

MJ & AB WAUGH  
VIGNERONS

# Greenock Creek WINES

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Dear Friends,

Well, once again it's time to say "hello" to all our trusted clients, to tell you about the happenings of the past 12 months and, most importantly, about our 1999 releases. But more about that later.

This year you will notice that our wines are packed in bright, shiny new cartons. We won't say anything more at this stage, but will wait for your critical comments.

Still on packaging, we are often asked by customers about the availability of any of our wines in magnums. This is on the drawing board, but unfortunately we haven't as yet come up with a really good style bottle that we want to use. But keep an eye out in the future.

The second vintage at our new Roennfeldt Road winery concluded successfully, with only a few minor hitches. It was very hot and dry during vintage, which meant that all our grapes (along with many other vineyards) ripened at the same time. Consequently our local hand-picking contractor was "snowed under", and things looked rather ominous for a time. But out of the blue we had a phone call from a Cambodian chap named Tom (a very common name I believe in Phnom Penh) who was running a gang of pickers and wanted to know whether we were interested in having some work done – were we what! Anyway, it all proved very successful and the grapes arrived safely at the winery.

One of the problems we have to confront in the near future is the lack of floor-space. We keep all our free-run juice and pressings separate in hogsheads, not stainless steel. Multiply that by 9 vineyards and that by 3 vintages, and you can see that a seemingly large shed doesn't take long to fill. Add to that empty barrels, machinery, etc and its getting a little cramped. So another barred shed is on the agenda.

It may appear a little premature when writing to you about the 1999 releases to mention the 2000 wines, but it seems appropriate to inform you of the circumstances. The coming of the new millennium was not a happy time for a number of Barossa vignerons, and we were no exception. Due to poor weather conditions at flowering, lack of winter rains and extreme heat, the harvest in some vineyards was down by as much as 60%. Because we are an estate winery and don't buy in grapes, we have to suffer the vagaries of nature. Consequently some of the 2002 releases will be in short supply. The one saving grace is that we will be releasing in 2002 the first vintage of our last plantings of Shiraz from a vineyard we have called "Alices' Block", after a couple of very good old friends of ours. This wine is very similar to the first release of the Seven Acre block back in 1995, but more about that in the next newsletter.

For those of you who have not heard, Australia was recently paid a visit by the USA's leading wine critic, Robert Parker Junior. The Baltimore based Mr Parker is the owner and publisher of "The Wine Advocate", a bi-monthly newsletter about wine with a distribution of over 40,000, of which some of you are sure to be recipients. Mr Parker has always rated our wines highly in previous "Advocates", but in issue number 135 we have scored a little better than usual, as below:

1995 Roennfeldt Road Shiraz	100	points
1995 Roennfeldt Road Cabernet Sauvignon	99	"
1998 Creek Block Shiraz	98+	"
1998 Apricot Block Shiraz	94+	"
1998 Seven Acre Shiraz	92	"
1998 Cabernet Sauvignon	90	"
1999 Cornerstone Grenache	91	"

It was very pleasing to read about the 1995 Roennfeldt Road Shiraz because this wine, along with Chris Ringland's 1996 Three Rivers Shiraz, are the only Australian reds ever to have scored 100 points by this critic. The only down side to this is that by the time these ratings were out, all the wine had been sold, causing a few unhappy faces.

Whilst talking about things American, we have been asked to be one of a group of wineries to host a party of approximately 28 wine retailers and restaurateurs who will be in the Barossa in late August. It will be interesting to hear the thoughts and opinions of people from such diverse locations and climates as Colorado, Texas and Florida.

Many of you will have heard about the enormous prices that some of our wines are demanding, but as you can see by the prices on our current order form these wines are obviously being acquired and re-sold for amounts far in excess of what we charge at Cellar Door. Unfortunately this is something over which we have no control and from which we definitely do not benefit.

