

# MODERN WINE & BEER CIRCLE MOVEMENT - CHRONOLOGY

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*Objective:*

*to document significant events which chart the progress of the amateur home brew movement in respect of organisation, technical knowledge and competition standards.*

## INTRODUCTION

This Chronology has been created in celebration of 40 years of organised amateur wine making. Naturally, such a Chronology must contain items which have been personally selected so, you, the reader, must indulge me. I do not pretend that it is complete and have also tried to include items of relevance to a modern winemaker. I know little about beer making, so apologise if significant events have been omitted in that respect. Entries for each year are loosely categorised into Regional, National (and international). Standards and Techniques, Amateur Winemaker facts and Social matters, then Products.

## PRE-HISTORY

The history of the art of making alcoholic beverages over the last few thousand years is well documented (as is the use of cork stoppers). During the early part of this century, home wine making and beer brewing, mainly by housewives, had been commonplace, if not very scientific.

## POST WORLD WAR 2

World War 2 imposed rationing on a variety of goods but home-made wine competitions restarted after the war at Horticultural and Agricultural Shows. Exhibitors in Women's Institute shows also had to provide a small sampling bottle which was tasted. Competitions were also held for display stands of wines, ingredients and appliances. The most nationally organised 'wine' show was that held by the National Honey Show Ltd, first held in 1933, therefore members of County Beekeepers Associations also had a keen interest in competitive wine making. Beekeepers had their own special mixture of acids and nutrients to assist fermentation, but they disregarded the fact that yeast itself could affect the quality of the final product.

With the introduction of the Welfare State, another social revolution began. There was more time for leisure, and after such a long period of carnage, destruction and privation, there was a desire to do something creative for a change. Because of the high cost of living many people began to do for themselves jobs about the house that they previously would not have considered. A new phrase was coined "Do it yourself" and this applied to wine making as well since the taste for wine had been developed by hundreds of thousands during service abroad.

Pre-war books on home wine making were re-published. For example, Peggy Hutchinson's 'Home Made Wine Secrets' reiterates trial and error methods and is total devoid of any science. Peggy also wrote 'Do's and Don'ts of Winemaking', 'More Home-Made Wine Secrets' and 'Home Made Sparkling Wine Secrets'. She lived at Spennymoor, Co. Durham, was influential in that wine circle in 1958, died in March 1960, and had been writing articles on cooking and wine making since about 1919.

Ambrose Heath's book 'Home Made Wines' was also available and wine making classes existed teaching 'grandmother's' recipes, e.g. by Mrs Rosina Clark, (later MBE, NGWBJ), Surrey County Beekeeping Adviser. In 1950, British wine production was 3.8 million gallons and the duty paid £2.8 million.

## 1952/1953

Grey Owl Research Laboratories Ltd., Kjnsgswood, Bristol, (predecessor of UNICAN Foods Ltd., Bristol), was founded by Mrs Suzanne Tritton, MPS, FRIC. Grey Owl was to market specialist yeasts, wine improvers, fruit pulps etc., and her company was named after her house in Almondsbury where she was later active in Bristol Wine Circle with Drs Beech, Webb & Pollard. In time, Mrs Tritton published 'Successful Winemaking' price 5s2d, 'Successful Wine & Beer Making (incl.Liqueurs)' price 5s, Winemaking from Fruit Pulps & Concentrates' price 3s 6d and 'Tritton's Guide to Better Wine & Beer Making for Beginner's' price 18s (1965).

Whilst honey came off rationing in 1951, it wasn't until 1953 that sugar came off making available a cheap source of alcohol. Prior to that, in 1952 in Hertfordshire, Mr Alec Spoor was taught beekeeping by Basil Waye and a year later was encouraged to make mead. They both won prizes in the 1954 Beekeepers' Association annual honey show and, soon after, Basil told Alec that many beekeepers in the area were making mead and country wines and suggested he bring them together into an association. A letter was published in the Welwyn Times on 17 December 1954 and 33 people turned up to the first meeting on 29 April 1955, Welwyn Garden City Wine Guild, so was born the third circle. In the autumn of 1953, four persons in Cheltenham got together to publish the 'Wine Lore' magazine which was posted world-wide on subscription. This group met regularly and expanded leading to the formation of the 'Cheltenham Amateur Winemakers Association' on October 17th, the first entry in their Minute Book with 17 members present. So was born the second wine circle.

