

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WINE AND BEER MAKERS
(Amateur)

NEWS AND VIEWS

DECEMBER 1989



NAWB

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N A W B (A)

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WINE AND BEERMAKERS (AMATEUR)

NEWS & VIEWS

DECEMBER 1989



EDITORIAL



IT'S A GREY NOVEMBER DAY as I write this - or do I mean gray? Recourse to the dictionary tells me either is acceptable; Shakespeare used both versions, though grey is the commoner spelling. But there is enough blue sky to patch a Dutchman's trousers - and for any Dutchman reading this, it simply means there is a break in the clouds, and fine weather may follow shortly. How much blue is needed to repair a Hollander's trousers? Well, about as much as the length of a piece of string.... I think it's time I found another topic!

News & Views this quarter contains the usual hodge-podge of reports, letters, reviews, and miscellaneous bits and pieces. If you receive a copy, you must have paid your subscription for this year. Nonetheless, the last page is, as usual, a Membership Application form. NAWB always needs new members; some drop out as the annual weekend moves away from their

area, to pop up again when the National comes back within easy travelling distance. They are always welcome, but we would rather keep in touch with them all the year round every year. And of course NAWB needs to gain even more members, to grow and flourish as befits the only national concern available to speak for the hobby, to liaise with the trade, and to publish a members' journal that is sent all over the country and to a few overseas enthusiasts as well. So I print the form again, in the hope that you will recruit at least one more member. Wasn't the National at Blackpool a great event? Scarborough will be even better, so don't be selfish and keep it to yourself, bring along a friend or two, and let them have the fun of writing to N & V in the future. Just like you do!

Those strange fetishists that sublimate their secret urges by closely studying the inside cover of News & Views - there's no depth of depravity that some people will not explore! - will already have noticed the change. For all our less weird members, I must point out that our dear Hon. Secretary, Lenn Drysdale, has moved house; please make a note of his new address and telephone number. The list of the members of the National Executive given in the enclosed Schedule was printed before the change, and is incorrect.

I can only close this Editorial by wishing everyone a Joyful Christmas, and a Happy New Year. As Editor I am in a privileged position in the Association, having the pleasure of contact, even if often only one-way, with all our members. This side of the hobby gives me a tremendous amount of fun and interest, and I hope I give a little of this back through News & Views. My Thanks and Best Wishes for the festive season and coming year to you all: to our advertisers and trade contacts, correspondents and contributors, but of course, most of all, to our Patrons and Members.

Ray Green



For XXS, NOT XXXX

AND A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN:

Dear Friends,

There is a well known saying that time passes more quickly as you get older. Well it seems like only last month that I was writing this letter to wish you all a Happy 1988 Christmas. Perhaps I ought to get the message!

This year, my second as your Chairman, I am enjoying greatly. Obviously the first year in office is rather nerve racking as you are never quite sure how everything is done. The second time around it is much easier to relax and be more confident.

This last year has certainly been an eventful one for me with N.A.W.B. The Show at Blackpool was, as we all know, a great success. The first ever wine competition organised by the Homebrew Trade Association was held in Coventry. I was amongst a group of National & Midland Federation judges who judged in a very friendly atmosphere. The competition is to be repeated in May 1990.

I personally have tried to visit as many Clubs and Federations as possible. I have travelled as far afield as Tyneside and Cornwall, and although I have lost count of the number of Clubs, I know I have been to 11 Federations.

I am now looking forward to 1990. A new decade and hopefully new achievements for the Association. Scarborough is, as usual, looking good! We have all the popular events featured, including the wine tasting, details of which you will find elsewhere in this issue, plus some extra attractions.

It is therefore my pleasure to wish you all a Happy and Vinous Christmas, a profitable and successful New Year, but most importantly, Good Health and Happiness to everyone.

See you all at Scarborough

Judith Irwin,



This is to introduce '**NAWBERT**', recently found swimming for ~~his life~~ his breakfast in five gallons of home-made bitter.

Drawn by **Nick Barrett**, and words by you!



*"Oh, yes, I'd do well at the National,
.... if only I had a few Show bottles"*

LETTERS... LETTERS... LETTERS... LETTERS... LETTERS... LETTERS...

