Nationals which we have had. One, however, that has had its difficulties and despairs in no small measure, but which will be particularly remembered by the determination to succeed on the part of all those who were involved. We must once again record here our thanks for the hospitality and for the considerable effort put in by the local winemakers.

At the Sunday morning A.G.M. we elected five members for the Committee, but unfortunately had to reject a further five worthy applicants. This is one of the sad facts of life. We are in the position of having more members willing to help than we can constitutionally accommodate on the Committee. It has not been customary in past years to publish the figures of votes polled because it was felt that the nominee coming at the bottom of the poll might be too discouraged to try again another time. But, secure in the knowledge that those who did not succeed this time will not be too despondent about it (nor indeed will the chap at the top of the poll ever become conceited about it), here are the actual voting figures:

Mr. F. Bastin	150	Mr. E. Evans	81	Mr. E. Plant	127
Mr. P. Delmon	187	Mr. F. Forster	121	Mr. H. Ritchie	145
Mr. L. Drysdale	76	Mr. D. Ives	91	Mr. A. Stanley	68
				Mr. G. Styles	99

Which figures do indeed show that nobody should be deterred from trying again next year.

At the A.G.M. too, we had a certain amount of time to discuss policy - particularly the ideas of a new (and completely logical) three tier framework for the Association. Much was said, both "for" and "against", but as many of those who spoke were giving their views 'off the cuff', perhaps now they have had time to formulate their views more clearly, they would care to publish their comments in these pages. Let us now try to see if there is a perfect solution by using an open discussion of ideas here.

It is of interest to observe that the two editors of the two current periodicals on amateur winemaking, have both devoted a part of their editorial to this very discussion - and, by some strange contrariness of nature, their personal views seem to be biased on opposite sides of the fence. As Editor of these few pages, I don't allow myself the luxury of an editorial, but I will admit that I prefer the present set-up. While acknowledging that it has its faults, at least I value my personal vote sufficiently to want to keep it.

Finally on Hull, while in fact you still remember clearly the wonderful weekend that it was, you must all be prepared for a shock when the balance sheet is eventually presented to you. The Show cost us several hundreds of pounds to stage. Such heavy expenditure is to be anticipated from time to time, but quite obviously we cannot do it often. In between the expensive Shows we must have several that will make sufficient profit to make good the deficit. We expect many more members to come to Eastbourne, and better still from a financial point of view, many more non-members. Let each member circle begin to plan now to bring a large contingent to Eastbourne. It is a beautiful town, with plenty of accommodation for all, and the sun ALWAYS shines.

For those wishing to book hotels and other accommodation, the Show will be held in the Winter Garden and Pavilion, so you need to be towards the Wish Tower end of the town.

"And of the things that are"

Your present Executive Committee have agreed to undertake the following tasks and responsibilities for the current year:

Association Administration:

Chairman	Dr. R.A. Webb
Vice-Chairman (also Programme Sec)	Mr. K. Hill
Treasurer	Mr. F.W. Forster
General Secretary	Mrs. S. Hill
Membership Secretary	Mrs. D.R. Martin

The Show:

Show Supervisor	Mr. L.P. Stagg
Chief Steward	Mr. E. Plant
Convenor of Judges	Mr. S.W. Andrews
Entries Secretary	Mr. P. Awbery
Awards Secretary	Mr. J.C. Luker
Schedule Secretary	Mr. F. Bastin

Ancillary Responsibilities:

Public Relations	Mr. C.W. Martin
Newsletter Editor	Mr. P.J. Delmon
Supplies	Mr. H. Ritchie
Local Liaison	Mr. B. Edwards

While listing these various names and duties, I am reminded that quite often I hear the question raised "What do the Executive actually DO? They have several meetings each year. They can't just be arranging the Show all the time. What else do they talk about, and what decisions and actions do they have to take?" Well, to answer these questions is a second purpose for this Newsletter to serve, but if perchance one member did absolutely nothing for a whole year, the effort that each one makes during the Show weekend itself, is on its own a herculean task.

