At the A.G.M. held on 28th October, 1978, the following members were elected to the National Executive Committee, and, at a subsequent committee meeting, officers were elected as indicated.

Mr. E.F. Adcock
Dr. P.B. Dransfield
Mr. V.H. Goffen
Mr. I.C. Morgan
Mr. D.W. Lancaster
Mr. T.G. Whitehouse
Mrs. S. Hill
Mr. D. Rouston
Mr. P. Delmon
Mr. A.P. Broadwater

and Messrs
R.N. Brooksbank, R. Down, P.J. Reeve and O.D. Smart

Chairman and Chief Examiner
Vice-Chairman
Hon. Secretary
Hon. Treasurer
Editor, Newsletter
Chief Examiner, Beer
Conference Manager & N.A.W.B. rep
Registrar
Chairman, Technical Panel
Shopkeeper

Briefly: Subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, changes of address 'phone number, etc. to the Registrar and requests for Handbooks, Register, judging sheets and stationery, to the Shopkeeper. Addresses are in the Register of Judges.

Members will be sorry to hear of the sudden death over Christmas of George Howden, a keen and able judge in the South-East. Our sympathies are with his wife and son who actively supported his judging activities, and our condolences go to the rest of his family.

By resolution of the last AGM we are now "The National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges". Stationery and publications are being altered, but don't forget to put the new initials N.G.W.B.J. on your lapel badges.

Revised editions of the Judges' Handbook and the Register of Judges are at the printers and should be available by the end of February. Copies of each will be sent to all members.

We hear that Roy Sperry has appeared on T.V., being interviewed on winemaking. News of this sort accompanied by suitable photographs, if available, is always welcome.

No one seems to know which number Newsletter this should be, but we hope to be in step again next time.
Having read the letter from the Midlands Group about the Guild Examination, Ted Adcock writes -

"Andy and I have always been aware of the limitations of an examination based on one class of wine for the practical section. When the examination was taken away from the hurly-burly of a large show to the more controlled atmosphere of our regional centres, our first concern was to get the organisation right. By 1977 we felt that we had achieved this, and therefore in 1978 we started to use two classes of wine for the practical section. The timing of the various sections is rather complicated, and it does mean that the candidates spend more time with us, but it does work.

The biggest problem all along has been the supply of suitable wines to use in the examination. The situation has been eased a little by asking candidates to donate a bottle for use in future examination, but this does not cover all our needs. I am afraid that the examiners' cellars still get raided unmercifully. Constructive help in this direction will be most welcome and donations will be gratefully received by any examiner."

Do 'Ave a Dransfield!

A feature of the A.G.M. weekend is the Sunday morning judging of a type of wine and beer in a competition for those present. In an earlier Newsletter, we (then merely I) were critical of the status of this event and the fitness of the judges to judge (see Handbook on 'hangovers') but it is at least useful to discuss the entries with other judges and all credit goes to the winners. Incidentally, the Southern Group have written to say that they feel generally that no useful purpose is served by the wine (and beer?) competition and that it is an activity more properly to be found at a Judges Group meeting (Views, please, Ed.)

It was most impressive to see the beer judges all at work on their entries at the table on the platform. We were reminded, in the first solemn moments, of the painting of the Dutch elders, but, by the end of the session, the works of Hogarth seemed more appropriate, although they had no sound tracks.

We apologise for being unable to give details of the winning beer or brewer but the best dry aperitif was entered by our new Vice-Chairman, Philip Dransfield, and we are fortunate (and thankful) to be able to reproduce the recipe in its original form. The author of the recipe is Mrs. Naomi Hawkin, an ex-pupil of Philip's and now a N.W. Regional Judge. Philip attributes his success to the long 'marriage' of flavours (he lost the bottle for a year or two!) and the slight sweetening of a dry vermouth to get the balance right (commercial dry vermouths do contain some sugar, Ed.).
Type: Aperitif - dry

Suggested Recipe: Citrus

Ingredients:
- 10 Oranges
- 2 Grapefruit
- 1/2 lb. Sultanas (or 1/2 pint Grape Concentrate)
- 3 Bananas
- 2 lbs. Sugar - PLUS 1 lb. for "feeding".
- Campden Tablets

Yeast: Tokay or Madeira (high alcohol tolerance).

Nutrient
- 1 tsp. Pectolase
- 1/2 tsp. Tannin
- White Vermouth Essence.

