

The Amateur Winemakers' National Guild of Judges

Newsletter

Including Reports of Regional Discussion Groups.

Confidential

No: 23. February 1971

Editor: Miss V.L. Clapham,
17 Norland House,
Queensdale Crescent,
W11 4TL

Death of a Founder Member

Again I have the sad duty of recording the death of a Founder member of the Guild. Mr. L. Hender of Lydeard St. Lawrence died on November 21st 1970.

Mr. R.C. Lucas has sent the following obituary.

"Mr. L. Hender, a retired bank official, founded the Taunton Winemakers' Circle, and was a founder Member of the A.W.N.G.J. He was a well known Somerset Bee-keeper and past Chairman of Somerset Bee-keepers' Association. For many years a member of the National Honey Show Executive Committee, he was also the holder of the British Bee-keepers' Association Judges' Certificate.

He was a very well known and respected judge of Honey, Mead and Wines in the West Country, and also had a wide knowledge of commercial wines.

To his widow, who is also a well known Honey judge we offer our deepest sympathy.

A memorial service was held at Lydeard St. Lawrence Church on Sunday December 13th."

I was sorry to hear from Roy Roycroft in December that he was flat on his back, not as one might think from the potency of his own brews, but from the trouble that has bothered him in recent years. We send best wishes and hope you are better Roy. I now continue his letter started in October.

"I think Mr. Toule (June) is on the wrong track in being against all fortification, though I do appreciate it is a thorny

subject. There are types of wine that require fortification directly or indirectly, and not just for the sake of having a high alcohol content. I know this latter to be correct but I do not know the answer to exhibiting them, except to have classes by purpose only, when fortified wines would be acceptable in appropriate classes and N.A.S. in others. However there appears to be considerable resistance against this despite the fact that the classes can be broken down to particular ingredients if required, i.e. purpose/ingredient = Dessert Wine Red/Elderberry.

To return to Mr. Toule's remarks; to obtain a high alcohol content does not require skill or special 'know how', it only requires the 'know how' and application of the basic principles of winemaking which all winemakers should know unless they belong to the 'hit and miss' brigade of recipe followers. (The best recipes can never be more than a guide, because of the variable factors that exist between formulation and each production).

Secondly, high alcohol content by itself is no criterion. I have produced wines with 22½% (not high compared with industrial 27% by fermentation), but have found that the quality of the wine deteriorated after 19 - 20%. Peculiar off flavours were produced.

Thirdly, High alcohol content is not so discernable by nose or palate in young wines, as in matured ones. The effect of high alcohol content becomes more noticeable after ageing as a result of redox reactions.

Further to positively say whether or not a wine has been fortified is very difficult provided the fortification was discreetly and not over done. This is because -

(a) Up to 18% alcohol must be accepted as this can be achieved by any amateur.

(b) Extraction of water increases the alcohol content of the remaining 'wine', but it would probably be accepted in a class and not rejected as fortified.

(c) Flavourless or almost flavourless alcohol (such as unflavoured vodka) will increase alcohol content but is likely to be undetected as fortification in a young wine, though matured/flavoured alcohol (such as brandy) would be.

(d) Addition of brandy in a well matured, properly balanced wine, particularly if matured after the fortification cannot positively be identified as fortification provided it does not exceed 18% volume.

The difficulty of (c) is illustrated by the fact that I have often been told I have fortified wine when it had up to 18% alcohol by fermentation (no fortification) and had been matured for around ten years or more.

Conversely, several years ago I disqualified a blackberry wine as being fortified, only to have it conclusively proved to me afterwards that it was not fortified. It was this that caused me to investigate more fully the question of fortification".

Gerry Whitehouse of Torquay writes as follows:-

"The Committee of one of the local Flower Shows is very averse to change, and I was quite pleased this year when they agreed to state that wines should be in 13 or 26 ounce bottles, but they still would not specify type or colour. This could possibly happen in the next five years!

However they had the last laugh because tucked away and apart from the wine section was another class I had to judge. In future I shall be taking an eye dropper to this show!"

Gerry enclosed a cutting from the schedule; underneath cheese straws, bread, jam, chutney, etc., was Class 159a, 1 Bottle Home made wine (not less than 4 oz.) Whose will be the last laugh if Gerry arrives at that show with his eye dropper?

