

A drop of the special stuff

The garbagemen who came twice a week to George Street North had their work cut out for them. The rubbish outside CM's store at No. 47 was a frightful mess of broken glass and rejected or disintegrating corks matted together with gluey labels that had not stuck to the bottles properly. To compensate the garbos for having to remove this dangerous material, CM staff at the store would reward them with left-overs from the bottling process that had accumulated since the last garbage collection. At the end of every bottling there was always some fraction of a bottle left over and this was tossed into one of several steel milking buckets. Rich red ruby port might share a bucket with sweet sherry and a generous measure of rum. At the end of the day the buckets were emptied into plain bottles that were then corked, and the garbos received a bottle each after every pick-up. They drank these mixtures with the greatest relish.

Once, at about stock-taking time when bottling was slow and the left-overs non-existent, the garbos were disappointed not to get their

usual treat. One of them approached Eric Bramley, who was running the department at the time, and indicated that he and his fellow workers had a bit of a thirst.

Eric said: "Well, come into the sample room and help yourselves. There's nice stuff here all bottled up for display."

The garbos went in and, taking one look at the rows of neatly labelled bottles, said: "Nah, mate, none of that rubbish. We want the special stuff."



47 George Street North.

supplied the wine and spirits for bottling in the early days. These included brandy, gin and fortified wines such as port, muscat and sherry. A stint on a bottling team at 47 George Street North before going on to other departments was a memorable experience for some young staff. Russ Williamson, Eric Bramley and George Craig, together with Gordon Cruikshanks, very successfully sold the products of all this labour around the metropolitan and country areas.

Although imports of machinery for the leather tanning industry revived after the war, the company's leather exports resumed only gradually and were never destined to regain their pre-war significance. After a shaky start, the wattle bark trade picked up and the mills were once again busy, but bark's future was uncertain. A hundred tons of bark yielded 30-45 tons of tannin in a slow and labour-intensive process and tanners were naturally keen to find