

# NEWS & VIEWS

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## DECEMBER 1992

### GREETINGS FROM NAWB

**W**e are entering the last few weeks of 1992, and soon it will be the festive season when we all put our troubles behind us to enjoy the festivities. Most wine circles will soon be having their Christmas Parties to enjoy this occasion with all their wine making friends and to exchange cards and gifts.

This year seems to me to have passed very quickly, a lot of water has gone under the bridge, some good times some bad, but all in all not a bad year for us winemakers. Our hobby seems to ride all the problems that we meet, and this is due to the warm and friendly family that comprises our hobby and organisation. This is obvious when we all meet at our Annual Show each year, everyone is so pleased to meet up again and talk about what has happened during the past year. Let us look forward to Weston-Super-Mare being a very successful show, and I look forward to seeing you all there.

Like all organisations, our hobby is facing difficulties, some wine circles are closing down, some seem to go from strength to strength, some concentrate on the winning of prizes, some

on the social side, but we all have our likes and dislikes and together we make a good organisation of wine and beer makers. Costs are, as usual, increasing each year, which is adding to the problems of making our organisation very healthy and financially sound. As we all know, it is very easy to spend money but very hard to raise funds. Without a good financial Bank Account it is difficult to survive in this period of trade depression, so I ask of you to support our next Show in great numbers to help make up for the poor support we had at Blackpool.

It is not very often that I have the opportunity to write to you all - the last time was when I was your past Chairman, which was enjoyable and a great honour. Since then I have served on the NAWB Committee as Secretary which is just as enjoyable. The News & Views is yours, helping to keep all our members in touch throughout the year, so please support the Editor with your articles and tit-bits to make his job easier. We all look forward to 1993 - may it bring you all the best of everything, health, wealth and happiness and continued successful wine and beer making.

*From all at NAWB, may we wish you a Very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.*

Lenn Drysdale  
NAWB General Secretary

### GREETINGS

### FROM THE GUILD

**N**ow that the major shows are over for this year and the preparation and lugging of entries dims in the memory, we enter a period of relative calm. The time of planning is with us.

Some of you may be planning the production of "Quickie" wines for Christmas and the New Year, or organising the brewing of beers to be consumed with pleasure over the holiday period.

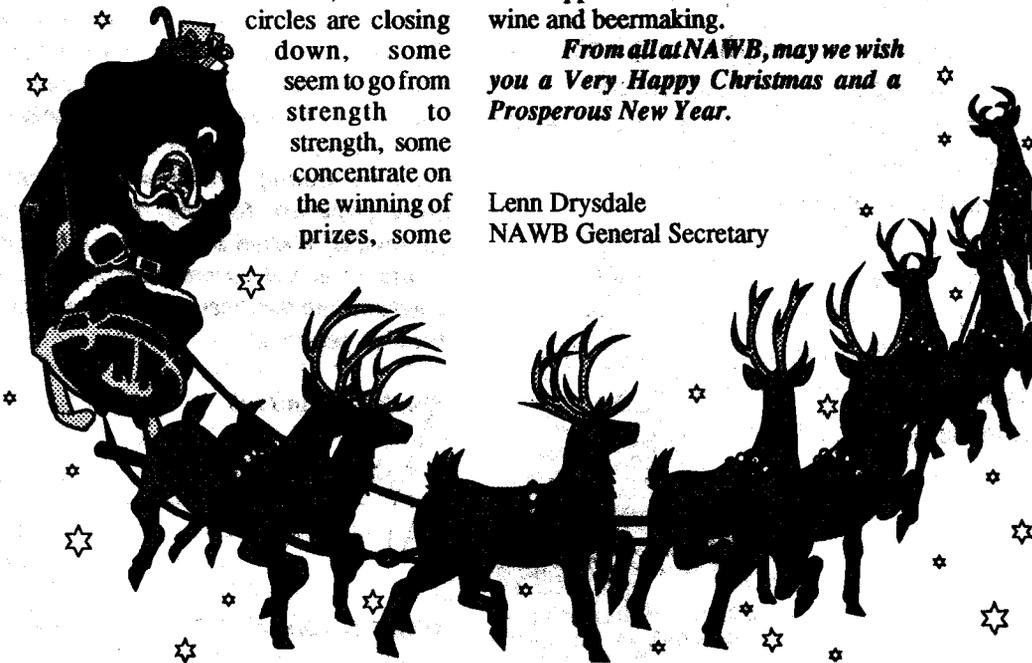
Others may be sampling wines made earlier in the year - or even in previous years - to select the appropriate wines for the festive table.

The more dedicated among you will be busy planning the preparation, selection and fine tuning of your entries for next year's main competition - the National Show.

*On behalf of the National Guild of Wine & Beer Judges I would like to wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.*

To those of you who will be competing in the 1993 National Show, we wish you every success. We always enjoy the pleasure and the challenge of judging your National entries and we also look forward to meeting many of our old friends and hopefully to making new friends at Weston Super Mare in 1993.