The first Reader's Letter come from Vic Goffen of Petersfield:

Dear Roy:

I was interested to read Stan Baker's remarks following his review of Andrew Barr's book 'Wine Snobbery'. Many years ago I came across the following quote by André Launay. I don't know if most of our members have heard of it, but do feel that if they have not, it's worthy of bringing to their attention.

"There is more rubbish talked about wine and wine tasting than anything else. It is the perfect subject for the snob, the one-up man, the bore and, because the true experts are patient and polite people who prefer drinking wines to talking about them, only the views of the amateur are expressed and they become more banal as time goes on!"



I quite agree with the admirable sentiment Launay expressed, but let us hope that our amateur members don't think it is aimed at them, for it is not. The quotation is in fact the opening paragraph of 'The Merrydown Book of Country Wines', in which Launay, the author, encourages amateurs to make country wines in the same way that that famous Company made wines for sale, initially from sugar and native English fruits. Amateur wine makers he loved, amateur wine snobs he abhorred for the rubbish they talked.

Secondly, Doreen Procter, Chairman of Phoenix, has kindly responded to the suggestion made in the last issue of N&V by the Chairman of the 'White Lions', that Circles should tell us about their names and origins. Her letter says:

Dear Roy...I've taken up the enormous hint (*not me, honest! Ed.*) to write back about the origins of **Phoenix**.

Phoenix came about in 1980, after several winemakers in our area had been showing wine at the National for their own small wine clubs, but failing to gain sufficient points to oust such giants as **Ace of Clubs**. After the formation of **Tyneside Nationals**, it was realised that something should be done to throw out more of a challenge.

So it came about...the rising of **Phoenix**. Members from as far afield as Sunderland in the north of our region to Guisborough in the south, out to Bishop Auckland in the west to various towns round the River Tees and the coast. The most convenient meeting place for all these enthusiasts to meet turned out to be Elmwood Community Centre at Stockton, where the club has met every second Tuesday of the month since its formation.

At first about two dozen people met, to discuss and taste their home-made wines. Enthusiasm bubbled, and the club now has a membership of forty. The only rule of the club is that members show each year at the National. This is really where



our name Phoenix originates - as winemakers we all work towards our goal - to rise each year at the National - and hopefully win! We have now won the Amateur Winemaker's Shield three out of the last four years. After each show we return home to 'lie low' for another year. We peruse our successes and failures, share each others recipes, discuss and criticise. Each member contributes to the meetings in some way, and all agree that it's one of the best ways of furthering our learning processes in wine and beer-making.

Never fear - we will be rising again this year to challenge everyone once more at the Scarborough National!

Yours sincerely

Doreen Procter
Chairman.

Thank you, Doreen. Who can resist a confident challenge like that? And who is going to send me the next letter on this topic? Ace of Clubs, where and why are you? And where is Scraftoft, as someone once asked? And is the Derwent Valley near Derwentwater in the Lake District? Why is there a Golden Circle? And who are the mysterious 23/25 Federation? How did they get that name? Is that their blood pressure reading, or the code name of a secret yeast they've cultured? And what about those poor old Old Bexley Winemakers?

Has your Circle an interesting name, history, whatever? Do you meet at 35,000 feet, British Airways? Do take the trouble to drop Roy a few lines, telling the other members about yourselves. Free Hot Cockles for the best reply! And a liardsworth of gilravaging for all the first twenty runners-up



Our ever-faithful Stan Baker wrote in Christmas mood about assorted aspects of home and commercial winemaking :

Roy - Popping corks at NAWB's annual wine show is now a thing of the past but many veteran winemakers will recall that one of the (many) problems was to keep the wines stable until they had been judged. Twenty five years ago most shows were held in the cooler months of Spring and Autumn because Campden tablets were not always effective in preventing certain types of yeasts from becoming active.

I well recall the prizegiving ceremony at one NAWB weekend when the weather was unseasonably warm and the attending dignitary's speech was punctuated by corks rising spectacularly above the massed ranks of bottles. One levitated cork even emitted a loud 'raspberry' sound.

To the amateur semi-sparkling wines were considered to be something of a joke, but commercial producers have long appreciated that a few trapped carbon dioxide bubbles in an uninspired, flavourless wine often improved the product.