Also, in the autumn of 1953, CJJ Berry published beer recipes in his weekly newspaper supplement. As a result of a call from Cdr Ian Mudie, RN, an advert was placed calling a tasting at Cdr Mudie's winery at Chilbolton, near Andover. Thoughts of a circle occurred amongst the 20 or so persons present leading to first meeting in January 1954 in an Andover restaurant. Andover was formally established as the first modern wine circle on March 17th with Cdr Mudie as the first chairman and, later, his guidance led to the introduction of the Bordeaux competition bottle, flanged stopper and judging sheets.

Also, at this time, Mary Hylett wrote 'Country Wines' price 8s 6d and 'Home Made Wines, Syrups & Cordials' was published by the National Federation of Women's Institutes, edited by Dr Beech of Long Ashton Research Station, price 3s 6d.

### **1955/1956**

The Noel Whitcombe Daily Mirror column published recipes by HE Bravery, including the 'Jungle Juice' recipe. HE Bravery later published 'Home Brewing Without Failures' (1960); 'Home Wine Making Without Failures'! 'Successful Modern Winemaking' (1961); 'Home Wine Making All the Year Round' (1966); 'The Simple Science of Wine and Beer making' (1969) and Home Booze (1976).

In 1956, Suzanne Tritton wrote 'Amateur Winemaking', referred to as one of the best authoritative and scientific works on domestic wine making. This gave the first hint to the underlying science of our craft.

In June 1956, Watford Wine Circle was formed and also the Amateur Winemaking Society of Wales (AWSW), the first circle in Wales whose formation was assisted by Cheltenham who proposed they become a section of Cheltenham. The second Welsh circle was Valley, in Anglesey, (1961), then Caerphilly (1962).

### **1957**

The BBC televised Andover Wine Circle on the 'Tonight' programme.

The first ever wine-makers convention was held by the County Farm Institute at Sparsholt, Winchester, Hampshire with lectures from Mr CJJ Berry and Cdr Mudie. This convention gave a tremendous impetus to winemaking in Hampshire. Circles were formed this year at Bishops Cleeve, Bristol (18 June), Hertford, Portsmouth (1 April), New Forest (Ivor Morgan was a founder) and Twickenham.

In December, the first edition (12 pages) of the 'The Amateur Winemaker' (AW) magazine was published as 'A Monthly Magazine for the Maker of Country Wines', price 6d. The appearance of this magazine precipitated the wholesale formation of Circles. 500 copies of the first issue were printed.

### **1958**

Regionally, Helensburgh, the first wine circle in Scotland, was formed by Charlie Roberts. The second Scottish Circle was Greenock (August 1959) then Keith (1961), then Ayr (1962). Other clubs founded in 1958 were Bournemouth (founded by beekeeper Cyril Lucas), Brighton, Coventry, Emmer Green, Farnborough, Ilkeston, Kettering, Luton, Ross-on-Wye, Scarborough, Southampton, Spennymoor, Winchester and York.

Nationally, AWSW (Cardiff) suggested a National Convention for wine makers which was later abandoned in December through lack of support. Creation of a national organisation was feared since it might bring unwanted Customs & Excise attention to the Movement. In addition, how would Headquarters be funded? Loosely knit county federations were much preferred instead.

A second wine makers convention was held in September by the County Farm Institute at Sparsholt, Winchester, Hants and The National Honey Show Ltd stated they intended including 'national' classes for home-made wine as well as mead in their October 1959 show.

Thoughts also turned to standards with Bristol Wine Circle holding extensive lectures on the art of judging wine. AW articles discussed making 'Wines by Type' and in August, an article was published on exhibiting and judging.

Three circles were reported to be using the newly reported schedule classifications for wine by type which were red and white, sweet and dry. Prior to these 5 classes existed for fruit, flower, grain, root and miscellaneous.

Wine should be at least one year old, shown in a clear glass round punted bottle of 26 fl oz size, bearing a label, of the ingredient and date of making but with no indication as to the exhibitor, set between the seams, 113 down the shoulder. Straight sided or stopper corks should be used which may be waxed and capsuled. The article also explained elementary rules for judging together with score system, totalling 100 points:

Appearance of bottle, label and efficiency of bottling -10

Clarity & brilliance, in bottle (10), to glass (10) -20

Bouquet - 20

Taste & texture - 50

On the product front, Dr Webb, chairman of Bristol Wine Circle, stated that household sugar is just as good as invert sugar for wine making. Maurice Chant, Pharmacist, of Bath, opened one of the first specialist amateur wine making shops. Grape vines were commercially available at 10s 6d each. Grape tannin was available from Grey Owl plus a full range of wine yeasts, Tronozymol yeast nutrient from Loftus (as ZYMOL) and Pectolytic enzyme and fungal wnylase from Evans.

