

THE HISTORY OF THE MALT VINEGAR ASSOCIATION AND ITS SUCCESSOR THE VINEGAR BREWERS FEDERATION.

The Vinegar Brewers began to organise themselves as early as 1756 with successor organizations formed throughout the 18th and 19th Century. In 1901 the London and Country Brewers' Association was formed. This was superseded by the United Vinegar Brewers' Association which was renamed the Malt Vinegar Brewers' Federation in 1930. (Source 'from Alegar to Sarson's: A History of Malt Vinegar' Author: Reginald Smith). On 22 November 1951, the Malt Vinegar Brewers Federation changed its name to the Vinegar Brewers' Federation (Source: The Minute Book of the Federation).

The earliest records held by the current Secretary is the Minute Book starting with the Minutes of a Committee Meeting held on 15th May 1941, two years into the Second World War. The first item was a tribute to the late Chairman G.M. Beaufoy Esq whose death, due to enemy action, was deplored by all. Under the item: Ministry of Food, the Secretary P Maybury Esq referred to having had a communication from the Ministry of Food (Animal Feeding Stuffs Division) relating to the disposal of Brewers' Grain, but as the communication had been destroyed by enemy action, he was unable to give exact details. He undertook to get in touch with the department to ascertain what information was now required. (Brewer's grain was used as an animal feedstuff during the War). At the General Meeting held afterwards, Henry M Beaufoy was invited to become Chairman.

Throughout the war years, many issues were discussed at the meetings; a few examples are given below.

- the rationing of yeast,
- prices of malt vinegar (the unthinkable under today's anti-trust laws),
- regulation of the sale of brewers' grain,
- the Ministry of Food issued a Maximum Prices Order relating to wet grain, and
- the maximum price charged for pure Malt Vinegar,
- a notice in Grocer and other trade publications of the day urging retailers to return of empties casks to their source as soon as very possible
- In May 1944 in a letter from the Ministry of Food concerning the labelling order it was indicated that the proposed to take no steps to clarify the position regarding designation and standards of vinegar. It was recommended to the members of the Federation to adopt a uniform system regarding the contents declaration on labels necessary under this Order,
- Controlled wet grain prices and the price of malt vinegar in bulk were still a discussion point in April 1946.

In June 1946 the correspondence with the Food Standards & Labelling Division of the Ministry of Food was cited in connection with improper labelling of dilute acetic acid and with a retailer misled by an incorrect description for Vinegar. During the same year, a lengthy discussion took place on the desirability of creating a fund to promote consumer interest in the difference between Genuine Vinegar and Dilute Acetic Acid. This ultimately lead to the Federation seeking a legal opinion see "The legal History of Vinegar-January 1952" in the Section 'Code of Practice' of our website www.vinegar-brewers-federation-uk.org

The Vinegar Brewers Federation joined the C.P.I.V. Permanent International Vinegar Committee sixty-two years ago on 9th September 1957. In 2011 C.P.I.V. was merged into the Culinaria Europe <http://www.culinaria-europe.eu/>. The Federation regularly participated in the meetings of the C.P.I.V. Technical Committee, the Secretaries meetings and the Annual General Assembly.

After the merger into Culinaria Europe, the Federation continues to participate in the twice-yearly meetings of the Vinegar Committee which discusses issues of the vinegar producers of the European Union and non-EU vinegar markets. The whole of the Culinary industry represented in Culinary Europe attends the yearly General Assembly where besides trade issues presentations relevant to the industry are presented by acknowledged experts in their field.

Since the 1950's modern technologies in the manufacture of vinegar are used and important partners to our industry in this respect are: -

“The Frings company (Heinrich Frings GmbH u. Co KG) www.frings.com started life in 1878 in Aachen as a vinegar producer. It quickly morphed into a supplier of vinegar technology to that industry. The Acetator was patented in 1953 and offered as the world's first expression of a submerged fermentation process radically speeding up production of quality vinegar from virtually any alcoholic substrate. For the first time in vinegar history, our friends the acetobacter could live, multiply and work converting alcohol into acetic acid throughout the entire volume of liquid in a vinegar fermenter.”

Cetotech GbmH, www.cetotec.com, founded in 1996 is an engineering company specialised in vinegar and yeast production technology.

Throughout the years up to the present time, the Federation's Committees spent their time to consider and take actions on issues affecting the vinegar industry. Much time was spent on participating in the preparation of the European (CEN) Code of Practice for Vinegar published on 7th November 1990 and subsequently adopted by the British Standards Institute (BSI) see the federations' website 'Code of Practice'. Further time has been spent on verifying the most appropriate methods of analyses alongside the Code of Practice.

At the national level, the Committees responded to relevant government departments on EC now EU legislation to be implemented in UK law, for example,

- consolidation of the food labelling regulations latterly the Food Information to the Consumer Regulations 2014,
- food safety laws,
- nutritional claims,
- the authenticity of vinegar, 'Aceto Balsamico' balsamic vinegar originating in Modena (Italy),
- allergens regulations are protecting people suffering from allergic reactions to certain foodstuffs.

Since the 1990's when the Vinegar Brewers Federation run a Publicity Campaign, our member companies recently evaluated and discussed the UK vinegar market and consumption of vinegar. Proposals to stimulate the market are under consideration.

Consumers must be made aware to distinguish between natural vinegar and non-brewed condiment food grade, a by-product of the Petro-chemical Industry.

The History of Vinegar stretches back over Centuries and is one of the few truly natural products whether it be cider, malt, wine or spirit vinegar, the base ingredients for all of them come from agriculture and Viticulture.

Walter J Anzer MBE Secretary - Vinegar Brewers Federation

