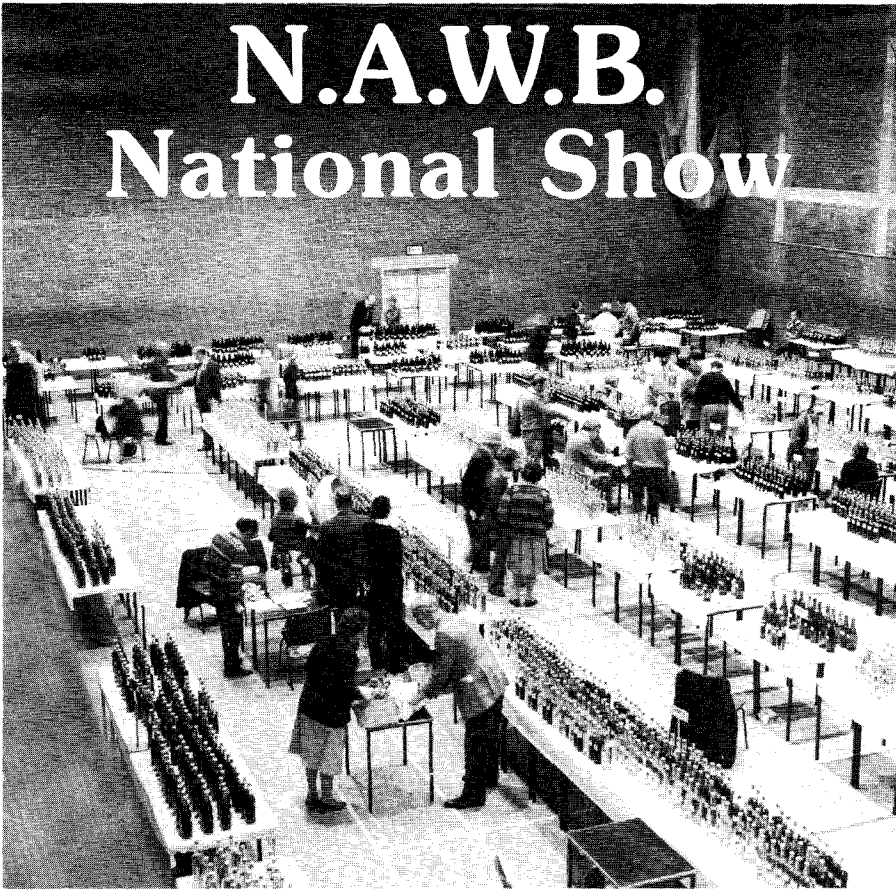


# N.A.W.B. National Show



*by Judy Irwin*

**F**RIDAY 30th March to Sunday 1st April, these were the dates for the twenty-sixth Amateur Wine and Beer Makers conference and show held this year at Nottingham University. This was my first year as a member of the executive committee and I must admit to a feeling of excitement as I set off on the day before, to enable us to prepare the halls and foyers ready to receive the 4030 expected bottle entries and competitors. We stayed in the halls of residence and on arrival were shown to our rooms which proved to be warm, with a private bathroom between two bedrooms. There was also a room set aside in which you could make tea or coffee and it was all spotlessly clean. There were only four of us on the Thursday evening so as another member of the committee, Mr Jim Chettle, lived nearby we were taken to his home for a delightfully relaxing evening of a lovely meal cooked for us by his wife Pauline. I think this was the lull before the storm.

Early breakfast on Friday and we were at the Sports Hall by 9.15am. This still resembled a gymnasium, and I began to wonder how it would all be ready by 2.30pm, the allotted time for

the start of the 'bottle-reception'. By now more of the team had arrived, plus one local winemaker who came as a steward, and soon the tables were being placed in position, and order was emerging out of chaos. By lunch time the show was staged, the tables covered in white paper, the class numbers in their place and we were able to slip back for a quick lunch.

