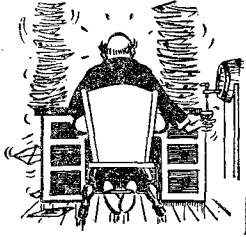


# The Amateur Winemaker

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## From the Editor's Chair . . .



### NO NATIONAL SET-UP

Most of us who were at the first National Congress thoroughly enjoyed both the proceedings and, even more, meeting members of distant circles for the first time. There was a remarkably friendly atmosphere, as there always is at gatherings of winemakers. One fact emerged quite clearly from debate, I thought, and that was that as yet there seems to be little demand for a national organisation, indeed a proposal to set up a national committee was heavily defeated. So was the suggestion of a national "standards" committee, although several speeches and questions during the day had indicated that there was a pressing need for some guidance to clubs (if they want it!) on the subject of show rules, exhibiting and judging.

### CLASSIFICATION

The biggest controversy, of course, arose on the matter of possible classes. Many clubs are now dividing their wines into white (dry, medium and sweet), and red (ditto) but others (like the South London club, as mentioned by a correspondent) prefer to stick to classification by ingredients (i.e. fruit, root, flower, grain and miscellaneous). Most clubs start in the latter way, but eventually abandon it when some poor judge discovers the physical impossibility of judging large classes of mixed sweet and dry wines. One taste of a really sweet wine will completely destroy one's palate for any dry wine which may be judged subsequently, and which, although probably excellent, will then taste like so much acid. The classification into dry, medium and sweet avoids this, and enables a judge to do the job efficiently, and there is nothing to prevent the name of the wine still being given on the label, e.g. "Parsnip (dry) 1957."

The judge, in any event, will probably place all the parsnip wines together, all the wheat wines together, and so on, before embarking on the task of finding the best. This "sweet, medium, dry" classification is not, as our correspondent alleges, a matter of slavish copying the Continental, but just practical commonsense. There is, though, perhaps some reason to ponder whether it is necessary to have wines divided into white and red, for that is a division stemming naturally from the use of the grape, but in a way foreign to home-made wines. Where does a golden wine go? Or a tawny? Or a green one? Some clubs have ruled "Pure reds only in the red class, everything else (including rosé) in the white" but it might be worth considering whether this rather arbitrary division could not be abandoned. We would then have simply classes for dry, medium and sweet wines. This might be better than having the first classification by ingredients

(root, fruit, flower, etc.) and then sub-classes for sweet, medium and dry, for that would mean a minimum of 15 awards, even if there was only one in each class. Many small shows cannot possibly run to that, whereas they can afford prizes in three main classes.

### WHAT IS "SWEET?"

This leads naturally to another problem. How is one to decide exactly what is a dry wine, what is medium, and what is sweet, since individual tastes vary so widely? Here the answer must undoubtedly be that suggested by Dr. Pollard, that in every set of show rules "specifications" must be given in the form of the hydrometer readings for the finished wine.

**One could rule, for instance, that a dry wine must never have a gravity of more than 5, and a semi-sweet more than 10, and that a sweet would be all all above the latter figure. This could be embodied in the rules for exhibitors, and in cases of doubt a judge could decide by means of a quick hydrometer test. One more job for the poor fellow!**

### LABELS

Another useful suggestion that was made which will be of help to those organising shows was that when a secretary received an entry from a would-be competitor he should send him some standard labels, so that all wines exhibited would bear the same labels, doing away with the multiplicity of shape and size which judges encounter at the moment. This, like the gravity classification, would appear to be an excellent solution.

### INDEPENDENT

There has in the past been some misunderstanding of the role of the Amateur Winemaker, and two speeches at the Congress indicated that some still exist. Although it is published at Andover it is not published by the Andover Circle, but independently, as the imprint included in every issue has indicated. The aim of the magazine, as was explained at the outset, is to serve not one but all the clubs now in existence, the individual winemaker, and the cause of winemaking generally. That is why we are happy to print news from any winemaking circle, to provide a forum for discussion of winemaking topics, and to act as a unifying medium for all the devotees of our hobby, whether in clubs or not. One or two clubs have their own magazines, but the majority take the Amateur Winemaker, availing themselves of the special terms we offer them, and we know from your kind letters that this link at national level is certainly appreciated, and that circles do look upon the "A.W." as their official journal.