Doug Hodgkinson  
Chairman  
National Guild of Wine & Beekeepers



**FROM  
THE  
EDITORS  
DESK**



Well, what a great response we had in correct entries received and the winner will be announced a little bit later, no I will do it now, and the winner is ??????????

Sad to say this, but NO CORRECT RETURNS received and even more sad to say NO CROSSWORD RETURNS RECEIVED at all !!!!!!!

Now, was it too difficult or are you not interested in this sort of idea in NEWS & VIEWS. Please let us know !!!!

Many thanks to Jan & Peter Mitchell for the one reply to the Post Code competition. To carry on with this style of NEWS & VIEWS we must have some effort from at least a few of the members. As always a few carry the majority and those few may get despondent with their continual efforts.

Stan Baker comes into a lot of criticism due to his articles, but at least he does supply a great deal of material for NEWS & VIEWS, and in all fairness, does show interest in what NAWB tries to carry out for its members. Your replies to his articles are fair and correct, and this leads to further material from you. I'm pleased that Stan has broad shoulders.

The next edition of NEWS & VIEWS should be out before the National Show & Conference in April 1993 so lets have some input for this edition.

*If all goes according to plan you should receive this edition before Christmas, so may I wish you a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year to you, your Circles and to all winemakers everywhere.*

*Both the leading article writers on the front page are looking forward to a successful Weston Super Mare Show & Conference. Let all members make it a good one and that goes for Christmas and the New year also.*

Speak to all in 1993

**John L Gorton NGWBJ  
NEWS & VIEWS Editor**

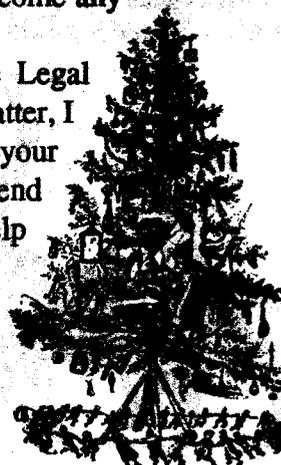
**PROBLEMS AT  
BLACKPOOL 1992  
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN????**

If you visited our Conference in Blackpool this year and have any grievances against the Norbreck Hotel, either with regard to service, facilities or any other aspects, I would welcome a letter from you giving full details. At the moment I am having a disagreement with the Hotel regarding the full cost of the hotel charges, and I would welcome any ammunition you could supply to me.

If there are any members who are in the Legal profession and could give me any advice on this matter, I look forward to hearing from you. As you know, as your Treasurer, I am constantly conscious of how I spend your money, and to this end you, the members, can help me.

Thanking you in advance.

**Judith Irwin  
NAWB Treasurer**





## CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

One would imagine at this late Autumn stage of the year, one's various activities would somehow quieten down, but no so. The commencement of dark nights found Eileen and I down at Looe, Cornwall, in our caravan amongst howling gales and torrential rain. We had to call at Cardiff to attend to final arrangements for the NGWBJ conference weekend, so we decided that having travelled so far from the north we may as well visit this part of the UK after too many years absence. We visited many of the old places we used to visit when our children were young, which brought back many happy memories of sunny summer camping holidays. I must mention that although the weather may have been damp, wet and windy, the hospitality of our wine and beer making friends was very warm indeed. Joyce Upton invited us to a turkey dinner shortly after we had arrived in the area along with some friends. Joyce is very proud of her wine and beer making and needless to say, this hospitality extended to bed and breakfast on three occasions - I wonder why? Thanks a lot Joyce.

Another memorable night was a Ho-down organised by the Saltash Wine Circle. Everyone had to bring along a 1/4lb. of unusual cheese and a bottle of wine. All these cheeses, about 40 or 50 in number, were laid out on a kitchen table and a member from each table assembled together to form a judging team to select the winning cheese, and the winner just happened to be someone called Rose Hardy with a homemade cheese. All the cheeses were then laid out in the main hall along with French sticks and butter for everyone to enjoy. Being a bit of a 'square' I only attempted three dances, but what a great night and a super idea.

One night before we were due to travel back to Cardiff, Phil and Rose Hardy

invited us round to dinner. This time it was Tamar salmon accompanied by various goodies and bottles of wine. This was followed by a tremendous treacle pudding, cooked in the microwave. Rose informed me. I've asked Rose to forward the recipe to the Newsletter. The flavour of this pud was enhanced with a 1984 Sauternes. Then to the garage to discover the techniques of Cornish beermaking, very interesting! Bed and breakfast again with Joyce.