It's quite an experience to see the exhibitors arrive to hand in their bottles. Car and even coachloads of people presenting their entries at a line of reception tables. The contents of these entries have taken months and

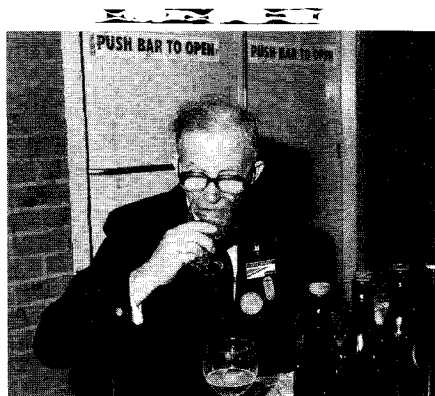
years to make and mature in highly polished bottles with new corks and labels placed with care. There are of course the members who like to give a bottle a last minute polish, or the cork that has become damaged in transit and even the lost entry ticket, and if this happens a new one needs writing out and I am afraid to say I was one of the guilty ones over that. Trophies were handed back, nearly fifty altogether, to be displayed on the stage and be presented to the proud new winner, and trays of tea kept the workers going! Behind the reception table a team of stewards collected the bottles and displayed them on the correct tables; these people do a wonderful job but even so the entries secretary, Norman Chiverton, and his wife Sarah, checked that every bottle was in the right place before they retired that night. This year it was possible to stand on a balcony and survey the whole scene and I should imagine it resembled an ant's nest, with everyone busy with their own job.

Back for dinner and change in time to go back to the large Sports Hall in which the Fancy Dress Dance was being held, a fascinating sight as people started arriving in all forms of dress, clutching several bottles of wine to consume during the evening! This year there was a grand turn out for the fancy dress parade, single, double and group entries with a prize for each section. The dance ended at 12.00pm followed by a party in the bedrooms, and I bet we were not the only ones.

Saturday 7.30am breakfast and straight back to the show where I met David Berry, the publisher of PWB. He had come along to see the show for himself. Judges briefing at 9.00am and I, with two other judges, was given the task of judging 130 Rosé wines. To



*The judges in operation*



*A fine array of donated prizes for the Tombola stall, above, while judge Eric Clarke carefully samples the beers.*

*Below, the experts at work computing the results.*

judge at the show one has to be a National Wine and Beer judge, that is to say, passed an examination set by the Guild of Judges. It is considered an honour to participate, but all judges come at their own expense and receive nothing except two glasses embossed with the NAWB emblem, the venue and the date.

A quick lunch then back to the show to answer winemakers' questions as to the quality of their wines — this is called Judges at the Bar. From there to another hall, for a new idea this year, an Open Forum, chaired by Mr C. Berry our President, where people could discuss with a panel of committee members the future of our association and other subjects. The computer, by this time, had produced the results sheets and they were on display in the foyer and everyone was trying to work out who had won which trophy, but all would be revealed on Sunday. The task of collecting the bottles was soon underway and completed without too much difficulty. I was one of the last to collect mine and was delighted to find that out of 11 entries I had gained a 3rd place and a 4th place. I have yet to win a second or even the coveted first, but I will keep trying.

After dinner there was the final dance and as it was the Chairman's birthday, his party as well. There was a competition for the best decorated table and Old Bexley Circle, from Kent,

easily won this with a magnificent table arrangement set out as a medieval banquet. Again a 12.00pm finish, and yet *more* parties back at the rooms.

Sunday morning: although feeling a little jaded I, with others, made my way back to the large hall to set out the trophies on the stage. The first event of the morning was the Annual General Meeting at which Mr C. Berry agreed to hold the office of President for a further year. Mr M. Matthews, the chairman, thanked the committee for all their help and gave a resume of the years of service that the retiring members had given to the association. The financial report was given and approved and two resolutions passed. The chairman finished by introducing the new committee and Mr Berry closed the meeting with thanks to Mr Matthews for all his work as leader.

Directly following this was the presentation of trophies, with Mr E. Tappenden of Old Bexley winning the Master Winemakers Scroll, Mr Hodgkinson and Mr Wheatly were joint Master Beer Maker and Tyneside wine circle the top of the Circle League. That was the last event of the weekend so back to my room to pack and load the car (and I, for one, was not counting the empty bottles), then a pre-lunch drink in the lounge and a much more leisurely meal than some of the others had been, before we set out on the 200 mile journey home.

As I said at the beginning, I was excited at the prospect of the show, at meeting old friends and making new ones. I have attended many 'Nationals' before but as an exhibitor, not as one of the workers, and on reflection, when I arrived home I definitely had not been disappointed in my expectations. ●

