

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WINE & BEERMEN (AMATEUR)

NEWS & VIEWS OCCASIONAL

February, 1980

NEWS

Dear Member,

This is the last News & Views prior to the Blackpool Conference and to those who are attending the following points are of vital importance--

For Judges and Judges' Stewards

Please note that the Judges' Briefing to be held at 8.0 p.m., Friday, 28th March, will now take place at the IMPERIAL HOTEL and not the Winter Gardens.

There is still time for anyone attending the Conference, to book in at the Imperial Hotel (4-star hotel) - the Conference Hotel - at the special Conference rate, through our Social Secretary, Len Drysdale, 7 Richmondfield Drive, Barwick in Elmet, Nr. Leeds. The special rate can only be obtained if booked through Len.

At 3.30 to 4.30 on the Saturday, 29th March, 1980, Past Presidents will be assessing wine and beer of members, so if you want your wine & beer assessed by experts, bring it along to the Planet Room in the Winter Gardens on the Saturday afternoon.

BOTTLE ARRIVALS

The Show bottles are being staged in the Winter Gardens. Please unload your bottles at the Winter Gardens, Main Entrance. There is only restricted parking at this entrance, so to avoid trouble, off-load your bottles at the Main Entrance to Winter Gardens and then park your car at one of the nearby car parks. Any over-long parking outside the Main Entrance may cause trouble with the Police.

DISPOSABLE BOTTLES RE CONFERENCE TICKETS

Please note that everyone attending the Conference must have a ticket (see page 23 of Schedule). To obtain your ticket apply to Len Drysdale, 7 Richmondfield Drive, Barwick in Elmet, Nr. Leeds, LS15 4ER. Members must enclose £1.50 per person. This is the sum being charged to NAWB per person to cover corkage charge. (Full Conference)

Non-members tickets cost £6.50 per person (this includes corkage charge). (Full Conference).

Day tickets, Saturday up to 5.00 p.m. £1. Fourteen years to seventeen years: half price.

All who have full conference tickets are entitled to attend the Civic Reception and Dance on Saturday evening. These tickets will be given out during Saturday morning at the Winter Gardens. Table inside entrance.

If you fail to book in advance all the above tickets will be available at the same table during the Conference.

Anyone who will be available to act as General Stewards will be very welcome. If you can oblige, please write to M. Matthews, 1 Meadow Way, Ringwood, Hants. BH24 1HY.

Bottle Collection To assist the Committee, I am appealing to all Exhibitors to collect their exhibits at the Winter Gardens at 5.00 p.m. on Saturday, and not leave them until the Sunday morning, if it can possibly be avoided.

So much for the last minute announcements. I write for all the Executive when I state that we all look forward to Blackpool Conference, to meet old friends and make new ones.

Hope to see you there.

APOLOGIES In the N.V.O., November, 1979, 'Letters to the Editor' the letter attributed to Mr. P. Darry should have read E. P. DAVEY, 9 Maines Farm Road, Upper Beeding, W. Sussex, BN4 3TH.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Roy Roycroft, 44 Newell Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP3 9TB.

Dear Ken,

The Editorial in November Amateur Winemaker suggested that new classes for 'Light Red' should be included in Show schedules, because there were so many light red wines with different palate characteristics entered in Red Classes. This is fallacious. All light red and all bright red wines are Rosé, and should be entered in Rosé Classes.

From D. W. Lancaster, Flat 110, Queen's Quay, 58 Upper Thames Street, London, EC4V 3RH.

Dear Sir,

In your November issue, 'Roy' Roycroft wrote:-

"All wines have a degree of sweetness, even those with no sweetness detectable on the palate". This statement is not true. 'Sweetness' is the name of the taste sensation caused by sugar and a number of other substances. If a taster does not detect sweetness in a wine, there is no sweetness as far as he is concerned, and he would say that he has tasted a dry wine. Even if chemical analysis finds sugar, the validity of the taster's statement is unaffected. If 'Roy' had written the first part of his statement as "Most wines contain some sugar", it would then be correct.

The problems start when other people get involved, generating more opinions, and the state of the wine is altered. This happens when wine is entered in a competition. Which class should it be entered in? What happens to the apparent sweetness when the wine is rebottled for competition, gets shaken up on the way to the show, and, above all, gets warmer or colder? I have accepted red table wines as dry when judging them in the cool of the morning, but would have had to discard them as too sweet later in the day. I have also known competitors unable to recognise their own wines on the show bench.

