

NAWB MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/RENEWAL FORM

Please note that membership fees are due on 1st July each year.
A Standing Order form is available on reverse if required.

INDIVIDUAL OR JOINT APPLICANTS

Names: please include Title, Forename & Surname (Please give member nos. if known)

1st person Membership No.

2nd person Membership No.

Address

.....

.....

County Post Code

Telephone numbers

e-mail address

Club/Circle/Guild Fee enclosed £

Cheques & Postal Orders payable to NAWB: £12 Single : £20 Joint Husband&Wife/Partners

CIRCLES AND FEDERATIONS

Name of Circle or Federation Membership No.

.....

Details of Representative (for all NAWB correspondence)

Name

Address

.....

County Post Code

Telephone numbers

e-mail address

Representatives Position..... Fee enclosed £

Cheques & Postal Orders payable to NAWB: £12 Circles and Federations

Notes: The fees quoted are annual amounts. Life membership is available at ten times the current annual fees for single and joint memberships only.

Existing members who require a receipt should enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

New members please enclose 50p for post and packing.

All Membership correspondence and payments to be sent to the Membership Secretary

Mr Joe Lee NGWBJ

12 Callerdale Road, Blyth,

Northumberland, NE24 5AB.

Telephone 0191 2560 426



NEWS & VIEWS

**November
2014**

**The Journal of
The National Association of Wine and Beer makers (Amateur)**

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**News & Views is your journal.
Your contributions are greatly appreciated
and can now be sent to the editor by e-mail.**



STANDING ORDER MANDATE

In order to save time and cost for your Association, and your own time, we strongly recommend that you use this standing order mandate for your annual membership payments. Please fill in the form below and send it to **your** Bank or Building Society, and notify the membership secretary that you are paying by this method.

Please fill in the areas as indicated. Thank you for using this method.



To: The Manager,

Bank/ Building Society

Branch

Please pay:

Beneficiary's Bank: Royal Bank of Scotland Plc, Llandudno Branch

Sort Code: 16-24-14

Name: National Association of Wine & Beer-makers

Account Number: 11857449

The sum of

Quote my Membership Number:

Date of First Payment

and annually thereafter on 1st July.

Please debit my account: Sort Code: - -

Account Number:

Name of Account Holder(s):

Signature(s).....

Date



COOKING WITH BOOZE

Braised Beef with Sherry and Semolina Dumplings

Ingredients (serves 4)

1 Kg	Beef braising or stewing steak
2	Onions, peeled
2	Carrots, peeled
3	sticks celery, de-stringed
1 tbs	plain flour
200 ml	sweet sherry
300 ml	red wine
400 ml	stock
Olive oil for cooking	
Salt & freshly ground black pepper	
Semolina Dumplings	
200 ml	Milk
80 gm	Butter
90 gm	Semolina
1	medium egg
Freshly grated nutmeg	

Heat the oven to 170°C/Gas 3. Cut the beef into large chunks, season with salt & pepper. Cut the vegetables into chunks and put to one side.

Heat a large flameproof casserole over a medium high heat, add a generous drizzle of olive oil. When it is hot, colour the beef in batches, browning on all sides, then remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.

Add the vegetables to the casserole with a little more oil if necessary and sweat over a medium heat until lightly coloured. Return the beef to the casserole, sprinkle with the flour and stir well. Pour in the

sherry, stirring and scraping the bottom of the casserole to deglaze, then repeat with the wine. Let the liquor reduce by half, then pour in the stock and season with salt & pepper. Put the lid on the casserole and place in the oven. Cook for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, make the dumplings. Bring the milk and butter to the boil in a heavy based saucepan over a medium heat. Stir in the semolina with a wooden spoon and continue to stir over the heat until the mixture forms a ball and leaves the pan clean. Remove from the heat and continue to beat with the spoon until the mixture is just warm. Mix in the egg until evenly combined and season with a generous pinch of nutmeg and salt & pepper to taste.