Back home and 1/2 a stone heavier, I needed to swing into action fairly quickly as I had left quite a lot of red Spanish grape wine finishing off in 5 gallon bins. This had cleared whilst we had been away but it needed racking off and filtering. Using a 55 litre chestnut barrel that had been used several times before, I added about 12.5 grams of America oak chips per gallon and filled the barrel to the top. There were also 8 gallons of wine - I call a grape re-run. It is made from all the grape shells from the dry red with a gallon of Beavertdale cab.sauv. red concentrate. This is made up to 8 galls. with water and fed with sugar until the yeast reaches its alcoholic tolerance. This was racked, filtered, then sweetened to SG1035 with sugar and some glycerine. Having just taken delivery of a 5 gallon American oak cask, I filled this to the top and left a further demijohn alongside "for the angels". The rest I am drinking and giving away at Xmas, i.e. two bottles to the lass who supplies my CO2 bottles down at the club, two bottles to our walking club Xmas hamper and so on. I have even managed to make next year's National competition wine of Date and Orange. If you haven't made this yet it is very easy once you have all the ingredients to hand, about 5 minutes that's all, so do have a go!

My next task indoors is to make beers for Xmas. Our neighbour over the road has a full-scale snooker saloon at the bottom of his garden instead of a garage. It is all panelled, with bar and taped music. Between Xmas and New Year the champion AVENUE snooker player for the year is determined by a day long (and sometimes well into the night) competition. I supply the keg beer and they supply the other refreshments. There's beer to make for the family and friends also. Outside there are seasonal tasks to do in the greenhouse and allotments, such as fencing, and refilling manure bins. It's a busy life.

However, one period of the year we all look forward to with family and friends is the Christmas period, when we can relax and enjoy the fruits of our labours.

**MAY I EXTEND TO ALL OUR NAWB MEMBERS, FEDERATIONS AND CIRCLES ON BEHALF OF THE NAWB COMMITTEE, EILEEN AND MYSELF, BEST WISHES FOR A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.**

### **SAMUEL'S YELLOW PUDDING (pronounced "Ello Pudd'n.")**

4 oz. Butter or Margarine  
4 oz. Sugar  
4 oz. Self-Raising Flour  
2 Eggs  
Vanilla essence  
Syrup to taste and decorate

Mix the butter and sugar in a bowl and beat well, add eggs and vanilla essence mixing well. Fold in flour and place in a 2 pint buttered bowl. Cover loosely with microwave proof cling film and cook for 4-5 minutes, depending on microwave power. When the side comes away from the bowl it is ready. Turn out onto a plate and pour syrup onto the pudding.

Note: This can be prepared ahead and put into the microwave when the main course is being cleared. When served ensure a tin of syrup is available on the table for extra calories! A Sauternes wine goes extremely well with this pudding

**ROSE HARDY**



# WINE & BEER STEWARDS

## For Weston Super Mare

Paline Pearce NGWBJ

National Convenor

It could be raining "cats and dogs", or it might be a cold icy morning with snow in the air, or a dark dull morning, but if your "News & Views" has just arrived, it is bound to put the sunshine back into the day!

This is always a bumper issue because it also contains your next year's Show Scheduled, and contained therein is a plea for stewards. As Convenor, the Judges' Stewards are of special interest to me. Come the New Year I shall be waiting to hear from you, so please, write to me soon so that I can include your name on the list. If you are interested in becoming a National Guild Judge, or are about to take your exam, please let me know.

As I visit various wine circles, the questions I am most frequently asked are:- "How do I know if my wine is up to standard? How can I tell if I am entering my wine in the correct class? How do I know if my wine is dry or sweet enough for the class? I think that I can quite safely say that we have all been faced with a similar problem at one time or another - even the Gerry Sparrow's of this world had to start somewhere!! My advice is to steward for a National Guild Judge where the different classifications will be made most obvious to you. Also, read your Schedule, because the advice within the pages is very informative. I also suggest that if you do not have an up-to-date copy of the Judges Handbook then you are indeed sadly lacking in advice. This little book is crammed full of information for not only the Judge, but the Competitor, and the Show Secretary of your circle. Should you wish to obtain a copy, please contact:

Mr Norman Chiverton,  
Suttons Views,  
Castle Lane,  
Woolscott,  
Rugby,  
Warwickshire, CV23 8DE  
Tele: 0788 810344

Please make cheques payable to NGWBJ - the cost is £3.50 + 43p p&p. If your circle wishes to make a bulk order of 10 or more, please telephone for a price quotation. I promise that you will not be sorry that you decided to invest in a copy of this invaluable book.

Don't forget, I shall be looking forward to hearing from all your would-be stewards.

Oh by the way, I am also looking for folks with a nice hand in writing, so if you can spare me a few hours on the Saturday morning of the Show and would be willing to help me, please contact me as soon as you can.