As a first step, if we want to be precise about the sweetness in a wine, the conditions under which it is to be judged will have to be standardised. Then, in order to reach a consensus, it would be necessary to use a panel of at least five judges and to apply statistical analysis to their rankings.

On another subject, aperitifs, it always seems to me that the distinctive characteristic is that the flavour, however powerful the first impression, does not linger in the mouth, but leaves it neutral and feeling refreshed. A 'short' flavour can be a defect in some other types of wine. This is evident when one compares commercial vermouths with some home-made products whose flavour will last through several subsequent and different aperitifs. It might be better to call them 'alcoholic mouthwashes'; at least this would save arguing about the spelling, the pronunciation and the derivation.

Yours sincerely, D. W. Lancaster

From Frank Scholes, 7 Warren Avenue, Portobello, Wakefield, WF2 7JW, West Yorks.

Dear Mr. Hill,

The November News and Views I think is the most interesting we have had up to date. And Roycroft's article on wine styles is most enlightening, and I can agree with him that there is room for improvement on the show bench. But a lot of winemakers are just not interested in showing, especially wines by style, and are just content to brew by certain ingredients. But I would remind him that the National Executive and the Guild of Judges have to try and please everybody and need the patience of Job and the dispositions of Saints.

I am not, and never have been, a great consumer of alcoholic beverages but have appreciated wines occasionally. Neither do I profess to be an expert on commercial wines. Since starting this hobby I have purchased odd bottles or half bottles of several

commercial wines for the sole purpose of trying to make mine to the same standard. I also agree with Roycroft that my testing kit can be a big help but other factors have to be taken into consideration. I have had disappointments and I have had successes - and apart from an odd part bottle or two my production has been drinkable.

Having built up a stock I have to slow down on brewing as space is strictly limited. I therefore cannot carry out all the experiments I would like, neither are there enough days in the week when I start as it is a slow business waiting to see how a particular brew turns out. Roycroft describes 'aperitif' which I think most experienced winemakers know what it means. The trouble is we do not know what will make a judge ravenous - we do not even know the judge until after. In fact, I do not even know what would make me ready for a meal - and having made and shown some I have not been able to tickle some judges' palates.

Roycroft goes on to table wines and I think his remarks are sensible as I personally would not like a sweet table wine with a dinner. Rose wine classes also seem to cause a lot of controversy but I do not see why it should as it is neither red nor even yellow and should be judged on the wine itself and the colour left to the judge's discretion - after all, there are only 2 points in this.

Roycroft also mentions that white wines have little or no tannin. This is rather a surprise seeing that most books on wine-making give it in varying amounts to help it clear. I have always been under the impression that when the grapes are gathered the bunches are tipped into the pressing vats, grapes stalks or tendrils and any insects that happened to be hiding in the bunches and were pressed. I have also slight recollections of having seen a film on this procedure years ago. I would imagine that there would be larger amounts of tannin in the stalks than in the grapes. Perhaps he would like to comment on this?

Another Show bench gamble is Liqueurs. Who knows what the judge wants, and how many judges are experienced in these? In fact I wonder how many winemakers regularly wine and dine, starting with aperitif and ending with Liqueur? I think this is mostly practised at entertaining profitable customers, club and office dinners, banquets, birthdays, weddings and christenings.

Sure there is room for improvement on the Show benches. White Sweet or Red Sweet, or White or Red Dry is meaningless, but I do not see how the present National Schedule can be improved as there are sections for wines by style and also sections for wines by ingredient. What is given in the Judges' Handbook are only recommended classes for different size shows. And I think if judges stick to the Handbook and forget their likes and dislikes, and judge wines on their merit - and if they do not like a particular class they should ask to be changed.

Yours faithfully,

Frank Scholes.

Letter from Stan Baker, 131 Gordon Road, Chatham, Kent.

Toasting a person's health differs in style and language throughout the world but in most countries it is usually accompanied by the drinking of an alcoholic beverage and this relationship between good health and alcohol has been partially understood, at least, since the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, when the soldiers on expeditions mixed wine into the local waters to make them more potable. In fact, they made them more sterile as research has shown that wine, in untreated water reduces the presence of bacteria and that red grape juice, richer in tannin, is even more effective.