The W.I. finds a champion! Doug Lancaster takes up the cudgel.

"For some years now, I have listened to, or read about fellow National judges' reactions to the winemaking and judging activities of the W.I. Reactions have varied from 'Oh, look as these curious creatures with their teaspoons', through scornful abuse of their yeastless recipes to fulmination against their apparent indifference to members of our Guild. I have shared these reactions.

The fact is, however, that the W.I. has fostered an interest in home winemaking among hundreds of its members for many years. Dr. Beech's excellent book "Homemade Wines", published by the National Federation of Womens Institutes, will help to introduce a more modern view of winemaking and wine-judging.

It is in the sensitive area of wine-judging that there is most likely to be friction. It was a good thing to find Cyril Berry recently on a W.I. panel testing candidates for the W.I. winemaking proficiency test.

To the best of my knowledge neither our Committee nor any individual Judge has felt strongly enough about this matter to propose any action, whether in the form of an "official" approach at national level, or in the form of an "Encyclical" encouraging Judges to make contact with their local W.I.'s. The few opportunities I have had of discussing winemaking and wine-judging with W.I.'s have resulted in an immediate "improvement".

The section of the Judges Handbook which deals with the organisation of a wine show rightly confines itself to those aspects which concern judging but does offer advice to organisers if they write to the Secretary. I do not know what the Secretary sends, but it seems to me that for some years there has been a crying need for a small guide book on how to organise a wine show covering all the logistics of the matter. There are plenty of people within the winemaking movement able to write such a booklet and if it became the active policy of the National Association of Amateur Winemakers to see that W.I.'s, Horticultural Societies, Townswomens Guilds could get copies easily, then I am sure that many of the present problems would disappear".

A number of folk send to the Editor matter i.e. judging statistics which should rightly go to the Secretary whose name can always be found in the Register of Judges. A saving in stamps would be achieved if such matter was correctly addressed, so, have you sent your stats to the Secretary please?

A "Not intoxicated observer" has sent a smile for our P.S.

Dinner Etiquette

We all know the procedure when ordering wine at a dinner function, but the Amateur Winemakers have their own set methods. First the table is weighted down with bottles. Then it's the ritual of "smell, roll and taste". This continues throughout the meal, the emphasis being on sniffing, the nose well down into the glass.

Sad to relate the habit or custom has grown so important that a member of the Guild was seen at Warwick to SNIFF HIS COFFEE. Will it be water next time and will judges' noses develop a certain trend?

NOTE from the TREASURER

A number of members intimated that they would like a CAR BADGE and so an order was placed.

These are now available at a price of £1.10.0. (£1.50p.) postage paid. I shall be pleased to receive applications.

I regret that there are no stocks of Marking Sheets at the moment, but hope to receive further supplies shortly.

Report of Meeting of the Hants & Dorset Regional Group A.W.N.G.J.

A meeting was held on Sunday, August 9th at the Dolphin Hotel, Southampton. Ten members of the Guild were present and apologies were received from three members away on holiday. The expenses of the meeting were shared by those present.

Items Discussed

Novices Classes

It was felt that as a means of encouraging exhibitors, special novice classes should be included in all shows and to prevent the overloading of classes at some shows, novices should not be allowed to enter the general classes. Classes for former "Prize Winners Only" could well be introduced at the "National" if the novice classes are not to be re-introduced.

Handbook

It was noted that a new edition of the Handbook is in course of preparation, containing a section addressed to Show Organisers. It was suggested that "Best Wine in the Show" should be discontinued, but if it must be included, then it should be divided into "Best Sweet and Best Dry" and that those Judges who had judged sweet classes should be asked to decide the best dry and vice versa. Members were in agreement with the suggestion that the punctual arrival of Judges at Shows be stressed in the Handbook and recommended that Organisers should be advised on the number of exhibits a Judge could handle per hour. Some Show Organisers did not realise this point and often expected a Judge to cope with the impossible.

Travelling Expenses

The question of Judges' travelling expenses was raised and the view that, on occasion, Judges were being exploited by some Show Organisers and that the time had now come when Organisers should be asked to indicate in their invitation, if they are prepared to pay travelling expenses, and, on what scale, i.e. second class Rail or mileage. (Bath & West pay 6d per mile). If this is not included in the invitation, then the Judge, in his reply should indicate the amount of expenses he expects to receive, in order to give the Organiser, if dissatisfied, the opportunity to make other arrangements.

