

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WINE AND BEERMAKERS (AMATEUR)

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NEWS AND VIEWS

FEBRUARY, 1981

Dear Members,

On behalf of the Executive, may I apologise for the lateness of your November News Letter and your Schedules. The News Letter was ready for posting in November but, due to a breakdown at the printers, the Schedules were held up for six weeks. The schedules - 24 boxes each the size of a case of wine, arrived in my hall on Xmas Eve, just as our guests were arriving. Believe me, my language was anything but seasonal. In view of this delay our Entries Secretary has taken a less rigid view of closing dates. For the technically minded it was the finishing machine that broke down.

We are delighted to welcome another PATRON to N.A.W.B., namely Southern Vinyards Ltd., bringing our total up to eight.

Everything is in hand for the Conference and Show at Exeter University and we look forward to meeting you all at what I am sure is going to be a great weekend. I don't doubt that as I am writing this many bottles are being inspected and their contents tasted prior to being on the Show bench. It always reminds me of the Cup Final, the nearer the date draws, the greater the tension mounts.

MEAL ON ARRIVAL

I have been asked to point out that the University will only provide an evening meal on the Friday night up to 7.30 p.m., so if you cannot arrive before that time, I suggest you get an evening meal prior to arrival.

CONFERENCE TICKETS

Please note that everyone, including members, must apply and get their Conference tickets prior to arrival at the University. These can be obtained from Lenn Drysdale 7 Richmondfield Drive, Barwick in Elmet, Near Leeds.

N.A.W.B. ACCOUNTS

Further to the letter in our last issue from Past President, Cyril Lucas, our Treasurer has asked me to state that anyone will receive a copy of the annual accounts from him at Forest Lodge, Challock Ashford, Kent. Please send a stamped, addressed envelope.

SALE OF THE CENTURY

I make no apologies for repeating this advert re Ladies Sterling Silver necklace with N.A.W.B. emblem. When you realise that silver has shot up in price and inflation has risen at about 16% per year, and we are still asking the same price that was asked three years ago, - they must be a bargain. The cost is £5, plus 25p postage. The Treasurer must be daft selling (giving them away) at this price. While stocks last, apply to Norman Chiverton, Sutton's View, Woolscot, Rugby.

IN MEMORIAM

It is with the deepest regret that I have to report the passing of a dear friend, Ken Scambler of Southport. Ken was Vice Chairman of the North West Federation and their very popular P.R.O. Some years ago Ken acted as Local Liaison Officer and P.R.O. to the National when we last held a Conference at Southport and a great success he made of the job. I know his many friends throughout the country will join with me in offering our heartfelt sympathy to his wife, Beryl. Ken's passing will leave a void in the lives of so many winemakers.

THE "NATIONAL" WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS:

Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Arnold, Honiton
Mr. and Mrs. E. Ball, South Nutfield
Mr. P. J. Harper, Hayes
Mr. and Mrs. H. J. Hodges, Plymouth
Miss J. F. Richards, Reading
Mr. and Mrs. J. Upton, Saltash
Mr. and Mrs. J. Wheeler, St. Albans
Mr. and Mrs. F. Holland, Sidmouth
Mrs. E. M. Wheatley, Bexley Heath
Mrs. B. Sampson, Kingsbridge
Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Baker, Rochester
Mrs. E. Urch, Plymouth
Mr. and Mrs. D. L. M. Davies, Axminster
Mr. A. G. Irwin, Kingsbridge
Mr. and Mrs. K. T. Murray, Newton Abbott
Mr. M. W. Palmer, North Harrow
Miss D. E. Palmer, North Harrow
Mr. D. Sheppard, Hull
Mr. G. D. Whiteley, Hull
Mr. and Mrs. D. Carter, Honiton
Mr. D. R. Kaye, Huddersfield
Mr. and Mrs. A. Lee, Honiton
Mrs. R. S. Ranplin, Colchester
Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Durling, Chathan
Mrs. D. Munchin, Hertford
Mr. M. R. Lawrenson, Gillingham
Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Williams, Gillingham
Mr. and Mrs. K. Wood, Northfleet
Mr. and Mrs. P. S. Dhar, Maidstone
Mr. and Mrs. A. Rivers, Paignton
Mr. and Mrs. D. J. Palfrey, Winbourne
Mr. and Mrs. B. W. Nightingale, Chingford
Mr. D. Milner, Whitley Bay
Mr. and Mrs. D. J. Dines, Lawford
Mrs. G. Hughes, Enfield,
Mr. and Mrs. W. Redshaw, Luton
Mr. and Mrs. K. J. Wheaton, Torquay
Mr. and Mrs. M. Butter, Torquay
Mr. and Mrs. M. Powell, Torquay
Mr. and Mrs. L. P. Royce, Torquay
Mr. and Mrs. V. C. Winkley, Exeter
Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Pheby, Wanstead