The Victorian family doctor had limited knowledge compared to the physician of today, but he appreciated that red wine, rich in iron, was very beneficial to anaemic patients and he often used alcohol to allay fears and to reduce pain.

In more recent years, people have come to appreciate that wine is a vaso-dilator in that it helps to speed up the flow of the blood around the body. This belief has been somewhat confirmed by a recent report in "The Lancet" on the 'negative association between ischaemic heart disease and alcohol consumption.' Statistical information is not always totally accurate - much depends on how the information was obtained.

However, it seems that 'a little of what you fancy does you good' in that 'the possibilities of bloodlessness to parts of the body due to contraction or blocking of parts of the arteries is reduced'.

Another blessing that one can derive from alcoholic beverages is psychological. It is the assessment of product quality which in the vintage wines can vary considerably from year to year. In a world becoming increasingly technological-minded, the assessment of wine quality, especially when one becomes very experienced, offers a high degree of personal satisfaction.

As Britain imports more wine than any other country in the World, the winelover wishing to improve his sensory skills has a very wide range of wines from which to choose. In fact, highly experienced wine judges in Britain probably know more about the wines of the world than the judges of other countries as foreign judges usually specialise in the wines of their country or even locality. At a recent 'blind' tasting of French wines, contested between British and French Judges, the British judges gained the first four places.

Developing a palate from home-made wines is not so easy today as it was in the early days of winemaking clubs. In those pre-EEC days both home grown and foreign fruit was relatively cheap and in great variety. Today, fruit is much more expensive and wines are made from a smaller range of ingredients. In most clubs, the members prefer to drink their own wines, so beginners have little opportunity of comparing their wines against those of the more experienced members. Fortunately the programme secretaries now include more commercial tastings and the popular "Spot the commercial" is an aid to improving the beginner's palate. Although 'all the year round' winemakers have used grape concentrate for the last two decades, the new 'quickie' recipes and fruit concentrates help the beginner to make and taste his wines in a few weeks. Some of these wines are quite acceptable!"

Letter from Stan Baker, 131 Gordon Road, Chatham.

"I certainly agree with Roy Roycroft's comments about 'purpose style' wines being included in National and Regional schedules as I am sure that this will do much to 'bridge the gap' between the differences in approach to home-made and commercial wines.

As Roy points out, aperitifs are usually dry oxidised wines and wines with herb infusions but dry, full-bodied white wines are also accepted as aperitifs. On past occasions at amateur shows, I have tasted award-winning table wines and found them to be oxidised, really only suitable as aperitifs. On other occasions I have heard Judges describing white commercial wines as being "too high in tannin"; Roy points out in his "Wine Classification" article that white wines may be made from white or black grapes but as only the juice is fermented the tannin content is minimal.

Another factor which arises is the inability of the beginner to differentiate between bacterial off-flavours and acceptable off-flavours such as controlled yeast autolysis. The wine producers of South Africa leave the white wines on the lees until the wine develops the characteristics related to the yeast of the specific grape variety used but of course, the operation is under very careful control.

I agree with the Editor in shopping around for wine bargains, but, better still, is to try to organise a small local group of interested wine-lovers. In my opinion, these wine-tasting groups will develop around the country - perhaps not on the scale of the home wine-making hobby, but no less enjoyable. Most winemaking groups are now introducing more commercial wine-tastings into their programmes and this must be doing much to enlarge the knowledge and sensory skills of home winemakers. All in all, it can only help to raise the standard of the movement. "

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Letter from John Toule, P.R.O. Association of Federations, President, Wales and West Federation:

The Editor's letter in the August edition of 'News & Views' sparked off an old hobby-horse of mine. The view is undoubtedly held by many that the National devotes all its

time to promoting an Annual Show and can find little time to give help to the wine-making movements' continuing interests. This is the reason why the Association of Federations was founded, because it was realised that the National would not - or could not - spare any time to ongoing liaison of events, location of clubs and their Secretaries, and generally giving a helping hand to Clubs & Federations.