When the beef has been in the oven for an hour, take it out and remove the lid. Using a large spoon scoop the semolina mixture into 4-6 dumplings and place on top of the stew. Put the lid back on and return to the oven. Cook for a further hour until the beef is soft and tender, removing the lid for the last 10 minutes. Leave to stand for at least 10 minutes before serving.

THE NAWB COMMITTEE

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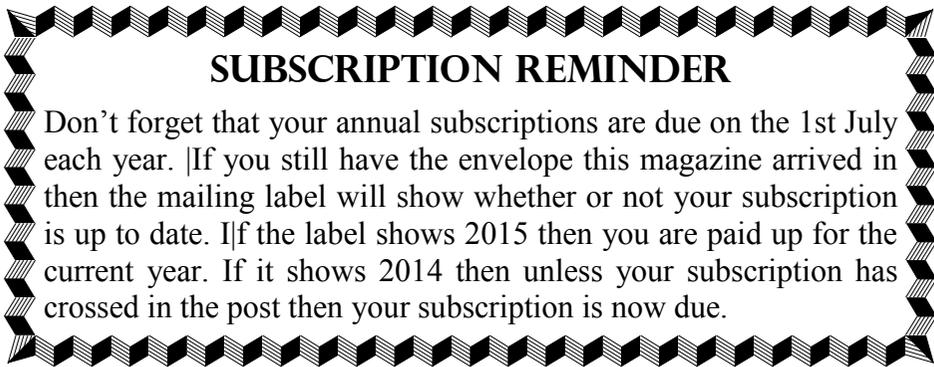
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CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

I can't believe that it is now nearly two years since I retired. Where did that time go? Certainly not on holidays, as we have managed just two one week holidays in the whole of that time. We plan to rectify that by visiting New Zealand this winter – we may come back in time for the National. On a personal level our lives have been dominated by extension building this summer. I know we should be downsizing at our age, but the deal is that I get a wine storage and brewing room and Elaine gets two new bathrooms. Unfortunately, just when we thought it was about finished, we had a leak in the new shower which is above the utility area where I currently store most of my wines and equipment. The ceiling has just been re-plastered, and so we have just the painting and floor to sort out!

I had hoped to get everything sorted out before the grape harvest, but as that has come in early this year, the logistics are going to get complicated. The red grapes are ripe already and we have been offered some Pinot Noir by a local vineyard. The whites look like being ready soon too, although it looks like being another modest year due to mildew again – we never quite get the weather right do we? Other fruit has been really good this year; I have never seen so many blackberries about. I was invited along to Langdon Hills Nature Reserve, near Basildon in Essex last month. They have an interesting project to make use of a number of existing elderly fruit tress –apples, plums, pears etc. and to plant a new orchard. The idea is that this fruit will be available for foragers to access and they are thinking about running some winemaking courses next year, hence my involvement.

Talking of foragers, you may recall that in January I mentioned my correspondence with John Wright, an author who was a little disparaging about homemade wine in a newspaper article. I am pleased to report that he accepted my challenge to steward for me at the Wales and West Show in June and we had a very interesting morning. Ron kindly gave me the 3 bottle class, but after the first few dry whites proved somewhat ordinary, I was getting worried. Fortunately the whites improved after that and the dry reds turned out to be superb, so honour was salvaged. As John pointed out we had tasted the best efforts of the top winemakers, so you would expect the quality to be good, but I think he found the experience illuminating. John is at least actively promoting our hobby as I saw a full page article by him in the Metro newspaper the other day, expounding on the virtues of sloe gin.



