

Quickie Table Wines

Ben Bennetts

In 1977, I published a small 16-page booklet titled “Quickie Table Wines”. It was a simple “do this, do that” set of instructions designed to produce palatable fruit-based table wines within 4 to 5 weeks. The technique had been well researched and proven by experiment and the booklet went on to become a UK best seller, selling just under 12,000 copies before publication ceased sometime around the mid-‘80s. Friends and family still talk about the booklet and their winemaking experiences and so I have decided to re-publish as an e-book. The prices in the booklet are 1977 prices but the technique is ageless. Enjoy.

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Background to the booklet

In my private life in the 1970s, I was an avid beer and wine maker, developing home-brew techniques with a friend of mine, Dave Line. I gave up beer making because of my expanding waistline but Dave went on to write and publish three successful paperback books on home-made beer making. I concentrated on the wine making.

If you make halfway-decent beer or wine, your circle of friends increases enormously and they all come round to your house, especially in the summer. In 1976, the UK had a very warm and dry summer and the evenings were usually spent barbecuing and drinking the home-made brews to the extent that disaster struck my household – I ran out of wine and beer! My friends had drunk me dry.

Making wine takes time. After fermentation is complete, you need to wait quite a few months for the wine to “fall bright”. This means that all the small solids in suspension finally fall to the bottom of the containing vessel allowing the clear wine above to be siphoned off into bottles ready for consumption or further maturation.

When I discovered I was out of stock, I had an emergency meeting with Dave to see if between us we could come up with a plan to restock fast. Our opening premise was if the French can do it, why can't we?

Every year in France, following the harvesting of the Gamay grapes in and around Bordeaux, there is a race to create a young wine called *Beaujolais Nouveau* and ship it around the globe on or before the third Thursday in November. *Beaujolais Nouveau* is a dreadful wine, in my opinion, but the point is that the wine is made in a short space of time, typically measured in weeks not months. The question we asked ourselves was how did they do it and, once known, could we emulate the procedure at home?

After extensive research involving drinking quite a lot of Dave's still plentiful wine and beer, we discovered the two main secrets – constant fermentation temperature to minimise the fermentation time, followed by filtering to remove the bits of fruit still in suspension.

We set to in earnest. This was a research project to beat all other research projects, and within weeks we'd cracked it and I was back with wine in my cellar (actually my garage – my house was not that grand). The word went out and all my friends returned and normal life resumed.

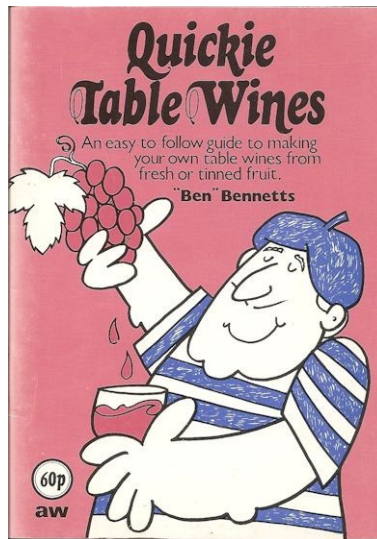
Many people asked me how I had made what were eminently drinkable table wines in such a short space of time and in the manner of a true researcher, I wrote a paper detailing the method. It was a simple, “do this, do this, do that, then do this and now drink it,” description in my best tutorial style: none of the chemistry behind the process. Dave read a copy and took it to his publisher. The sixteen-page *Quickie Table Wines* booklet, first published in February 1977, was the result.

The booklet was an instant best seller, going through three reprints and selling close on 12,000 copies around the UK over a period of five to six years. I was in demand to give presentations to local wine circles and my fame as a homemade winemaker was spreading.

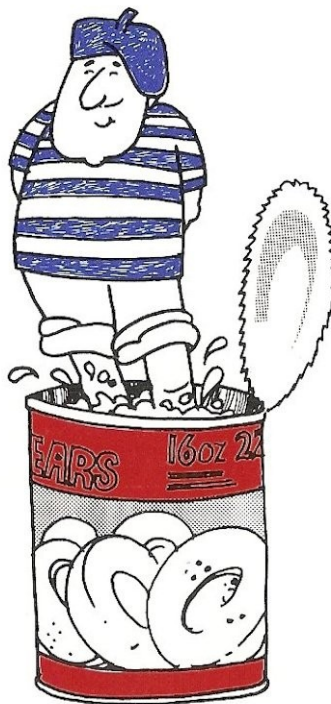
The booklet went out of print in the early 1980s but I have decided to re-publish as an e-book, adhering as close as possible to the original layout. Here it is, with a few minor corrections to the original text.