Both production methods and marketing techniques in the Wine Trade have changed greatly in recent years. Some wines need long maturing times and stock held for long periods reduces cash flow. Beaujolais Nouveau was originally a sales gimmick to sell younger wines so that producers could survive whilst other wines of the same vintage, made in the traditional method, would lose some of their tannin and become more acceptable on the palate. The 'new' technique of maceration carbonique is now almost commonplace in wineries round the world.

One such winery is that at Rueda, situated about one hundred miles north of Madrid, the capital city of Spain. Currently the Rueda has a Denominación de Origen for only white wines, but the Rueda winemakers hope soon to produce maceration



carbonique wines which are as good as any in the world.

NAWB members who made visits to breweries a few years (ago) when the new stainless steel lager vessels were being installed will recall their long cylindrical shape with the pencil point base. The fermentation vessels at Rueda, well illustrated on a 'Tomorrow's World' TV programme, showed that they are much slimmer than the lager-fermenting vessels. Fixed to the Rueda vessels are separate cylinders that trap aroma compounds which are released from the grapes during fermentation. These compounds are returned to the wine at the bottling stage. Some NAWB winemakers may be purists and object to the use of aroma and flavour additives. However, the art of blending requires a well-trained palate and nose; it is as possible to have too much aroma and flavour in a wine as it is to have too little.

Stan Bakewell

Thank you Stan, for an interesting letter. Congratulations, by the way - your very welcome Christmas Greetings card, which arrived on November 10th, was definitely the first of the season! I hadn't even bought mine then. Another 'First' for your list of successes!

SCARBOROUGH 1990 - WHAT'S NEW?

Very little, actually. The Schedules are enclosed with News & Views, together with the Booking forms, Stewards' appeal, and TWO Entry forms, as agreed, to prevent matrimonial disharmony.

As is usual, there will be Fancy Dress Parade, Wine Tasting, Civic Reception, AGM, and a variety of Trade Stands to whet your appetite, or rather 'wet your whistles'. And speaking of



which, our Chairman sends us:

DETAILS OF THE TASTING TO BE HELD DURING THE SCARBOROUGH SHOW

We will be tasting 6 wines, all of which are from Yugoslavia. They are taken from their varietal range, and are as follows:

WHITE.	RED.
Pinot Blanc.	Merlot.
Chardonnay.	Cabernet Sauvignon.
Gewurztraminer.	Pinot Noir.

All the wines come from the **TELTSCHER BROTHERS LTD.** list who are partially sponsoring us for this event.

I think you will find this, as I did, to be a very interesting range of wines which will make for a first class tasting.

Judith Irwin.

Chairman.

AND ONE LAST ITEM: At Blackpool this year, **Mrs. Catherine Shaw** of Hopkinson's Beer & Wine Circle, on her first visit to the National, won to her great delight, the **KIT - DRY STOUT Class**. An excellent achievement! To her disappointment, however, she found there was no trophy for this Class, and correspondingly no replica to keep. To add to her woes, your Editor, who shall be lashed with scorpions and have **CHEMPRO** rubbed into his wounds, printed only a list of trophy winners, not the full list of class winners.

Catherine's Stout was made from an own-brand kit from her local homebrew shop, **Holly Bank Home Brew**, run by Mrs. Irene Todd. The kits also took 2nd, 4th, and 6th places in the **Kit - Dry Stout Class**. If the shop's 12 other beer kits and 17 wines are as good, there's going to be a revolution! Generously, to console Catherine and encourage les autres, Irene has donated to **NAWB** the **HOLLYBANK TROPHY** for 1990. **Your move, Catherine!**





...OR TAKE THE LONG WAY ROUND...



...OR DO IT THE EASY, LAZY WAY !

SCARBOROUGH

REVIEWS...REVIEWS...REVIEWS...REVIEWS...REVIEWS...REVIEWS...RE

I would like to be able to write 'Revue...Revue...Revue.. and so on, but the rest of the Committee don't agree that I should spend your subscriptions on buying striptease-show and girlie-revue-bar tickets. How does one become a dirty old man? All right, I'm working on it.....

Just the same, I do have some interesting items to write about this quarter. Some homebrew, some just plain for drinkers, so you qualify just the same.