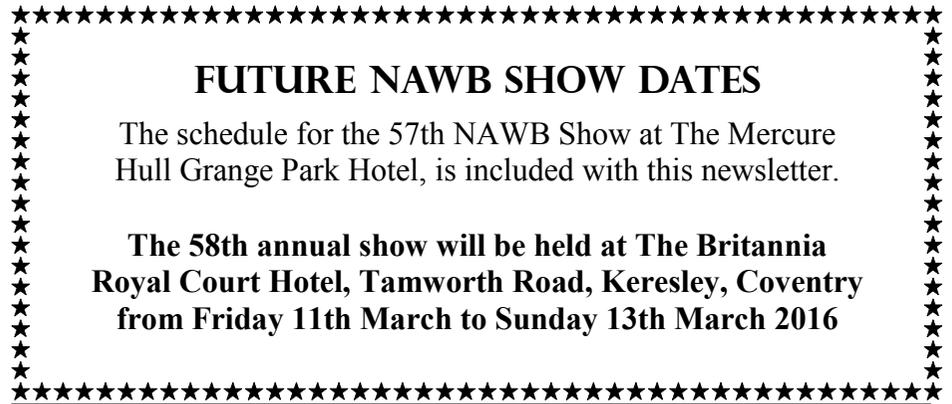
SUBSCRIPTION REMINDER

Don't forget that your annual subscriptions are due on the 1st July each year. If you still have the envelope this magazine arrived in then the mailing label will show whether or not your subscription is up to date. If the label shows 2015 then you are paid up for the current year. If it shows 2014 then unless your subscription has crossed in the post then your subscription is now due.

Your contributions to News & Views are very much appreciated.
Next edition due in January

Anything to do with our hobby
A favourite recipe
News of what your circle or federation is doing

Don't forget that you can now send them by e-mail
newsletter@nawb.org.uk



FUTURE NAWB SHOW DATES

The schedule for the 57th NAWB Show at The Mercure Hull Grange Park Hotel, is included with this newsletter.

The 58th annual show will be held at The Britannia Royal Court Hotel, Tamworth Road, Keresley, Coventry from Friday 11th March to Sunday 13th March 2016

Examiner and President. It is impossible to name all the judges that were members of Harrow Guild.

The Middlesex Federation have been well supported by the Harrow Guild for over 50 years, their members always prominent on our committees. We will certainly miss their input and their diligent devotion to Middlesex and our homebrew hobby!

Bob Marsdon—President, Middlesex Federation

PS. Ted Adcock's widow Joan, sadly passed away on 26th June at the age of 97. Joan always a great supporter of Ted in his activities hosted the North Thames Group of Judge's meetings for many years.

PPS. Now the good news, the 52nd Middlesex Festival is being planned, for the 6th June 2015 at the Perivale Community Centre. (date to be confirmed).

INSURANCE AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Some insurance premiums were paid very late this year and this had a knock on effect in that the insurance certificates were issued late. I therefore feel it necessary to update the current system of collecting the data for the insurance scheme as well as the premium collection.

At the end of January an e-mail or letter will be sent out asking for a commitment to take out insurance and for each Federation and Circle to give up to date details needed to ensure that the correct cover is provided in accordance with their needs.

Federations need to make sure I have an up to date list of the circles that are to be covered by their insurance. Last year, after the insurance premiums had all been worked out I found that one Federation had lost some of its member circles which meant that they almost certainly had to pay a higher premium than necessary. There may well have been other Federations in the same position. Perhaps it would help if Circles/Federations would include "Insurance" in the agenda for their last meeting before May so that cheques can be prepared in good time, otherwise holidays can delay the signatories from signing cheques.

I trust you will help me to ensure that premium payments are made on time, there has not been a problem yet, but remember Insurance Companies are not charities, if you haven't paid the premium they won't pay your claim. Can you afford a period when you are not insured.

Kate Edge

Back to National Show matters, brewers need to carefully examine their show schedules this year as we have a few changes in classes, to reflect some of the newer styles that are popular amongst the new generation of home brewers. We have changed a couple of existing definitions – the light ale becomes a light bitter (so you can put some hops in now) and sweet stout will include oatmeal stout (as the Scots are not deserting us), and we are going to alternate the brown ales – next year will be Newcastle Brown. One other change is that the dark mild and bitter classes will now count towards the NAWB Master and Master Brewer awards. Further details can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

I also need to draw your attention to Kate's piece on Insurance. She has had a nightmare this year, contacting people and getting the money in. NAWB saves clubs and Federations a great deal of money by providing this service, but with the demise of some Federations it is becoming increasingly onerous to administer. Please make sure that you keep contact details up-to-date and that you pay your renewals promptly. Remember if you are not insured, your club committee is liable! Also, late payments mess up the NAWB accounts, making it difficult for us to work out our real financial position at year end.