(^_^)

Quickie Table Wines



Foreword



The sole aim of this pamphlet is to enable anyone, even if they have not made wine before, to turn out really quickly highly satisfactory table wines that can be drunk while still fairly young after only four to five weeks. – “quickie” table wines, in other words.

The pamphlet does not dive deeply into the science of winemaking but the method given is based on sound principles, is well proven, and DOES WORK! It enables you to make clever use of fresh or tinned fruit and to keep the cost per bottle right down ... would you think 15p (£0.15) a bottle of wine reasonable?

Want to hear more ...? Read on!

The economics

The wines are based on 1 lb of tinned or fresh fruit, ½ lb raisins or sultanas and 2.2 lb (1 kg) of sugar to make 1 gallon of wine. The aim is to produce a lightly flavoured wine of table strength that can be drunk relatively young. An important part of the process is to clear the wine by filtering as soon as it finishes fermenting. This normally means you can start drinking within 4 to 5 weeks of starting to make it! The average price, not counting the initial outlay for the equipment, is around 15p per bottle, and the strength is about 11% to 12% alcohol by volume, equivalent to 19° to 21° proof.



Basic equipment

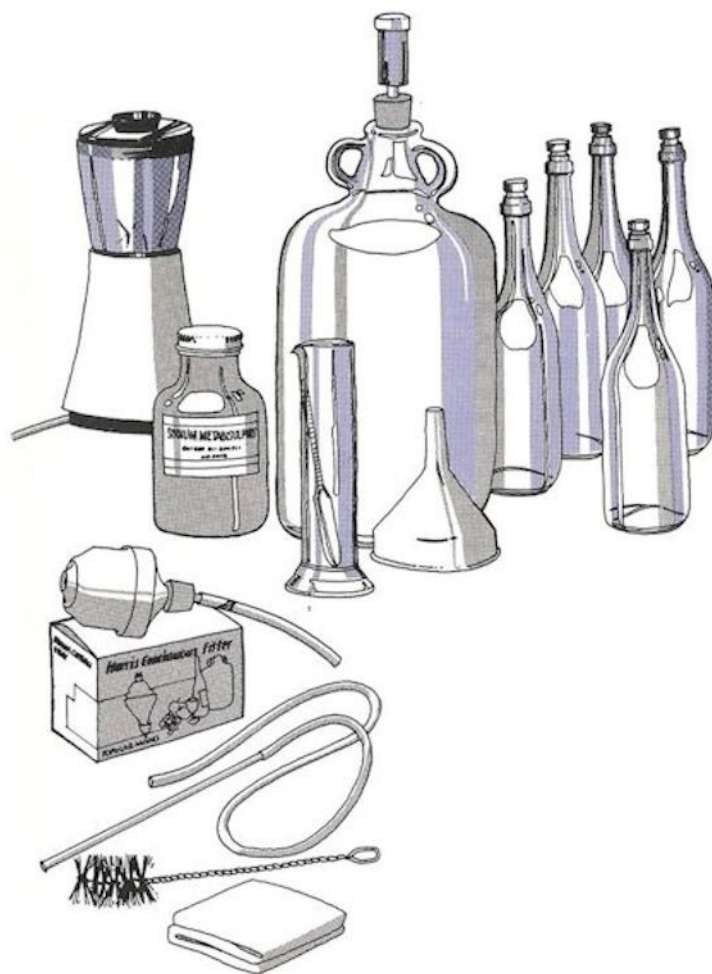


Figure 1

Prices shown are 1978 UK Pound (£) prices

- 1 gallon fermenting jar (75p)
- Hydrometer (71p) and trial jar (49p)
- Airlock and cork (28p)
- Nylon fine mesh filter bag (45p)
- Syphon tube for racking (11p per yard)
- Large funnel (56p)
- Ordinary domestic liquidiser
- Wine filter – I use the popular Harris filter (say £3)
- Sodium metabisulphite for sterilisation (32p)
- Wines bottles (30p per dozen) and corks (12p each)

Apart from the liquidiser, all this equipment is available from a homemade beer and wine stockist or Boots the Chemist. The approximate total price to get you started is £8.