*Here's wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a super New Year.*

**Included in the Schedule is the application form for Wine / Beer Stewards and General Stewards. The National needs both on the DAY!!! John - Editor**

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9 Crossroads

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Good if you give  
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PS, if Judith...*  
**Hugh (Good)**  
**Fund Raising**

# FERE

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# YEAST and CHLORINE

## By Prof Gerry Fowles NGWBJ

My attention has been drawn to the comments made by Al Proctor in the September issue of News & Views. Al's comments on Gervin yeasts are unfortunate, particularly in respect of the role of "chlorine". Thus Al says that he doesn't bother to remove the heavy "chlorine" from his water before making up his must, and presumably re-hydrating his yeast. This is most regrettable, and it gives winemakers very bad advice indeed.

Thus when any active dried yeast is rehydrated the process must be done properly if the yeast is to be reconstituted in the best state. In particular, attention must be paid to re-establishing the yeast cell membrane, which means rehydrating at around 35°C in dilute (say 5%) sugar solution. If any biocidal substance is present in the rehydrating liquid then the membrane is likely to be affected, and a lot of cell death may take place. This is likely to mean indifferent fermentations and possibly yeasty tastes in extreme cases. It is plainly unwise to destroy yeast cells by exposing them to chlorine derivatives. I must emphasise that all yeast cells are likely to suffer a deterioration if rehydrated in chlorinated water! Some strains of yeast will be more sensitive than others, of course, just as they will be to sulphur dioxide.

Another reason for boiling over-chlorinated water is that if the ingredients contain significant amounts of phenolic substances then they may become chlorinated, and this will produce the dreaded "TCP" or some related off-flavour. This is especially true with beer-making of course, but can be important with red wines where we use pulp fermentation.

The manufacturers of professional active dried wine yeast go to a great deal of trouble to give us yeasts of the highest possible quality, and it is silly to nullify their efforts. There are 11 different strains of wine yeast in the Gervin collection, and all are different; they have different characteristics, of course, and their resistance to sulphur dioxide varies, so it is likely that some strains may suffer greater damage than others when rehydrated in chlorinated water. But experienced winemakers usually avoid creating problems!

For the record, Gervin yeasts come from two different manufacturers, one of which is said to be by far the largest producer in the world. Their yeasts are used by the vast majority of professional winemakers all over the world. I simply take in samples of the available strains, and after rigorous testing, analysis,

and sometimes wide checks throughout the country, I select the strains with the best characteristics (e.g. temperature and alcohol tolerance, volatiles production and maximum sugar to alcohol production), and send the yeasts to the sachet makers. The sachet material is triple foil and the packing with inert gas (nitrogen), both of which ensure a long shelf-life. If any reader wants full information about the Gervin strains currently available, they should write to me or give me a ring on 0734-691518 and I will send them the latest information.

I feel that it is important that winemakers should know that irrespective of their choice of yeast (and we all have our favourites), they should avoid contaminating their musts with anything that can damage the precious yeast cells.

*The comments that Al Proctor made concerning Gervin Yeasts were his own and no way does he imply that Gervin yeasts are inferior. It does show that even experienced winemakers attempt something new when they experience problems.*

*John, Editor*

## Thoughts on Winemaking.

### **Sugar & High Alcohol**

Read in Gerry Fowles recently published new book on Winemaking that feeding the yeast with sugar to achieve high levels of alcohol does not work. Generally only 16% is achieved. The book reads that you have to add all the sugar at once.

Now that does put a different light on high alcohol wines and makes everything done in the past seem un-necessary?

### **Fermentation**

Why must we ferment in a demi-john???? Why can't we ferment in a bucket with a tight fitting lid. Providing that no airborne bugs and things can enter, does it matter what we use.



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# RECOGNISING THE REAL RISK

E J Stenhouse - Information Service to the  
Yorkshire Federation of Amateur Winemakers and Brewers

A survey carried out in the Yorkshire Federation showed that less than one-third of the circles had insurance cover of any kind. One small circle was paying a premium on trophy insurance that was equivalent to one-third of the total value of the trophies concerned. This absurd situation was perhaps prompted by vague notions of a man in a striped jersey, wearing a flat cap and loaded with a bulging sack. Nothing could be further removed from the real situation, as your present day thief is likely to be wearing jeans and trainers who - on average - would be in your home for less than two minutes. He does not stop to examine your silver for hallmarks (how many circle trophies have them?) he is interested only in cash, cameras, videos and the like.

There may be exceptions of course, but the majority of wine circles were formed later than the era of solid silver trophies. Much of the value of the trophy lies in the engraving and the last thing your opportunist thief wants is to be picked up by the police whilst carrying loot engraved with the name of the circle and that of the trophy holder. In the case of fire or theft, most trophies would be included in the household cover.

Another circle had wisely taken out

a policy for public liability, but this had an exclusion for barbecues - surely one of the few times when a circle activity might be deemed slightly risky.

The Federation Chairman made extensive enquiries and was eventually able to negotiate a BLOCK insurance with one of the major companies through the offices of a very helpful broker. In effect this means that if a circle pays its share of the block premium then every member of that circle is insured against public and product liability. In other words, if a civil action is instituted by one member against another, then both are covered for legal costs or damages up to a maximum of half a million pounds - with no exclusion clauses.