It seems that never a day goes by that we don't read in the newspaper about wine exports and the continued growth in this market, and we are still being inundated with requests by exporters and importers to purchase our wines, no matter how small the quantity. However, not many new accounts will be opened for these releases. Our well-established clients in the USA, Switzerland and the UK are a pleasure to deal with and account for about 90% of a small export allocation. As usual we place our first emphasis on meeting the requirements of our cellar door, mail order and wholesale customers.

Visitors to the Barossa could not have helped but notice the large packs of various sized blue pipes on some of the road-sides around the area. These belong to Barossa Infrastructure Limited, who have embarked on a \$30 million, 240 kilometre auxiliary pipeline to provide cheaper water to the Barossa from the River Murray. There are many arguments for and against this scheme, but don't get alarmed, we are not having a bar of it. Annabelle and I believe that if you want to grow riverland grapes then go "up the river". There are many aspects to growing premium and super-premium grapes, and fortunately adding huge doses of salty water does not come into the equation for us.

Our workforce has not altered since our last newsletter. Joe Evans and Henry Carnal are still the backbone on the viticultural side of things and during vintage they switch hats to become competent cellar hands. This year Annabelle's son Jarrod was also around to provide some valuable assistance, and to experience first-hand a vintage in a small winery. Additionally we had a short visit from my niece and nephew, Michael and Julie-Anne, from Victoria, who also pitched in and helped where possible.

Kerry Ward is our computer operator who comes in as required to catch up on the seemingly endless amount of correspondence etc that we receive, and Amanda O'Sullivan is still the "flag bearer" in Adelaide and environs keeping track of our wholesale clients. Both of these ladies with their professionalism, enthusiasm and effervescent personalities are a pleasure to have on board.

In each newsletter we mention Miriam's, the bed and breakfast cottage we have been running in Tanunda for some years now. Patronage has been excellent, so when you are next visiting the Valley keep Miriam's in mind, as it is only a short walk to the restaurants, antique shops, wineries and the like. Walking to these places is not only great exercise but pleasant, cheap and breathalyser-free! Information can be obtained via the winery's phone or fax numbers or from most Bed and Breakfast guides.

The 2001 Barossa Vintage Festival was again a great success, from the main street parade of floats and assorted paraphernalia to the wonderful array of foods at the "Harvest Market" on the grounds of the Yalumba Winery. The weather conditions were wonderful, and it seemed a pity when it all had to end. To add to the Festival's success, a very good friend of ours, Aaron Penley, chair of the Barossa Wine & Tourism Association, was presented with the "Harry Dowling Award" in recognition of his unending toil and effort for tourism in the region. Congratulations Aaron!

Our cellar door will re-open for the next release on Saturday, 8 September at 11.00 am. We look forward to seeing you again and for you to taste the new wines, which have been critiqued for us on the following pages by Philip White from the Adelaide "Advertiser".

Hoping you all have had a good year.

Kindest regards,

***Michael & Annabelle Waugh***

## The 2001 Releases

*Tasting notes and discussion by Philip White*

It's become one of the most anticipated highlights of my year, tasting the new Greenock Creek wines for this newsletter. It's like searching the kindergarten for future Champions of the World.

You may be aware that some critics are suddenly pointing these glories rather more generously than I do in their infancy. I suspect such writers will be extending their pointing scale to a maximum 120 to fit these wines in once they're mature, and really singing.

As usual, these notes are made from preliminary unbottled samples taken from the barrels in approximate, but pretty close proportion to the final blends, except in the instance of the Roennfeldt Road wines, which have been in bottle for over two years.

The 1999s will trigger particular interest, as I believe they're more refined and elegant than some of the bigger, richer vintages. But I think they'll eventually offer greater rewards for the patient cellarer, which is saying something, considering the sheer quality and ballooning reputation of the glories we have come to expect from this very special suite of vineyards.

Similarly, the Roennfeldt Grenache 2000 is a more elegant and less concentrated wine than the previous vintages, a fact that will delight some and perhaps disappoint the lovers of brute force. At Greenock Creek, it's not just the vineyards that do the talking: the vagaries of vintage also have their input, and it's up to Michael to ensure that these realities of nature are protected and preserved, without too much interference, right through to your glass.