## 1959

The February Edition of AW listed 43 existing or projected wine circles and published a map of them on the front cover. 60 circles existed by December. Cyril Shave started Birmingham & Sutton Coldfield Amateur Winemakers Circle as a 'correspondence only' circle. Twickenham reported a membership of 300 in July and Pathe Pictorial Gazette film No. 196 recorded the activities of Tewin Village Produce Association Wine Guild.

Andover announced, in March, their intention to hold a National Congress of Winemakers which duly took place on Whit-Monday 18 May in the Fiesta Hall, East Street, the "First National Congress of Amateur Winemakers 1959". This show attracted 184 bottle entries from 25 circles in 6 classes, red & white, dry, medium sweet and sweet. The registration fee was 6s. and the Shaw Porter trophy for best wine in the show went to R W James, Cheltenham. Entries were not accepted from people with the same surname at the same address. A proposal at the Congress to setup a national committee was heavily defeated although it was recognised that there was a need for a national 'standards' committee to guide clubs on showing and judging wines. Following suggestions by Mrs R E Clark, the Surrey County Beekeeping adviser, Congress agreed to support the wine classes at the National Honey Show where they could hold a national rendezvous and one delegate from each circle was advised to attend to help form standards. Cyril Lucas' (Bournemouth) experience of honey and horticultural shows help shape the style of the National Show.

AW encouraged competition schedules to separate sweet, medium sweet and dry wines to help judges but to avoid red & white classes since they don't apply to our wines'. However, the chairman of the South London Club criticised trends towards commercial wine types. Their show classes were age, under 6 months, 6-12 months, over 12 months for root, fruit, cereal, cocktails/blend and any other variety of wine - (15 classes) with a flower class to be added soon. The National Honey Show and Beekeepers Convention was held from 29 September to 1st October, in the Caton Hall, London. Their schedule included red & white, sweet & dry classes for amateur wine makers with two closed and two open classes for dry & sweet mead. This schedule also called for mead to be displayed in clear, glass, round, 26 fl oz flat bottomed bottles (wine to be shown in punted bottles) without lettering, fluting or ornament of any kind. The meeting of circle delegates at the National Honey Show was a flop with only 6 or so people attending.

By the end of that year, 5,000 copies of AW were being printed (now 9d) and distributed to Scotland, Ireland, Wales, England, USA, Canada, South, East & West Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Malaya. In October, AW retailed a chrome stick pin, 1/2" high and 1/4" wide, in the shape of a fermentation lock with the letters 'AW' below costing 3s. AW also reported that 40% of wine consumed in the USA was from domestic sources.

Products available that year were plastic fermentation locks (2s 6d), Southern Vineyards pure grape juice to make 3-week wines, a beginner's outfit for 35s from Loftus, Spanish grape concentrate from Hidalgo, Noiroit liqueur extracts, and a range of products from Grey Owl, Loftus, Sempex, Leigh Williams and others.

## 1960

The Amateur Winemaking Society of Cheltenham celebrated its 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 25 November. The "Hampshire League of Winemakers" was formed to hold a knockout competition between circles rather than a single show. The "Hertfordshire Amateur Wine & Beer Makers Federation" and "Essex Winemakers Federation." were formed. Cyril Lucas, Bournemouth, stated that a national show could not be organised by a single circle and suggested creation of a national show committee similar to the National Honey Show Ltd which only existed to run a show and where individual members pay a subscription, of 7s 6d pa with County Beekeeping Associations paying 3 guineas. Non-members could also exhibit.

The second amateur winemakers conference and show, as held on 22/23rd April at the Town Hall, Bournemouth. The Bournemouth Master Winemakers Cup was presented for the first time and the Shaw Porter Trophy won by R J Curtis, Wimborne. The show attracted over 600 entries in 24 classes covering only wines by ingredient. Conference tickets cost 7s 6d, with free entry to exhibitors spending £ 1 worth of entries money, and wine entries were 2s per exhibit. Prize money was awarded for the first three winners in each class. Sparkling wine, Mead and Wine Bottle label classes appear for the first time. Wine entries must not contain added alcohol. Farnborough's (chairman CW Martin) 18' circle display gained first prize.