Ingredients for 1 gallon



Figure 2

- 1 lb fruit, fresh or tinned (15 oz size)
- ½ lb raisins (for red wines) or sultanas (for white and rosé wines)
- 1 kg (2.2 lb) ordinary white sugar
- 1 teaspoon Leigh-Williams Pectolase
- 1 teaspoon CWE Formula 67 yeast
- 1 teaspoon CWE yeast nutrient
- Citric, tartaric or malic acid and liquid tannin (quantities vary according to the basic fruit: see Table 1 later)
- Saccharin tablets for sweetening, if required.

As before, all the special chemicals are available from winemaking shops. Use either the proprietary brands mentioned above or Boots's own.

Getting the wine started

1. In a large saucepan boil enough water to dissolve all the sugar. Leave to cool.
2. Liquidise all the fruit, including the juice if tinned, and place in the fermenting jar.
3. Liquidise the raisins or sultanas and add to the fruit in the jar. Hint: raisins or sultanas are easier to liquidise if water is added to them in the liquidiser.

4. Half fill a clean wine bottle with some of the cooled sugar solution and place to one side. Put the rest of the sugar into the jar and top-up with cooled pre-boiled tap water to just below the shoulder – see Fig. 3 below. *Do not* fill the jar right up to the neck.



Figure 3

5. Add 1 teaspoon of Pectolase to the jar, swirl, plug with a clean tissue or piece of kitchen roll and leave for 4 hours, or overnight, in a warm place. (The Pectolase helps the extraction of juice from the fruit and also destroys any pectin that might be present.) In the meantime ...

6. ... make up a yeast starter by adding 1 teaspoon yeast, 1 teaspoon yeast nutrient and the correct quantities of acid and tannin (Table 1) to the sugar solution in the wine bottle. Shake it all up, plug with a tissue and leave by the jar. (I usually mix the ingredients in the liquidiser.)

7. After 4 hours or so, add the yeast starter to the jar and leave in a warm place preferably between 21°C to 24°C (70°F to 75°F). You should see the yeast working on the sugar within 24 hours. Leave it alone now but watch that the fermentation is not so vigorous as to push the plug out. If this happens, just push the plug back in again.

This is the end of the first stage. The next stage occurs some 3 or 4 days later.

Getting rid of solids



Figure 4

8. After 3 to 4 days, filter the wine through the nylon filter bag to remove as much of the solid debris as possible. Measure the specific gravity (SG) with your hydrometer – this should be around 1.040 to 1.060 at this stage – and put the wine back into the jar, topping up with water to about half-way up the shoulder. Again, *do not* fill the jar right up – see Fig. 5 below. Re-plug with a tissue and leave in a warm place. It is usual for a large deposit (up to 1”) to form after about 1 hour. This is the debris that passed through the filter bag and will be removed by racking at a later stage.



Figure 5

9. After about 1 day, when the fermentation has quietened down somewhat, replace the tissue plug with the airlock. If after 2 to 3 hours there is no build-up of foam inside the jar, gradually start topping-up with water until you have reduced the air-gap to about $\frac{1}{2}$ " (distance between the wine and the bottom of the airlock cork) – see Fig. 5 again. If there is excessive foam, you will just have to wait until the fermentation has quietened down. It will do so eventually.

By this time, the wine should be fermenting away quite merrily with the airlock "blipping" about once every 2 to 5 seconds. You are well on the way now!