It is a well-known fact that the Federations have been extremely successful. Many quite major shows are held annually. Following the lead of the North West Federation, the Wales and West now hold an annual show at Pontin's, Breen, Somerset, where 2,000 bottles and 1,500 Winemakers share the weekend. In addition to this the Wales and West organises judging classes, weekend seminars, continental trips, social weekends, camping weekends, as well as producing regular newsletters, lists of speakers, and location and addresses of all clubs in the area.

If this can be done at Federation level, why not extend it to a National basis? Unfortunately, we then involve the problem of distance, cost and time. The Association of Federations has made a valiant attempt to fill the gap of 'other activities' as distinct from a National show, but the above factors have tended to thwart their attempts. This is the reason why the Association of Feds. sought integration with the National so that resources could be pooled. Unfortunately this attempt was rejected by the National Committee.

This work demands time and application and, unfortunately, it falls on a few who look in vain for successors. Winemakers don't want to be organised but, nevertheless, expect their interests to be catered for.

My sympathies go to the Editor. This demand for service will always exist but the people to carry it out are not always willing to make the necessary sacrifices.

John Toule.

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Letter from Vernon Whitehouse, 17 Cranford Road, Paignton, TQ3 1DA.

Dear Ken,

I have found a few friends down here who are also members of the N.A.W.B., who - like myself - find the Draw a little bit too much effort to sell, when we belong to so many organisations that also do Draws. My thoughts are as follows:

Now that the N.A.W.B. may not require the financial support of the Draw, it must surely be time to 'draw an end to the Draw'. Has the time run out for the usefulness of the Draw? Would it not be easier to put up the fee by £1 and stop the Draw? If each member buys at least 50p-worth of tickets, plus postage, etc., then it must surely be easier to pay a small increase in fees. It would save all the hard work of selling the tickets, and for those of us who buy more than £1-worth, probably cheaper, let alone easier. Maybe next year the fee will be adjusted and I will have one less job to do?

Looking forward to a National again - on my own ground, the NORTH WEST at BLACKPOOL, in the land where I came from - Lancashire. Hope it all goes well.

Yours sincerely,  
Vernon Whitehouse "

The WINNING LETTER for this month - STAN BAKER, CHATHAM.

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Concluding article by Roy Roycroft on Wine Classifications -

"DESSERT A dessert wine is one which is drunk at the end of a meal or immediately afterwards when the diner is sated. It has to compliment the dessert course as well as titillate and stimulate a dull, jaded palate, yet give the diner the feeling of well-being and satisfaction. This is asking a lot of a wine, and it obviously has to be made specifically to meet the required attributes.

To compliment the dessert course the wine has to have a very pleasing and mellow flavour that is appropriate. To stimulate and titillate the jaded palate requires a high alcohol and a high acid content, but it is better with a high tannin content as well, though none should be individually obtrusive or it will detract from satisfaction. To give satisfaction, there must be a rich, full body with sweetness that is smooth and heavy on the palate. The whole has to be completely combined together without any roughness, harshness or astringency, to give the feeling of well-being. It therefore has to be well matured. These points indicate the description of dessert wine as:

Very full-bodied and rich, with high acid, tannin, sugar and alcohol content, matured so that it is rounded, smooth and so completely homogenous that none are individually discernable on the palate plus a flavour that is mellow and compatible to the end of a dinner. It should develop in the mouth and fade slowly.

A wine has to meet the full description, otherwise it is not a dessert but a sweet drinking wine (Social).

Dessert wines made in any quantity commercially are from the hotter grape growing areas where the grapes ripen more fully with their sugar, acid and tannin content at its highest and balanced. Even so, for some desserts the grapes are allowed to start shrivelling on the vines, and for others they are laid on straw or matting to partly dry and give a greater concentration. For Port, the fermentation is stopped by the addition of spirit so that the wine retains some unfermented juice. It follows that for amateur dessert wines the fruit should be fully ripe to shrivelling and used in large quantities without, or with very little water, for a short pulp fermentation and pressing.

SPARKLING & PETILANT WINE These are wines which contain carbon dioxide from the fermentation.

The Petilant (French) or Spritzig (German) are wines in which the carbon dioxide is imprisoned but rarely in sufficient quantity for bubbles to be seen in the glass. The presence of the gas causes a prickling of the tongue and a tingling on the palate giving the impression that the wine is lively and fresh. The wine itself is usually of a light and delicate nature.