METHOD:

Prepare yeast starter two days beforehand.

Wash fruit. Peel two oranges and one grapefruit with potato-peeler (thinly, so as to exclude the pith) and put the peelings into a saucepan with the sliced bananas and boil for 15 min.

Put 2 lb. sugar into sterilized bucket with well-washed and minced or chopped sultanas. Dissolve in half a gallon of boiling water. Strain into the bucket the water of the bananas and the extracted juice of all the citrus fruit. Make up to a gallon with cool boiled water. Add Pectolase, nutrient, tannin and yeast starter when the liquid is lukewarm. Ferment for 3 - 5 days, stirring every day, and strain into a gallon jar. The aim is to make a wine high in alcohol and it will be necessary to "feed" the must when the S.G. has dropped to about 10, and after the first two feedings to about 5, as all the sugar will have to ferment out for the wine to finish dry. Dissolve half a pound of sugar in sufficient water and add that in two stages. After that, keep on feeding in two ounce lots as long as the yeast will work. Rack, top up with boiled water and add one dissolved Campden Tablet. Rack again when necessary and sulphite each time. When bottling, draw off one bottle of the wine (in case the rest needs diluting) and flavour the rest carefully with the White Vermouth Essence.

Note (1) The basic wine entered in the RWNOJ Wine of the Year Competition had been made as "Wine of the Month" in Spring '75. I recalled that it won in the Circle Competition in 1976. A bottle of it stored (in a well & washed Harrod's malt whisky bottle) was overlooked and forgotten till a few weeks ago. Hence long maturation of ingredients, or this made a significant difference to the quality of the wine. This I think is where we can toll down 'by hurried'.

(2) Though called "extra dry" this vermouth is medium dry. This helps because though it can be dryer than usual for a vermouth because of low citrus content it has a high citrus content & flavour.

(3) Vermouth herbs & some grapefruit peel were left soaking in a bottle of this strong wine to allow for final adjustment of flavour. (The herbs were from "Simplex") but the bottle in show was refreshed with wine extract of peel & herbs.
AGM 1978

Eighty members attended the A.G.M. at the Hawthornes Hotel, Bristol, on Saturday 28th October, with 'Andy' in the chair.

The occasion was undoubtedly a milestone in the progress of the Guild and resulted in a number of important changes. First, the name of the Guild was changed to "The National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges". With their name in lights too, the beer judges can hold up their well-retained heads with no feelings of being taken for granted organisationally. Second, 'Andy' Andrews, Don Hebbs and Wilf Newsom, whose efforts since the creation of the Guild have given it such a sound foundation, retired from the Executive Committee. A special word, as always, for Fred Green, also not seeking re-election. How well he has coped over the years in organising the A.G.M. weekends in increasingly difficult circumstances. We do hope this talent is not going to waste. John Grindell and Geoff Newton also retired.

John Grindell could not be present to give his Treasurer's Report, but the financial statement shows a healthy balance of £817 and there will be no increase in member's subscriptions this year.

The third change brought about by the A.G.M. was the creation of the honorary post of President and at a Special (some might say remarkable, but shouldn't equity always prevail over statute?) General Meeting 'Andy' was elected as the Guild's first President unanimously and with acclamation.

Suitable presentations were made to 'Andy' at dinner, and several interesting photographs were taken at this historic occasion. The evening passed most pleasantly, and the favourite topic of conversation, as so often at meetings of judges, was each other's wine. Sunday morning was occupied with the wine and beer competitions, and after lunch, which was well up to the high level of food, comfort and service we enjoyed throughout, it was all over once again. We may be criticised for failing to distinguish between the A.G.M. and the rest of the weekend, but this is not a formal report so much as an impression of the total event.

We took away some extra ounces, perhaps a little indigestion, certainly some ideas on judging, but above all a comforting feeling of belonging to a worthwhile organisation with a lot of friendly people.

The Weekend Seminar at High Leigh

A very useful and stimulating weekend. Once again superb organisation by Fred Green, to whom a well-deserved presentation was made. Three good speakers, Dr. R.A. Webb, Prof. Gerry Fowles and Mr. J. Clapperton, followed by adequate and constructive discussion. An excellent commercial wine tasting organised by Conal Gregory. The favourite wine? A Rioja. Ambitious competitors should stock up with oak chips and study closely a forthcoming article by Gerry Fowles.