Waiting! ... and racking

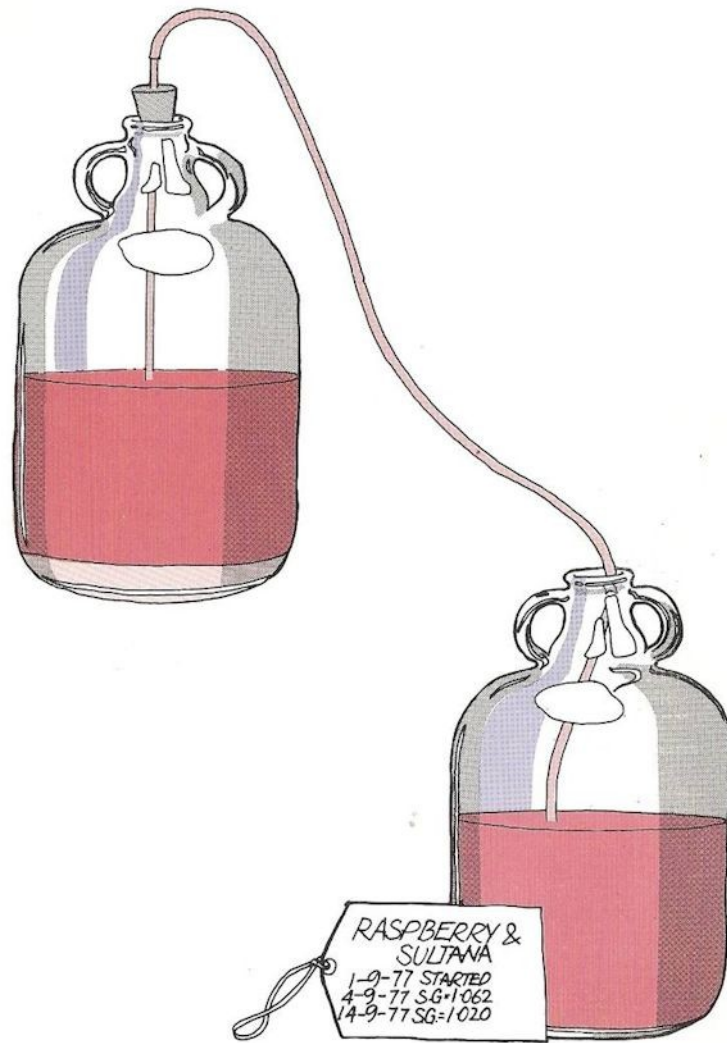


Figure 6

10. This is the waiting stage. The only thing you should do occasionally is siphon the wine from one jar to another to remove the deposit you get on the bottom of the jar. This is called *racking* and is shown in Fig. 6. I rack, on average, about once a fortnight (when there is about $\frac{1}{4}$ " deposit) and you should always measure and record the SG. This not only tells you that the wine is fermenting out at a reasonable rate, but also tells you how close it is to finishing. These wines should all work out dry with SGs of 0.990 to 1.000 (the SG of water). If you want a medium wine (SG = 1.000) or sweet wine (SG = 1.010 or higher), you can either stop the fermentation by filtering when it reaches your target SG or, preferably, let it work right out and then sweeten with saccharin (try 1 tablet at a time per gallon until the sweetness suits your palate).



Figure 7

11. Whenever you rack, you will inevitably lose some of the wine and this will create a larger airspace than the recommended $\frac{1}{2}$ ". *Always* top up with water to reduce the airspace back down to the $\frac{1}{2}$ " level.

You should always taste the wine when you rack it, even when it is sweet and working hard. In this way, you will build up a palate experience to tell you how the wine is progressing. You may also identify things that are not quite right.

The final stage occurs when the wine has finished working. On average with this quantity of sugar, this should take about 3 to 4 weeks at 21°C to 24°C and the only thing left to do is filter, bottle and start drinking.

