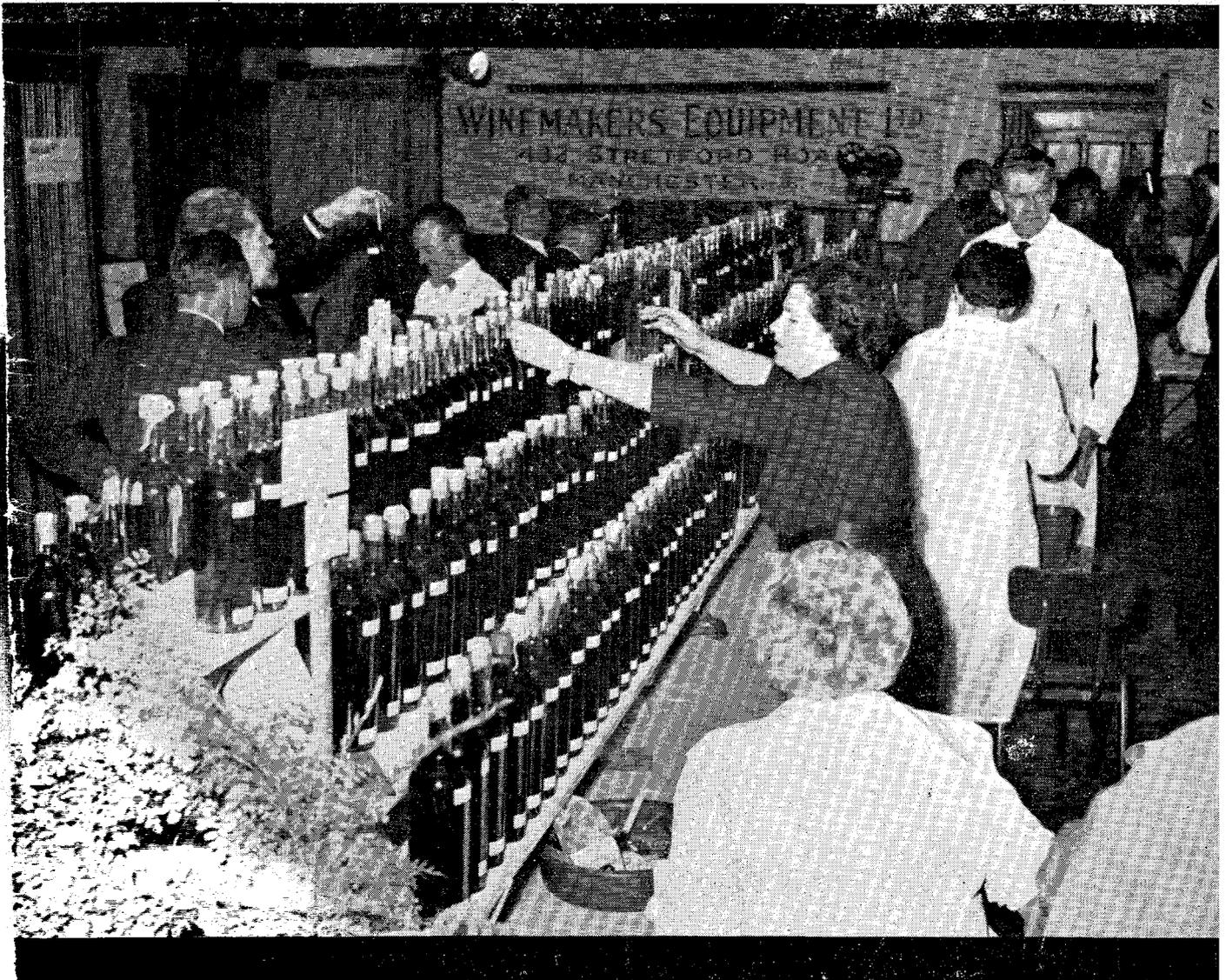


The Amateur

Winemaker

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A monthly magazine for the Maker of Country Wines



July, 1961

Busy scene during judging at "the National",
(full report inside)

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WE ALL ENJOYED OUR HARROW WEEKEND

NOW that the bustle and excitement of our third Amateur Winemakers' National Conference and Show is a thing of the past, we can look back and say "What a Show it was!" Everyone seemed thoroughly to enjoy it, and the whole Conference certainly had a wonderful atmosphere of friendliness, helped perhaps by the fact that the accommodation was sorely taxed. The Rest Hotel at Kenton, near Harrow, certainly made us welcome, did us proud, and proved a convenient centre.