## OUR COVER PICTURE

Mrs. A. Harvey, who with her husband, arranged the Andover Circle's imposing display at the Congress shows a special bottle to Mrs. Sturdy Ward, of York, (light coat) and Mrs. Bayley, Andover (pointing) two of the prizewinners in the wine competition.

# All about the Congress

**T**HERE is no doubt that the first national congress of amateur winemakers, although necessarily on a small scale, was an undoubted success in more ways than one, and that it has laid the foundation for more ambitious ones in the years ahead. It was successful in that everyone of the 170 people who attended had a thoroughly stimulating and enjoyable day, and in that it did succeed in paying its way.

The sponsors, the Andover Circle (we can reveal now that it is all over!) had at times had horrible doubts . . . a small club, they had committed themselves to an outlay of well over £60 to finance this Congress, and if it had "flopped" the treasurer would not have been the only one with a long face! Bookings were slow to come in at first, and the committee had many anxious moments, but in the event other clubs rallied round nobly, and thanks to the joint efforts of many people, it was a wonderful day.

Many clubs sent representatives, among them (we apologise if this list is not complete) Bristol, Cardiff, Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham, Farnborough, Coventry, York, Winchester, Southampton, New Forest, Leeds, Chelmsford, Norwich, Portsmouth, Bournemouth, Watford and Twickenham.

These began arriving at the Fiesta Hall, Andover, at about 10 a.m., and were greeted by the President and Chairman of the local Circle, Cdr. I. M. N. Mudie and Mr. C. J. Padwick, J.P. Inside the hall was the colourful exhibit of well over 200 bottles of wine provided by Andover members, which Mr. and Mrs. A. Harvey had spent the whole of the previous day arranging, and a superb job they had made of it. Along one side of the hall were trade stands, Messrs. Bryants, M. Agusti Hidalgo, the Amateur Winemaker, and Grey Owl Laboratories.

The first half-hour was an indication of the amount of interest ahead, for because everyone was wearing identification tags introductions were soon effected and the buzz of conversation grew steadily louder.

The Mayor of Andover, Cllr. R. S. Harrison, accompanied by his daughter, the Mayoress, welcomed the gathering to Andover, which they were proud was the home of the first winemakers' circle in the country, and wished the Congress well, and the proceedings were under way. There were talks by Cdr. Mudie and Dr. A. Pollard, two films, one on sherry and one on port (both marred, unfortunately, by the inadequate blackout, but no-one seemed to mind) a Brains Trust, and a business session.

Lunch and tea were available in the hall, and later in the day Mrs. B. Shaw Porter presented her husband's splendid trophy, a most generous gift, and the certificates, and the draw was made for a number of prizes, amongst them gifts of invert sugar and apparatus from Messrs. John F. Cameron & Co. Ltd., Loftus, Semplex, M. Agusti Hidalgo, and others.

Warm thanks to the Andover Circle were voiced by Mr. B. C. A. Turner and Mrs. D. A. Robb, and accorded with applause. Most of the company had long journeys to make, so left during the early evening, and the social was consequently more or less a drink and a chat, and wound up an excellent day in relaxed fashion.

## CUP GOES TO BISHOP'S CLEEVE

A medium sweet elderflower wine made by Mr. R. W. James, of Bishop's Cleeve, Cheltenham, was awarded the B. Shaw Porter Challenge Trophy as the best wine exhibited at the Congress. Congratulations Mr. James!

There were 184 entries, from 25 clubs; the sweet white wine class was the biggest, with 44 entries, the medium sweet next with 38, and the dry third with 36. In the red wines the entries were: Sweet 25, dry 21, and medium 20.

As can be seen, the awards were widely distributed, and the full list of winners and their clubs is:

### WHITE WINE

DRY: 1 C. J. Berry, Andover (apple), 2 Mrs. D. A. Robb, Southampton (walnut leaf), h.c. K. D. Evans, Southampton (parsnip).

MEDIUM SWEET: 1 (and championship) R. W. James, Bishop's Cleeve; 2 F. M. Greathead, Andover (garden grape), h.c. A. D. Farr Barry, Glam. (orange) and H. H. Waites, Cheltenham (parsley).