Getting the wine ready for drinking

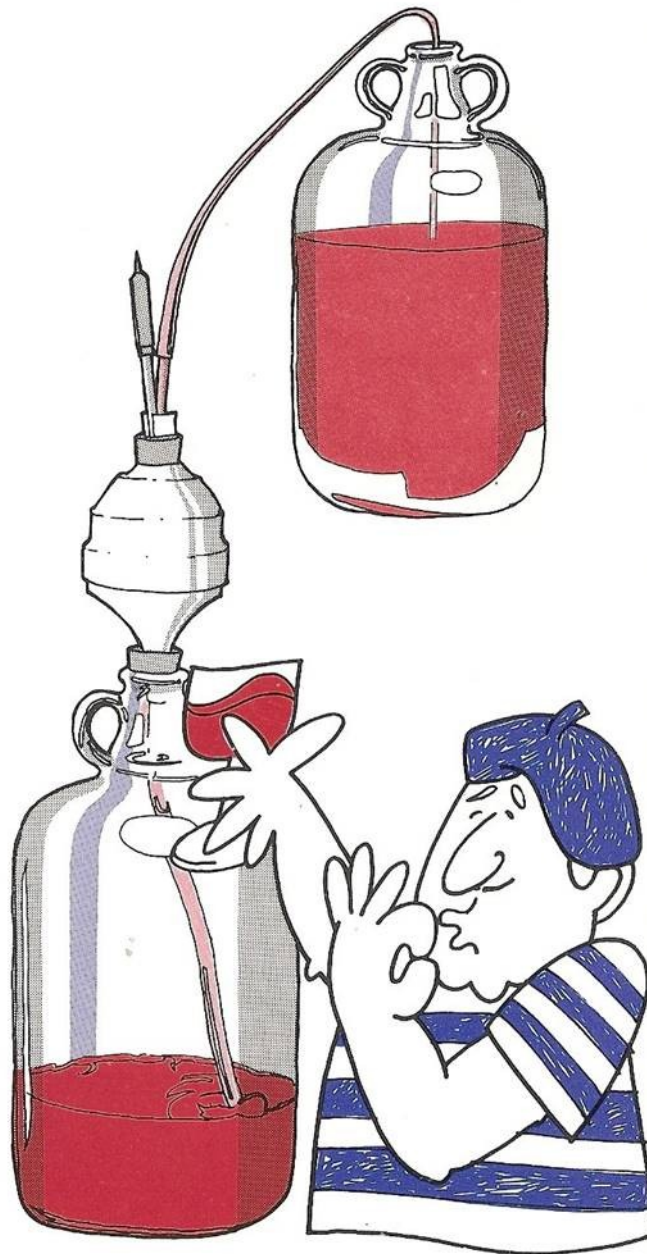


Figure 8

12. When the wine has finished working as evidenced by the SG reading or by the visible lack of bubbles, give it a final rack and leave for another week under the airlock. During this time it will start to clear and normally the airlock would be replaced by a solid cork and the wine left undisturbed apart from occasional racking if needed. For the quickie wines, we cheat and use an artificial clearing process. (This is not really cheating: it is, after all, what commercial winemakers do!) There are several good makes of filter available but I prefer the Harris model (shown in Fig. 8). This you can buy in a wine supplier shop along with the various filter powders and instructions for use and I will not go into details here.

The method is simple however and after the week has elapsed, put the wine through the filter (cake filter pad followed by polish filter pad) and either put the wine aside in a jar (this time plugged with a solid cork) or bottle off into six wine bottles and start drinking!

By this time, of course, I hope you've got your second gallon going!

Keep it clean!



Figure 9

Wine is very prone to various airborne diseases, such as acetification caused by vinegar bacteria, and it is vital that you keep all the equipment scrupulously clean. This means rinsing everything with a standard solution of the sterilising agent sodium metabisulphite. (I make up a solution by dissolving 1 tablespoon of sodium met in 1 pint of warm water.)

The other problem with wine is that it can become oxidised. This will happen if you leave large air gaps between the wine and the cork. You can detect oxidation just by smell or by swirling some about in your mouth, swallowing it, and then breathing out hard through your nose. If the wine is oxidised, you will get an after-taste in the back of your throat. Once tasted, never forgotten, and there is no cure for the oxidised wine unfortunately.



Figure 10

Stuck ferments

Take care not to rack too often. There is a danger that you will stop the fermentation process prematurely especially if you rack below an SG of 1.030. This is called a *stuck* fermentation and if this happens, the only real solution is to get another gallon going of the same wine and mix the two gallons together. This way, you mix a vigorously-working yeast colony with a dormant colony and with a bit of luck, the vigorous one takes command and both gallons work out in the normal way.

Quantities of tannin and acid for various fruits

	Fruit	Tannin (drops)	Acid (level teaspoon)	Comment
Red wines from tinned fruit (15 oz.)	Black Cherry	20	2 citric	Remove stones before liquidising
	Raspberry	20	2 malic	Best drunk fairly young
	Loganberry	20	1/2 malic	Best drunk fairly young
	Blackcurrant	20	2 malic	Makes an excellent red
Red wines from 1 lb fresh fruit	Blackberry	20	1/2 tartaric	Wash the berries before use
	Sloe	None	1 citric	It is not necessary to remove the stones but liquidise lightly to avoid cracking them open
	Blackberry and Elderberry	None	1/2 tartaric	1/2 lb of each fruit
	Strawberry	6	1 1/2 malic	Makes a distinctive rosé
White wines from tinned fruit (15 oz.) or fruit juice (25 fl.oz.)	Guava	6	2 malic	Despite the pink colour, guava produces an excellent delicate white wine
	Apple	6	1 citric	One of the best ways I know of making apple wine

Table 1

The wines I have listed in Table 1 are those that I have made and liked. If this is your first attempt at winemaking, I would recommend you try one of the following: Blackcurrant, Blackberry and Elderberry, Strawberry, Guava or Apple.

