

# THE "BLIZZARD"

Freak weather marked the day of arrival of the advance party in Harrogate, travellers from the South left home in driving snow and raced North to try to leave it behind. On arrival, the chairman was even overheard claiming prescience for the committee in arranging a Northern National the very year that blizzards swept our southern conference centres!

Early on Friday the fifteenth, the committee and a band of some 20 stalwarts from York, Leeds and a few southern circles set to work to erect the staging in the fine surroundings of the Royal Hall. By lunchtime work was well up to schedule and entries received by rail and post had been received and staged. A record entry of some 2,075 bottles of wine and beer kept the stewards busy all the afternoon and well into the evening. The total of 377 competitors was a little down on last year and many well-known exhibitors were not represented. An unusual event for a winemakers conference was a visit by a party of about 20 overseas students in the charge of a Commonwealth Relations Officer. The party were conducted round the trade stands and the wine exhibition in its partially staged form by Messrs. Berry, Martin and Woodley and expressed considerable interest in all they saw. Perhaps we shall see a rush of foreign wine circles breaking out when these people return to their homelands! This year the trade stands were displayed to much better effect and were accessible to participants for the maximum possible time. The trade were not extensively represented, but those that were there, Messrs. Grey Owl Laboratories and Winemakers Equipment Ltd., were most welcome and offered a wide range of materials and apparatus.

Hull and District Winemakers' Guild made an attractive display of the trophies for the forthcoming Hull Show and, of course, Amateur Winemaker publications were well laid out to catch the visitor's eye.

Judging started at nine sharp on the Saturday morning and proceeded smoothly as usual, under the interested eye of the spectators in the balcony.

At the same time Mr. D. W. Jones was speaking on "The Romance of Brewing" in the comfortable surroundings of the Lounge Hall of the Royal Baths. He was followed by Dr. J. G. Carr on the "Micro-Biology of Winemaking" and you will find reports of these talks elsewhere in this issue. The afternoon was very full of interest for all the near 600 winemakers present.

Highlights were the well presented colour slide exhibits, a considerable improvement on last year, and Eric Malin's talk on "basics." The judges were at their classes for the benefit of exhibitors for a period during the afternoon and there was no mistaking the popularity of this feature of the conference.

The evening saw some 400 winemakers "whooping it up" at the fine reception given to the conference by the civic authorities. The merrymaking was considerably enlivened by the impromptu cabaret act put on by Wilf N... and Jean N....! All present enjoyed the lavish hospitality of Harrogate and some of us were even finding potential converts among the town councillors!

Thick heads notwithstanding, participants gathered for the award of the trophies in ideal surroundings, the fine acoustics of the hall combined with comfortable seating and the wine show spread out before us, contributed to a thoroughly enjoyable climax to the conference.

The following "Any Questions?" session in the same setting was greatly enjoyed; every word could be clearly heard and the questions covered

## BEER, ANCIENT AND MODERN

Mr. D. W. Jones entertained a large audience with an amusing account of somewhat lethal brewing practice closely followed by an historical account of the development of the beers we know today.

Starting from ancient Mesopotamia, he traced the story of beer rapidly through somewhat unsavoury phases up to 1437 when Henry VI granted the Brewers' Company its first charter. The beginnings of hopped beer in England can be seen in the 16th century importation of hops and beer from the low countries.

The first licensing laws were also enacted in the 16th century and in the 17th Charles I raised the first taxes on beer. Stout and the oldest English brewery, Tomson and Wooton, of Ramsgate, appeared soon after but it was not

until 1868 that the first bottled beers were introduced by Whitbreads. Mr. Jones went on to describe the system of tax on "original gravity" and the range from "near beer" to "coronation ales" was identified with appropriate "original gravities." A most interesting talk was concluded with a few words on basic brewing ingredients and a comprehensive account of the properties and uses of dextrins. The speaker's well known recipe for "Bier Dwejo" was available and will no doubt serve to introduce many of his audience to the delights of home-brew.

