

Sunshine and Showers

A special report on this year's National Show at Eastbourne by
Roy Ekins



Cyril Berry, President of the NAWB and consultant editor of Winemaker, relaxes with his charming wife.

Basking in the sun in the shelter of Beachy Head, Eastbourne was the Conference town that acted as host to the 1985 National Amateur Wine & Beer Show, and the Annual General Meeting of the National Association of Wine & Beer Makers.

Most of the Committee arrived on the Thursday evening, ready for an early start on Friday morning. The venue for the show was the newly-built Exhibition hall at the rear of the Devonshire Theatre complex, and it proved to be clean and airy, and quite well lit, with ample room for the many tables necessary to stage the show.

Over 500 enthusiasts stayed for the weekend, bringing 3623 entries with them. The small army of hardworking stewards, who laboured during Friday to collect and set out the tables, and then bench the entries after sorting them into the 59 classes, did a magnificent job of work, as did all the stewards throughout the weekend, whatever their task, and all praise to them for it. Unhappily, our Chief Steward, Gerry Sparrow could not be with us, having just been admitted to his local hospital

Instead; we wish him a speedy recovery.

Friday evening was the time for the Fancy Dress Carnival, a joyful event that grows each year in size and popularity. Judy Irwin, our Hon. Secretary, from Semley, won the Best Individual award, dressed half and half as 'Costa del Sol' (sun hat, swimming costume and one sandal) and 'Costa del England' (sou'wester, plastic mac and one Wellington boot). Doreen and Roger Leigh of Liphook won the 'Pairs' award, all dresses up for a day at the seaside, complete with a mini-deckchair. 'Three Old Crabs' came first in the group entries, in the shape of bewhiskered old fishermen, disguises concealing to our surprise 'Andy' Andrews, Joan Tolman, and Jeff Haws (Winemakers of Hertford). The circle entry winners were the Hutton Wine Circle, dressed as 'Peers of the Realm' (Pier of Wigan, Pier of Brighton, and so on).

Bright and early on Saturday morning, almost 80 judges and their stewards assembled in the Gold Room for a short but adequate briefing by the Convenor, Mrs Margery Ives.

Everyone remained in their seats until all the envelopes had been distributed, and this innovation undoubtedly made for a quieter and more efficient briefing, all judges then being ready to start judging about the same time.

As well as the many members' wine and beer classes, there were classes open to all, plus classes for savoury and dessert dishes cooked with wine - how very enticing they looked and the last class of all, for a wine-bottle label design.

While all this industry was taking place, a coach load of competitors and families went to visit the English Wine Centre, at Drusilla's. Here there are wines from many of the English vineyards in the area, plus a variety of other attractions, including a small zoo.

During the afternoon the first event was Judges at the Bar, when competitors can discuss their entries with the judges that adjudicated on them. Nominally this was scheduled to last for half an hour, when the hall should have been closed, but in practice hobbyists were still talking shop over an hour later. In the meantime the Gold Room was back in use, this time for an illustrated lecture by Peter Hanshall, one of the guides from Drusilla's.

Throughout the weekend Philip Delmon and his helpers manned the Tombola, always one of the most popular stands at the show. This year there was another, new attraction - a brand new Talbot Samba motor car, just £1 - for any gambler lucky enough to shake the dice and throw seven sixes.

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National Show

Sunshine and Showers continued

Many came near to it, but no one actually achieved that magical result.

Also there for information, interest, and convenience was a NAWB table manned by Judy Irwin, where you could buy car stickers, order NAWB jerseys or sweat-shirts, pay subscriptions, or just stop and chat.

After a much-needed break, in which to clean up, change, and have dinner everyone returned to the Floral Hall, dressed in their finery and refreshed, to attend the Civic Reception as the guests of the Mayor and Mayoress of Eastbourne, Councillor Leslie Mason and his charming wife Doreen. It was showery outside, but that did not dampen the spirits of those inside in the slightest, especially when we were assured by the Mayor that the sun would shine in the morning. The first prize for the raffle was a gallon bottle of Scotch whisky, won by Mr and Mrs Tompkins of Scraptoft Circle. The last prize matching pots of mustard and horseraddish, was won by our Editor, Catherine Cummings - there must be a moral there somewhere! Then our ex-Editor, and the President of the Association, Cyril Berry, thanked the Mayor for his hospitality, and called for those present to give three cheers to show their approval. And so the evening passed along, with plenty to drink, lots of good company, and lively

music in pleasant surroundings. But all good things must end, so it was off into the rainy night, to hotel parties and eventually to welcome sleep.

Sunday morning brought a late breakfast, and then the Annual General Meeting of the Association, held in a crowded Gold Room. The proceedings were, of course, confidential to the members of NA WB, but I am sure that no one will take exception to my releasing the news that the Committee has asked Mrs Freda Stagg of the Dorset Federation - and she has agreed - to accept the honour of becoming President of the Association for 1985-86, as successor to Cyril Berry, retiring President.

After a lively AGM, we were honoured by the arrival of the Mayor and Mayoress, who had kindly agreed to distribute the trophies to those



competitors successful in the Annual Show. This they did with every appearance of being genuinely interested in the proceedings, warmly congratulating the successful exhibitors. The Master Wine & Beer maker of the Year was R J Wheatley of Old Bexley, with E F Tappenden of the same circle, the Master for the past two years, making history by winning the Bournemouth Master Winemaker Cup for the third year in succession. Councillor Mason would up with a few well-chosed sentences, referring to the great friendship that was evident among the winemakers and brewers present. He also pointed out that the sun was shining, but whether this was a personal triumph, a Corporation achievement, or a well-forecasted natural event was not made clear! Perhaps it was just the kind of weather that Eastbourne deservedly enjoys as one of the premier resorts of the South Coast.

With the presentation of sheaves of flowers to Mrs Mason, Mrs Berry, and Mrs Drysdale, who health forced her absence, the chairman brought the Twenty-Seventh Amateur Wine and Beermakers National Conferences and Show to an end. All that remained was a little tidying up, lunch, and then away to the far corners of the country, taking with us happy memories of another excellent weekend.