Finally, just to let you know that we have booked Coventry for the 2016 show for March 11-13, so get the date in your diaries.
Cheers

Peter Robinson

FRIDAY NIGHT TASTING

This year's Friday night tasting was very well received with several people commenting that it was good to have tasting of proper country wines available. We have one or two ideas to improve the logistics this year and we should hopefully have a bit more space.

However, most importantly we need our top wine and beer makers to supply the samples. We are only looking at a maximum of 6 bottles of a wine or 8-10 for a beer. So please, it would be good to get some volunteers, rather than have to ask people direct (I will if I have to). So I look forward to receiving lots of offers. Just drop me an email or phone call, before I do the same to you!

Peter Robinson

2015 SHOW SCHEDULE

Along with this issue you will find the show schedule for the 2015 National Show at Hull on Friday, Saturday & Sunday 20th, 21st & 22nd. All the usual information is in there about how to book your accommodation and in due course to enter your bottles and book your meals. It has new set recipes for both wine and beer and for many it signals a new start to our activities.

For the winemakers there will be no surprises, there are no changes to the tried and trusted format of recent years. However the brewers will find that the schedule brings new challenges to their brewing schedules.

To date, apart from the odd “rare beer” in the set recipe class, NAWB has always stuck to a classification of traditional British brews, these are all well defined by the National Guild of Judges in their Judges Handbook but over the years beer styles have become more global as opposed to national and brewers have suggested that some new beer styles should be included in the schedule, so, after a lot of consideration, and a fair amount of consultation with the Judges Guild, the Committee have agreed to make a few changes.

We decided that we couldn't increase the number of beer classes, sadly there are not enough beer judges for that, so to bring in new classes some old ones would have to go. Classes that were considered as possible for deletion were light ale, the two brown ale classes, sweet stout and the kit or extract dry stout.

The first change to be agreed was a change to the light ale class. When I first started work, many years ago quite a few of my colleagues would drink “light and bitter” which was a large half pint of bitter with a bottle of light ale, they said they liked the extra carbonation but when pressed they did admit that the big attraction was sometimes getting a pint and a quarter of beer for the price of a pint. I cannot recall anybody drinking light ale on its own and having tried it to see what I was supposed to be judging I am not surprised. We also had to consider that competitors were asking for a class in which they could enter their weaker bitters. The solution we have come up with is to replace the light ale class with one we are calling light bitter. In his Chairman's Chatter Peter has already said that you can put some hops in now, well you can also use a bit more malt as we are allowing a little higher gravity, and therefore a bit more alcohol, though to be honest I suspect many competitors were already doing this with their entries for the light ale class in any case. The definition for the new class is given in the “Competition

Central Counties Federation

The 27th Central Counties Federation Show took place at The Quality Hotel in Peterborough. Entries were down on the previous year but there were still over 400 bottles in the competition. Numbers attending the evening dinner dance held firm at 64 so quite a successful event.

Class winners trophies were well spread around as Charles Hill (8 wins) and Mrs Burns of Luton (4 wins) were the only competitors to win more than two classes, however this did mean that Charles Hill won virtually all of the points trophies including master vintner and master brewer. Pat Lord was the master cook.

However when it came to the best entries in various sections these were all won by members of non affiliated circles. Roger Fensome's winning sweet white table wine was selected as the best table wine in the show whilst Elaine Robinson's Mead proved to be the best country wine. The best beer in the show was Larry Cullen's winning IPA.

We hope to do it all again next year providing the federation has enough officers to run the show and we have a suitable venue. There is some uncertainty about the current venue as it is under new ownership and we understand there is a possibility that there is a possibility that they will close down the conference facilities. We will keep competitors informed when we get the information.