It was felt that this type of cover was absolutely essential. Otherwise the first successful civil action against a Chairman or committee would mean the end of volunteers to hold office.

Over 90% of the circles in the Federation are now taking advantage of the scheme for the second year - without any increase in the premium for 1992. Since this company can avoid the expense of making out over 50 separate policies, the individual cost is very small indeed; about a penny a week per person.

If any other Federation or similar group is interested in block insurance, then the Secretary will supply detailed information upon receipt of a stamped addressed envelope. Please write to Miss B Gande, Broad Reach, Cleveley Gardens, Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire, HX7 5JE

*First of all Eric your letter has surfaced from the pile of papers passed on to me and this is the first edition that I could print it in.*

*Insurance for all things, whether they are cars, houses and contents is an essential cost that has to be paid out and it applies to Wine Circles also. The Hampshire Wine League of which I am Chairman, has cover for public liability to £1,000,000, which at today's costs is still low. It does cover Treasurers of Circles and their Trophies.*

*This may be a suggestion to NAWB that it holds its own insurance, possibly covering all Federations, Circles and Members if costs could be made favourable.*

**What are your VIEWS MEMBERS????**

*John Editor.*

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## A JUDGES VIEW ON WINEMAKING

concerning Stan Baker

By Anne Parrack NGWBJ

I read Stan Baker's letter in October's News & Views with some incredulity at some of his comments.

Surely in this day and age there cannot be ANY competitors who would think that a "single ingredient" class in a show could possibly preclude the use of vinosity and body-giving ingredients in addition to the main ingredient.

His later comment, that it would be "doubtful whether judges of the ingredient class in the 1993 National would permit the use of raisins and sultanas for body", I find quite incredible. As a National Judge, I feel that I must make it clear to some readers who might be inclined to take this opinion as "gospel", that National Judges look for well-balanced wines with appropriate body for the type (dry, medium, sweet, after-dinner etc.) As long as the main ingredient

flavour is PREDOMINANT in an ingredient class, it matters not what is used to provide the body and/or vinosity.

I would also take him to task regarding his statement that "subtle use of oak ameliorates excess levels". It has NO effect on acid levels at all, but it does soften the tannins in the wine due to an exchange between the harsh fruit tannin and the softer oak tannins, thus "maturing" young wines a little quicker.

Mr Baker also states that "tartaric acid is dominant in green unripe gooseberries". It is my understanding that gooseberries contain malic and citric acids in equal quantities (see MUST p.52 by Gerry Fowles), and NO tartaric.

His opinion that sweet elderberry wine (Port style) is acceptable (regarding tannins) within a year after making is

debatable. If adequate amounts of fruit have been used in the recipe and the alcohol content is the maximum obtainable, one finds that one's palate is sensitised to the tannins by the high alcohol content and this may take SOME YEARS to mellow.

I wonder if Mr Baker does in fact make any wines these days! Sorry to be a grouch.

*I expect Anne, that Stan will tell us all in the next edition of News & Views if he makes wine, and in the last edition we had a comment from Jan Mitchell NGWBJ over Stan's comments. Many thanks to you both for writing in to News & Views and to Stan for his articles, even though they cause some debate. John - Editor*

## WINEMAKERS IN THE DARK - CONTINUED

By Natalie Doherty  
NGWBJ

Having read my copy of News & Views, may I comment on "Winemakers in the Dark". Hugh Thomas is quite right when he says that we do not have a consensus of opinion as to the taste and characteristics of our homemade wine. Is this because so many people just make wine and do not aim at anything in particular, or is it because of the mixture of ingredients used as opposed to the commercial field where it is one ingredient?

To have some guidelines of this nature would be especially helpful and encouraging to potential judges. The array of ingredients used is completely baffling to a beginner, and many would be judges are, I'm sure, lost on the way, simply because variety of tastes overwhelms them and they feel incapable of ever sorting them all out! However, if there were a few simple definitions for basic wines it would prove a tremendous help. May I suggest for cherries or plums, perhaps an almond flavour. Please feel free to contradict this statement.

If judges, winemakers etc. would care to send me their definitions I will assemble them in some sort of order and send the results back, via News & Views, and perhaps a wine tasting could be arranged to see if there is agreement or discord.

*Well Natalie, I shall look forward to having some information to print on definitions on bouquets and tastes (flavour). Again it is up to you the members to make this possible.*

*For interest Natalie is one of the newer Judges to the Guild and passed at Blackpool 1992.*  
John - Editor.

## POST CODE FUN

by Jan Mitchell and help  
from Peter Mitchell

As a confirmed Radio 4 fan I didn't know about the "Postcode Game".

Who's that Ken Bruce anyway?

Is he on when I'm wrestling with umpteen 12 year-olds' 3 R's?