Most speakers at the Conference were against setting up a national organisation but L. Gilbertson's (AWSW) proposal to form a standing committee to organise a national convention and show was overwhelmingly approved. Mr BCA Turner (Harrow) proposed that C J J Berry be authorised to select and appoint a committee in the first instance. Accordingly, on 29th October, a meeting at Andover elected a committee to form the "Amateur Winemakers 'National' Conference" (AWNC) to organise future conferences and shows. The words 'and Show' would be added when appropriate. Elected officers and committee were C J J Berry (Andover) Chairman, C Lucas (Bournemouth) Secretary, Ivor Morgan (New Forest) Treasurer, and committee members, B C A Turner (Harrow), S W Andrews (Hertford), L Gilbertson (AWSW), E Malin (Bishop's Cleeve), C W Martin (Farnborough), Dr R A Webb (Bristol), W G Timbrell (Harrow) and C Ricknan (Harrow). 20 out of 88 circles attended and all circles were invited to contribute 1s per member to aid funding.

In February, articles on Cooking with Wine were written by Lilian K Lucas of Bournemouth and these set the standards used today. In October, Mr E A Roycroft (champion wine maker at the last conference) suggested wine classes be organised by purpose: Appetiser (before dinner wine), Table Wine (possibly divided into light and

medium), Dessert, After-dinner Wine (perhaps fortified), Social (for general use) and Light Wine (for drinking in quantity, such as vin ordinaire).

Typical competition scores this year were:

Andover: clarity & stability 3 pts, aroma 5, flavour 12.

Coventry: clarity 3, bouquet 3, flavour 3, body 12.

York: contents 80, cork 10, presentation 10.

Cyril Shave's system: presentation 4, clarity & colour 3, stability & no deposit 3, bouquet & strength 5, taste (original & aftertaste) 5.

Dr Pollard, a scientist at Long Ashton Research Centre suggested judges used a hydrometer on the show bench and the book 'Winemakers Companion' mentioned using vitamin B1.

Books published that year included C J J Berry's 'First Steps in Winemaking' (January 5s) which sold out in a month! 'Wines & Juices' written by Dr F W Beech & Dr A Pollard of *Long* Ashton Research Station. In December, Mills & Boon published 'Winemakers Companion' by BCA Turner, & C J J Berry, price, - 18s 6d. This book lists all 86 known wine circles as at June 1960, documents the amateur movement and states that the majority of winemakers in Great Britain are men and women of intelligence and culture, often members of the so called middle classes.

Semplex retail Vierka dried yeasts. In August, AW sold prize card Diplomas at 1s each and the English Cottage Wine Company retailed complete packs for Peach (17s6d) Apricot & Golden Rice (15s) wines. Prior to this, only concentrates, fruit pulps & extracts, synthetic musts, flavours and essences were available.

Duty payable per gallon on still wine under 15.5% alcohol was 10s 6d and on those over 27% 30s 6d. On sparkling wines the figures were 28s6d and 36s6d respectively. A 'Sweetmakers' License' was required to sell homemade wine. Bottles of commercial sherry, port and table wine do not cost more than £ 2/15/-each.

## 1961

By the end of this year over 100 circles were thought to exist with Hertfordshire claiming more amateur winemakers than any other county. Croydon attempted to form a South East Region Federation and Bournemouth organised a 7 day trip to Germany taking in the wine festival based at Bingen.

The third National conference and show was held on 2/3rd June at the Rest Hotel, Kenton, Harrow. This was the first organised by the AWNC Committee and was partially funded by 42, circles at a 'bob a nob'. Conference tickets cost 7s 6d, wine entries 2s per exhibit. Prize money was given for first three places. There were 27 classes, attracting 753 entries. The Schedule stated that rhubarb had to be entered in fruit classes and that bottles must be clear glass, punted, approx 26 fl oz Corks, plastic stoppers or cork stoppers only may be used. The Shaw Porter Trophy was won by Mrs Renee Martin, Farnborough. After the event classes at the National were reported to be too large and difficult to assess when mixed fruits were included. Single fruit classes recommended. There were also calls for a National Society to be established to help set standards after reports of sweet wines in dry classes at the National. There was also debate on what constitutes a dry wine despite, reporting of hydrometer readings.

A Mead & Country Winemakers Rally, held at Epsom, was organised by Mrs RE Clark.

Internationally, amateur wine making in Canada and the USA, from both grapes and fruits, pulp and concentrate, was well organised and established. The Amateur Winemakers Association of Vancouver was formed and, generally, Canadian wine circles were flourishing. Amateur wine making was expanding in New Zealand.