National Judges' Travelling Expenses

Several members expressed the view that it was high time the "National" Committee considered making a contribution to Judges' expenses, in view of the fact that the 1969 and 1970 Conferences entailed very expensive journeys for those living in the South and 1971 will be more expensive still. As at the 1969 "National A.G.M." very considerable increases in Committee expenses were agreed, it was felt that "Sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander".

Judging of Large Classes

Considerable discussion on this point took place and it was agreed that if splitting into two classes was impossible then two Judges should be employed and that they should endeavour to reach

a mutually satisfactory conclusion. The use of a third or overlord Judge was deprecated.

Three Bottle Class

Methods of judging this and the difficulties that arise were discussed, but it was felt that the approach was a matter for the individual Judge. It was agreed that the class was more attractive if it consisted of two table wines and one dessert, rather than aperitif, table, dessert.

National Judges' Presentation Glasses

An enquiry was made as to when these would be received, as some four months had now elapsed since the "National". Two Judges reported having received them.

At the end of the meeting, a request for further meetings was made and on the proposition of Mrs. Robb, seconded by Mr. Haswell, it was agreed to form a Hants and Dorset section of the A.W.N.G.J. with Mr. R.C. Lucas as Chairman and Mrs. D. Robb, Hon. Sec. It was agreed to hold the next meeting on Sunday, November 22nd, 1970 at the residence of Mrs. Robb.

Notes on the First Meeting of National Judges in the Midland Region, held at 33 Grove Road, Bingham, Notts. on 20th Sept. 1970.

Members attending:- Messrs. Brooksbank, Chase, A. Dransfield, Green Greenfield, Mr. and Mrs. Trivett, Mr. and Mrs. Tubb.

Apologies for Absence:- Miss Disney, Messrs. Ball, Delmon, Ritchie, Stagg.

Mr. M. Chase was elected Chairman for this meeting.

Mrs. N. Tubb was elected Minute Secretary.

1. It was agreed that the following terms of reference should be the main concerns of regional meetings.

(a) Transmission of ideas.

(b) Discussion of mutual problems concerning judges and judging

It was further agreed that relevant information should be sent to the Judges' Newsletter, and that decisions for National action as well as any unresolved matters be passed to the Executive Committee of the National Guild.

It was also decided that two meetings per year should be held, one six to eight weeks before the Judges' Annual Meeting, and one soon after the National Conference.

2. Faults in Wines

It was agreed that many National Judges, through lack of experience in tasting wines with certain faults, need more instruction in recognition of these faults. Specimens would be collected where possible, for tasting at future meetings, and each meeting should include some practical tasting. This particular meeting tasted "mousey" orange wine and discussed reasons. Mr. Brooksbank felt there was some connection between orange and mouse, and was already carrying out experiments on possible causes of mousey wines. All present promised to co-operate (a) by querying ingredients in known mousey wines and sending details to him, and (b) Mr. and Mrs. Tubb to make further brew of orange wine, keeping detailed records in an attempt to produce mousey wine.

3. Methods of Judging

The amount of emphasis to be placed on presentation and clarity as opposed to interest "only in the wine itself", was discussed. Certain judges had been observed taking only a passing interest in the first two sections, which was considered unfair to competitors taking pains with these particular aspects. It was agreed that very large classes may not allow a judge to give adequate attention to these, but where possible it should be done. Equally it was felt unfair to pay too much attention to detail of presentation by deducting marks for trivial things such as imperfect corks. This does not help the competitor to feel his entry has been seriously considered. Previous comments led to a discussion on other methods of judging adopted by those present. A number of variations were discussed, e.g. whether there was any advantage in judging entries in groups of six rather than one at a time, whether judge or steward should remove corks, whether judge or steward should write the judge's comments, whether a steward should be allowed to pour a second glass of wine for his own tasting, and whether marks for presentation and clarity already calculated were taken into account when making final assessment for placings. It was generally felt to be wrong to allow stewards to have separate tasting as this was extravagant and unfair use of the competitor's wine, but the particular judge who allowed this

insisted that it was the most satisfactory method for a steward training to take the examination to taste the wine at the same time.