This wine is probably not made by amateurs except by accident. If it does occur it is good for drinking but of no use in a show. It has insufficient gas to be accepted as sparkling, and in still wine classes would be rejected.

Sparkling wines are also wines in which carbon dioxide is imprisoned but in such amount that there is a very visible release of gas in the glass as bubbles - the sparkle. This gas is as a result of a closed and controlled secondary fermentation and the method producing the best sparkling wine is bottle fermentation with the wine processed in the bottle. When poured into a glass the beads (bubbles) are small and rise slowly and continuously over a very long period from bottle fermentation. From other methods the beads are larger and rise more rapidly for shorter periods.

Sparkling wine, by its very nature, has universal appeal and is drunk as an Aperitif, Table and Social wine as well as being drunk on special occasions.

Any wine could be made sparkling, but it would not be a good sparkling wine because the gas accentuates everything about the wine; flavour, qualities and faults. This fact dictates the character of the still wine before it is made sparkling. The wine is thinnish but well balanced, very clean without any taint of contamination or disorder, very dry and has a good malic acid content, yet has very little flavour or aroma, but that little has to be pleasing. It can be described as a rather negative wine or 'a wine that is pale, grey and tawny' as the French themselves described the still wine that became their famous Champagne when sparkling. One thing is certain. If the still wine is not a good one it will never be a good sparkling wine.

OXIDISED All wines are oxidised by contact with air and by internal chemical reactions up to a certain point to be properly matured. Both are an essential part of maturing, but when either continues too long the wine is spoilt. It is over-oxidised. Though all wines are oxidised in some way, the term 'Oxidised Wine' is commonly used to refer to wines of the Sherry or Arbois type. These are oxidised under flor yeast or by the Solera System to a point beyond the normal (over-oxidised) but without spoilage. It is extremely doubtful that amateurs will induce a true sherry type flor to develop and the Solera System is beyond them. Good amateur oxidised wines are few, and much wine is spoilt in attempting them, though a good one can sometimes occur by accident.

SOCIAL WINES These are drinking wines without the full characteristics of wines for a specific purpose or style. They are wines which are drunk away from the table at no particular time and without food or only with tidbits. They are the most frequently made by amateurs. The run-of-the-mill wines made without specific purpose, probably strictly to a recipe, and irrespective of what the recipe calls them, not true wines of purpose. Just drinking wines. They are the wines that are too soft, too strongly flavoured, too sweet and/or without the full acid/tannin balance for a table wine; semi-sweet that are the wrong colour or without the characteristics of a rose; the sweet that have not the full body, the richness, the high alcohol content or any other characteristic of a dessert.

They are sometimes said to be drunk too young: too young for whom? There are at least two commercial wines, Federweisser and Heurige, which are drunk so young that they are milky white with yeast cells. Age has no significance for Social wines so long as the wines are drinkable and pleasing. Likewise flavour is not important though it should be pleasing. However, to be of the best they should be clean, not overpowering in flavour, or aroma, nor too high in alcohol as they may be drunk in large quantities. When drunk dry they are often preferred more sweet (less dry) than a table wine, and drunk sweet to be lower in residual sugar than a dessert because the social will taste sweeter due to the difference in characteristics. Acidity/tannin content is often preferred to be lower than for table - the wine is preferred softer.

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O C C A S I O N A L

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

Wales and West Federation Comp. and Show - Pontin's Camp, Brean Sands, Somerset.

18th to 20th April, 1980

Schedules from Ken Shaw, 13 Nicander Parade, Mayhill, Swansea.

North West Federation Comp. and Show - Pontin's Camp, Ainsdale, Nr. Southport, Lancs.

17th to 19th October, 1980

Schedules from Mrs. A. Fordey, 226 Queensway, Rochdale, Lancs.

Midland Region Federation Show and Dinner. 25th October, 1980. The Town Hall, Burton on Trent.

Further details from E. G. Peace, 98 Selsey Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B17 8JS.

Holidays abroad by K. Bilham, 96 Brigstock Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

April 29th	5 days	Denmark	£109.
May 12th	6 days	Denmark	£139.
Aug. 11th	6 days	Loire Valley	£109
Sept. 15th	9 days	5 Countries - Passion Play Oberamagau	£209

For further details write to Ken Bilham at the above address.

K. L. Hill  
Editor,  
18 Laxton Road,  
Liverpool, L25