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From V. Wadmore, 10 Lawrence Street, Sandiacre, Notts, NG10 5DH.

For a number of years now it has been a concern of mine towards the lack of interest shown in general stewarding at various Shows. I believe one of the main reasons for this is that, whereas a judge's steward has the pleasure of tasting a range of Beers and Wines and learning from the judge, the general steward has no such 'perks' to look forward to - in fact the main reason most of us do general stewarding is that we believe we only get out of the hobby what we put into it, also if we were not to do it you would have no Show and everyone else would suffer.

The problem is - how to alleviate this situation? I feel it could be helped by forming a 'guild' of stewards which would have a number of advantages. Firstly it would then be possible to have a list of people who were willing to either general steward, or act as judges' stewards, so Show organisers could write to these people asking if they would like to steward at their Show because, to my mind, people would be more likely to help if asked formally, well in advance, instead of being press-ganged into it on the day of the Show.

Secondly, members of the guild could be issued with a pamphlet on what is expected of them in the way of equipment and how to handle competitors bottles - so you should not get a repetition of what happened to me at a National Show when the bottle steward inverted a bottle of my beer because they did not realise there was a yeast deposit or, to put it another way, as a National Guild Judge is known to be the best in his field, so a National Guild Steward would be known to be the best in their field - which brings me to the third point - recognition. All stewards would then be recognised as doing their best to help the hobby in the best possible way at Shows. Lastly, it could act as an important link between the N.A.W.B. and the N.G.W.B.J. as the National Guild of Judges requires you to have stewarded to a National Judge before sitting their examination.

I hope this letter gives you some food for thought.

Yours sincerely,

V. Wadmore.

Editor's comment: "If anyone is interested, contact the writer with a view to forming a Group".

Letter from Dave Hilton 23 Jubilee Avenue, Whitton, Middlesex, TW2 6JA.

Dear Ken,

Reference the November News and Views, with special regard to "Decrease in threshold sensitivity of taste attributed to old age".

Surely the ability of elderly judges to assess at the expected high standard the merits of a particular wine must at times be suspect and therefore incur criticism. When our sight or hearing deteriorate we can obtain aids to correct the disability. I know of nothing that we can benefit by for our sense of smell and taste.

There is a solution, and I suppose the obvious, judges should undergo a periodic examination and if found wanting, move into retirement.

I don't think it would be unreasonable to have some sort of test and for judges to receive an up-dated Certificate of Competence, the examination need not be arduous but it is essential that all wine judges have an adequate and proportionate sense of smell and taste.

Dave,
Chairman, Richmond Guild of Winemakers.

Letter from Stan Baker, Chathan, Kent.

When to Drink?

Much has been written about the longevity of wine; one reads of white wines being ready to drink in three weeks and of red table and dessert style wines lasting several years. In between there is the huge bulk of wines "estimated" to reach perfection in several months or a few years.

These "guestimates" may often be wrong as wines rarely ferment or mature exactly in the same way or at the same rate. Much depends on the general balance of the Must and the storage conditions during maturation.

Commercial wine producers are affected by weather conditions to a much greater extent than the home winemaker who can buy his fruit in the form of sundried raisins at the local supermarket. Heavy rains during the Autumn can affect the quality of fruits of the hedgerows; elderberries and blackberries can become low in acid and tannin.

