

Greenock Creek

VINEYARD & CELLARS
Radford Road Seppeltsfield

PO Box 79, Greenock, South Australia 5360

Telephone: (08) 8562 8103

Facsimile: (08) 8562 8259

1 September 1999

Dear Friends,

It's that time of year again to sit around the kitchen table and put pen to paper regarding the happenings of the last 12 months - although it doesn't seem that long ago - and the prospect for next year.

In our 1998 newsletter we informed you of our decision to bring all our grape processing and winemaking back home under the one roof again. At the time of writing, our architect and the town planner were dotting the i's and crossing the t's on the plans, and so after a few delays, work commenced. As it stands now, all the masonry fermenters, which by the way contain more steel than BHP produce in a week, and brick walls have been completed. Four 5,000 litre underground storage tanks have been installed, and the largest section, that is, the steelwork for the roof and side walls is nearly completed. After that, all the masonry has to be rendered, fermenter epoxied, concrete floor laid, and the power and water, etc connected.

A great friend of ours, and we're sure of many of you, Robert O'Callaghan, dropped by and casually remarked that it's a long time since anyone he knew built open fermenters. These days it's mostly stainless steel Potters and Vinamatics, no romance whatsoever!

Speaking of building projects, we have finally engaged the same architect to start drawing up plans for an open space kitchen and dining area to join the wire surrounded back-verandah (meat-safe) to the lovely old stone buildings about 12 metres south.

The main idea is for a large entertaining area with ample double-door opening to allow lots of light to penetrate and maintain the lovely eastern views of vineyards and hills that we now enjoy from our kitchen and verandah. So after 10 years of squeezing guests around our minuscule kitchen table like penguins, we've decided to make life a little easier. It's embryonic just now, but it will be faster to complete than the winery, for obvious reasons!

Once again our wines, from the 1996 vintage, were shown to American wine critic Robert Parker by Dan Phillips the Los Angeles based wine importer, who obviously imports a very small amount of Greenock Creek Wine. Mr Parker was more than generous in his description and ratings of the wines. It's slightly incongruous that by the time he gets to taste the wines they have all been sold, but that's something we have no control over.

Mr Parker's comments and ratings from the *Wine Advocate*, April 1999, are set out below:

<u>Wine</u>	<u>Rate out of 100</u>
1997 Greenock Creek Cornerstone Grenache	92
1996 Greenock Creek Cabernet Sauvignon	94
1996 Seven Acre Shiraz	97
1996 Creek Block Shiraz	96

“These four wines are inspirational. The 1997 Grenache (15.5% alcohol from 60-year old vines) exhibits a Chateau Rayss-like flamboyant, kirsch liqueur and raspberry-scented nose that saturates the olfactory sense. Explosive in the mouth, with full body, terrific purity, and a spectacularly layered, long, lusty finish, it deserves a “Wow!” Drink it over the next 5-7 years. The thrills don’t end with the Grenache. The 1996 Cabernet Sauvignon (from 10-year old vines) may only have a “modest” 13.9%, yet it is a sensational wine. Its opaque saturated purple colour is followed by copious amounts of cassis, earth, and spice aromas. There is superb concentration, huge body, outstanding purity, and a multi-dimensional, thick, viscous, concentrated finish. It is a blockbuster Cabernet Sauvignon that will be drinkable young because of low acidity, but will evolve for two decades.

I rated the 1996 Shiraz Seven Acres slightly higher than the 1996 Shiraz Creek Block, but I would not be surprised to see these scores reversed at any given tasting. They are both amazing wines, representing the essence of old Shiraz from the Barossa Valley.