I examined these samples over some 24 hours, returning constantly to the glasses, always tantalised by their capacity to evolve and surprise as their various decorative facets shimmered loose of the fruit concentrated at their base. Except for the confounding beauty of the Roennfeldt's wines, which took two days to release true hints of their future.

### **Greenock Creek Grenache 2000**

While this Roennfeldt vineyard generally produces the best model of a blood-and-boiled roses grenache you'll find on earth, this one's more along the lines of a strawberry conserve. But give it time, and think about it, and all the typifiers of the previous releases are there, along with Spanish leather, Grandma's cedar spice box, and cool black tea. But it's no porty plum liqueur. The palate's lithe and viscous, and eminently elegant and refined, if a touch stiff in the department at this early stage. The appetising, puckery finish, with its staunch medium-grained tannins eventually subsides, giving way to a rise of delicious, firmly acidic strawberry and raspberry.

This wine will become a great steaming cult item as it matures, but lovers of the usual fat grenache may have to wait some years for it to bloom and mellow enough to suit their particular demands. It'll live easily through 2010. 91+++ points

### **Greenock Creek Cabernet Sauvignon 1999**

This wine seems a touch lighter, and is more audaciously leafy and minty than previous vintages. It even lets loose whispers of eau de cologne mint and wintergreen, perfect cabernet descriptors in the trendy cooler areas, but not usually so evident at Greenock Creek. The bouquet is still very smooth and polished, with the usual deep well of blackberry and blueberry simmering and glowering beneath the less stolid decorative perfumes that spring up as the wine gets air.

In the mouth, it's a lithe and sinuous affair, elegant and supple. Its smooth, silky texture seems polished to a high sheen. The leafy greens evident in the first rush of bouquet rise again in the finish, but the wine remains in beautiful balance. It leaves the palate singing, the gums bristling for food, and the salivary glands gushing in response to its fine-grained tannins and strapping acidity. I'd let this one settle for another couple of years, but it'll drink very well into the next decade. 89++ points.

### **Greenock Creek Apricot Block Shiraz 1999**

I know the name of this block automatically suggests certain flavours and aromas, but it's not mere auto-suggestion that had me scribbling notes about a bouquet of apricot and peach. Like the wines of that other apricot orchard district, Cote Rotie, this Shiraz does indeed smell like a bowl of freshly sliced stone fruits in a bowl, but this one also includes mulberry, blackberry, whole grapes and Black Forest kirsch. The delinquent barrel blend also had a slight appley whiff, which seemed merely to add to the whole fruit explosion. There's also some pleasant seasoning oak evident, although the general effect is one of a dense velvet meniscus, with nothing protruding rudely from the surface.

The palate's sensuous and viscous, with a slightly waxy feel. Once that softness has its chance to impress, there's a gradual rise of firm, but beautifully assimilated, velvety tannin and acidity. This is more elegant and slender than your usual Greenock Creek Shiraz. The finish is long and tapered, with that appetising acidity bringing the whole thing to a lipsmacking, tantalising, long and lingering finish. Then comes a range of aftertastes that reminded me of an astounding chocolate and chilli sauce that Adelaide's great chef, Cheong Liew, once made to season a barramundi that we quickly demolished. It'll drink perfectly from release through to 2010 and beyond. 89++ points.

### **Greenock Creek Seven Acre Shiraz 1999**

This one's more dense and typically GC than the cheeky cabernet and Apricot Block reds. In a sense, it's more like the reedy old Creek Block to sniff, because of its muddy, swampy base tones. Those aside, it's all ripe red berries of myriad facets, in a really rich fruitcake bouquet, with well-cooked spice and rind. In wicked juxtaposition, shots of Parade Gloss bootpolish bounce neatly off a rich whiff of Chanel Number 5.