One has only to recall the never-to-be forgotten golden summer of 1976 with sunshine week in, week out, and then a change to heavy rains at picking time. Hedgerow wines in that year were certainly out of character; as they were also in the commercial vineyards of Europe when wines attained the character of much warmer regions.

Knowing when to drink a wine depends on personal taste and knowledge. A few years ago at the National Shows, many of the winning wines were young and fruity and probably having a refreshing acidity which appealed to the Judges' jaded palate. Today, perhaps, one would prefer their wines to be more mellow. Acidity is essential but it should be balanced by body, alcohol and fruit. The great white Burgundies, because of their scarcity the most expensive white table wines in the World, have a mellowed acidity resultant from a long maturation. Buying white Burgundies requires knowledge; many expensive wines from this region taste nothing better than watered-down apple wines.

"Guestimating" when to drink a red wine is even more difficult. Tannin acts as a preservative which during maturation chemically changes from an abrasive tasting substance into a relatively smooth tasting substance. So if one wishes to add "instant" age to a wine one could make a stock gallon of over-tannin wine and allow it to mature, adding it to wines containing too little tannin.

Sometimes a wine fails to ferment to dryness and the resultant wine is too cloying. One can store the wine in a cool dark place and allow the excess sugar to "drop" out or one could blend with an over-acid wine, but these sometimes fail to get together. Over-dry wines often lose character when a sweeter wine is added; but a little vanillin may improve the flavour and lessen the austerity. Blending an older wine with a younger wine often helps, but usually wines are drunk too early.

Vanilla is not the only flavouring that can be used in wine. The most famous non-alcoholic drink in America, if not the World, contains phosphic acid, cola nut extract, nutmeg, coriander, tartaric acid, caramel, caffeine, cinnamon, vegetable glycerin, lavender, extract of guarana, lime juice and citrus oil. As the formula is kept secret it is unlikely that any winemaker will blend an alcoholic Coco-cola even if this was the aim.

There is little use in "guestimating". Do the same as the commercial producers - try a sample bottle from time to time, it's quite a pleasant pastime.

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Letter from Frank Scholes - 7 Warren Avenue, Portobello, Wakefield, WF2 7JW. W Yorks.

Dear Mr. Hill,

It was not my intention to give the impression in the February News and Views that the colour of Rose wines should be completely ignored, and I think Mr. Nicholls has misunderstood me. My argument is that the colour of Rose wines can be left to the Judge's discretion as it only carries 4 points and the most points are awarded on the wine itself. If a white wine was entered in a Rose class then surely it should be automatically disqualified as being in the wrong class and not even tasted.

There are bound to be differences between Judges in marking for colour. They are not advocating carrying colour charts, I hope. The same argument could arise with white or golden class - there are various tints of gold. The same applies to tawny wines.

There are only a few true colours and the Rose colour is a combination of red and other colours. I can personally see other colours in a rose colour, such as blue, yellow, white and brown tints.

So as the Judge's handbook states pink, it must be as these various tints are I think impossible to produce in wines.

I have also read the passage in Wines Like Those You Buy of the blind man being asked to comment on a rose wine and his answer was no surprise to me. Which is explained by the following: All persons born normally are gifted with 5 senses, viz: SIGHT, TOUCH, SMELL, HEARING AND TASTE. If every person were alike I do not think there

would be any problems as far as our hobby went, as one goes through life they can lose one or more of these senses - by illness, accident or even abuse. When this happens the remaining senses will gradually develop and become more acute. The same applies to those people who are born with the loss of one of these sense which explains the blind man's assessment of the rose wine. There are people who while they have good eyesight and are not colour blind, have great difficulty in distinguishing between colours, - some between red and brown, some green and blue and others yellow and pink. There are also people who have very little sense of taste or smell which is a great handicap to them in this hobby.

Mr. Nicholls also takes exception to my remarks on Judges, but I think he has taken this personally and there was no personality involved in my remarks as I do not even know him. My remarks were made from a competitor's point of view - it too often happens a competitor goes along to a Judge for an assessment of his or her wine and is asked a lot of questions as to what sort it is and how old, and ends up with a lecture from the judge - sometimes on clarity and some sediment in their wine; also, had it been in a different glass it may have got an award. All a competitor asks for is an honest assessment of their wine, and not a lot of bluff.