HARROW AND GOODBYE

On the 7th July. Members and guests gathered for a buffet supper, to herald the forthcoming closure of the Harrow Guild of Winemakers. The supper was splendid, wines were taken and a toast proposed to the Harrow Guild, the evening ended, with the singing of the traditional “Auld Land Syne”.

This highly esteemed winemaking club, was founded by the renowned homebrew author, Ben Turner in 1959. Ben was also a founder member of NAWB and the NGWBJ and was instrumental in bringing the National Show to Middlesex in 1961. Over fifty years, the Harrow Guild probably provided more National Wine and Beer Judges, than any other club in the country. Among them apart from Ben, were Fred Bastin, 12 years on the National Committee and NAWB President from 1977-1979, also Bryan Acton, co-author of “Making Wines Like Those You Buy” and Tilly Timbrell, who wrote “The Winemaker's Cookbook”, the first such book to hit the homebrew market. Another Harrow stalwart of our hobby, was Ted Adcock, erstwhile Middlesex Federation Chairman, NGWBJ Chief

Thanks Jim for the report. I have to say that as a very distant observer it didn't seem anywhere near as bad as your report suggests. Car parking was a problem but I found a space eventually, I was in a room over the road, not a problem for me, the room was massive, you would have had more room for dancing if the dance had been held in my room. The food served to me was good. They seemed a bit slow in allowing home made wine to be drunk, the agreement was that home made wine could be drunk after the meal was finished, but I got round this. I never take home made wine to drink before it has been judged, so on Friday night I bought a bottle from the hotel. I was a little surprised when the wine waitress came to the table and asked "Who ordered the chee-anti", anyway at the end of the evening I took the empty bottle back to my room and refilled it with home made wine for the Saturday evening meal. I did have to explain at the table that it was the same bottle but not the same wine as last night when John Gorton had a go about people who open a bottle of wine one night and finish it off the next. Later I also had to explain to Bill & Bridget Berrecloth why I was sniffing and tasting my wine alongside theirs. I honestly think that my home made 2008 Selection Limited Edition South African Cabernet Sauvignon was better than the Cabernet Sauvignon they had purchased from the hotel for around £20. Anyway there were no queries about my wine from the hotel.

Anyway, Jim, thanks to all the team at South West Counties who put on the show, I hope you can find a successor to Morris, he has done a great job over the years, and I don't suppose there will be a large queue of volunteers to take on the job.
Editor.

Wales & West Federation

The 2 day Wales & West Wine & Dine event at the Toorak Hotel in Torquay starting on November 28th is fully booked. Their next event will take place in March/April 2015.

Next year's Wales & West Festival will take place on 19th, 20th & 21st June at the Derwent Hotel, Torquay

There are 66 classes for wine, beer, cookery & art.

This year Wales & West have the exclusive use of Derwent Hotel in which all the Festival activities will take place. .

Guidelines " in the schedule as follows:

LIGHT BITTER

The term "light" refers to flavour and not colour. With an Original Gravity of 30-40 and an alcohol level of 3.0 to 3.8% the colour can vary from straw to amber. The beer should have a bouquet light to moderate in hop. The taste should be clean and dry; the bitterness should not overpower the other flavour components

PLEASE NOTE: On page 16 of your schedule (pale blue cover) class 69 reads Light Bitter (O.G. 30-35). This is an error it should read Light Bitter (O.G. 30-40).

When considering the future of the sweet class, we decided to continue with the class but to allow more variation to the style than previously. We decided that oatmeal stouts, popular in Scotland, should be included, these are normally higher in alcohol than the traditional sweet stouts as described in the handbook of the Judges Guild. We must therefore also allow more alcohol in the stouts sweetened with lactose, so Mackeson Export would now be a commercial example at the high gravity end of the class. Commercial examples of the oatmeal version would include Sam Smith's oatmeal stout, there's a recipe in Wheeler & Protz "Brew Classic European Beers at Home", or Maclay's oat malt stout, which as the name implies uses malted oats (around 20%). A short definition for the "Competition Guidelines" was difficult for what is now a fairly diverse class but we are using the following (some brewers may prefer more detail that can be found at <http://www.bjcp.org/stylecenter.php>)

SWEET STOUT

The Original Gravity ranges from 40 to 55. Colour is dark brown to almost black. Dark malts dominate the bouquet and flavour, bitterness is slight. Alcohol ranges from 4.0 to 5.5%. "Milk" stouts, sweetened with lactose have a high residual sweetness. Oatmeal versions are less sweet but full bodied and can have an oily mouthfeel.