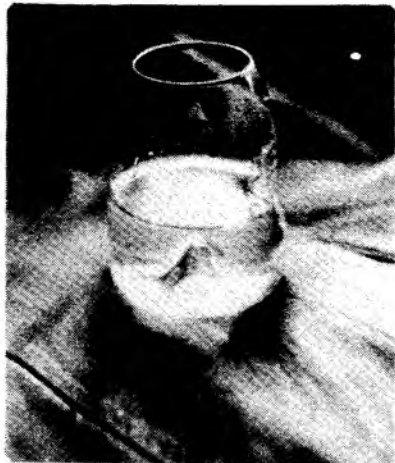
THE AIR-AU-VIN This is a fascinating novelty. We all know how a bottle of wine, especially a red wine, improves by being allowed to 'breathe' for a while. And of course, you forget, or guests call unexpectedly, or more often still, you find you need another bottle! Well, the Air-Au-Vin has a fine tube that bubbles air into the wine when the cork has been drawn, assisting the wine to quickly reach a good state for drinking. The air comes from a spring loaded plunger, that slowly slides back into place, forcing the air down the tube and into the wine.

The gift for the man who already has everything, Air-Au-Vin retails at under £15 from most good shops. Easily used and maintained.



And speaking of the man who has everything, he must therefore already have the finest of wine appreciation glasses. If not, the **Impitoyable Le Taster** fine French lead crystal glasses are still obtainable by return of post from Roy Ekins, at £10.95 each, including post and packing.

Definitely a bargain! Write or telephone your Christmas order now!



VINA's range of home-wine grape concentrate cans includes a **Medium Sweet White wine, VINA No. 3,** and a **Medium Smooth Red, VINA No.6.** As with most modern kits, these are simplicity itself to make, and they both produce an inexpensive and eminently drinkable wine. The great grandmothers of our family, both in their eighties, rapidly made inroads into the Medium Sweet White, though Irene and I made sure of our share by keeping the demijohn in my storeroom.

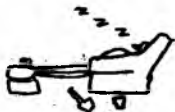
The Medium Smooth Red never actually got into bottles either, though I was determined to keep some by me and see how it fared in competition. Not sufficiently determined, it seems; I shall have to make another gallon! A very pleasant brew, a light Beaujolais type of wine that never really had time to show its best after fermentation - it was drunk too soon! A compliment indeed; both wines were made and consumed in under two months. A German wine yeast was used in both instances.

BOOTS (The Chemists, who else?) market a handy device, the **Winemakers Pump Syphon**. (I must be psychologically disturbed, for this sticks in my memory as the Sump Python!) If you are a novice winemaker, or only make single gallons at a time, or just plain can't get the hang of syphoning with a length of plastic tubing without spraying the kitchen with the precious fluid, then this is well worth trying. Beermakers will not be interested, this is not for you!

The Pump Syphon is an impressive collection of tubes and bits of plastic gadgetry, but which very simply push-fit together to make a quite remarkably effective self-starting syphon. Although the instructions suggest depressing the pump head a few times, I found it worked on just one or two depressions, and the wine flowed merrily into a clean jar. It will transfer wine from the fermenting jar to another demijohn, or to wine bottles, and includes a simple but efficient in-line tap to switch the flow on or off as desired; this simply suspends the syphon action in mid-flow, as it were.

Nothing in this world is perfect, except me, and I found that although to syphon the wine without disturbing the sediment the cap needed to clip onto the demijohn of wine, this only happened when a standard round-lipped jar was used. With the screw-top ex-fruit juice etc. gallon jars that so many of us have acquired over the years, the cap was too tight a fit, impeding the movement of the pump body in following the wine down the demijohn. This meant the tube drawing the wine from within the source jar was not held steady in place. There was also about half an inch of irrecoverable wine in the bottom of the jar, far more than I would leave using a syphon tube.

My overall impression was of a well-engineered piece of equipment that works very efficiently, is easily cleaned after use, and without metal parts that would corrode or contaminate the wine. Recommended for the novice, not the experienced.



BEER: I haven't much to report in this issue in the beer line, not because of kit shortages - I have a dozen awaiting trial - but the old arch-enemy, shortage of time. They just don't put as many hours in a day as they used to!

