

News from the Hen

No. 14 Winter 2013



Its Pre Grease



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Vintage No. 10

For us 2013 was a bit special as it was our 10th vintage. Also, it was possibly our warmest to date.

We say possibly because it depends what measure you take. By some measures 2010 was our warmest. But the bottom line is that 2013 saw our earliest finish – we were finished before the end of March for the first time. By our book, earliest must mean warmest.

Runs of high temperatures in February and March were key to the early harvest. In 2013, the maxima in these months were nearly 18% above their average for the preceding 9 years.

What about the wines?

Well for reds, warm years (like 2010) have generally been well regarded. The reds tend to have more tannin/structure – which is good if you like bigger more robust styles. Bigger tannins, deeper colour, bigger mouthfeel. This is the way things are looking for 2013 reds – quite a contrast to the last two vintages.

But not everyone is after 'big'.

It was interesting having our 2011 and 2010 Pinot Noirs on tasting together over the last four months (the 2011 being from our coldest and wettest vintage).

They are both very much Pinot Noir, but quite different in style – the 2011 being more delicate. At the tasting bench preferences have been split, some like big and robust, others prefer the lighter.

But Pinot Noir is rarely straight forward. A key event in this year's vintage was the 9 day run in in March, when the maximum temperature averaged nearly 31°C. For Pinot Noir the style of wine depended very much on whether it was picked before the hot run, in the middle or at the end. We had some in each of these categories – so we have some quite different batches of Pinot Noir from the same vintage.

What about the whites?

Well they were good in quality but many crops were a bit on the light side. We will make only small amounts of Chardonnay, Viognier and Blanc de Blanc in 2013.

We were able to access some extra Pinot Gris and Sauvignon Blanc grapes from a nearby vineyard, so we have been able to keep production of those lines up. At this stage the Pinot Gris is looking quite spectacular.

It's pre grease

Have a look at the photo on page one. Which is the oldest bit of equipment in the photo – the driver, the tractor or the seed drill?

If you answered, seed drill, you are correct. It is close to 100 years old and still in working order. It was originally built to be pulled by a couple of horses and has been adapted to tow behind a tractor. Ian, the proud owner and operator is the second oldest bit of equipment there.

But what does he mean – it's pre grease?

Well, the seed drill is so old it was built before grease was used to lubricate this type of farm machinery. Instead it has oil pots, each with

wicks to transport the oil, a drip at time, onto the gears and parts needing lubrication.

So what was it doing at the winery?

Sowing grass seed into the newly landscaped front of the cellar door. We have taken out the Delivery Road – mostly for safety reasons. It passed too close to the tables outside the cellar door. With a lot of cars turning in by mistake (instead of driving on for the parking) it was all a bit dangerous.

In addition to taking out the road, we have removed some vines and bamboos to open up the front lawned area. Better views to the Bay from around the Cellar Door and better for Music Days and such.

Petanque anyone?



In the photo above you will see a gravelled area where the Delivery Road used to be - nestled in next to the flowering gum and cyprus trees. The new petanque court.

We've commissioned some bench seats (from the builder of our outside tables) to go in near the playing area. So by the time the weather starts to improve in Spring we should have an expanded lawn area and a functioning petanque field. (Boules available from the Cellar Door)

Now its time to sort out some teams and get practising. We have issued a challenge to the RSL (it has Phillip Island's other petanque field) and await their response.

Wine comings & goings

The goings:

- **2012 Pinot Gris** – we are out of this. The 2013 will be bottled in July.
- **2010 Chardonnay** – this has the distinction of coming and going in between newsletters. We did not have a lot of it and it sold out quickly.
- **2010 Pinot Noir** – This is now off tasting as we have only a small quantity left.
- **2010 Blanc de Blanc** – this has been off tasting for a while but now is virtually sold out. We will pull a bit of the 2009 out of museum stocks but may run out completely before the 2011 is disgorged and available.

The comings:

- **2011 Chardonnay** - We are now switching to the 2011 vintage. This is a lovely Chardonnay, quite richly flavoured but with finesse and good acid. It has done consistently well at wine shows – see the [website](#) for details.

Going the stomp



We are often asked if we still stomp the grapes. Well as you can see from the above, we do sometimes. A small batch of whole bunch Pinot Noir ferment being 'plunged' by Pip. Going the stomp.

In the vineyard

The vines have pretty well shut down. The days are colder and wetter – it must be pruning time.

Adam and Pip have started, Rick has yet to get his hands to the secateurs – having an extended seniors moment and just can't remember where he put them. Probably because he hasn't used them for a couple of years. New ones on the way, he will be back in harness this year, at least a bit.

Museum musings

In tidying up the museum store we found a few wines that we had more of than we thought. The 2006 Chardonnay was a case in point and for a few weeks between the end of the 2010 and start of the 2011 Chardonnay we put this wine on for tasting and sale at cellar door.

The 2006 was a classy vintage and it has been great to show people what age does for a good Chardonnay.

Offering this at cellar door has been a bit of fun and well received. We will do this again from time to time – a 2006 Shiraz and 2008 Pinot Noir are the next cabs off the rank.

MailChimp – up and running

We are now up and running with 'MailChimp' to manage our email lists and send out emails individually. We hope you find the system working OK from your end. At the very least, you now have the ability to directly change your email or remove yourself from our list if you no longer wish to receive newsletters.

On-line sales update

On-line sales continue to tick away and we remain very interested in your feedback on the system. If you have any issues/problems please let us know.

Cheers from Purple Hen