

MJ & AB WAUGH
VIGNERONS

Greenock Creek WINES

Radford Road, Seppeltsfield

ABN 97 007 797 757

PO Box 79, Greenock, South Australia 5360

Telephone: (08) 8562 8103 Facsimile: (08) 8562 8259

Email greenockcreek@ozemail.com.au

1 August 2007

Hi Folks,

To quote an old cliché, it doesn't seem like twelve months since we wrote to you, but it definitely is. The past year has just flown by, quite smoothly in our neck of the woods, except for the drought of course, but more about that later.

We were once again humbled by the popularity of our 2004 wines, and thank our loyal customers for the continued support. It certainly provides us with the incentive to keep producing the best possible wines from our low yielding vines, although we could have done with a few more grapes this year!

We are pleased to report that we still have our small band of dedicated and energetic staff, namely Alicia, Kerry, Karen and Amanda handling the office work and sales, and Joe and Henry in cellar door, the vineyard and winery. However this year we welcome a new addition to the team, Peter Atyeo, who started with us in March.



Henry and Michael emptying this year's wine from barrels

Peter comes to us with a wealth of experience, having worked in the Riverland, far north of the state, and around the Barossa. He can weld up a broken gate at a moment's notice or shear us a sheep, none of which we need just at the moment, but he has been invaluable in the past few weeks overseeing the bottling of our new wines. We look forward to handing over a few more jobs to Peter in the months ahead.

Speaking of our new wines, the bottling went well this year and was completed without incident. This might sound trivial, but there is quite a lengthy process involved from when the wine is carefully sucked out of barrel until it reaches the bottling line. There is no room for error in the process and constant checks are required to ensure the wine is kept in premium condition until it finally leaves the bottling hall. The corks are also tested, and the final procedure of applying the labels is often one of the most harrowing, as these need to be applied straight, without ripples and at the correct height. All very simple when it goes according to plan!

Back at the winery the empty barrels are washed and dried for storage until they are required again in six months time. We generally use the barrels three times before they are condemned to the pot-plant division. This work certainly keeps Joe and Henry busy, in between the pruning which is now taking place in earnest.

Speaking of Joe, we are very pleased to say that his lovely wife, Sue, and sister-in-law Tracey, are making quite a name for themselves with their Ballycroft Artisan cheese which they have been making for some time now. So if you are in the Barossa, look out for this local delicacy at the Angaston Farmers' Market.

At present we are enjoying some most welcome rain, a huge relief after the severe drought conditions that we experienced last year and which affected everyone, both city and country. However, it was probably most sorely felt in the rural industries, including grapegrowing. It is difficult to know what the

end result will be from this lack of rain, and there are conflicting reports around the Barossa about the 2007 vintage. As far as Greenock Creek Wines is concerned the report is not at all favourable. All vineyards were down on tonnage, some by as much as 70%, with the exception of the old Roennfeldt Road Shiraz which produced about the same amount, and of equal quality to previous years.

It is quite a common fallacy that vineyards producing small tonnages naturally produce premium wines. Not so. If there is inadequate moisture in the soil during the entire growing period, then the vine receives insufficient nutrients and water, resulting in poor fruit set and development. Fortunately our vines are used to minimal water, but they have certainly suffered from the severe lack of rain. We can only keep our fingers crossed that the winter of 2007 will be average or above and they will recover sufficiently for the 2008 vintage.

Miriam's Bed & Breakfast continues to go from strength to strength, and Annabelle's daughter Alicia is kept very busy looking after the stream of people who choose to stay at Miriam's when visiting the Barossa. This year was exceptionally busy because of the Vintage Festival in April, and a host of other local and state events that have attracted visitors to the area.

Finally some news on the opening of cellar door. Unlike other years when this has happened in September, this year cellar door will open on **18 August**. We are taking a couple of weeks off at the end of September this year to take a holiday with friends, and don't want to leave the office staff with too many headaches, so have decided to bring forward the release date. Therefore you will be reading this newsletter a few weeks earlier than previous years!

As usual we look forward with pleasure to meeting many of you at cellar door, and catching up with others on the phone or by email. We trust you are enjoying the best of health and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kindest regards,

Michael & Annabelle Waugh

PS Don't forget to let us know if you have changed address or wish to be removed from the mailing list.

The 2007 Releases

Tasting notes and discussion by Philip White

The dance of the eight veils.