# NATIONAL

Bernard Brown reports . . .

a wide range of common controversy. When 12.30 p.m. came round, many of us were very reluctant to begin the preparations for breaking up a most happy and successful conference.

Behind the scenes, the national committee members were working like beavers, among their activities was the attractive tombola set up and run by Ivor Morgan which resulted in a profit of over £60 for the conference funds. The full financial condition of the National Association after this first northern national will only be known when all the accounts are collected but whatever the overall result, all present will look back on the 1966 National with very real pleasure.

Next month we shall be publishing pictures and final details.

The "National" was run by a committee consisting of Mr. C. J. J. Berry (Chairman), Mr. S. W. Andrews (Vice-Chairman), Wing Comd. R. W. Woodley (General Secretary), Mr. R. C. Lucas (Treasurer), Mrs. L. K. Lucas (Assistant Treasurer and Schedule Secretary), Mrs. D. R. Martin (Entries Secretary), Mr. B. S. Brown (Minutes and Publicity), Mr. C. W. Martin (Show Supervisor), Dr. R. A. Webb (Programme Producer), Mr. F. G. Bastin (Supplies), Mr. J. C. Luker (Awards Secretary), Mr. L. P. Stagg (Chief Steward), Dr. C. B. Lucas (Information), Mr. I. C. Morgan (Draw and Trade Stands), Mr. E. A. Malin (P.R.O.) and Mr. A. D. Francis (Harrogate liaison).

## MICRO-BUGS IN WINE

Nearly three hundred conference participants had the pleasure of hearing Dr. J. G. Carr of Long Ashton Research Station on the subject of "The Micro-Biology of Winemaking."

Dr. Carr started by reminding us that modern micro-biology was founded on the work of Louis Pasteur in the field of the biology of fermentation. It was important to realise that the organisms covered by this field of study were measured in the scale from one millionth to one thousandth of a millimetre and that the class of fungal organisms known as yeasts were at the large end of the scale while the bacteria tended towards the small end. Yeasts cells had a considerable internal structure with the enzyme producing mitochondria and energy stores as the most prominent features. They were capable of reproducing in any one of three ways, fission, budding or sexual fusion, followed by multiple splitting. Yeasts could exist in both the haploid and the diploid form but only the diploid yeasts were strong fermenters.

Bacteria had a structure unrelated to that of any other group of organisms and reproduced primarily by fission. Many of the larger bacteria were mobile and were equipped with flagella for locomotion.

Fermentation was concerned with the aerobic and anaerobic phases of yeast activity in which hexose sugars were split to provide energy for the yeast cell and liberate CO<sub>2</sub> and ethyl alcohol as waste products. So called "Fusel Oils" were also produced in p.p.m. quantities and it was probable that the differences between yeast strains consisted chiefly in their varying abilities to produce these higher alcohol substances.

One of the constituents of "Fusel Oil" was phenyl ethyl alcohol, more commonly known as Attar of Roses and different yeast varieties were definitely known to vary in their ability to produce it. Yeasts produced a large number of enzyme substances, large protein molecules which had to be built up either directly from amino acids or synthesised from nitrogen salts. Vitamin

B1, Thiamine, is necessary during the anaerobic phase of fermentation and wines will stick if there is no more available nitrogenous material or vitamins substances. Fermentation also requires small quantities of various metallic salts and this has led to a modern method of wine stabilisation by the removal of all metallic ions by passing the wine through an ion exchange resin.

Film yeasts were to be guarded against as they oxidised the alcohol and produced off flavours; they were, fortunately, susceptible to SO<sub>2</sub>. *Saccharomyces ludwigii* was a large lemon-shaped fermentative yeast which was a nuisance to the cider and brewing industries because it caused bottle deposit without spoiling the flavour. Disorders of wine with a bacterial cause included acetification, glutinous polysaccharide formations (impossible in a really dry wine), excess lactic acid and excess acetamide. In conclusion Dr. Carr remarked that it would be a very sad thing for the world if we were all knee deep in dead elephants as a result of micro-organisms failing to fulfil their essential function of breaking down organic material!

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