Initial success has encouraged the Guild to book High Leigh for the first weekend in December 1980 for a similar seminar.
"The anomalies in judging methods as between one judge and another were causing concern among exhibitors who were of the opinion that entering competitions was a matter of luck and depended solely on the palate of the particular judge who appraised a given bottle of wine. It was clearly evident that a method of judging and a standard marking system must be laid down and adhered to by every judge".

This no doubt familiar extract from the Introduction to the Judges' Handbook describes the factors which brought the Guild into being. How far has it progressed in fifteen years? We certainly have a standard procedure for judging and a standard marking system, but how far has the Guild progressed in the much more vital matter of removing the anomalies which arise between the palates of different judges? We were reminded of this at the High Leigh Weekend Seminar when comments were invited from several members on a particular dry red table wine. The variety of comment made it difficult to believe that the same wine was being tasted - 'It is oxidised and the high alcohol is burning my mouth', "Too high in tannin, low in alcohol and short of acid", "There's no tannin, but much too much acid"

We all know that incompatible differences in assessment are by no means rare and when, as at a show, competitors are involved, the reputation of the Guild and its members is at risk. What can be done, then, to eliminate or at least reduce the differences and progress towards what we have ambitiously called a national palate? Two possible, if rather different, answers emerged from High Leigh. One came when the red wine in question was commented on by more experienced judges. The degree of agreement was noticeably closer, suggesting that experience was important. Perhaps, then, the wine-tasting discussions by regional Groups should be further developed in every way possible. For example, a bottle of each of four very different wines could be sent to each Regional Group for tasting and discussion. Subsequently their views would be compared with the accompanying but hitherto unopened comments on the same wines by a panel of some of our most experienced members. The other possibility was suggested by the remarks of John Clapperton, formerly of the Brewing Research Foundation, at High Leigh. It is accepted that there are specialists in various aspects of beer flavour, so maybe we should recognise specialists in judging, for example, dry red table wines, who could by discussion and tasting meetings with Regional Groups, improve the general level of ability to judge this type of wine. Certainly, the essence of any attempt to improve the degree of palate agreement on the quality of a wine is discussion between members.

We can remember being told at Long Ashton that it took several months to arrive at a list(thirty-seven, we think) of agreed terms for describing cider flavours. We would not like to think that any Guild members are using the word 'acid' when others say 'tannin', or vice-versa(or, worst of all, including the Ed.).

Bert Garton voices similar thoughts for the brewers:"I would like to have more discussions on judging beers to get down to the problems we encounter and which are not fully covered in the Handbook".

The Editor.
Led by Stan Scantlebury, the Wales and West Group discussed aperitifs recently. They noted that in the commercial field there were no hard and fast rules regarding component parts and attributes, i.e. amount of alcohol, acidity, flavour, etc. Home winemakers could endeavour to copy any of the large variety of types, and, in a single competition class, there could be as many as 14 different types. Perhaps it would be better if the Aperitif class was excluded from the schedule. The Wales and West Group (and the rest of us, Ed.) would welcome suggestions and comments on judging such a class, and whether it is really suitable for inclusion in schedules.

The Southern Group have been discussing the merits or otherwise of, (1), a reduction in the number of N.E.C. members, (2), the retirement (presumably by regulation, Ed.) of two members each year from the N.E.C., and (3), all propositions for election to the N.E.C. to be made to the meeting and a proper ballot paper prepared.

Finally, here are a number of points from Roy Roycroft and Buzz. He wrote in June, and, to a large extent, the extended descriptions of wine types he offers have now been covered in the new Handbook. He asks "Should rosé wines be accepted in a red class when there are classes for white and red only?" We feel that if Roy would first define a rosé wine he would be going a long way towards answering his own question. Secondly, what's the point of entering a chihuahua in a class for bulldogs just because it's the only dog you've got? On the flavour of dry red table wines, Roy very soundly states that flavour should not be long lasting and intrude on the next mouthful of food and concludes "strong and lingering flavours are therefore a fault". Commenting on a Group query about judging delicate wines against big (or robust) ones, Roy thinks the difficulty arises from inadequate palate cleansing between wines. He watched a judge finalise seven wines by tasting them one after the other without pause and rightly says "At the end he could not have been tasting wines but blends." We would agree with Roy when he says that show organisers should be told how to schedule and that the Guild should press more heavily for classes by purpose. The lists in the Handbook created order out of chaos fifteen years ago but perhaps could be replaced by something more useful now.