Some general comments about Table 1

1. The flavour and body of each of the red wines is significantly improved by adding 2 to 3 tablespoons of fresh elderberries to the main fruit before liquidisation. (Elderberries store well in a freezer.)

2. In all cases you can use 7 fl. oz. of a red or white grape concentrate instead of the 1/2 lb of raisins or sultanas. Use red concentrate for red wines and white concentrate for white or rosé wines.

3. If the first wine you make is not to your liking, keep it and try blending with other wines. Never throw a wine away unless it has a definite off flavour.

4. You should cultivate the habit of keeping records, especially when you start experimenting with other fruits. It is very annoying when you produce a good wine but have

forgotten what the original quantities were and what special techniques you used. I find the record sheet below (Table 2) to be the most useful format.

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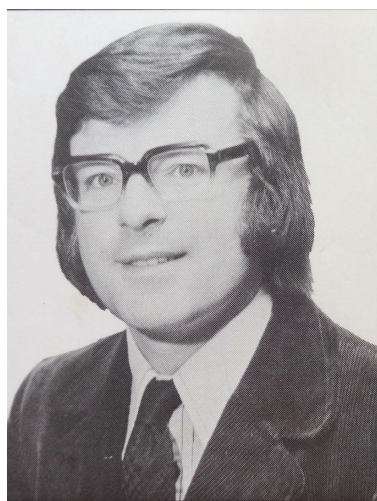
Table 2

Extending the art

If you feel like trying other fruits, do so but remember that it is usually more difficult to make a decent white than a red. I would only recommend the guava or apple as a good repeatable white but if apricots or peaches sound interesting, try them. This is all part of the fun, and disappointment, of making your own wine.

© R G Bennetts, February 1977
First published by the Amateur Winemaker

The Author



Ben Bennetts is a University Lecturer in Digital Electronics and has been making wines since 1968. He is married with three young children and lives in Southampton. His other hobbies include growing vegetables and coaching young gymnasts.

(^_^)

Postscript: 2015 Comments

I stopped making wine in the late '80s, probably because I no longer had the time and because I could afford to buy commercially-produced wines, but as I retyped the text of the original book to create the e-book, a number of thoughts occurred to me.

1. Current ingredient prices and price per bottle. I went onto a well-known supermarket website and priced the ingredients needed for 1 gallon of wine based on tinned fruit. The total came out at around £12 – that is, £2 per bottle compared with the original £0.15 a bottle in 1977. £0.15 in 1977 is now £0.97 (2014) according to an historic inflation calculator I found on the web so the cost of making a homemade bottle of wine has doubled based on the equivalent rate back in 1977. Most of the new cost comes from the increased prices of the yeast, acids, nutrients and tannin rather than from the fruit, raisins and sugar.

2. Equipment. You can still buy winemaking equipment from specialist High Street shops but not from Boots the Chemist. There are also several online beer and wine-making kit suppliers. Enter *homemade winemaking* in Google and see where it takes you.

Product names have changed, of course. A search for *CWE Formula 67 yeast* produces alternatives and the Harris filter is now known as the Harris Vinbrite wine filter but the basic equipment is all still available thus proving that homemade winemaking is alive and well in the suburbs.

3. When I submitted the text to the publisher in 1977, I enclosed a few black-and-white photographs with the suggestion he use them as illustrations. Clearly, he was not impressed with my photographic skills and he commissioned an artist to illustrate the booklet with the line drawings you have seen. I never found out who the artist was – no credit was ever given - but I was amazed how his, or her, graphics brought the text alive. I was also very impressed with the artwork: the various expressions on the face particularly plus the obvious French connection via the beret and stripy shirt.