"The things which shall be hereafter"

When winemakers meet together, they discuss at great length, and with considerable vitality, some of the more controversial aspects of the hobby. The same points of view are possibly put forward fifty times in one room in one evening. Why not put your view forward just once for everybody to read at home, and this will then leave you your wine gatherings free for the enjoyment of wine. The space is here waiting for you.

What, for example, are your views on some of these topics?

Cash prizes - do we need to continue with them?

The Committee - could they not delegate some of their responsibilities to able members, so that they themselves can concentrate on policy?

The Show - is there enough to see? Is there enough to do?

How National is the National?

Should it be a closed show for the benefit of Members?

Isn't 50p perhaps too much for an outsider to pay just to see hundreds of bottles of wine?

Programme - should we not think primarily of what the first-timers would like to see and hear, or are we really catering mainly for the old hands?

Should A.O.B. be taken and discussed within the A.G.M. itself?

Do we need to spend money on greater publicity in order to attain a membership figure in the thousands?

These are just a few of the topics one hears discussed. Do you feel sufficiently strongly on one of these? If you do, write, I will attempt to find a contrary opinion from elsewhere, and I will seek out a Committee member's personal opinion, and I will publish all three together for comparison. Let us bring our Association to life.

Now here are two letters which have already come in to me. I publish them both in full.

"The Programme for the National"

by Ken Hill

For my sins I have again been appointed Programme Secretary for the 1972 National Conference and Show at Eastbourne. It is the aim of the Executive to, at all times, provide the style of entertainment that the members desire. It is with this in view that I am putting these thoughts on to paper.

To avoid members having to travel long distances with its accompanying expense the Committee are now holding the A.G.M. at the Annual Conference and Show and not as of yore in November. This means that the Sunday morning of the Conference is taken up with A.G.M. and the distribution of prizes. We are therefore reduced to the Saturday afternoon to provide the talks. Having been reduced in this way it is all the more important that we use the time available to its very best advantage. The pattern in the past has been fairly predictable, and as far as I have been able to ascertain, acceptable. There has been a talk by an experienced amateur winemaker on the Saturday afternoon followed by an "Any Questions" Panel... The talk has been mainly aimed at the experienced winemaker whilst the "Any Questions" gave an opportunity for the beginner and for that matter the experienced winemaker to try and obtain an answer to his or her problems and I think the panel usually managed to oblige with an answer.

Bearing in mind the limited time at our disposal I feel that the retention of the "Any Question" panel is essential. This gives everyone a chance to have their say and at the same time listen to an authoritative view point. The talk on winemaking becomes more difficult each year as there is so little new to offer in the way of new information to the experienced winemaker so that you finish up by permutating different styles of speakers all giving similar information.

This brings me to the Raison d'etre of this letter. Are you all happy with the present style of programme? We can arrange a different style of speaker such as a Talk on Commercial Wines, or a talk on allied subjects such as Cheese and Cheesemaking, or a talk by a Commercial Brewer. These are just a few suggestions. I hope that you may have many more of your own ideas of greater variety and originality. I will be delighted to hear from you and will give serious consideration to any suggestions made.

Thought has been given to trying to provide an alternative entertainment on the Saturday morning for those members who do not wish to watch the judging nor spend the morning enjoying the delights or otherwise of the resort in which the Conference is being held. One difficulty that has arisen is that most wineries or breweries do not cater for Saturday mornings. Nonetheless this aspect is being looked into.

The aim of the Executive Committee is to give the members what they want. So here is your chance. Do write and tell me your views on the National Programme bearing in mind that we need Sunday morning for the A.G.M. and that we also wish to cater for the experienced and inexperienced winemaker. All letters welcome to Ken Hill, 18 Laxton Road, Liverpool 25.