During the years I've written these tasting notes, there's always been a sly temptation to sit here, surrounded by glasses, submit to the dance of the eight veils, and gibber. Mix some metaphors. Maybe that's all I do. But any fair dinkum Greenock Creek enthusiast should understand this. Appraising such a rugged suite of outstanding vinous individualists is, well, it's not really a dance. It's more like climbing the world's eight tallest peaks every July. But, you know, I struggle on, poor boy, telling myself you couldn't get a better man for the job.

This year, before setting forth on my task, I carefully read Harry G. Frankfurt's *On Bullshit*. Harry's Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Princeton. He's made me feel a lot better. So we shall now proceed with impunity. There's always a philosophical warp for me in Greenock Creek. In my day-to-day appraisals of industrial alcoholic beverages – usually made by chemists in hard hats and steel-capped boots - I remain stubbornly critical of the high alcohol wines they promote as their best. In refineries? With fruit from those endless monocultural grapeyards? Bah! Too often they're too hot, too porty, too jammy, and too simple, lacking the staunch natural acidity which would balance them and preserve them through years in the cellar. They might be homogenised, homologated and hyper-oxygenated, but the poor buggers are dead before they're grown. So they spruce them up with additives, put them in coffins of raw oak and wait for the posthumous trophies.

After preaching the gospel of modesty and elegance for fifty one weeks of the year, I'm suddenly whacked by eight monstrous Greenocks, which I keep open for twice-daily examination for the duration of that fifty-second week. Waiting for these wines is like cowering in the wee croft, holding the breath, while the Vikings come sauntering up the hill, axes glinting. But when these eight invaders arrive, they always confound me with their unwavering combinations of profound alcohols with staunch acidities and incredible phenolic density, and yet usually in quite breathtaking balance. They even, somehow, sometimes approach elegance. Like when the gorgeous 2000 Roennfeldt's cabernet came in at 12% alcohol with as much intensity and unfathomable depth as the rest of the suite. None of this, however, prepared me for the 2005s. These are mighty, savage tinctures, devoid of sophistry, and as brutally strong and ferrous as if forged by blacksmiths from iron made of chocolate and stone, with balance. Like the pyramids have balance. And, dare I say, grace.

The great French vignobles claimed after their heatwave in 2003 that they'd finally had a year when they could match Australian wines for alcohol and power. They wouldn't have dared utter a word if they'd forseen the Greenock Creek 2005s. And they'll hand in their check when they see the '06 Grenache. If global warming is fair dink, Michael stays alive, and we could get enough of it, we could choose to die of this stuff. But his wines may keep us alive well after the rest. We could sit there drinking, watching the TV's test pattern gradually decay to eternal snow.

While these wines are the most Barossan of Barossa reds, in their intensely concentrated way, the 2005s are probably best approached as liqueurs – you can't just sit down and casually knock any of them over with your steak without afterwards knowing you've waded well past your depth.

First, you need four people per bottle. After the initial disbelieving silence, you'll then find yourself in a four-way burst of discussion which magnifies exponentially in four dimensions. By the time the bottle's done, and you leave, trying to sing like Tom Waits, with those heavy black Greenock exhalations, you'll all know you've just had a vinous adventure that would take ordinary wine buffs several decades to accumulate.

Bacchus only knows how much valuable light the 2005 Roennfeldts will suck from the universe. Or, for that matter, the 2006s. One quick whack of that '06 Grenache – which comes from Roennfeldt's, remember - and you'll be reeling 'round like a shot man, wondering whether you'll live long enough to see these wines at their best.

Greenock Creek Alices Shiraz 2005 - 17.5% alcohol

Smelling more like the creamy chocolate Mexican-style sauce I once saw Cheong Liew pour over a fish in the World's End than anything made of grapes (we greedily devoured that fish), this wine is dumbfounding. It has plenty of spicy piquancy, from its oak, but there's no chance of that carpentry getting much of a say in. Kahlua and licorice, plum liqueur, Cherry Heering and deep framboise and cassis liqueur swim lazily about in its incredibly intense bouquet; there's even that wicked black smell of freshly-polished Spanish leather, like great tempranillo. The palate is an unctuous anointing oil from some heavenly religion not yet invented. While it's in your mouth it's all velvety and thick; as it leaves it gives the mouth a creamy coating of bitter chocolate and cherry dessert, and the breath a drying adult tang of alcohol, as if you'd just swallowed a Kahlua and vodka cocktail, with maybe a dribble of Campari. I have never had a wine like it. It is not porty, but more like some of those devilish coffee/chocolate/orange liqueur cocktails I blended in The Exeter as a kid. Magic. Hot. Scary. Impossible. Just make sure there's a few of you there when you draw the cork. A doctor would be handy. And I'd love to use it in a cocktail, once I dream of a flavour that's not already in it. 94++ points.