The Committee decided to remove a brown ale class from the schedule, but also wanted to keep the two styles alive. The London and Northern browns are quite different so rather than allowing both styles to be entered in the same class the styles will feature in alternate years. For the 2015 competition at Hull you will need to make the northern (Newcastle) version and for 2016 at Coventry you will need to make the London version.

The Committee decided that the poorly supported class for kit or extract dry stouts should be discontinued. So having deleted two classes from the schedule we were now able to introduce two new ones.

The first of these will be a permanent addition to the schedule. It is a class for Wheat Beer. The Judges Guild has supplied the following definition. Both the Bavarian and Belgian styles are acceptable within the definition but the sour Berlin style does not as the gravity would be too low.

WHEAT BEER

This is a young fresh fast maturing beer, pale straw to dark gold in colour, with an OG of 45-55. It is typically brewed using up to 50% wheat malt and is often cloudy. It should be highly carbonated with a thick, well retained head. Yeast derived flavours, from using the correct type of yeast, are needed and can be fruity and spicy, with phenolic clove and banana like flavours amongst others. Belgian styles often use unmalted wheat, producing a breadly/grainy flavour, and may be flavoured with coriander and orange peel. Hop bitterness, flavour and aroma should be low, with a soft finish on the palate. Commercial examples include Hoegaarden, Schneider-weisse, Erdinger and Franziskaner.

The second new class is to be a “Guest Beer” class. There will be a different beer style each year. This will generally be a beer from around the world with continental and American styles expected to feature. The styles for 2015 & 2016 have been decided. For the 2015 show this will be a French/Belgian “Saison” style beer. The description for the 2015 Saison Beer class is as follows

SAISON BEER

Saison beer has an O.G. of 1048-1065 and alcohol content of 5-7%. Often a distinctive pale orange but may be golden or amber in colour. Fruity aroma, reminiscent of citrus fruits with low to moderate hop, and possibly hints of spice. Flavourwise, a refreshing, fruity/spicy ale, highly carbonated. Should have a dry finish with a quenching acidity and moderate hop bitterness.

The 2016 Guest Beer will be Belgian Golden Strong Ale (see Competition Guidelines in this year’s show schedule).

Brewers should note that results in classes 66-79 will decide the Master Brewer and count towards the NAWB Master trophy.

week. No wonder I still dream about working!

PS Have found quite a good solution for fruit flies. Put some cider vinegar in a plastic container, cover it with cling film and then punch several holes in the top.

Peter Robinson

I don't know what you are complaining about Peter, looks like a stroll in the park compared to my October. You've got too much time on your hands if you can read the Sunday newspapers. Editor.

NEWS FROM THE FEDERATIONS

South Western Counties Festival 2014

The Festival was held at The Queen’s Hotel in Bournemouth this year, having been held at Bideford for some years. It was considered a move that would ring the changes and also add an additional venue to our options for future years. Morris Picken, our Festival manager spent many weeks and numerous visits trying to ensure our transition was smooth. This, however was frustrated by several changes of Events Manager and or Assistant. The eventual outcome was that we did not get the number of rooms we had initially been promised with some people being accommodated at an adjacent hotel. We also promised two function rooms, one the evening dance and one for the competition. The hotel booked another function and gave them the room we’d been promised for our dances. This meant our meals and dances were held in the restaurant, with a make-shift dance floor. A week before our arrival, it was discovered the additional parking in the college over the road had been withdrawn and we were left with insufficient parking.