Well, Peter and I started playing about with our postcode - which is PO11 9DS and came up with the following :-

Jan: Pour Out 119 Decent Slurps  
Peter: Pick out 119 Damson Stones

It's good fun when you get into it. It reminds me of a great game suitable for the lull between drinks on Christmas afternoon. We call it TELEGRAMS. A number of cards are prepared with 4 or 5 letter words printed on them. The printing has to be big due to the fuddled states of people's brains after Christmas Dinner! Everyone needs paper and pencil.

When a card is selected, all struggle to make up a "telegram" with each word beginning with the letters on the card. The results can be lewd, crude and often downright hilarious!

### EXAMPLES;

WINE - Water is Not Enough  
YEAST - You Expect Always Strong Turbulence  
INDIA - I'm Normally Dreadfully Inebriated Afterwards

*Many thanks Jan & Peter for your Post Code replies. Maybe these few will inspire some more Post Code funnies or what ever from the members.*

John - Editor

## MARBLES

By George Lashbrook

Over a period of about three weeks immediately prior to the Wales & West Festival, in either 1981 or 1982, I had entered about thirty-odd bottles of wine in two other shows, and to save these wines from spoiling after coming off the Show benches, I had topped these part-used bottles up with sterilised marbles, as I had done so for a number of yeasts. (It saves one becoming "like a newt", for short periods after shows)!!

So I took the last seven or eight of these bottles to the Wales & West Festival, and about the only place that was not in use in the chalet was the window sill, so these bottles were placed between the curtain and the window, and the contents consumed as required.

Come Saturday morning, people began to notice the marbles, and of course most of the remarks and other comments were, shall we say, unprintable. However, we maintained that it was Marble Wine, and made by a new process which was still in the experimental stage! A few people must have believed that we were telling the truth, because before the last day of the Show, I was asked about these experiments by a number of groups of winemakers. My only comment was:- Shsssssssssecret - still a long way to go to get it to perfection before we announce the procedure to the world.

Honest - Scouts Honour, and all that - this actually happened just as I have described, and it was just my perverse sense of humour having a little bit of fun. Talking of sense of humour - how's this for a funny. I have been re-inking my spare printer ribbon, and have noticed that underneath the three paragraphs of instructions on the ink container, in larger print, and in a different colour is the following:- "LEAVE TO DRY AT LEAST 24 HOURS"

And to think I've just paid good money to make my ribbon WET.

Perhaps there are some other members who would like to relate their pet funny story, or maybe an embarrassing situation. I'm sure I could write a book on "Clangers that I have dropped".

*You may have dropped "Clangers" George, but there a lot of additional "Clangers" out there within our membership. Lets hear some of them and share them with your fellow winemakers. I have one, probably print it next time " Bunged up airlocks and things go tinkle and rattle in the night in our bathroom!!!. John - Editor*

## IT'S GRUMBLE TIME AGAIN, Re MANUFACTURERS!

By Hugh (Again) Thomas

Don't you think it is time that our equipment was brought into the new Technical Age, (My equipment definitely needs an uplift) Let us look at the present style of Fermenting Barrels, Why are they not fitted with a circle of mesh, clipped into the inside, about six inches from the top. This would surely help to keep our musts below sea level and maybe overcome a tendency for oxidation to rear its ugly head.

Why do we have to syphon? Surely a tap on the bottom (OOOOH!) complete with an assortment of strainers could make life easier and less messy. My kitchen looks as if a bombs gone off when I try to clear up! The next object of my gaze will be the power filters that my Aquatic mad son keeps on using to clear his sixty gallon tanks? Maybe there is a product we could use or adapt Any ideas?

Congratulations John on editing another lively News & Views. Your 'phone chat with AlProctor, the 1992 NAWB Champion, was most informative and indicated the dedication to gain top wine and beer award.

Al's grapes were probably imported from Italy; vineyards being rather rare in England's mother counties. But even in the sunny south the vineyard owners have had a tough time. Many are not picking because they have unsold stocks of bottled wines from previous vintages. Some vineyard owners have invited local winemakers to pick at low cost.

1993 will probably not see the end of the recession, and low cost grapes may be available again next Autumn. Interested winemakers should contact Cdr Bond (ex-naval officer nut not 007!) Chairman of the English Vineyards Association at 38 West Park, London SE94RM (tel: 081-857-0452). Cdr Bond informs me that English grape growers, unlike their European counterparts, do not get an E.C. subsidy to promote their products. They are worthy of all the support that they can get.

Making wine does not come easy to some grape growers; they lack experience, and equipment is costly. Instead they hire professional winemakers. Having a biochemistry background, these wine and vine consultants "create" wines in much the same way that chemists formulate the ingredients for Kits and Concentrates. This gives an unfair advantage to exhibitors and NAWB schedule committee are wise to take this section out of the Master Award.