Greenock Creek Apricot Block Shiraz 2005 – 16.5% alcohol

The fleshy white stone fruits are here again: apricot and peach. But this year they're in a thick swim with chocolate crème caramel with a flaming brandied crêpes suzette sizzling alongside. (So far, these are reds for hard-core dessert maniacs.) The aroma shows astounding balance and poise, given that extreme alcohol, so, once again, one should best regard it as a freakish dry liqueur. It has a whiff of fairy floss and fired marshmallow about its bouquet, but below that deceptive prettiness simmers a whole mess of wicked dark fruit devilry. The palate's drier than the Alice's, and therefore more ordinarily vinous, but forget ordinary. That humungous alcohol leaves a hot finish that would be better applied to a steaming chocolate dessert than anything like meat, but then, maybe a steaming hot peppered meat (marinated mammoth haunch) with chocolate-chilli sauce would counteract it sufficiently to shush down the worried suits from your insurance agency. Give 'em a slug – one bottle will deal with four of them – and be careful not to finish the bottle by yourself. This kills. Such alcohol usually indicates a wine that will be best within a year or two, but like these other releases, it has sufficient acidity and complexity to live for many years. (Even the old Greenock Creek Chardonnays, upon release, had alcohol like this in their finish, but it would soften and amalgamate after five or six years.) 93++ points

Greenock Creek Seven Acre Shiraz 2005 – 15% alcohol

This one's more like your usual Creek Block - all the peated meat and swamp-preserved Piltown Man whoofs that you'd usually get in the old salt down the Creek are here, in the lightest Greenock Creek wine of the year(!) Roennfeldt's stony Hopeless Hill aside, the Seven Acre has the most scabrous dry soil of the Greenock Creek quilt, so this marshy stuff is off the wall. Jeez. It also has a thick smell like the playdough Nanny used to make, to keep me out of the chook gizzards on a big plucking day. Then comes the samphire mud and swamp myrtle whiffs that have hovered around the back of all Creek Blocks. But gradually, all that pickled leather and flesh gives way to the mighty smooth wave of blackberry, prune, mulberry and marello cherry we have come to expect of Seven Acre; even dried fig and dates. The palate's slick and unctuous; the finish chocolaty and velvety, and as thick and sobering as a good feed of King James' Bible. One for a huge beef bourguignon, plenty of beetroot and Spanish onion. Arrogantly confounding. 93+++ points.

Greenock Creek Creek Block Shiraz 2005 – 18% alcohol

Oh yeah? Eighteen? Balderdash! Nope. Read 'em and weep. As I write, trying not to let too much slide down inside, Andrew Ford tells me on Radio National that the word juggernaut comes from the Indonesian jigorgans –

or something to that effect – which is one of the biggest gongs in the gamelan band. Originally, it came from the Sanscrit Jagganatha – lord of the world. This juggernaut sure rings a helluva big gong, even for a lord of the world. Right from the first whiff, it's enticing, stupefying, and overwhelming. It's an intensely complex, alluring and evolving drink. It smells as if a plum pudding shop, a Christmas cake shop, a Mississippi mudcake shop, and a charcuterie of the best and finest smoked meats in Alsace and the Barossa have collided at a mighty muddy crossroads somewhere out in the Louisiana bayou. Cajuns be here, with long hunting guns. Ry Cooder's playing snaky bottleneck in the background. A New Orleans spicemonger's just piled on top of the wreckage, his load spilling everywhere. The palate's thick and furry, the finish salty and tangy, like a sweaty mad Irish seaweed salesman's just pranged into the other end of the wreck. But after all that, the finish is luscious if swampy; comforting if confronting; embalming if awakening to the harsh dread realities of adults-only alcohol. You can have it both ways. Don't ever try to drink one alone. Breathtaking. Each tiny sip takes ten minutes to absorb. Once you've worked out how much it means to you, you're addicted . 94+++ points.