The majority present said they made their final assessments on the wines only, and a suggestion was put forward by Mr. Chase that of the wines concerned the marks in the first three columns should be transferred to a short list, the wine itself re-marked, and then all marks added to get the final result. All agreed this was a good idea. With this exception the majority were firmly of the opinion that judging should be carried out by literal reference to the Judges' Handbook with no personal variations.

4. Position of labels.

Although it was generally understood that labels should be centred between bottle seams, no reference to this is made in National Show Schedules. It was agreed that a recommendation should be sent to the Executive Committee for this to be included as a standard part of presentation rules.

5. Dry Wines

The question was raised as to how dry a wine should be as commercial 'dry' wines are not necessarily absolutely so. There was completely divided opinion as to whether any wine with detectable sugar should be acceptable in a dry class. It was agreed that this might well be a question the Executive Committee should ask other groups to discuss and final conclusions to be circularised to all members.

6. Next Meeting This was provisionally arranged for 9th May 1971, either at the home of Mr. Chase or at a hired room in Coventry. It was agreed that one item for the agenda per person should be submitted six weeks in advance of the date of the meeting, and each person should take, if possible, a sample of a diseased wine and also one of character.

Notes from Meeting of Herts and Bucks Region

We have held our first Area Judges Meeting; ten of the thirteen were present and we had a very lively time. Ruby Jones made us very welcome at her home.

Our main topics of discussion were the vexed question of fees, and labelling of wine bottles with main ingredients.

As the majority were against the labelling of bottles for a variety of reasons, that subject was soon disposed of.

On fees we were unanimous in wanting rates fixed by the Guild, varying according to the type (and affluence) of the show, and we decided we would like to have a standard reply form, printed for the Guild, which members could purchase. A copy of the form we finally agreed on follows. It leaves space at the bottom in case a personal note is wanted.

After this we gave up, having decided to hold quarterly meetings except for the next one which would have coincided with the Judges A.G.M. This will take place on January 17th at 3 p.m. at Ruby Jones'.

The rest of the evening was spent in eating, drinking and discussing idiosyncrasies of taste.

The form would be headed with the Guild Crest

I/We have pleasure in accepting your invitation to judge wine/beer classes at on..... at..... am/pm.

The Guilds Standard fees for judging are:-

Major Horticultural Shows	250Np.
Regional Wine or Beer Shows	100Np.
Local Wine Club Competitions	50Np.

Travel expenses would normally only be chargeable outside a ten mile radius; beyond this 2½Np. a mile in addition to the above would be required.

Please send a sketch map of the area.

I/We regret I am/we are unable to accept your invitation to judge on.....

Signed

Member of the Amateur Winemakers National Guild
of Judges

A.W.N.G.J. East Anglia Section. Group Meeting

Held on the 2nd October, 1970 in The Plough Hotel, Chelmsford at 8 p.m.

Present: Messrs Argent, Broadwater, Capon, Hutchinson, Millett, Moore and Mrs. Farmer.

Apologies received for absence: Messrs. Marks, Padmore and Whippy.

Mr. Moore chaired the meeting. Discussions took place on the following subjects.

Judging of Split Classes.

It was generally thought that the system of pointing, as tried at the last National, was not entirely satisfactory.

An idea was suggested, whereby a very large class, should be divided into complete units, with full awards granted to each unit. This would appear to be more acceptable than the method of giving a number of unspecified fifths, as at present adopted. It was appreciated that this was a matter for the National Association to consider, and the Guild could only make a recommendation.

The National Show

It was rumoured that at the next National the privileges now enjoyed by all judges, were to be withdrawn on condition. Only judges who were individual members of the association would be granted concessions. This action if adopted was to be deprecated by all present, and it was hoped that the rumour was nothing more than that. If there was some element of truth then it was hoped the executive committee of the Guild would be receiving information to enable some action to be taken on behalf of it's members.

Show Organisers

A view was put forward that show organisers' ability was at fault in connection with some major shows. This resulted from methods imposed, in creating misunderstandings and sometimes minor chaos. It was felt some prominence to this subject should be given, although a laid down directive was inadvisable. Coupled with this, a control was necessary on the number of bottles a judge was expected to assess in a given time.