The palate's typical Greenock Creek, full, soft, silky and unctuous, bit with really good natural-looking acidity as well as the usual extremely fine-grained tannin. The flavours show the increasing maturity of the Seven Acre vines: this is more complex wine than this vineyard has previously given us. At first, the acidity seems overt, but with time it slides beneath the surface of the usual Holy Syrup, only to reappear in the puckery, gum-sucking aftertaste. The wine will easily go to 2015. 92+ points.

#### **Greenock Creek Creek Block Shiraz 1999**

There's not quite so much Creature From the Black Lagoon in this edition of the Creek Block, but more fresh cream, prune and beetroot/borscht. The top notes are spice and blueberry, the base a fathomless soup of red berries and mystery. It's voluptuous and seductive, a raven-haired temptress in a tux, doused with *Bal á Versailles* perfume.

The palate's slick, slender, and elegant, with twists of polished leather and dark chocolate betraying greater opulence to come. As it breathes, it becomes more typically Creek Block, and the high notes of brandied loganberry, swamp myrtle and marshmallow sugar that kick it off gradually subside to mint and bay leaf, and eventually even the good old tussocky mud of the Creek Block reasserts itself. There's a shot of tight, hot alcohol in the finish, but even the old basket-pressed Chardonnays had that, and it was always eventually lost in the fruit. The wine will go through 2015 without a blink. 92+++ points.

#### **Greenock Creek Roennfeldt Road Shiraz 1996**

How can sublime elegance and sheer over-the-top opulence harmonise like this? In a word, BREEDING! While there are occasional whiffs of oak and vintage port in this astonishing thing, it remains absolutely smooth and harmonious, and nothing like the 1995 did at this early stage, when it made Bronte's Heathcliff look cultured and polished. This wine just grows and glows. As it does, wave after wave of its many components rise gently and fall again. Shoepolish, boiled beetroot, mocha, peas poached in dry red with cloves, strawberries in dark chocolate, sweet berries of myriad hue, the essence of all things black; all this gradually comes and goes, as if conjured by a *parfumeur* rather than hammered by a smith.

The palate's opulent but elegant, viscous and supple. It shows sublime juiciness and extreme length, and has the unnerving capacity to become more viscous after it's been swallowed, as if the memory is a better analyser than the present. Extremely fine tannins rise long after swallowing, too, with very firm acidity, and a final blast of that chocolatey, porty alcohol occasionally reminds you of your first impression, and leads you helplessly back for more. This beauty will easily live through 2020. 93+++ points

#### **Greenock Creek Roennfeldt Road Cabernet Sauvignon 1996**

In their youth, I preferred the '95 Cabernet to the Shiraz in Roennfeldt's, and I'm guilty of the same preference this year, although the vintages are quite different in style. This version's shy and withdrawing for the vineyard, but I think it'll still be the better of the two '96s with time and patience. It's perfectly mannered and homogenous, time and air giving rise to a slightly acrid, leafy top note, as if that mid-range of the bouquet, which is pure bilberry flan with cream, needed a sharpening garnish.

Right from the start of the palate, you're in immaculate luxury. The wine has such confounding depth and complexity, serious viscosity and gravity, that it comes as surprise when its vapours begin to leap off the tongue, into your breath and lungs. For while it already has the profound weight and authority of a great sage, it's also perfectly fresh, and youthfully vibrant. The flavours are a textbook lesson in what Cabernet leafiness is all about. There are the deep green blackberry briars tangled with the pickled vine leaves of dolmades, but with the viscosity, and depth of sweet fruit to balance it and ensure constant delight and satisfaction over many, many years. The wine finishes with savoury, puckery tannins, but remains elegant while intense, and beautifully balanced.

If the '95 Roennfeldt's were the essence of an ancient, dying vineyard, hammered and compressed into vinous fruitbomb tablets, the lively contrasting vibrancy of these '96s are the essence of the vineyard's rebirth. Celebrate! This Cabernet will go an easy 25 years. 94+++ points.

*Note: Plus signs (+++) indicate wines that will earn higher points as they mature.*

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### **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.

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_