There are 500 cases of the Seven Acres and 100 cases of the Creek Block. The Seven Acres is made from 9-year old Shiraz vines and the Creek Block from 60-year old Shiraz, with the latter having 15.8% alcohol and the former 14.8%. The 1996 Shiraz Creek Block exhibits a dense purple colour, and a spectacular nose of roasted coffee intermixed with cassis, blackberries, liquorice, and spice. The wine displays amazing ripeness, an unctuous texture, full-bodied palate, and a finish that lasts for 45+ seconds. Its high alcohol and tannin are neatly concealed by the wine’s amazing concentration. Anticipated maturity: 2000-2020. The 1996 Shiraz Seven Acres possesses all of the above, in addition to more complexity in the nose (violets?), as well as a more delineated palate. It is an enormous, massive, fabulously concentrated yet symmetrical wine. Although few readers will have a chance to try these wines, their names are worth knowing as they are among the world’s finest Shiraz. Anticipated maturity: 2002-2025.”

As with the 1996 wines, we have had enormous response from commercial outlets and the general public regarding their chances of obtaining some of the '97ers. Most people are sympathetic to the fact that our production is very small and purchasing some is somewhat of a lottery, but there are just a few who virtually demand an allocation. Now that the wine is bottled and settling down, we will have the difficult task of making those allocations, because our mail order and cellar door sales get first preference.

As mentioned in our previous newsletter we decided to graft our one hectare Chardonnay block to Shiraz. So after lopping all 900 odd vines off about 30mm from the ground in October 1998, a gentleman by the name of Don Rayner from McLaren Vale and a couple of fellow workers arrived and put two chip-buds in each stump. He jokingly quipped as he left, *"Don't take any holidays around Christmas!"* He was right. As the weather warmed up the grafts started to move and finally went berserk! The growth was phenomenal, but then I suppose it should be. Twenty years of vigorous root growth all directed into just two small buds says it all!

We'll get a crop this year of some consequence in quantity, and of course the quality is an unknown factor. It will be very interesting as the Creek Block Shiraz runs into the old Chardonnay, but then the Creek Block has 20 years start on the new grafts. Time will tell!

We have had a lot of enquiries about the 1995 Roennfeldt Road reds (Shiraz and Cabernet), and we wish to advise you that these two magnificent wines will be released in the Year 2000.

The 1999 Vintage Festival has been and gone, and was another huge success. It's a bit hard to estimate just how many visitors came to the Barossa for it, but going by reports from accommodation places, wineries, restaurants, etc the number was up on the last Festival.

Although the 1999 Vintage Festival has long gone, we would like to mention to you one of the events in which we participated. It was a 25-Over a side cricket match between local wine types from the Greenock area, and the same bunch from Krondorf Road, which took place on the lovely Greenock Oval. The weather was just perfect, so when the suitably attired captain for Greenock won the toss, he decided to send the others in to bat. After a lot of huffing and puffing, they made 115 off the 25 overs. Every player on both sides had to bowl two overs, and bat for the same, for which I am very pleased, one more over from me and my arm would have seized up! I didn't get any wickets, and only made a magnificent "one" run not out, before I was unceremoniously told to "get off" to allow the last few to have a go. Mark McNamara and crew from Pear Tree Cottage Restaurant supplied a delicious fillet wrapped venison dish for lunch, and along with copious amounts of St Hallett Shiraz and Coopers Ale (both by the way very generously donated), a good time was had by all. Oh! And by the way, the Krondorf gang won by four runs.

At the present time the Barossa Gourmet festivities are in full swing. The format has change this year from a one weekend event to a series of dinners and tastings over a four week period, allowing more people to participate.

The Barossa's next major event will be the Music Festival from 2 to 17 October. With the fine spring weather we are enjoying, and the Valley in pristine condition, it promises to be as successful as previous festivals.

The bed and breakfast industry is still growing steadily, not only in the Barossa but throughout the State. Miriam's is no exception. We were only discussing recently how it's been seven years since we opened Miriam's and in that time the number of repeat bookings has been very encouraging, from within Australia and overseas. A couple from England who are now good friends of ours, have visited Miriam's on three occasions and have booked their airline tickets and Miriam's for part of the summer 2000. Like many overseas visitors to the Barossa and South Australia they have been lured back. Because of the cottage's location, in the heart of Tanunda, walking to nearby shops, wineries and restaurants, etc is a plus.