The Festival, given the above got underway on Friday 10th October. The people arriving had many difficulties, but the hotel did their best to sort out the many problems. This they did well. The Evening was very enjoyable, with good entertainment and acquaintances were soon being renewed.

The competition was keenly contested with bigger entry than last year, but by fewer entrants. The outright winner, with the most points was Terry Western and the Western family seemed to win most of the trophies with Mo, Terry’s wife collecting a couple of cups herself.

Morris Picken is standing down this coming January, after ten years in post. It is proposed that next year’s festival will return to Bideford.

Jim Moon

it is my 'look after the elderly' day. We take a friend to a coffee morning and then in the afternoon, I go to see my father. After getting home, time for more emails and writing up my pieces for the NAWB newsletter.

Thursday

Go to a local vineyard to help pick the remains of his Pinot Noir crop after the mildew and birds have been at it. There are insufficient grapes for commercial purposes (he harvested 1.8 tons last year), so we have agreed that I will make the wine up and we will split it between us. Have never made Pinot Noir before, so should be interesting. Back home to put through the de-stemmer/crusher and then clean out the equipment in preparation for next week's white grape harvest. Looks like we will be measuring the output in bottles this year.

Friday

Friday morning is swimming and shopping and then off to the travel agent to discuss our forthcoming holiday in New Zealand – the winemaking world will have to manage without us for a few weeks. In the evening, Elaine and I take a look at her wine for the Guild Conference dinner. It needs to go with avocado, parma ham and raspberry coulis, so we decide to experiment with sweetening it up slightly. The tasting is constantly interrupted by the need to swat fruit flies – the grape wine bubbling away really brings them in.

Saturday

Judging at a club show this morning, so relatively relaxing, especially as we are not entering this one. Still some more to do when we get home as we have a Federation quiz night next week, and guess who has foolishly volunteered to set the questions!

Sunday

Off to Copped Hall (see separate article), a local project to restore an old home that was destroyed by fire. We managed to make some wine from a very old Black Hamburg vine last year. There are also some vines in a separate greenhouse, so I have been asked to come in and advise on those. Then drop in at my allotment on the way home to check out how my white grapes are coming along. We had a savage hailstorm on Friday and I am hoping that it missed my plot. Fortunately it did it and they look ready for picking next week. Then I can relax for the rest of the day – watch the football, have dinner and read the papers, before it all starts again next

A TRIUMPH OF HOPE OVER LOGIC

Logic tells you that making wine from Black Hamburg grapes grown outside during a not particularly good summer is a bad idea. So I should have known better when I received an email from a volunteer at the Copped Hall Trust last year. Copped Hall (<http://www.coppedhalltrust.org.uk/>) is a Georgian Mansion which was destroyed by fire and is being progressively restored by the Trust. The grounds include a magnificent walled garden. It is located near Junction 26 of the M25 and is well worth a visit if you are in the area.

The grounds boast a very old vine, which I identified as a Black Hamburg. Last year it had a good crop of grapes, so I was asked about the possibility of making some wine from them. For those of you unfamiliar with the grape – it has German origins where it is known as Trollinger. It probably should be an eating grape but the pips are rather a deterrent. In a good year it is perhaps possible to make wine from it. I once made a reasonable Rose from these grapes grown in a conservatory, but when grown outdoors, ripening tends to be very late.

Anyway, ever up for a challenge, I agreed to give it a go. We picked on 28th October and managed to get about 40lb of grapes. This gave 3 ½ gallons of must initially with a not very promising OG of 1051 (most sensible people would have stopped there). I only fermented on the skins for 4 days (perhaps I should have left them longer) and ended up with 2 gallons of juice. I used a total of 2lb sugar to chaptalize, so this would have brought the gravity up to around 1077. The wine continued fermenting slowly through to the end of December when it had a final gravity of 995.

Initial tasting showed high acidity, and I checked with the pH meter which showed a reading of 2.9 (very acid). I am a bit reluctant to use too much potassium carbonate to reduce acid as I have had unfortunate experiences with it in the past, but desperate times call for desperate measures. I added some to bring the pH up to 3.2, but it still tasted very acid. A bit more brought it to 3.4 which I judged to be as far I could go. It was still a bit sharp, so I decided to add a bit of sugar bringing the final gravity up to 1001, and the wine was bottled in early July.