The Pearson Square diagram for liqueur making was explained in AW and in March oak chips were recommended to aid maturation and supply tannin. Cdr Mudie performed public judging in front of 60 people with some invited to judge along with him. Circles were recommended to follow this practice. It was reported that beekeepers, when assessing meads made by wine makers, were more interested in the honey used than the yeast used which to them had no influence on the final product. In June, Coventry WC laid down rules for showing and judging wines by type; Appetiser, Red Dinner Wine, White Dinner Wine, Dessert Wine and Social Wine. AW advised that show bottles use a cylindrical cork, driven home flush and they can be waxed and capsuled, but Cyril Shave deplored the use of greasy, waxed corks.

Grape wine makers were annoyed at the disparaging comments made by country wine makers. Articles were published on growing grapes and on blending wine. There was a growth in 'quickie' wines from concentrates, extracts and synthetic musts. The first American wines since 1939 were imported and all were sweet and mainly made from imported European fruits, cost 15s 6d per bottle. Drs Pollard & Beech published 'Wines & Juices' containing recipes for wines by type containing mixed ingredients and about half the sugar used (i.e. 21b per gallon) in normal recipes at this time.

## 1962

By the end of that year, over 30,000 members in 180 circles were thought to exist. "South Western Counties Winemaker's Festival" was started which became a federation in 1968. There was a growth in further education classes for wine making.

That year's National was held on 6/7th April at the Town Hall, Cheltenham. Ticket 7s 6d, wine entries 2s. There were 1,222 entries in 28 classes, prize money again awarded. Bottles must not be waxed nor capsuled. 5 trophies awarded

including the Amateur Winemaking Shield for the Circle with the most points. The Smallholder Blue Ribbon, awarded for the best circle display, went to Farnborough (chairman Mr C W Martin) who consistently did well at this event. The Shaw Porter Trophy went to C J Padwick, Andover.

Delegates from the North wanted the 1963 Show staged in the north. New constitution and rules established conference membership to circles donating 10s and that one third of the members of the AWNC committee had to retire each year.

Miss Temple, Merseyside, called for the AWNC to resolve differences in wine classes, why separate red from white? And, it was best to separate ingredient wines. The same situation didn't happen in horticultural shows governed by RHS rules.

The October National Honey Show had only two mead classes but 6 wine classes. Mead entries were down, wine entries were up.

Internationally, Christchurch started the first club in New Zealand. In Rhodesia, a tax of 10 per lb was put on imported hops used by 1500 wine/beer makers to bring cost per pint up to commercial levels to increase revenue. The Amateur Winemakers Guild of Salisbury was born out of protest. This tax was replaced with a £ 1 license in June 1966 (and after UDI).

In respect of standards and techniques, the use of air-locks was decried, cotton wool plugged corks declared to be adequate and Wilf Newsom repeated his call for the use of stopper (or shouldered or flanged) corks to be used for exhibition bottles to ease the task of judging. HESA wine circle were changing to their use.

In April, Mr Pete, M Duncan BSc, ARIC, advocated that judges write comments on each wine on judging sheets to help winemakers increase their knowledge. This method was used when exhibiting and judging budgerigars! AW remarked that this would tax the judges to find something to write about 40 wines which take 4 hours anyway to judge ("Budgies at the Jar"?). Cyril Shave stated that he and Mr Millington did this anyway, using one sheet per bottle with a minimum of 20 points:

Appearance (bottle, Cork label & general cleanliness) 4 pts

Clarity brilliance and colour 3 pts

Stability and no deposits 3 pts

Bouquet & strength 5 pts

Taste (original & aftertaste) 5 pts

Space for general appreciation and comment.

Winemakers were encouraged to use wine yeasts and not brewer's yeast and in November there was some comment that wine makers were making wines to please the judges and not themselves and that home-made wines were better than the lower end of the commercial market.

AW reported it corresponded with Germany, France, Canada, USA, Norway, Dominica, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Malta and Iraq. AW magazine binders were now available, 14s for two years and 9s for one year I

Over 20 million gallons of commercial wine were sold in 1961. Grey Owl marketed fruit pulps and book 'Wine Making From Fruit Pulps,™ and Concentrates' and in November, marketed complete packs to make fruit wines. In December, Southern

This article ended with 'Continued next page', except it wasn't, nor was it continued or concluded in later issues of News & Views.