Exhibitors enjoy winning awards at the National; the one exception being the huge ornate Hidalgo trophy, donated by an importer of Spanish grape concentrate in the early days of the NAWB movement. Spanish sheries were then popular and winemakers made rosehip sherry. Since then oxidised wines have become less popular; palate preference has changed towards un-oxidised fruity white wines. Consequently, parts of the vineyards in the Sherry region are no longer in use but their Sherry Institute of Spain informs me that some wine producers are experimenting with the making of sparkling wines.

Medley is an apt name for the new five from eight ingredient class, and not to be confused with Medlar, a fruit similar to small apples. Exhibitors will receive special labels on which they indicate ingredient and sweetness range. Assessing sweetness is not that easy; it often relates to fruit rather than residual sugar. Most old red burgundies and some old clarets have a slightly sweet finish.

Is rhubarb a fruit or a vegetable? When rhubarb is in season I have eaten it as

## STAN BAKER WRITES.....

a dessert; ameliorating the bitter flavour (probably oxalic acid) with a generous helping of sweet custard. No mention is made in the Tynemouth Development Class recipe, and whether the rhubarb needs to be de-acified and then acid level restored with conventional wine acids. Undoubtedly the white grape concentrate gave the wine a better flavour.

A specific yeast variety was recommended for the parsnip, rhubarb and carrot wine recipes. This interest in yeasts goes back to early NAWB Shows, when special yeasts were used for port, sherry, burgundies, etc. until a general purpose yeast was propagated and become popular.

Yeasts are versatile. Having been around for millions of years the ubiquitous micro-organism has long adapted to unfavourable environments. When starved of nutrients yeast cells develop "thread-like" tentacles and wrap themselves around a reliable source of nutrition. This parasitic role is maintained until a chemical balance has been resorted; the yeast then detaches itself and reverts to its traditional free-moving lifestyle.

Traditional winemakers in early NAWB days used mild airborne yeasts to ferment wines and this practice is used today in one of Belgium's oldest breweries in the making of their most prestigious beer. At night, mostly during the Autumn, the brewery windows are left open and wild yeasts flow in and inoculate the liquid brews cooling in open vessels. Maturation and fermentation stages of this prestigious beer is most unusual. To quote a national newspapers article"

"There follows a series of multiple fermentations, over a period of between one and three summers, in wooden casks previously used for claret, muscat, port or sherry. Galleries full of these casks are allowed to remain musty, mouldy and cobwebby so that the wild yeasts are not disturbed". If nothing else these Belgian beers should have plenty of character!

Character in a wine (or beer) is often very difficult to describe. Hugh (Gabby) Thomas has the right approach - by using familiar smells and flavours. Sensory memory banks are mostly developed when one is young but the vocabulary may vary dependent upon whether the person was mostly familiar with town or country. Oz Clarke's descriptions - "dust in Granny's attic" or "breeze from the North Sea" means little to me. My granny never had an attic,

and a breeze from the North Sea when experienced in my locality in North Kent, often has a polluted undertone.

Jan Mitchell was not happy with my comments on assessing wine and uses the term "batch" judging. Tasting procedure at prestigious commercial wine appreciation events differs greatly from the mandatory judging procedure as laid down in the NGWBJ handbook. Wines, usually twelve in number, are poured in advance of the tasting; the exception being thirty-year old wines. If frail, the bouquets of these wines would disappear into thin air; a waste of the customer's money.

Allowing your wines (that is up to thirty years old) time to breathe, enables the built-up gases in the wine, the result of chemical changes during bottle maturation, to dissipate into the air. Swirling the wine around in a suitable vessel, such as an ISO wine glass, and cupping the wine glass with both hands (thus warming up the wine) accelerates the process, shortens the breathing time, thus making the wine more acceptable.

Time is what the busy wine judge has not got, so the "batch" approach is worth considering. Having sampled over fifteen thousand commercial wines over the last seventeen years, I am convinced that off-bouquets and off-flavours will persist in a bad wine regardless of the time that it is allowed to breathe. If the bouquet and flavour does improve with time it indicates that the wine was good and merely had "bottle-sick". Batch assessment at first stage should prevent "dud" wines being brought forward for finalising.

*With reference to 'batch judging' I must make a stand on this point Stan and put it to rest. The National Guild of Wine & Beer Judges stipulates that wines for amateur Competitions such as the National or any other Show being major or not so major and if judged by a National Judge or Judges shall be judge as per the Judges Handbook. This will give all wines an equal chance and not allow any to breath excessively. We must also bear in mind that homemade winemakers may have only bottled their wine a day or two before a show and therefore the wine may have had an enforced breathing by being racked from one vessel to another. I do appreciate that you have done a great deal of commercial tasting but feel that there is a place and procedure in both sides of Amateur and Commercial Winemaking. Many thanks for Stan Baker Writes..... and look forward to printing many more in the future.*

John - Editor

## WINE CLUB

By Haydn Herbert  
Bargoed Wine Circle

*How's this for an inventive poem?*

W. Is for the wine you brew from a kit  
I. Is for the in laws who always drink it  
N. Is for the nausea the morning after  
E. Is for the euphoria and all the laughter

C. Is for the chuckle when it tastes just right  
L. Is for the looking after at night  
U. Is for the undying love of the craft  
B. Is for the brewer and he's not daft

## BATH WINE CIRCLE

30 years old.