Enclosed please find an order form. Philip White, long standing enthusiast for Greenock Creek, and wine critic on Adelaide's daily "Advertiser" has let us publish his preliminary tasting notes of our new releases.

Hoping you have all had a fruitful year and looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

MICHAEL & ANNABELLE

Tasting Notes

Greenock Creek Cabernet Sauvignon 1997

A short decade after these vines were planted, whammo! – we have a veritable essence of Barossa Cabernet Sauvignon, more concentrated in its youth than any of its predecessors. The wine shows great wallops of dark chocolate, along with pleasant hints of the more swampy and vegetal aromas which we typically see in the Creek Block Shiraz, which adjoins this Cabernet on the creek bank. There's a decorative dusting of marshmallow sugar, giving the bouquet its pretty top note. In the mouth, the wine is silky and intense, immediately asserting its superiority. The finish is very long and sinuous, and climaxes with a tiny shot of dry tannin providing contrast to those sweet red berries. The wine has exemplary acidity, and will mature into a rare beauty given correct cellaring conditions for a decade or so. 94++/100

Greenock Creek Seven Acre Shiraz 1997

After it was planted in 1990, the Seven Acre block very quickly made clear its intention to supply low crops of intense Barossa Shiraz with a rare floral note highlighting its dainty, but dense bouquet. Almost impossibly, this vintage seems even more intensely so, in spite of the wine's extreme youth. The palate, too, is perhaps a little more forceful than the previous silky smooth offerings, but it still retains that polished sheen of texture and mouthfeel that are the vineyard's other hallmarks. The palate is beautifully viscous and long, deliciously adorning the sensories like a magnificent silky drape. The tannins are leafy and green, but do nothing to interrupt that astonishing lingering smoothness of the finish and aftertaste. The wine offers great promise for the patient cellarmaster. 93++/100

Greenock Creek Creek Block Shiraz 1997

The 40 year old Creek Block, sulking there among the reeds in their deep black alluvium, usually offers a range of concentrated swampy vegetal decay aromas that reminds one of brown coal, or even peat. As with our other '97s, this hallmark is even more concentrated and intense. The wine is a sultry brute in its infancy, a lot more Heathcliff than Heathcote. But all that swarthy, sweaty earthiness is topped with a pretty highlight of marshmallow sugar, similar but less obvious than in the '97 Cabernet. The palate is unctuous and authoritative, and thick with the flavours which that astounding bouquet warned of. As it coats the tongue with its earthly glory, waves of sweet ripe berry concentrate flood in, building to a very long finish which is almost dried off by pleasing velvet and moss tannins. This is a classic old style Barossa Shiraz, and one which will live for an extremely long time in the right cellar. 94++/100

Greenock Creek Cornerstone Grenache 1998

If you saw the harsh, stony soil that these ancient Grenache vines poke through on Hopeless Hill, you would wonder how, or why, it stays alive. But this '98 is not just determined, it's absolutely, resolutely, pig-headedly digging in, then *dancing*, much after the style of the greater vintages of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. This Grenache *par excellence* has some of the earthy decay of the '97 Creek Block Shiraz, but retains that more flamboyant and gushy personality that is Grenache. At first sniff, the wine can be almost sickly in its heady, meaty extroversion, but while the bouquet settles and tightens somewhat in its conversion to flavour and mouthfeel, any afterbreath reminds you of the chubby, outrageous campiness of that aroma: somewhere between a risqué cabernet and a butcher shop. But there's a basement of dark salty liquorice below all that celebration, and a gentle rise of firm, fine, blackwood tannin to ensure you that there's a very serious, pious heart pumping away within all that craziness. 94++/100

Important

To maintain your place on our mailing list, please fill out and return the below slip – even if you do not wish to purchase on this occasion. Please also advise of change of address.

(Please tear off and return to Greenock Creek Vineyards and Cellars, PO Box 79, Greenock SA 5360)

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Telephone _____