One small point however. In Fig. 6 – racking the wine - the astute observer will notice that the artist has drawn a solid cork in the upper bottle. If you do this, the wine will not flow. Air cannot enter the upper bottle to replace the fluid that has moved out. In practice, I just secured the racking tube in the neck of the upper bottle with a wedge of kitchen roll.

4. Finally, my photograph and mini-bio at the end of the booklet brought a smile to my face. I like the fashionable long hairstyle and corduroy jacket plus the fact that I grew vegetables to feed my three hungry young children. The three children are now middle-aged adults and have in turn produced their own children, my grandchildren, but I note that none of my adult offspring grow vegetables to feed their offspring. Nor do they make their own wine and they still don't eat all their vegetables. How times have changed!

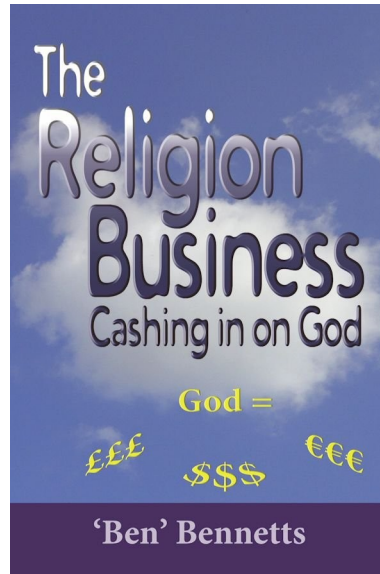
Contact the Author

You can contact me either by e-mail, ben@hollamhouse.com, or via my website ben-bennetts.com Feel free to do so.

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Other books by Ben Bennetts

These e-books are available in most reputable online book stores.



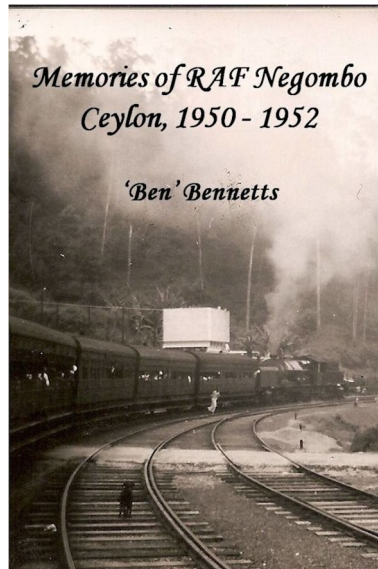
The Religion Business:
Cashing In On God

Ben Bennetts
Published 2012

Faith Warning!

Do not read this book if you have a blind faith in the existence of God, or any other god(s), and you don't want your faith shaken, stirred or otherwise disturbed.

If you make the assumption that all gods, including God, are the inventions of fertile, imaginative and in some cases, manipulative minds, and then take a look at any specific religion, you see it for what it is – a business like any other commercial business, marketing and selling a product in exchange not only for money but, in many cases, mind control of a large group of people. This book is written from this point of view and surveys both ancient and modern religions, questioning the evidence for the existence of God and challenging the beliefs, doctrines and practices of major religions such as Christianity and Islam.

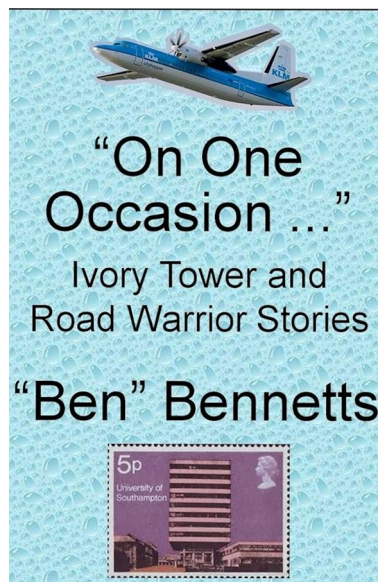


**Memories of RAF Negombo
Ceylon, 1950 – 52**

Ben Bennetts
Assisted by Maureen Wyatt (née Bennetts)
Published 2012

My father was stationed in RAF Negombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in the early '50s. I joined him along with my mother and sister. This is an account of my life in the camp, my first experience of living outside of the UK. The essay tells of trips to the jungle, life on the camp, long troopship journeys, encounters with wild animals (some in the living room), and falling in love for the first time (I was 10 years old!).