Congratulations to the Bath Wine Circle who are celebrating their 30th Anniversary this year. To mark the occasion, an Anniversary Dinner Dance was held in the magnificent surroundings of the Banqueting Room at the Guildhall in Bath. The evening was a tremendous success, and attended by 180 people.

The principal guests were:-

The Mayor & Mayoress of Bath; Mr Gerry Hadley (Wales & West Fed President) accompanied by Mrs Betty Stroud (ex-Wales & West Fed President) and friend, and also Mr Bert Hill (Chairman of the Wales & West Federation) and his wife Betty.

In proposing a toast to the "Bath Wine Circle", Mr Stan Mathews (Circle President) made reference to the strong bond of friendship which exists between wine circles. In response, Mr Doug Webber (Chairman of Bath Wine Circle) paid tribute to the dedication of members over the years in building such a successful circle, and then concluded by proposing a TOAST to the guests. The Mayor of Bath then responded.

*Thank you to Haydn Herbert, who is the Editor of the Wales & West Federation's Newsletter, who sent me a copy of their Newsletter from which I used these two articles. What a way to celebrate your 30th Anniversary - in the Guildhall of your own town. Well done Bath.*

*John - Editor*

## THOUGHTS ON NEWS & VIEWS & THUMBSCREWS

by Peter Awbery

Previously I had intended to put pen to paper with regard to just one item featured in the September issue, but then things - just like Topsy - grew (or was it "grewed")? No points for guessing which was the original featured item.

Many congratulations to the Schedule Committee for the new Medley Class - if the continued use of this class is justified after taking into account the number of entries that will be received in 1993, perhaps the list could be modified/extended to include reference to "Vegetable". I offer this comment, especially after reading Chairman's Chatter. I'm sure that somewhere I've read (surely not in News & Views!) that use of the word "Vegetable" conjures up thoughts of making soup more than making wine, so perhaps use of "garden produce" nomenclature instead of "Vegetable" would counteract this unwarranted comment.

Regarding the 5th paragraph in the

letter from Janette Rawlins, and the National Cookery Classes. With tongue firmly in cheek, surely this points to where priorities lie - Gastronomes will contend that wines are chosen to compliment food.

I particularly like the method used whereby SMALL items are slotted into the publication to fill out available space, i.e. Nit-picking Time. Is it really possible to be executed by the use of "Thumbscrews"? Surely the actual death is more likely to be occasioned by both severe pain and shock. Thus in this instance the "thumbscrew" could also be said to be a Catalyst - always depending where that particular torture appliance is applied!! Regarding the disease suffered by the signatory to just one digit, it's been my experience that regular use of soap and water - and with the occasional use of Swarfega - will remove all trace of the colouration. I'm advised that visits to a Dermatologist are only necessary in extreme cases.

## SOUTH WEST COUNTIES 3 DAY FESTIVAL 1992

By Alan Edwards Chairman

The South Western Counties Wine & Beermakers Federation held its 30th, three day annual Festival and Competition on the week ending 10th October 1992 at Twitchen Park, Morteohoe, Woolacombe, North Devon. This is close to the seaside resort of Ilfracombe, and it's bracing sea air. The site holds over 120 Luxury Caravans, and facilities for 15 Touring Caravans at reasonable prices.

The Festival was attended by approximately 200 members from 30 circles, with a total of 775 entries - 673 wines; 81 Beers; 18 Cooking Recipes; 3 Circle Stands.

The maximum of 160 Points for wine entries went to Exeter, for which they collected 7 trophies.

In the beer classes, Tothill Amateur Brewers Association (T.A.B.A.) collected 67 points, winning 4 trophies.

The Circle Stand Trophy was won by Tiverton - the theme being "Entry into Europe"

In the cooking classes, Milber had

the maximum of 20 points and collected 3 trophies.

Judith Irwin NGWBJ, provided us with our Wine Tasting on the Saturday afternoon. Ron Williams NGWBJ, gave a very interesting, educational and entertaining lecture on "Wine - A Hobby for the Nineties" on the Sunday morning. Both these events were very well attended, due to the popularity of our two speakers!

On the social side, there was dancing, a Fancy Hat Competition and a Wine Draw on Friday night. On Saturday night we had the presentation of the trophies followed by dancing until midnight.

I have since been reliably informed that everyone had a very enjoyable weekend, and no complaints have been registered!

*Many thanks Alan for your little item on your Festival. Perhaps more Federations would like to give us a small report.*

*John - Editor.*