"Two Nationals are better than one" by Stan Baker

In the Spring of each year, for more than a decade, there has been a movement of people on the roads and motorways of Britain. They come from all directions - North, South, East and West. Some may travel for many hours in weather that is sometimes fair, sometimes foul. They come from all walks of life - different classes and creeds - but they have one thing in common, the transporting of bottles of wine and beer. Who then are these peculiar people?



They are the dedicated of the amateur winemaking movement; either individual members or the representatives of associated clubs, on their annual pilgrimage, - their Mecca - the National Conference and Show. What a splendid gathering they make as they assemble at the Show. Intermingling in the crowd to renew old friendships or to make new ones. I have attended eight Nationals and have enjoyed them all. One would think that there was nothing more that could be done to improve on them, but as Dr. Webb pointed out at the 1970 National - "It may be the biggest, but it doesn't mean its the best". I am of the same opinion.

The huge bottle entry at the '70 Show made it obvious to the NAAW Committee that future Show schedules would have to be designed to keep the entries down. The 1971 schedule seems to have accomplished this by limiting the entry from each winemaker. Thus the trend for the future National could be towards the smaller Show. Smaller shows mean small venues, which are easier to find, and will reduce overhead costs.

If it is desired that shows are to be smaller, would it not be possible to hold two national shows at opposite ends of the country? A much greater choice of venues would be possible and the needs of the two million home brewers in Britain would be better served.

The basic idea is that the National Movement be split into twin Associations. One, solely for members with individual voting rights. This could retain the initials N.A.A.W. The other to be an amalgamation of the existing County Federations, many of whom are doing excellent work throughout the country. I suggest that they should be entitled National Association of Federation Winemakers (N.A.F.W.) Regarding voting rights. I consider that the current practice of one vote for every ten members of an associated club to be very frustrating for the dedicated individual member who gets only one vote. As I pointed out in a previous article in the A.W. (October 1969, page 602) entitled "Why not prune out the Passengers?" not all club members are equally knowledgeable or interested.

Individual members of the NAAW could persuade their club to join the NAFW. Club members of the NAFW could individual members of the NAAW. Thus the dedicated winemakers could enjoy the best of both worlds. Provided that the members of each association are made aware of their voting rights, I think they will find the conditions quite acceptable. Subscriptions to either Association could be minimal - it is financially more sound for the current National Show if each person paid an admission fee.

Twin Associations could have many advantages. Firstly, each could hold an annual conference and Show at a venue not previously used. Mr. L. Drysdale of Leeds stated that the present Association has been monopolised by the South for the past years. The twin Association could help to overcome this by alternating their venues around the country. Both Associations having equal national status, should liaise regarding choice of venue. The Nationals should be held in the Spring, if possible, at opposite ends of the country. Show dates should not coincide as some winemakers may wish to attend both Shows. Most winemakers prefer to leave the Autumn free for home brewing.

The character of the two National Conferences could be quite different. The NAAW could hold debates of a more controversial nature than would appeal perhaps to the NAFW. I think that the winemaking fraternity has the right to a choice of the type of Association to which it belongs. I do not think travelling times will be much reduced in the immediate future, and as we get older the prospect of fast driving for long hours becomes less pleasant. I am sure that people prefer to travel a lesser distance than a greater one. If attendances are lower than at current Nationals, the fact that there are two Shows in the year would increase the overall attendance figure as well as public interest.

Finally, I will enumerate my main reasons for believing that the 'twin' National system is best:

- (1) The necessity of reducing the size of the Show, to fit into more possible venues.
- (2) The desire for Federation representation at National Level.
- (3) The choice of type of Association that it offers to winemakers.
- (4) The reduction of travelling time to a Show.
- (5) The increased public interest gained from having two Shows annually in different parts of the country.

For my money, two Nationals are better than one.

And with these two letters I go to the duplicator. It is my hope that you will receive this letter by mid-July, but as many will be distributed by hand there may be some little delay.

With my best wishes to each and every one of you, for I count all winemakers as friends, and all members of the Association as arch-friends.

*Philip Delmon*