Having said that, I have made up and am starting to enjoy drinking **Munton's Export Pilsner**, one of their 40-pint Connoisseur's Range. This just needed a kilo of sugar adding, plus water to make up to five gallons. It's easy to make, light and pleasant, with an O.G of 1040 plus - a deceptively strong lager to drink; it should contain around 5% alcohol. Rather nice, clears well without added finings, hoppy clean flavour and nose straight from the barrel!

And look out for Paine's new kit, shortly to be launched. It is a **Barley Wine**, one of their **John Bull Premium Range**, and if I can produce a beer like the manufacturer's sample I have tasted, I shall die happy! Bob Barron, Paine's Sales Manager, brought some along to the Paines/Homebrew Today 'Homebrew Retailer of the Year' presentation (see below), and it really was most impressive. Beware of this if you are driving, it's definitely a fireside-at-home drink unless you're a passenger!

In the next issue there will be more reports on **VINA** and **Unican** wines, **High Kicks 'Pina Colada'** by Paines, **Hambleton Bard** beer kits and **Grande Maison** wines, and a **Sparkling Wine** from **CWE**. And a new wine additive, '**VinBody**', from **VINA**. There's a great assortment for you to look forward to, as long as I'm capable of reviewing them all! Merry Xmas!

And finally, although you might think your Editor is a hard-hearted old curmudgeon, I am really an old romantic. True! Which is why, after waiting twelve years, since I first saw them in Silver Jubilee year, I can now sit and sup ale from my own **Leather Jack**, though it tastes a bit odd. Irane bought me this unique gift at Hawes, in the Yorkshire Dales, though it was made by **Brian Grainger** of **Elder Cottage, Manfield**,



Darlington, Co. Durham (tel. 032 574 633). Lined with pitch to waterproof it, the tankard does whiff a bit (but nicely!) when new, but soon settles down to being a pleasing mediæval pot to drink your excellent homebrew from. As Brian says, "Avoid hot liquids and squeezing, and with care should last 400 years". I don't think this can be construed in law as a guarantee for four centuries, but given fair treatment, these tankards will outlast you and me. But *please* don't put them in the microwave to mull ale, or in the dishwasher to clean them - you'll only have yourself to blame! And even if you don't use them for drinking, the tankards are quite decorative items. (£10 by mail order from Brian, post & packing included, for a nominal pint pot). I hope to arrange for these to be on sale at the National at Scarborough, perhaps at a slightly reduced price.



STREET SIGN IN SCARBOROUGH. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

GEORDIE SCOOP! Did you notice the advertisement on the back page of 'Homebrew Today'? In case you missed it, here it is again. If that's not superb publicity, I don't know what is!



But in view of the bad barley harvest in 1989, it seems inevitable that beer kit and malt prices will rise too. We can rest assured of one thing: whatever the increase, it certainly won't work out at anything like the commercial beer increase per pint.

HOMEBREW RETAILER OF THE YEAR

MAUREEN JAMES, of M & D Homebrew, 148 Kirkgate, Wakefield, has won the top and valuable prize of the national competition sponsored by Paine's PLC and 'Homebrew Today' for the best homebrew retailer of the year. By a unanimous decision by the judges, Maureen's shop was selected as the finest place in the country to go for good service, assistance, and a wide range of brews to taste and purchase. The prize was a cheque for £1200 and a trophy. In her four years as a homebrew retailer,

Maureen has gone out of her way to give tastings, run classes, and publicise the hobby by every means she can. Evelyn Barrett, Editor of Homebrew Today, Bob Barron, Sales Manager of Paine's, Tony Todd of Brewicon, and your Editor were among those crowding the shop for the presentation, which was well supported by the local Press and Radio. An award of £150 and a selection of Paine's kits was also made to Mr. John Hewitt, as the customer whose nomination brought Maureen's shop to the Judges' eyes.

Readers in Yorkshire must think themselves very lucky - the runner-up out of well over 250 nominations was Phil. Tapley, of B-I-Y, Wellgate, Rotherham. The Yorkshire Federation Show and the National should be worth judging next year, with the First and Second best retail shops in Britain in the area!

Watch out for the nomination forms in Homebrew Today next year, and enter your favourite homebrew shop - you might be the next customer whose entry is adjudged the best.

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BOOKWORM'S CORNER:

COMPLETE HOME WINEMAKING, by Gillian Pearkes.

