

News from the Hen

No. 13 Summer 2013



“Rats” on the wire



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Music in January – last one this Friday 25th

Three of the four events are over – so if you don't get to the next one you've missed them for another year.

The last event is a new group for us – The Dirt Floor, a four piece from the Leongatha hills playing World – Folk – Fusion. They are great and best of all led by fellow winemaker and viticulturist Dean Roberts from Lythostylis Wines (near Leongatha). Dean and Dayna have a passion for wine and music (and life).

As Molly would say – do yourself a favour and get along to the last January music gig for 2013.

Music from 6pm till around 8:30pm.

Bring a rug and/or chairs we have a limited number of chairs, tables and benches (and if it's nice and still throw in some mozzie repellent).

You can bring your own food or buy a platter here – its up to you.

We will have our wines on sale by the bottle or glass.

Rats on the wire

The photo on the first page shows starlings perched on the electricity wires waiting to quietly drop into the vineyard to get stuck into the ripening fruit.

Starlings are known in the country as 'rats with wings' – they are voracious eaters and have an amazing ability to let their colleagues know that the food is on. Another introduced pest for which we can thank our colonial forebears.

Many other birds are a problem, but not on the scale of starlings. It's the ability of starlings to flock to a food source that means they can literally destroy an entire crop in pretty short time.

So when the starlings start to turn up on the wires above the vineyard, you know it's time to get the nets on.

Rick first saw bird netting on vines in Switzerland 25 years ago and was heard to observe that if you had to go to all that trouble and expense to grow vines it couldn't be worth it. 'We don't have to do that back in Oz', he opined. Nowadays he is out there wrapping nets on 10 hectares of vines – 100,000 square metres of netting. Such is life.

Vintage 2013 – our tenth

Thus far the 2013 vintage is shaping up pretty well. After a heap of rain in spring and early summer, things have dried off dramatically. By and large this is a good thing – the drying soils are slowing the vines. A bit of water stress is a good thing for quality.

Moderate stress is the trick. This year we have a full dam, so we have the option of irrigating if we need to. To date we have watered the young vines and left the established vines to suffer for a bit.

The other great thing about a dry summer is that it reduces disease pressure – so we can cut back on fungicide sprays.

Heat waves can be an issue – with the potential to sunburn fruit. This is where the Island comes into its own. Peak temperatures are 5 – 7 degrees below Melbourne thanks to the cooling effect of the Bay when northerlies are blowing.

So, thus far, the vintage is shaping up well. Fingers crossed for the all important February and March weather.

2012 Vintage wrap up

In mid February we will bottle the 2012 Shiraz, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay leaving the Cabernet and Merlot (both in barrel) as the only unfinished wines from 2012. Across the board, we are really happy with the 2012 wines and think it will go down as a top vintage.

One change this year is that we will do two vineyard specific Pinot Noir. Since 2010 we have managed and taken the fruit from the Silverwaters Vineyard. This is always fermented and matured separately and until this year our blending trials have always shown the blend of the two vineyards to be superior to each alone. This year the reverse was the case, so we will be bottling each individually – a McFees Road Vineyard and a Silverwaters Vineyard Pinot Noir.

Wine shows

As reported in the last Newsletter, we had really strong results at the the Gippsland Wine Show – taking out Trophies for Best Pinot Noir, Best Shiraz and Wine of Show. Good results continued at the Victorian Wines Show and the Royal Melbourne Wine Show. This is the first year that we have taken out gold medals at all three shows.

From listening to people at cellar door it seems that the show system is not all that well understood. Firstly, wine shows are not like the

Olympics – medals are awarded for wines reaching a given level of excellence in the view of the judges. Hence there can be multiple medals of each designation (bronze, silver and gold) awarded in each class – or none, if the judges believe the wines to not have the required merit.

Trophies are awarded to the wine the judges believe is the best of the Gold Medal wines in a given class or category.

Wine comings & goings

Newly released wines since the last newsletter are:

- **2012 Sauvignon Blanc**
- **2012 Pinot Gris**
- **2012 OD Riesling (replacing the 2011 Off Dry Sauvignon)** This is our first Riesling using fruit from our new vineyard. Really pleased with it and so were the judges at the Gippsland Wine Show, where it won a Silver Medal.
- **2011 Pinot Noir (replacing the 2008 CS)** – This wine medalled in both Shows in which we entered it – a Gold at Gippsland and a Bronze at the Victorian. Light and elegant and very Pinot Noir.
- **2011 Shiraz (replacing the 2010)** – one trophy winning shiraz replaced with another – the 2011 winning Best Shiraz at the Gippsland Wine Show and a Gold Medal at the Royal Melbourne.
- **2010 Cabernet Merlot (replacing the 2009 Merlot)** This is our first blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot – a style we plan to continue. There is a 2010 Merlot in bottle (not yet released) but in future we expect to be making a blend more often than a straight Merlot.
- **2011 Sparkling Shiraz** – we said we would have it ready for Christmas and we did. Its been on sale since mid December and has been even more successful than the last vintage (the 2008).

Email 'system'

We keep threatening to move to 'Mail Chimp' and then failing to get our act together. Hopefully this will be the last email in this form. The switch to the new system should give you more control over changing emails and/or removing yourselves from the system if you have tired of us.

But then again, we are about as reliable as the Melbourne Star in meeting deadlines on this one.

On-Line Sales

Thanks to those of you giving the on-line shop a go – we certainly get a kick when an order pops up in our emails.

We are interested in your feedback on the system.

Sorry this is a bit of a short Newsletter, but we have to get out and get those nets on. Better short than none at all – we hope.

Cheers from all at Purple Hen