Judges at the Bar

This was the next controversial subject, and raised lively interest. All were agreed as to the value of the innovation to the exhibitor, although it was felt that full advantage was not taken of the event. Some improvement in the system might be warranted, and one idea put forward was for the name of the judge to be displayed by the class number on the bench. This would obviate enquiries "who or where is the judge". But even this had disadvantages. One member thought there was always a danger of a judge entering into a lecture on winemaking, rather than answering the question, as to why the entry had lost points. This took up time, kept other enquiries waiting and defeated the object for the reason of having J.A.B.

Refreshments were then served, and all felt at a disadvantage in holding the meeting in an hotel, because the "home brew" was missing.

Convenor of Judges

The meeting was asked to consider what the responsibilities of a convenor of judges (outside the National) should be. The members were divided as to whether the judges should be engaged by the convenor or by the show secretary. After discussion the meeting resolved on the side of the convenor who should have full powers on the control of engagement and duties of judges, with a proviso that full co-operation was necessary with the show secretary.

The above is a report on the major items discussed. The meeting closed at 10.15 p.m. and expression made that the gathering very much enjoyed and thought worthwhile. All agreed that further meeting should be called as required, rather than having a fixed number over the year. The next meeting to be convened by Mrs. Farmer for the 15th January, 1971.

Report of the Surrey, Sussex, Kent
Discussion Group

Meeting held Sunday August 23rd at the Rose & Crown Hotel,
Tonbridge, at 2.30 p.m.

Present: Mrs. H.M. Baker, Mr. K. Bilham, Mr. W.E. Grainger,
Mr. C.G. Howden, Mr. D.G. Sayers, Mr. O.D.G. Smart, Mrs. H. Timbrell.

In view of the distances members had to travel, it was decided future meetings should be held in Spring, Summer and Autumn and the next meeting was fixed for October 25th with a lunch date before the meeting.

The subjects covered were:

Judging Expenses/Fees

Everyone was unanimous that members should not be out of pocket when they went to judge - although, of course, this was a personal matter, especially where small new clubs were concerned. There seemed no problem with County Shows where a 'scale of charges' applied but often judges were invited to judge with no mention made of expenses and some Circles gave no welcome or thanks to visiting judges.

It was agreed that it was up to judges to educate organisers where necessary by 'valuing themselves', stating that expenses would be required and asking for schedules to see that conditions were acceptable, before accepting an invitation to judge.

Rose Wines

Taking commercial standards into consideration, the point was raised as to whether a "petillant" wine was acceptable in competition.

After discussion and a tasting of a commercial rose from the Cote de Provence, which one judge 'just happened to have in his car', it was suggested that it should be put to the Executive Committee that the Handbook should include the fact that a "Petillant" wine was acceptable, if this was agreed by the Executive Committee.

Status of the Guild of Judges

At various shows and on schedules it was noticed that Dahlia judges, etc. always had letters printed after their names and it was suggested that Wine Judges should add "A.W.N.G.J." after their names when writing to accept invitations to judge. This was in no way to boost the judge's ego but to differentiate between

'volunteer' judges and members of the Guild, at Shows and would show the status of the Judges' Guild to other organisations.

It was suggested that the Executive Committee might agree to get some stamps made with these letters, to be purchased by interested judges.

Presentation and Uniformity

The wrinkling of labels to conform with schedules specifying 'shoulder height' was next discussed and the suggestion made that $5\frac{1}{2}$ " (or decimal equivalent) from the bottom of the bottle would be better. Also the unwritten law of labels being placed between seams was not in the Handbook (although it was thought that this was being included in the current amendment). Some expressed the view that these considerations of presentation were not all that important to them when judging but it was generally felt, from the points of uniformity and presentation at a show, these standards would be useful.

List of Judges

One Judge had been told on a couple of occasions that people asking for the List of Judges had been told that this was a private list and not available for public circulation. If this is a fact, the meeting could not understand why this information should be private and further information is requested from the Executive Committee.

News Letter

It was agreed that a copy of the summary of the group's discussions should be sent to the Newsletter after each meeting.

Everyone welcomed the arrival of the Newsletter although all did not feel the urge or necessity to submit a contribution.

The meeting closed at 5 p.m.