This is a revised and newly printed edition of a book originally published in 1962. It has been comprehensively brought up to date by the author, with new drawings and descriptions of modern techniques and material.

Miss Pearkes is a well-known commercial English wine grower and vintner, and her professional approach shows clearly in this attractive paperback, price £2.99, published by Mandarin.

Straightforward guidance and diagrams on growing fruits or a small vineyard for winemaking, as well as practical instruction and many recipes for making wines, ciders and perry, make this a good buy for novice or expert.



ROY ALLIVER submitted the following odious odes.

HOMEGROWN

However do the experts make
 Their wines from native fruit?
 The thrushes eat my currants,
 With cherries blackbirds scoot!
 The strawberries are fledglings' food,
 The elder's food for all;
 Maggots consume my raspberries,
 To grubs, black berries fall.
 Worms infest my crabapples,
 My rhubarb smells plain evil,
 And just to show how bad things are,
 I think I've got the weevil!

THAT FESTIVE FEELING

Christmas comes but once a year,
 Or so the pundits say,
 And each year we have to suffer
 What our friends all give away!

At the Circle's Christmas Party
 There are lots of kinds of liquor,
 And if you drink just half of them
 You'll end up sicker, quicker!



STAN BAKER offers us some thoughts on ripening fruit:

The weather pattern of the UK is among the most varied in the world. In some years, Spring frosts, strong winds or rain for days on end do not allow fruit blossoms to set and this results in a shortfall of fruit for Autumn winemaking. During some years the weather is kind and there is a surplus locally of fruit. In 1969 there was a glut of apples and I made 168 gallons of dry apple wine. Most of this turned to vinegar over several years because there was too much to drink, and other local winemakers had also made their share and did not welcome free samples. 1989 has also been a glut year for apples in Kent, and with fewer home winemakers prepared to make apple wine from surplus fruit the apple farmers, having sold all they could through the wholesale markets, have been forced to plough the surplus, some hundreds of tonnes, back into the ground.

Fruits and plants relate to a chemical time scale. In the Autumn surplus waste acids are pumped from the trunks of trees and bushes into the leaves, resulting in the acids burning the leaves to produce varied colours of brown, red, and gold. When this process is completed, hormones weaken the stems of the leaves where they attach to the plant, and the leaves fall off.

Similarly the fruit ripening on a plant relates to a chemical time scale. When the sugars and acids are at optimum level the flavour compounds are at their best. Scientific grape growers use instruments to assist them in making decisions, in choosing the best time to pick their crop. and in parts of the world where grapes are transported hundreds of miles in refrigerated conditions they are often picked at night, by mechanical methods, to ensure that the flavour is not lost. Whereas grapes for winemaking are picked at a ripe stage when flavour is best, grapes and other fruits for eating are often



picked at an unripe stage. This is so that the fruit can survive the mechanical and bulk handling that takes place when fruit is transported, in a refrigerated state, to central warehouses before being distributed to wholesale outlets. Government-funded fruit research centres in the UK have long been aware of the advantages of refrigeration in preserving fruit during the winter months, but few traditional varieties of apples have been successful and newer varieties have been introduced, which it is hoped will have a longer shelf life.

When fruit or vegetables are ripe they generate a gas known as ethylene and some fruit and vegetables react to very cold conditions and often become soggy and unfit to eat. However a new product has been marketed which should slow down the rotting process and preserve fruit and vegetables for longer periods.

To quote a report in a quality Sunday newspaper "The preserver works by absorbing ethylene, which is the gas that, after ripening, proceeds to rot produce. The pellets are of a substance called 'Ethysorb', based on aluminium salts and Potassium permanganate, are in a small container that resembles a pencil eraser, which is a miniature of systems used in supermarkets, and should last about two months."

Ethylene gas is mostly used to 'ripen' fruit just before it is stacked on supermarket shelves and although the gas does improve the colour of the fruit it does nothing to improve its flavour. Genetic engineers in Davis University are said to be experimenting with the DNA structure of plants so that they will produce fruit that does not soften or bruise so easily. The fruit can therefore be left longer on the plant, allowing the full flavour to mature. Obviously this genetic solution is not ideal, but when most people have a desire for fully flavoured fruit it does seem to be the easiest approach.