Everything seemed to run smoothly, thanks to some extremely hard work behind the scenes by the officers and committee, and by the members of the Harrow Guild, who put in some yeoman service. The judging on Friday afternoon went off well, (the BBC television team and local Pressmen seemed highly intrigued), the evening wine party was as lively as these parties usually are, the three talks on Saturday provided both interest and humour, and the lunch was an undoubted success, while the "business session" produced some useful and encouraging suggestions.

But the outstanding feature of the whole weekend was without a shadow of a doubt the magnificent show of country wines, occupying the whole of the floor of the large hall. There were some 710 entries-753 bottles of wine-as compared with 180 at Andover in 1959 and 600 at Bournemouth last year. They made a really impressive sight, beautifully set out on well-prepared tables and staging.

Judges and stewards were briefed at 1.30 p.m. an judging took the whole of the Friday afternoon. At the end of it the announcement was made that the two coveted trophies had been won by:

The Shaw Porter Challenge Cup for the best wine in the show: Mrs. C. W. Martin, of Farnborough.

The Bournemouth Master Winemaker's Challenge Cup for the highest aggregate of points: Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Austin, of Hertford, with Mrs. R. A. Evans (Southampton) as runner-up.

Early in the evening a summary of the judges' comments was given by the Chief Judge, Mr. C. J. J. Berry, and this revealed that generally there had been a very high standard of presentation, clarity, and taste, but that in some cases wines had not come up to the promise of their appearance. The judges had plenty of constructive criticism, but only in one or two classes were they downright rude! Generally, as was obvious, the wines did reach satisfyingly high standard.

Dr. R. A. Webb commented in slightly more detail on the three-bottle class, and Mr. B. C. A. Turner on the "four wines for a dinner" class, two exceptionally difficult classes to judge.

Cdr. I. M. N. Mudie also explained in some detail how the "best wine in the show" had been chosen-a loganberry made by Mrs. C. W. Martin, and how a blackberry and, of all things, a coffee wine had run it extremely close.

The awards were presented on Saturday evening by Mrs. B. C. A. Turner, wife of the Harrow President.

The trade stands

Although the trade stands were a little smaller than at Bournemouth last year, owing to the demands upon space, they were generally far more ambitiously contrived and set out, and all the firms had been at great pains to make their stands really interesting. That they succeeded was evident, for they were never without customers or enquirers and the attendants were kept busy throughout the conference.

Firms exhibiting were: Josph Bryant Ltd., Fermenta, Grey Owl Laboratories Ltd., Heath and Heather Ltd., M. Agusti Hidalgo Ltd., W. R. Loftus Ltd., Semplex, Southern Vineyards Ltd., Winemakers Equipment Ltd., and the *Amateur Winemaker*. Messrs. James Powell & Sons (Whitefriars) Ltd., of We aids tone, had an intriguing display of modern glassware.

The Circle Stands

Harrow won the competition for displays by Wine-makers' Circles, which was staged in the loggia, and in which there were four entries. Their stand, which had a pegboard background and a "grass" front cloth, was both instructional and attractive, embodying grapes, black and white, liquor fermenting, 28 bottles of finished wine, and winemaking literature. Amersham's was something similar, with the bottles ranged diagonally across the background, and HESA had a tiered display which included their Circle's trophies and an array of equipment.

Perhaps the most original stand, however, was that of Farnborough, which was based upon the laying of an attractive table place, an idea that had been cleverly worked out and beautifully done.

BUT WHAT'S A DRY WINE?

SPEAKING on the subject "Dry Wines for Preference?" Cdr. I. M. N. Mudie, President of the Andover Circle, got right down to fundamentals by posing the query: What IS a dry wine?

He recalled that at the first national conference it had been suggested that a dry wine was one with a gravity of less than 5, a medium one with a gravity of 6 to 12, and a sweet one with a gravity of up to 20. At that time no one had experimented methodically but the Andover Circle did so, using some commercial wines whose descriptions were known, and also some country wines, and came to the conclusion that the figures should preferably be:-

Dry	Specific gravity below 1.000
Medium	Specific gravity below 1.014
Sweet	Specific gravity 1.015 and above

As a matter of interest, the French specified that extra dry champagne should contain not more than 1-4 % sugar, or a specific gravity of 0.986 to 1.000.

Circles might very well experiment in this matter and endeavour to arrive at an agreed grading which could be used nationally and for inter-club competitions. A small panel could taste a few wines bearing no indication of gravity or strength, and then assess them as dry, medium or sweet. Afterwards the wines could be tested with the hydrometer.

