

# The Amateur Winemaker

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Just a part of the 2000 entry wine show at Brighton.  
Full report, Page 126.



# The Amateur Winemaker

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## ***From the Editors Chair***

*When you ask one friend to dine  
Give him your best wine.  
When you ask two,  
The second best will do.  
-Longfellow*

### **TOO BIG?**

The Brighton National Conference and Show is fully reported in this issue, and there is little I (as Chairman) can add, except to say that financially, the treasurer tells me, it was the most successful show yet, though figures are not yet quite finalised. As regards the number of entries, it was certainly our biggest show to date, and our cover picture (by Baron Stirk, of Faversham) shows only a fraction of the 2,000 exhibits. There were some comments by the judges that although numbers had increased, quality seemed to have suffered, and a suggestion was made that it might be necessary to insist upon a certain standard for National entries, but it is difficult to visualise a really practical method of achieving this. One idea was that Circles should hold eliminating "rounds," but not all clubs support the conference, and in any case this would leave the lone winemaker who is not able to join a club "out in the cold." To my mind it seems rather a pity to limit the growth of the National artificially in this way after it has grown so dramatically in the last five years. It would seem preferable to let the problem of quality solve itself naturally, as it will with the passage of time. One way of accomplishing this would be to provide some means for the judge to communicate his findings to the exhibitors in more detail than is at present possible. He obviously cannot report in detail on every bottle, that would take far too long, but a brief two or three word comment on certain obvious faults would result in such faults being gradually eliminated.

### **FAST GROWTH**

The speed of growth of the National has brought many problems and one that looms large is the necessity for the creation of some mechanism whereby judges can be trained, tested, and given, as it were, a recognisable standing and authority, and this is one problem that the national committee will be tackling with some urgency. Every year it becomes necessary to produce more judges, and the expansion is at such a rate that there are rarely enough available, so steps will have to be taken to build up a really large panel of judges whose services can be called upon, and whose capability is beyond question.

### **CRITICISMS**

By and large everyone seems to have enjoyed Brighton. The weather was like the curate's egg, good in parts (lovely on Friday, filthy on Saturday), the wine show was the biggest ever, and the Circle and trade stands were far and away the best we have had. There were some criticisms, of course. Many (rightly, I think) took exception to being locked out unnecessarily after 2 p.m., owing to an organisational misunderstanding, and there were also comments about the amplification system (too much in the main hall and none at the lunch). Another criticism was that the A.G.M. was too rushed, although it had to be if the programme was to be concluded and people from a distance got away on time. This is a perennial problem, it seems, and probably the answer will be to have the A.G.M. on another day altogether, when more time can be given to it.

\*

### **THANKS, TOO**

But for every criticism there were two expressions of praise or thanks, and generally this year visitors did seem to appreciate much more just how much hard work had been necessary by the committee and by the Brighton club to make such an enjoyable week-end possible.

# BRIGHTON PROVES MOST POPULAR VENUE YET

WHAT a week-end it was! We're getting a little blase, now perhaps, about our National Conference and Show, but certainly the fifth, at Brighton, on 19 and 20 April, is never likely to be forgotten.

Every year sees the National bigger than ever, and in three years entries had risen from 160 to 1,200. What was Brighton going to produce this year? Everyone freely forecast 1,500, we in this magazine went one better and said 1,600, but in the event there were all but 2,000 bottles on the show stands.

And about 1,000 people attended the Conference on the main day, Saturday. Some 450 attended the Mayor's reception on the Friday evening, and roughly the same number sat down to lunch on the Saturday-everything was "the biggest so far."

Perhaps it was the lure of Brighton. Certainly many of those attending made a weekend of it, staying one, two or three nights in local hotels. Brighton certainly seemed to have everything, even gloriously sunny weather on the Friday (the least said about Saturday the better, but the rain did not worry us once we were inside).

The accommodation was magnificently suitable, so much so that we fear almost anything else will be an anti-climax. The huge Corn Exchange just accommodated the wine show, exhibition, and lunch, and the Friday evening reception was held in Brighton's famous Royal Pavilion.

Staging was erected on the Thursday night and entries were placed in position and trade stands erected early on Friday morning. It was a rush to get everything ready, but by 11.30 a.m. the Judges' Convenor, Mr. S. W. Andrews, was able to brief the judges and stewards (about 80 of them) and judging was under way by midday. It took all the afternoon and in some cases part of the evening ..

