

1985 National Association's Eastbourne weekend

by Judy Irwin



Stewards at work benching the entries.

IT'S over for another year, the National Show weekend I mean, and as I was Secretary for the first time, I really appreciate the work and organization that is needed to put on an event of this size. Because the National Association covers the whole country and members of the committee come from far and wide, we limit ourselves to four committee meetings a year. There are now only eight elected members on the executive, with three co-opted members as representatives from the Circles. Federations and Guild of Judges, so you can see there are not many of us to cope with the management of a two day conference, including two dances, a show with an entry of up to 4000 bottles, and the Annual General Meeting, but with the help from some wonderful people called general stewards, we do. At the last committee meeting we worked out that between us we travelled 1865 miles to attend each meeting, an average of 200 miles per person. Not bad really for a hobby.

This year saw us assembled at Eastbourne by early Friday morning and a busy few hours saw the room, into which the show entries were to be brought, ready to receive them. The homework done by the Show Manager, Mr Dave Pulley, and the Entries Secretary, Mr Norman Chiverton, certainly proved worthwhile as the tables and stands were soon positioned and then covered in white paper to await the entries. The afternoon had hardly begun when the first competition arrived and in a very short time the show benches began to be weighed down with bottles of wine and beer. This year we had decided to use

bottle labels which did not show the Exhibition Number, which made the task of arranging the tables easier. Mr Chiverton, as usual, had the organization of the entries completely in hand, and all went very smoothly.

Friday evening saw the first dance, accompanied by a superb seven piece dance band, a chance to relax, meet friends, some of whom you haven't seen since the last National, share some of your wine with others and taste theirs, and to compete in the fancy dress parade. This year's entrants really did us proud, with single entries and some outstanding efforts by the Clubs. One group displayed a beach scene of building sandcastles; absolutely brilliant with the main character appearing to sit on a blanket

carried by the other members of the team. Yet another were in old time beach costumes, but the winners were the 'Peers of the Realm', a play on words as each member was dressed as a Peer with the name of a pier on their backs. The single ladies entry was a split personality of one half Costa-del-Sol and the other Costa-del-England, depicting the sun and rain, whilst the winner of the men's were the Three Old Crabs, again brilliantly displayed. Dancing continued until midnight when, after a final drink with friends, we retired to be ready for the big day following.

Saturday morning 9.00 am. Judges briefing, which this year went very smoothly with judges patiently waiting to be told the class they would take, then straight into the exhibition room. Unfortunately, this year we were very short of judges stewards and many judges had to handle the class on their own. This was a great pity as anyone who is interested in making wine would really enjoy working with a judge and seeing how he or she undertakes to sort out a class. I do hope next year more people will come forward. For the first time we organized a trip for those members not involved in the judging and a coach load took a tour around the English Wine Centre at Drucillas. I understand that the standard of entries was quite high and I know most judges enjoyed their



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Hard work — the beer judging in progress.

morning. They do not get any help towards their expenses, either travelling or accommodation, and are not even given a free lunch. They come and judge because they are proud to do so, and enjoy their hobby. The presentation of two souvenir glasses is given to each judge as a token of appreciation of their time and trouble. Unfortunately some places were not awarded by judges this year, and this is a matter that will be investigated.

In the afternoon the show was open to the public with a chance to win a new car at the throw of a dice. A well stocked tombola and some trade stalls were also there, as was an officially NAWB table. I sat at this most of the afternoon and was amazed at the people who came up to speak to me. Some paid next years subs, some obtained entrance tickets to the AGM, some purchased our car stickers. These are a new item for us and really just meant as a lot of fun. One says 'Wine-makers do it on the Kitchen Table', the other 'Beermakers do it over a Barrel'. They cost 40p each and if anyone wants them, just write to me at Semley. Most of all though I found that members just wanted to come and talk about the Association, and I felt that a lot can be learnt from this kind of contact.

Saturday evening saw us at the Civic Reception given to us by the Mayor and Mayoress on behalf of Eastbourne. Together with other officers of the Committee we met Councillor Leslie Mason and Mrs Mason, before the beginning of the dance, for refreshments, and then accompanied them into the dance hall. They stayed the whole evening and took part in the entertainments. Refreshments were provided and in all a lovely evening was enjoyed by everyone, or at least all I spoke to. Again drinks with friends

and then sleep, but not before we put the clocks on an hour.

Sunday morning saw us all preparing for the AGM and what a good attendance this year. We were even late starting as the queue coming in was more than I could cope with at the door. Our President Mr Cyril Berry opened the meeting, which was then chaired by the Chairman, Mr Len Drysdale. The first few items on the agenda passed quickly and the new Committee was elected. We came to item eight which was a proposal put forward by Mr Ken Belham, an individual member from Middlesex, and seconded by Mr Eric Clark. The proposal was that the Guild of Judges convene the show in future. There were many points put forward, both for and against the proposal, and in the end the majority was against it. AOB as usual brought out some interesting points and the meeting was quickly brought to an end as the Mayor had arrived for the prize giving. Our new President was introduced and we had great pleasure in welcoming Mrs Freida Stagg, who is the first lady President. She has been a friend of the wine-makers for many years, an active

committee member and widow of Mr Leslie Stagg, himself a former President. Mr Berry closed the meeting and we prepared to meet our guests, and to hold the prize giving ceremony.

The display of trophies on the stage was magnificent. They are valued at £10,000, and it is quite a sight to see them all assembled. The Mayor shook hands with each prize winner and then presented them with their trophy. There are too many names to mention, but the major prizes went to the following:

The NAWB Trophy for the Master Wine and Beermaker of the year — Mr R.S. Wheatley from Old Bexley Club. The Bournemouth Master Winemakers Cup for the most points in the 16 wine classes — Mr E. Tappenden from the Old Bexley Club.

The Amateur Winemaker Shield for the Circle with the most points — The Ace of Clubs.

The Wilf Newson Cup. The Master Brewer of the Year — Mr T.D. Hodgkinson from Tyneside Nationals. Tilly Timbrell Trophy, for the cookery classes was shared by four ladies — Mrs Couper — Jubilee Circle; Mrs Barr — Golden Circle; Mrs Wright — Old Bexley; and Mrs Joiner — Old Bexley.

At the end of this prizegiving everyone left the halls to make their way back to their hotels and so return home. After clearing up the halls and office, had lunch and then we, too, went our separate ways. I think, taken overall, everyone enjoyed the weekend. I know that there were a few minor hiccups but we are a voluntary committee and we do our best. I know I made mistakes, but it was my first year as Secretary, so I hope to do better next year. If you came to Eastbourne and enjoyed it, why not support our mid-year event in September? If you didn't attend, why not join now and get all the details? I know one thing I can be sure of, you will be joining a group of friends who would welcome you.



Cyril Berry passing the president's jewel to Freida Stagg.