This essay was also my first attempt to publish an eBook containing photographs and other images. I've improved my skills in later eBooks.



"On one occasion ..."
Ivory Tower and Road Warrior Stories

Ben Bennetts

Published 2013

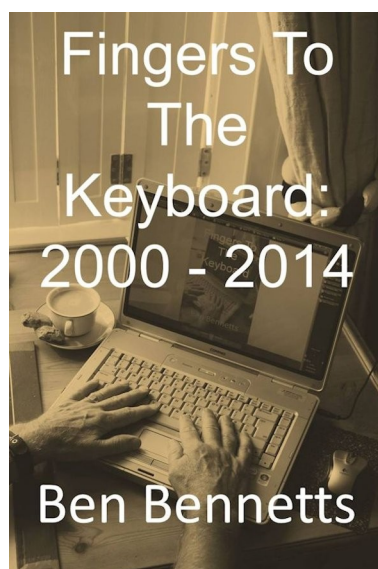
I am a retired electronics consultant engineer who spent eleven years as a researcher and lecturer at Southampton University (the Ivory Tower) and a further twenty-eight years in industry, mostly as a one-man-band consultant roving the world (the Road Warrior). These are my stories: some funny, some sad, and some just interesting.



Tales from the Trails
Part 1: UK trails

Ben Bennetts
Published 2014

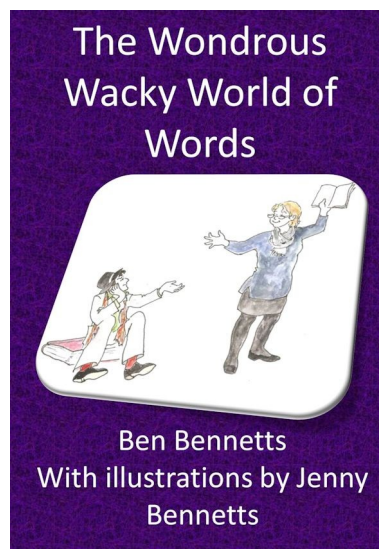
Walking is good for you. It provides physical exercise and stimulates the senses. It gets you out and about. You see places that can only be reached on foot. It also has its moments, sometimes funny sometimes dangerous, plus mishaps and other adventures. This book is a collection of observations, stories, advice and photographs from the long-distance walks I've made, mostly accompanied by my wife, since retiring at age 66 in 2007. Part 1 covers UK long-distance trails including many UK National Trails. Part 2 covers walks in other countries, notably Nepal, India, Spain, Switzerland and Madeira.



Fingers to the Keyboard

Ben Bennetts
Published 2014

In-between writing 'proper' books, I often dash off an essay on anything that amuses me or otherwise catches my attention. *Fingers to the Keyboard* is an eclectic mix and collection of these essays on topics such as the stupidity of politicians, the idiosyncrasies of English grammar, the baiting of scammers, the trials and tribulations of being hard of hearing, commentaries on various sports, religious extremism, the beauty of mathematics, film and book reviews, and a miscellany of grumpy old man moans and groans.



The Wondrous Wacky World of Words

Ben Bennetts, with illustrations by Jenny Bennetts
Published 2015

How are you on words? Do you know your oxymorons from your tautologies; your alliterations from your euphemisms; your acronyms from your homonyms; or your onomatopoeias from your palindromes? Is *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* a nonce word or a nonsense word? Can you create neologisms by prefixing, suffixing, back-forming, compounding, and blending with the best of them? Can you define the word *word* without using the word *word*? Do you know what it means to *munch a brick* or *bend someone's ear*? Is a *fire distinguisher* a spoonerism or a malapropism? Are you a logophile, an etymologist, a lexicologist, a philologist, a logologist, a linguist or just someone who enjoys a walk in the park?

If you know the answers to all these questions, you've no need to read this essay. If not, read on and be amused, amazed and ameliorated.



Tales from the Trails
Part 2: non-UK trails

Ben Bennetts
Published 2015

Tales from the Trails Part 2 is a follow on from Part 1 and covers long-distance walking in the Himalaya Mountains in Nepal and India, the lower Sierra Nevada Mountains and the Camino de Santiago in Spain, along the *levadas* of Madeira, and snow-shoeing in Switzerland.

(^_^)