The show opened at 6.45 p.m. and the Mayor of Brighton, Aid. W. H. G. Button, and the Mayoress, were escorted round by the Chairman, Mr. C. J. Berry, and Vice-Chairman, Mr. B. C. A. Turner, and visited all the stands and classes. The Mayor made a brief speech of welcome, for which he was thanked by Mr. Berry.

Later, at his reception in the Royal Pavilion, the Mayor and Mayoress shook hands with all the 450 guests, before entertaining them to a most enjoyable evening. To describe the two ballrooms which the dancing occupied there is only one word, overworked by teenagers nowadays, but here used in its true sense "fabulous."

Everyone was overwhelmed by the oriental richness of the Pavilion's decorations and its marvellous state of preservation. Brighton really "did us proud;" and this was an evening to remember.

Saturday, of course, was the main day, and there was a full programme. The highlight was the luncheon, at which 450 sat down. Mr. B. C. A. Turner, after an excellent meal, proposed the toast of "Amateur Wine-makers" very wittily, coupling with it the name of the Southdown Guild, the local winemaking Society which had done so much towards the success of the Conference, and he mentioned in particular Mr. E. A. Hawkins and Mr. D. E. Woodcock, who had been towers of strength. The Southdown Chairman, Mr. Horton, replied.

At the lunch a collection was taken (in buckets!) for the Mayor's fund for the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, and realised over £28, for which Aid. Button voiced his thanks. It was only a small expression of our gratitude to him, for he was a genial host and was genuinely interested in our welfare and activities.

The very full day's programme wound up at 5.45 p.m. with the Convenor of the Judges, Mr. Andrews, giving a summary of the judges' reports, and the presentation of the prizes by the Conference Chairman, Mr. C. J. Berry.

## The Trade Stands

..... made a brave show round the sides of the Corn Exchange, and were as varied as the exhibits by the Circles.

Grey Owl Laboratories were showing their yeasts and fruit pulps, and giving "tasters" of apricot brandy and pineapple, peach or apricot "Sparkley," Southern Vinyards were also giving samples of wines, particularly sherries, made with their products, W. R. Loftus Ltd. were showing a very wide range of products, as usual, and this magazine had a stand displaying its publications and the now popular winemaker ties. Winemakers Equipment Ltd., who have just opened a new shop in Manchester, displayed a selection from their varied stock, but Fermenta confined themselves to displaying in detail their Almanac. Merrydown Cider, exhibiting for the first time, had an attractive stand, as did Huntley & Palmer Ltd., and another popular spot for "tasters" was the stand of M. Agusti Hidalgo (London) Ltd., well-known for their orange and grape juice concentrates. Ragus Sugars Ltd. concentrated upon their invert sugar, and next door to them Leigh-Williams & Sons had a stand packed with almost any commodity the winemaker could need.

## Judge with the judges

This competition, in which visitors to the show were invited to judge six wines and place them in order of merit, to see how nearly their findings tallied with those of an expert judge, proved more popular than ever

this year.

This was largely due to the excellent work put in by Mrs. Cherry Leeds, who organised and ran it. Mrs. Leeds, after analysing all the entries (some task !) reports :

The right order was :

ADBEFC No one got the first three.

Mr. Peter Stanton, of Brighton, got 1 2 5 and won the prize.

Mr. R. A. Prince, of Christchurch, Hants. got 1 3 4 6, and T. Tunbridge of Chelmsford got 1 3 4 5.

Six people got three right, 31 two right (five of these were 1 and 2), six people three right, 61 one right ... and the rest were nowhere !

There were 174 entries and the competition raised £4/10/0. Some people "had a go" simply because the prize, a lovely rosewood cheese tray, given by Mrs. Leeds, was worth it.

Mrs. Leeds feels that R. A. Prince and T. Tunbridge deserved consolation prizes and is awarding them a subscription to the "A.W." for a year. Could we have their addresses, please?

## Old v. New proves best session of all

"How to achieve quality in your wine" was a discussion between the Scientific Minded Winemaker (Mr. Cedric Austin) and a disciple (no doubt with his tongue in his cheek!) of "Granny's Methods" of Winemaking (Mr. John Parker).

This proved not only lively, educative, and in places farcical. The "actors" of the parts would make a good musical hall turn, and anyone who missed this event not only missed one of the highlights of the show, but their winemaking education must obviously be not complete.

Quality, yeasts, nutrients, clarity, colour, acidity, sterility of musts, racking, filtration, aeration, maturation, etc., all received their full share of attention both from the angle of the scientific winemaker and the follower of Old Granny's methods.