SWEET: 1 Mrs. E. A. Bayley, Andover (orange), 2 R. H. Hives, Bournemouth (orange), h.c. Mrs. G. J. Boyce, Andover (apricot) and G. P. Culverwell, Norwich (elderflower).

(Continued on page 9)



The 'Brains Trust' in session!



The Andover Circle's display.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU GET THE CHANCE

**T**HE speaker at the morning session was Cdr. I. M. N. Mudie, Andover's President, who dealt with the subject of "The Appreciation and Judging of Wine" with a dry humour which obviously appealed to his audience.

He took them on an imaginary visit to a wine-tasting in a French cellar, telling the novice how to comport himself so as not to disgrace himself in the eyes of the more experienced, and by this means managed to explain much of the connoisseur's vocabulary, and the reasons for the procedure to be followed in sampling a wine.

By the end of his talk his hearers had become accustomed to such words as "bouquet," "aroma," "body," "mordant," "after-taste," "greeting," "farewell" . . . and even "*Tres souple!*"

He went on to deal with the judging of wine, explaining the detailed form which his Circle had devised to train its members. During question time, it was obvious that whilst the idea of such a form was

acceptable, there were many opinions as to the detailed allocation of points, as to the best classification of wines (a point which was to recur again and again), and as to the labelling of bottles in competitions.

Several people declared that they thought 15 marks out of 100 too many to award purely for the type and condition of bottle, seal and label, but Cdr. Mudie pointed out that this form had been devised in the early days, when it was imperative to raise the standard of presentation of wines made at home; it might well now be revised.

### AVOIDING COMPLICATIONS

In his talk—on "The Principles of Fermentation"—during the afternoon, Dr. A. Pollard, of Long Ashton Research Station, told of how several types of cider were made there from any single variety of apple for comparative purposes.

Comparison, of course, was quite impossible unless the juice (or in winemaking, the vegetable, flower or other extract) was first treated to suppress the wide range of micro-organisms which it contained, moulds, yeasts, lactic acid bacteria, and acetic bacteria. There were many non-fermenting yeasts which grew in the presence of air and which did not produce alcohol, but which would affect the finished product. The "must" could be purified of them by adding sulphite (SO<sub>2</sub>) in the form of Campden tablets or metabisulphite which would suppress them, and soon afterwards, when it had done its work, a good fermenting yeast could be added, and the result was then much more predictable. A must would always ferment faster and better for having had sulphite added initially.

The amount to add was 100 parts per million, or two Campden tablets to the gallon if the fruit used was sound; three to the gallon if it was in poor condition.

(Continued from previous page)

#### RED WINE

**DRY:** 1 R. H. Hives, Bournemouth (blackcurrant), 2 Mrs. M. Sturdy Ward, Huby, York (elderberry), h.c. J. G. Wills, Southampton (bellheather).

**MEDIUM SWEET:** 1 Mrs. M. Sturdy Ward, York (raspberry), 2 F. M. Greathead, Andover (raspberry), h.c. Mrs. S. B. McLoughlin, Watford (elderberry).

**SWEET:** 1 K. D. Evans, Southampton (strawberry), 2 F. Raven, Winchester (rosepetal), h.c. Mrs. B. Parker, Whitechurch, Andover (blackcurrant).

Judges were: Mrs. R. E. Clarke, Mrs. S. M. Tritton, M.P.S., F.R.I.C. (Grey Owl Research Laboratories), Mr. Tibor Klein (M. Agusti Hidalgo Ltd.), Mr. F. Herrington, Godalming, and Mr. S. H. Pullinger, Alesford. Giving their comments, Mr. Herrington said that selecting the champion wine from the six class winners had been extremely difficult, so much so that the three male judges nearly came to blows! The standard was definitely high, but could still be improved, particularly by the introduction of rather more body to many of the wines.

Mr. F. Spark was the competition organiser.