MISTLETOE

Following the absolute torrent of apathy that greeted the article last quarter by our new correspondent, 'Medicus', it is clear that a further dose of sensible medical advice would not come amiss. So here again, is a homily by our own expert:

METHANE & OTHER GAS GENERATION FOR HOME BEER & WINE MAKERS

by 'MEDICUS'

With the advent of Christmas there is a distinct danger to all homebrew imbibers, that is possible not generally realised.

You will all at some time have tried reducing acidity in your wines by the addition of precipitated chalk (calcium carbonate) or even that common antacid substance, sodium bicarbonate. There invariably follows a violent upsurge of bubbles, causing foaming and frequently a severe loss of wine.

Over-indulgence in turkey and Christmas Pud, especially when accompanied by large glasses of highly acid wines, often gives rise to a lack of clarity in the patient - in extreme cases, to an absolute thickness - and recourse to bicarb. and patent medicines is the normal reaction. Beware! A much more troublesome result of such supposed cures can be the rapid inflation of the patient, also accompanied by some foaming, as the carbonates usually prescribed react with the acids. In extreme cases it has proved necessary to tether a diner by one leg to the table to prevent him drifting around the room. One rare case has been recorded of a very small woman whistling round the room like a deflating balloon, leaving her nether garment hooked on a portrait of Queen Victoria, who was not amused.

A much safer course of treatment is to administer large doses of milk stout, where the casein content combines with the acid and coagulates into small pellets of a polystyrene-like foam, that can be digested at leisure.

Too low an internal acid level is of course an unhealthy



state. Autopsies have discovered oysters forming new shells inside heedless consumers, who have over-indulged in patent medicines and given the unfortunate naked molluscs they swallowed whole a fine source of carbonates with which to replace their missing shells. The worst case known was where one overgrown oyster had half-a-dozen men and a bottle of Champagne at one sitting.

Christmas is a time for celebration, and for partaking of the best things in life. A dozen bottles of wine a day should be the absolute maximum, provided that the consumption of port and whisky is restricted to a couple of bottles of each before and after breakfast, when the drinker should force himself to eat. At least one slice of bread and a vitamin pill should be ingested, to ensure a balanced diet. The rest of the meals for the day can then be much lighter.

Look after your health over the holidays; if you feel a cold coming on, a quick snifter of Cointreau should give you ample Vitamin C, as it is made from oranges. And a final health tip - aspirin is NOT a major item of diet, and must be supplemented with food occasionally.

Enjoy yourselves!

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NAWBERT says:

"When I've half-emptied the demijohn,
I'll think about bottling some for
Scarbroughborough....."



DEDICATED BEER DRINKERS can't fail to be thrilled if they make a pilgrimage to the '**MASON'S ARMS**' in the Lake District, where Nigel Stevenson specialises in supplying hundreds of beers from all over the world, as well as guest beers from the finest breweries in Britain. This incredible collection - all of which are on sale - includes classics such as Pilsner Urquell, Imperial Russian Stout, Kwak, Beck's (on draught when I called), Eku 28 (OG 1130!), Tiger - the list seems endless. Over 200 beers, from upwards of 36 countries, but specialising in those from Europe; a fine range of German, Dutch, and Belgian beers, with many quite unusual brews like Lambic beers, and strawberry aperitif beer - well, someone must like it.

There is a catalogue of the beers on each of this ancient and busy pub's tables for reference, but you can buy a new and clean copy for a pound if you want one to take away. This beer list is said to be "biodegradable and septic tank compatible".

The Masons Arms is easily found. From the A590 turn north at Gilpin Bridge (A5074) up the Lythe Valley, passing every pub you see (hard though that may be). After a few miles you will see a left turn signposted for Bowland Bridge and Cartmell Fell. Take this, and drive through Bowland Bridge village; the Masons Arms is about half a mile further on, on a hairpin bend halfway up a steep hill (Strawberry Bank). There is a car park at the back. From the Windermere side of the hill there is a road not far from Newby Bridge that climbs up from the A592 (the lakeside road) from Fell Foot, past Gummars How viewpoint, that will take you, with a right fork after the summit, to Strawberry Bank and the Mason's Arms. It's a stiff climb, even in a car, but the reward justifies it. The pub can also be reached from the Ghyll Head road, nearer to Windermere. And for the lucky few, there is some accommodation, but you need to get details in advance.