Questions asked and ably answered were on temperatures, blending, standards, adding acid before or after fermentation, failures, aeration, measuring sugar content in ingredients, yeast types, aroma and bouquet, cost of winemaking past and present day, etc.

The chairman, Commander I. M. N. Mudie, R.N. (retd.), kept order but was often "involved" with both sides and as a sort of "kind uncle" contributed much to the discussions.

It is hoped this most entertaining and educative feature will be repeated at future conferences. The "scientist" was "brilliant" with his wit and wine techniques, and no doubt produces "brilliant" wines but we all thought "Old Granny" also knew a thing or two!

## Yeasts and what they do

This lecture by J. A. Baruett, King's College, Cambridge, proved to be a most informative one by an expert on his subject.

The attentive audience were shown slides depicting grapes in French vineyards and "must" in the vat, also slides of wine yeasts and other yeasts.

A rare and educative film, produced in East Germany, was shown depicting brewing yeast cells and baker's yeast cells actually budding and it is understood that this film of yeast action through a microscope is indeed a treasured record by scientists interested in yeast culture and as 300/400 cells would go on a pin head the enlarged cells through the camera lens brought to viewers a most interesting spectacle.

Amongst the questions asked, after the address, by winemakers were "Does yeast change its character by living in different environments?" "Does different types of yeast yield different flavours in wines?" "When yeast ceases to work does it completely die out in a wine?" "Is yeast animal or vegetable? "

Identification of yeasts is often difficult even to experts, as many yeasts look so much alike and tests that are made to enable identification are the feeding to them of different sugars.

The subject was ably dealt with, was most informative on *yeast proper*, except that as the lecturer was a specialist in his subject he was not fully able to deal with the winemaker's aspect which was a little disappointing to a minority. Perhaps the asking of such "winey " questions to a yeast "Purist" were unfair?

## Two motions passed, Two defeated

The annual general meeting of the Conference and Show did not produce anything of great moment this year, although there were some interesting debates on the resolutions. This year for the first time only accredited delegates of Circles were admitted. Even so, the meeting took longer than scheduled and almost over-ran into the prize giving. There were, despite this, criticisms afterwards that it had been too hurried, and it may be that eventually the annual meeting will have to be held on a separate occasion altogether, since it is so difficult to fit it into the time table to do justice to it.

The Chairman, Mr. C. J. J. Berry, presiding, reported briefly on the past year and it was pointed out by the Treasurer, Mr. I. Morgan, that last year's show had been a great success financially; the show now had some £288 to its credit.

Some discussion naturally arose on the venue for the 1964 Conference. The general secretary, Mr. R. C. Lucas, on behalf of the Bournemouth Circle, warmly invited the Conference to return to Bournemouth (it was held there in 1960) and the Vice-Chairman, Mr. B. C. A. Turner, outlined a novel proposal that at some time in the future (not 1964) the Conference might consider taking over a Butlin's holiday camp for a week-end. To do this they would have to guarantee some 500 bookings at about £5/5/0 a time. The meeting agreed that this

should be fully investigated and also that Bournemouth should be the 1964 venue.

Mr. Turner took the chair for the election of three members to the committee (three retire each year) and in the event, on a paper ballot, the three retiring members (C. J. J. Berry, Andover, I. C. Morgan, New Forest, and R. A. Webb, Bristol) were re-elected.

One slight amendment was made to the constitution to allow committee members to vote on resolutions at the A.G.M., on the proposition of Mr. Berry. As worded, voting was previously restricted to delegates.

A resolution on the payment of travelling expenses to committee members on Conference business was passed on the proposition of Mr. S. W. Andrews, it being to the effect that expenses in excess of the first £1 of a second class railway fare would be paid, it having been pointed out by the committee themselves that to pay *all* travelling might prove too burdensome to the funds, and they were thanked for their suggestion that they should themselves meet the first £1.

Mr. L. Gilbertson proposed a Winemaking Society of Wales resolution that ½ bottles should be allowed in the wine competition to cut down transport expenses but on the vote, although there was a measure of support for it, it was defeated.

By an even narrower margin a resolution from Merseyside, proposed by Mr. A. Temple that the rule preventing husbands and wives from exhibiting in the same classes should be abolished was also beaten. This too had a good measure of support but by a small majority the meeting voted that the rule be retained.

The organising committee consisted of C. J. Berry (Chairman), B. C. A. Turner (Vice-Chairman), R. C. Lucas (General Secretary), I. Morgan (treasurer), E. A. Malin, L. Gilbertson, C. W. Martin, R. A. Webb, S. W. Andrews, E. A. Hawkins and D. Woodcock.