It was a deep Rose colour, but didn't taste too bad to me. Elaine designed some suitable labels using a picture of Copped Hall and I delivered the final product. It seems to have gone down quite well to my surprise. Even a former Tesco wine buyer thought it was drinkable when tasting it blind.

Apparently each of the trustees has been presented with a bottle. On my last visit I found that I seem to be known as 'The Wine Man'. I have been called worse things!

Trouble is that I have now set expectations. I'm not sure about this year as the crop seems rather small and the bunches are variable with a lot of small green grapes. The white grapes in the Walled Garden have been wiped out by Powdery Mildew so there is nothing to blend with, which had been my aim. We will have to see how things go in October!

Peter Robinson

FUNGUS PLAGUE HITS FRENCH WINEMAKERS

I have been sent cuttings from newspapers about a disease that is causing great concern to French winemakers.

The fungal disease "esca" has infected 13% of France's vines this year costing the industry over €1 billion. The disease dates from Roman times but has recently returned, it was first found in mid August on Sauvignon vines in the Loire valley but has now spread elsewhere in France and has also been found in other European countries and California. The disease is transmitted by airborne fungi, it stunts the growth of the vines and can cause them to wither and die rapidly.

There is only one known treatment, sodium arsenite, but its use is banned because it is carcinogenic. Lifting the ban has therefore been ruled out on health grounds, so once the disease is detected the vines have to be ripped up and burnt. Winemakers fear that the disease could be as devastating as phylloxera which came close to wiping out Europe's vineyards in the 19th century. Industry leaders are asking the European Union and national governments to declare the fight against esca an international emergency and provide funding to step up research to find a cure or preventative treatment.

Vineyard owners affected by the disease are suffering twice over, their yields have fallen drastically and to continue in business they have to replant new vines. Some local authorities are helping winegrowers finance replanting and the EU is funding some research but representatives say much more has to be done. The French wine and spirits industry is worth over €13 billion (£10 billion) a year.

Only time will tell of the effect this will have on commercial wine prices and the knock on effects to our supplies of grape juice and concentrate.

A WEEK AND A BIT IN THE LIFE

I am frequently complaining about how all my time is taken up by this hobby in its various guises – judging, making and administrating. So here is a mini-blog of my last few days to illustrate what I mean.

Saturday

Judging at the National Craft Brewers in Bristol. Rather an early start – up at 5.30 and don't get back until gone 21.00. The joys of public transport. Still, an enjoyable day. Spend the morning judging porters and the afternoon on Belgian Strong Ales. As you swallow and don't spit, this is quite a heavy day even though the numbers are not too high. I finish off with a couple of Saison beers to find out what I am aiming for next year.

Sunday

No chance of a lie in this morning as we have a NAWB Committee meeting in Leicester and that involves a hour drive. Meeting goes smoothly and we get home by about 5.00 p.m. Still not time to read the Sunday newspapers though – it usually takes me all week.

Monday

Need to take the skins off my Rondo red wine this morning. We picked last week and I have two large buckets frothing away. Quite a good yield of juice with a total of six gallons, five for our mulled wine at the local Dickensian evening and a gallon for competitions. We have a club night tonight, so I then have to prepare entries for the competition – white wines filter through agonisingly slowly. We have lost our speaker at short notice, so have to drop in at Tesco to buy some wines. Impromptu blind tasting goes down quite well. I also win both classes at the competition and get first prize in the raffle, so not a bad evening overall.

Tuesday

Have quite a few actions from Sunday's meeting, including checking Kate's very prompt draft minutes. Several emails and some phone calls take up a surprising amount of time. Then I spend some time shifting bottles round to my new wine store. In the evening, we have a club committee meeting at our house, so still no chance to relax, especially as I have to take the minutes.

Wednesday

Start off by writing up the minutes from last night. A bit of a break today as