May I also ask Mr. Nicholl how many winemakers have room to store Barrels to mature their wines in cellars are a thing of the past. I myself have to cut back on brewing owing to the lack of storage space.

I can agree to a certain extent to his remarks on social wines but I have no intention of entering into any arguments on this subject as some people's social wines can be table wines and others dessert wines.

I do not know where Mr. Nicholls got the idea that as one gets older they lose their sense of taste. Personally this is not so far from it but I cannot speak for other people. Smoking can affect one's taste. I have not always been a non-smoker. And to suggest that older Judges should retire or be made to retire, I would think the older Judges would do so on their own if they were so affected. To conclude this letter, I sincerely hope Mr. Nicholls is very fortunate to be able to settle this question for himself in another 20 or 30 years' time.

I am,
Yours fraternally,
Frank Scholes.

Letter from E. A. W. Roycroft, 44 Newell Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. HP3 9PB.

SWEETNESS IN WINE

I do not wish to prolong the discussion of sweetness of wine and its relation to showing, but Doug Lancaster has reiterated his opinion - not fact - and cast such doubt on what I have written, by saying "which, indeed, are facts and which are opinions?" (pity he does not know) that readers are probably confused. May I therefore regurgitate the facts as briefly as possible and state their logical application so that readers can have a clearer understanding.

First may I emphatically state I did not and am not using the word 'detectable' with a specialised meaning as suggested by Doug. If he or anyone else has used it wrongly that is their ignorance. The Oxford Dictionary defines 'detect' as "discover existence or presence of". It does not mean recognise which is defined (Oxford) as "knew again, identify as known before: discover or realise nature of". It is exactly with these meanings that the words are used in relation to the perception (Oxford: = action by which the mind refers its sensations to external object) of sweetness in wine.

A bibliograph for the following facts can be supplied if required.

- Fact 1 ALL wines have some sweetness
- Fact 2 In reference to wine 'dry' means 'less sweet than'
- Fact 3 The perception of sweetness is divided into two parts (a) detectable (but not recognisable) sweetness (b) recognisable sweetness.

- Fact 4 A person's ability to recognise sweetness can vary between morning and evening.
- Fact 5 The recognition of sweetness can be comparative with what has previously been in the mouth
- Fact 6 The threshold of recognisable sweetness can vary between person and person.

For as uniform judging as possible at shows, the only completely logical application of the above facts is as follows:-

- a) Judges should know the comparison of personal threshold of recognisable sweetness with the average threshold and judge accordingly (Fact 6. See also my last comments)
- b) Drinking or eating of anything sweet should be avoided before judging
- c) The mouth should be cleansed between wines (Fact 5, and also for other possible overlaps)
- d) Competition judging should commence as early as possible in the morning. (Fact 4)
- e) All classes should be by purpose, i.e. Table, Social, Desert, Aperitif, to set the standard for sweetness (facts 1, 2 and 3) by generally accepted and traditional standards of sweetness for drinking of commercial wine. The Show standard and/definitions would then be -

Aperitif	- no recognizable sweetness	} the norm for Aperitif and Table is no recognizable sweetness. Therefore no need to add 'dry' but if added the wines should be of the lowest detectable sweetness.
Aperitif sweet	- very slight recognizable sweetness	
Table	- no recognizable sweetness	
Table sweet	- slight recognizable sweetness	
Rose	- slight recognizable sweetness (the norm requires no qualification)	
Rose dry	- no recognizable sweetness	
Rose sweet	- medium recognizable sweetness	
Dessert	- near 'syrup' but the wine should be so balanced) that sweetness is not a separate characteristic)	the norm. No qualification.
Dessert dry	- a definite recognizable sweetness but less sweet than dessert.	
*Social	- slight recognizable sweetness (the norm requires no qualification)	
*Social dry	- no recognizable sweetness	
*Social sweet	- Medium to full recognizable sweetness	
*Sparkling very dry	- mid-detectable sweetness	
* My opinion - no real commercial standard		
Sparkling dry	- upper level of detectable/lowest level recognizable sweetness	
Sparkling sweet	- A little recognizable sweetness	
Oxidised dry	- no detectable sweetness	
Oxidised med.sweet	- middle levels of recognizable sweetness	
Oxidised sweet	- higher levels of recognizable sweetness	

These standards are readily assessable when the difference between detectable and recognizable sweetness is understood and that 'dry' means 'less sweet than'.