Greenock Creek Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 – 15% alcohol

On opening, there's a thick layer of home-made play dough seemingly holding this wine's fruits down. Ever so gradually they ooze through, heavenly-scented, juicily-fruited, but railtrack smooth and polished for the long haul. The flavours are about as intense as a piece of railway line, too: streamlined and steely. As they draw ever on, they're joined by tannin that's not quite as coarse as railway ballast, but it'll certainly preserve everything you've already noticed for a couple of decades. As the oxygen ever so gradually works its way into that solid compaction, the gravels subside into much more comforting velvet, and the steely chassis of the wine gradually goes fluffy at the edges with pithy fresh fruit flesh. I reckon this could become one of the best Greenock cabernets yet made. It'd be nice if there were enough bottles to check it every week for about twenty five years. 94+++ points.

Greenock Creek Cornerstone Grenache 2006 – 18.5% alcohol

I could write a terribly confusing thesis on this impossibility. I cannot imagine how Michael got it to ferment dry. Like, you add pure alcohol to sweet strong juice to kill all the yeast to make port and end up with strong numbers like this. Yeast finds it impossible to live in alcohols like this. Yet here we are with a wine picked so sweet that it ends up on the Bacchus side of eighteen once its yeast has kicked it dry. This is one King Hell Mother of a Greenash. It doesn't really smell like eighteen and a half. It couldn't possibly. No normally fermented wine could. None has before, to my knowledge, although perhaps some of the Durifs the great Mick Morris made at Rutherglen in the 'sixties may have approached such wild numbers. Michael hates grenache, yet here he's set a new peg on the pole vault of unfortified liqueur wines - farming vines within a cover break of the formidable Seppeltsfield Para Port vineyard, where they use powerful grape spirit to get Australia's most famous and revered fortified grenache up to this strength. Really.

This one doesn't smell much bigger than a Yangarra grenache from the magic Blewett Springs sands near Kangarilla, yet it's at least three whole per cent bigger than the biggest of them. It smells like aromatic prunus, deadly nightshade berries, marshmallow sugar, and a jammy trifle drenched in brandy. It's scarey, yet pretty, and fresh. Its alcohol brushes the nostrils like a warning shot of gunpowder, yet that's quickly mixed with fresh vanilla bean, and below that wells a huge swell of blackberry and mulberry conserve. Coconut. Whipped cream. Tip it in, and you're awash with some weird pirate's dessert liqueur, more evocative than Johnny Depp's wildest eyeshadowed dreaming. Keef would love this drink. More, please. I'll go get my other ear pierced. 94+++ points

Greenock Creek Roennfeldt Road Shiraz 2002 – 16.5% alcohol

This was a classic vintage year over much of South Australia, with ideally long, slow ripening. So I've been awaiting the '02 Roennfeldts with more excitement than usual. This wine will take many, many years to calm down. After five years, it's still angsty and awkward. It smells like the jam factory's burning down. (Yet there's still a load of fresh, vibrant fruits not yet alight or cooking: blueberries, bilberries, blackcurrants, blackberries, gean cherries, quetsch plums, purple fig – anything with stacks of black phenolics and anthocyanins.) Its tight American oak is still prominent, yet everything seems to be here in equal proportion. Six days after opening it was just beginning to smooth out, fluffy and intense and as long as the Nullarbor. One glass managed to survive in the bottom of the opened, recorked bottle for another fortnight and it's still quite simply a gorgeous, right royal drink. Bette Davis doing Elizabeth I. 96 points, with as many pluses as you can stay alive for.

Greenock Creek Roennfeldt Road Cabernet Sauvignon 2002 – 15.5% alcohol

Ever smelt blackcurrant bread coming out of a wood oven? That's about where this magnificence begins. It starts by tricking you into thinking it's soft and approachable, leaving an innocently saucy lozenge of flavour on the tongue, like a fruit gum. You get the feeling that the damned thing's just wafted over and off your palate like a ghost, leaving that little sweetie for Ron. Then you realise you've just had one of the most blissful intensities of your life, and it's reminding you it's still with you – on and on it goes. I tasted this bottle over a week, and left one glass in the bottom for another fortnight. I drink that remnant as I write: it's still unfathomable, truly confounding, and alive after three weeks of air! A truly wondrous unction, more complex, rewarding and substantial than a lot of humans. It'll live for thirty years. 96+++