Practical test

Cdr. Mudie then proceeded to do just this. He set up six bottles, and called for three volunteer judges from the audience, who were immediately forthcoming. They tasted each bottle, and gave their opinions, dry, medium or sweet, and these were compared with Cdr. Mudie's and with the hydrometer readings. On the first two samples they were almost unanimous, and two out of three agreed about the third ("horrible!") but after that the opinions on the dryness or otherwise of the last three wines varied widely.

The test was quite a striking indication of the fallibility of human taste.

Having made his point, the Commander went on to talk about the actual production of dry wines, and stressed that in the past winemakers had tended to use far too much sugar and to produce dreadfully oversweet wines. It was far preferable to use, say, only 21-lbs. of sugar to the gallon and produce a dry wine, for if it was too dry it could always be sugared to taste before drinking.

Sugaring later

Commercial wine experts were apt to raise their hands in horror at this, or at the idea of adding sugar to a wine at any stage, but the fact was that there was nothing against it. Although they would not talk about it-or if they did would call it by a technical-sounding name-even the French did add sugar to their wines when the crop was of poor quality.

It was infinitely better to produce a dry wine which could be sweetened to taste subsequently than to produce an oversweet wine which was irreclaimable.

Cdr. Mudie made a strong plea to wine makers not to be overawed by the commercial wine world or by the attitude of the wine snob towards country wines. "Continental wines are not all that superior," he said "and our wines are in fact a jolly good product. We should not be brow-beaten by the "experts"; do not allow that your wines are any worse than theirs. Many of the wines produced at this conference are infinitely superior to any I have had on the Continent. Some of the wines in France are undrinkable except by the locals. So be proud of your wines."

During the interesting discussion which followed Cdr. Mudie's talk yet another grading was suggested by Dr. Spencer, of Welwyn Garden City: Dry, 0.990 to 0.999; Medium 1.000 to 1.010 and sweet: 1.011 to 1.024 or above.

CHELTENHAM NEXT YEAR?

WHERE will the next Conference and Show be held? Anyone at the business session would offer to wager you instantly that it will be in CHELTENHAM but it's still subject to confirmation. The odds are, however, that 1962 will see the Conference assembling in that delightful town.

Certainly no-one could have offered a warmer invitation than the spokesman of the Cheltenham Amateur Winemakers' Association, Mr. Jakeway, did at the Conference's business session. Cheltenham have already done so much spadework, apparently, that it would seem positively churlish to refuse their invitation!

As the committee chairman, Mr. C. J. Berry, who presided at the business meeting, pointed out, it was nevertheless a little rash to decide out of hand, for the committee would need to inspect the proposed meeting place and make several other enquiries. Brighton also offered to act as hosts, and it is possible that this might be the venue the following year. Both clubs were warmly thanked for their invitations, which the committee is to explore.

On the platform at the meeting were the other members of the Conference Committee, Mr. R. C. Lucas (secretary), Mr. I. C. Morgan (New Forest), Mr. S. W. Andrews (Hertford), Mr. E. A. Malin (Bishop's Cleeve), Mr. C. A. Rickman (Harrow), Mr. H. G. Timbrell (Harrow), Mr. L. W. Gilbertson (Cardiff), Mr. C. W. Martin (Farnborough), Mr. B. C. A. Turner (Harrow) and Dr. R. A. Webb (Bristol).

Mr. Berry explained that the committee to run the Conference had been elected at a meeting late in 1960, and when the Conference programme was drawn up it was originally intended that the business meeting should

be an annual general meeting, since some machinery must be devised for the election of officers and committee annually, in order to ensure that fresh blood and ideas were introduced. Then, however, it had been realised that there would be no balance sheet to produce and no report to be made, since the Conference was still in progress. So it was decided to continue with the same committee until next year's conference, when there would be a proper annual general meeting, with the election of officers and the presentation of the balance sheet of the 1961 conference.

Finance

Speaking of finance, the Chairman said that Circles had really been most generous in their response to an appeal for funds for a "float" for the conference, and had subscribed almost exactly £100.

The object of the committee throughout had been to make the conference self-supporting: they had been grateful for the float, but were aiming at emerging from the conference still with £100, and possibly even with « little more. It would be rash to quote figures at this stage, but they were optimistic of success.

The last part of the short business session was given over to receiving suggestions for the programme and running of the 1962 Conference and names of recommended speakers.