Finally. Doug Lancaster basis his opinion and remarks on "sweetness being a subjective assessment". For drinking, when it is a matter of personal like or dislike; with the only restriction of "don't inflict personal likes on others when they are other than average"; assessment can be subjective. For classes in shows (and that is what all this sweetness correspondence is about) there must be a standard and, as a judge, Doug should know that for a judge to be worthy of the name, all assessments at the show bench should be objective (to the standard). What has been written above is both subjective and objective with the subjective related to the objective and backed by fact. If Doug, or anyone else can give facts to the contrary, I should be very pleased to know them. As for judges being on their own, this applies to only the smallest of Guild/Club/Circle competitions. Usually there is another judge to whom reference can be made if there is any doubt as to the acceptability of a wine. Preferably a judge who has a class of the opposite sweetness.

Editorial Comment: This is part of Roy's last letter but, due to lack of space, the second half of the letter on Rosé has been held over to the next issue.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Ken Bilham, 96 Brigstock Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey, Telephone 01-679.7916, is organising a Wine and Liqueur tasting in Troglodyte caves and visits to Chateaux along the Loire - 6 days for £19 - on 17th August, 1981. If you are interested, contact Ken.

October 16th. 17th and 18th. 1981

North West Annual Conference and Show at Pontin's Camp, Ainsdale, Nr. Southport. For information, please contact Mr. F. Fordey, 226 Queens Way, Rochdale, Lancs.

NEW BOOKS

The A. W. have just published two books that are well worth reading:-

Diabetic Brewing and Winemaking by Peter McCall, is obviously of interest to all those unfortunate enough to suffer from diabetes. The book covers the calorific value of winemaking ingredients and would therefore be of great advantage to anyone on a diet or slimming campaign.

Beer Kits and Brewing, by Dave Line.

This is Dave Line's last book before his untimely death. It is a fitting tribute to him. It covers beer making from Kits to mashing, with an interesting chapter on American-style home-made beer. A 'must' for any beermaker.

PERSONAL

This will be my last Newsletter as I am retiring from the Executive at the A.G.M. I have been on the Executive for the last fifteen years and I feel it is time that I stepped down. Fresh blood may bring fresh ideas. I have enjoyed my years on the Executive and I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all those readers who have helped me by sending their letters for publication. I look forward to seeing you all again at Exeter.

K.H., Editor.

THE BUDGET

There is no doubt that there is going to be an increase in duty on wine and spirits in the April budget. Stock up now if you can afford it.

P.S. Any letters to the Editor that are sent to me will be forwarded to whoever takes over my position on the Executive. Keep them coming.

LAGER BEER

Of interest to those persons who enjoy a quality continental lager, is the fact that a Dutch lager, called GROLSCH, is now available from a limited number of sources in Great Britain. I find no pleasure in the English made lagers which are so popular. To my palate they are only light dinner ale with a German style name and are lacking in flavour and style. My favourite lager is URQUELLS Pilsner Lager bottled in Pilsner. This is available from Peter Dominics Shops only. Last year whilst on holiday in Jersey I was introduced to Grolsch and, for my palate, this is a near rival in quality to Urquells. I believe Grolsch is available in the Midlands. Whilst at the Wales and West last year I managed to buy some from a wine shop in Burnham on Sea. It is easily recognised as it comes in 45 centilitre with its distinctive pot stopper. What makes it unique is the fact that it is one of the few lagers that is not pasteurised. If you like a good lager, do try a bottle of Grolsch.

May you never have an empty glass.

Ken Hill,
EDITOR

18 Laxton Road,
Liverpool, L25 0PQ.