# 'YES' TO CAXTON HALL: 'NO' TO NATIONAL SET-UP

THE business session after tea was perhaps a little unproductive, but it was difficult to see how it could be otherwise since those present were not delegates in the true sense of the word, and had no authority to speak for their clubs. It was a most useful discussion, however, and the many points brought out certainly gave all of us something to think about, and to talk over in our own Circles. Mr. C. J. Padwick, J.P., Andover's chairman, presided.

On the first suggestion, tabled by Mrs. R. E. Clark, the Surrey County Beekeeping Adviser, that circles should strongly support the home-made wine classes in the National Honey Show at Caxton Hall, Westminster on 1-3 October, 1959, the meeting was unanimously in favour.

Mrs. Clark had explained that Caxton Hall was ideally situated in central London and to a large extent this would offer wine-makers a national rendezvous. The Show would be pleased to offer them a room at Caxton Hall on the morning of 1 October (a Thursday) for a business meeting, an offer that was gratefully accepted. (Details of the wine classes will be sent to readers later).

This settled, we then turned to the matter of the desirability of setting up a national organisation. Major Cameron, of Winchester, thought that the Caxton Hall meeting would be an ideal opportunity of laying the foundations of a national organisation and Mr. B. C. A. Turner backed him up, saying that there was certainly a need of one, if only to lay down national standards in certain matters. All clubs would be glad to get national guidance.

#### Caution advocated

Mr. Haswell, Southampton's chairman, however, said that whilst most clubs might like some form of loose federation, there were many other factors to bear in mind; such federation was bound to increase the subscriptions of the clubs in it, because of the expense involved, and secondly their friends of the Customs and Excise "might no longer be

our friends."

"We should not hastily jump into this," he said, "although we do want some form of unification in certain matters." (hear, hear).

Two or three delegates supported this view, and Cdr. Mudie and Mr. C. Berry (Andover) both also urged caution.

Mrs. Tritton (Bristol) suggested that what was really needed was a national committee which would meet once or twice a year to discuss how to improve quality and to lay down authoritative standards for judging and exhibiting and moved an amendment that this be done.

Major Cameron observed that he had only tabled his original resolution to test the feeling of the meeting and allow discussion; he would be quite happy to withdraw it if desired.

#### "Standards"

Wing-Comdr. Woodley (Andover) proposed that the committee be called a "standards committee" rather than a national committee, and said that it could do a useful job, but a Cardiff speaker said that he thought the mechanics of such a committee, in the present state of development, were going to present some difficulty. He suggested representatives should take the ideas that had been raised back to their own organisations, discuss them, and report their feelings, perhaps to Andover, perhaps to the October meeting in London.

The Chairman agreed that this might be the best procedure.

Mr. Haswell (Southampton) said that he saw no need for a standards committee; most of them had adopted the ideas and principles that the Andover Circle had evolved in the earliest days and he would like to see Andover suggest national standards for exhibiting and judging which other clubs could then discuss and, if they wished, adopt. The Andover Club also had easily available the services of the Amateur Winemaker to put those ideas over.

A vote was then taken: the idea of a standards committee was heavily defeated, only three people voting in favour. So was the suggestion of a national committee, for which only five raised their hands.

Miss Dunning, Norwich, suggested that the October meeting should be for the specific purpose of discussing this subject again, but a Cardiff speaker said that since it was on a Thursday it was not likely to be well attended; he proposed that it be "delegates only."

Dr. Webb (Bristol) said that the reaction of the average winemaker in most clubs was likely to be: "What do we, as members, get out of it?" If the answer was "Nothing," then the need for a national committee did not exist. He doubted whether they could see further at the moment than some vague common interest in standardising competitions, and whether that was enough, and Mr. Tritton said that it seemed to him that the movement was a little premature in thinking of a national organisation as yet.

#### Badge

Finally the matter of a national badge was raised. Mr. C. J. Berry mentioned that prices had been obtained for badges, which the delegates might like to consider, but that it should be pointed out that a badge was usually that of an organisation; if it was sold simply as an item of jewellery it attracted purchase tax, which raised the price appreciably. There was also a considerable difference in the price of badges ordered in quantity and those ordered in small numbers, and members might like to consider that problem.

The meeting ended with thanks to the Andover Circle and the chairman of its organising committee, Mr. J. Hill, who was unfortunately prevented from attending the Congress at the last minute.

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