

Winery News

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN AND OUT OF THE SHED

30 Years On

I had just finished Vintage 1985 with Grant Burge at the old Krondorf winery here in the Barossa, when the phone rang. On the other end of the phone was winemaking consultant Tony Jordan, who I had worked with in my previous job at the Mid Murray Cooperative Winery in Swan Hill Victoria.

One of Tony's clients was Arrowfield winery in the Upper Hunter Valley of NSW. He mentioned that they were looking for a winemaker and he had recommended me for the job. After a phone call and a meeting with the hierarchy at Arrowfield I packed my bags, loaded the car and was on my way.

The Upper Hunter is an interesting place. We know the Hunter Valley as a wine growing region, but in the Upper Hunter there seemed to be more activity under the ground than above, as coal mining was a big industry in this area. Most grape growing and winemaking was taking place in the Lower Hunter, but there were a couple of wineries in the north making a bit of noise back in the 80's. These were Rosemount and Arrowfield wineries. One was actually making a fair bit more noise than the other – Rosemount.

Arrowfield vineyards and winery were located 26 kms south east of Muswellbrook and 12 kms from a small town called Jerry's Plains. Both towns were a long way from anywhere. Rosemount was over the hill, 20 kms to the north-west of Arrowfield located near a town called Denman.

Most folk who worked at Arrowfield lived on the property. A good number of the vineyard staff lived in a few houses at the bottom of the hill close to the river, and the winery staff lived in a group of 5 houses alongside of each other, around 150 metres from the winery. Basically, we all worked and lived together.

For much of the year life on the property wasn't particularly lively. There were some local activities we did together, but most entertainment was off site. Come Vintage time life did pick up when a tribe of new vintage staff arrived. Harvest starts early up that way, typically in January. The Upper Hunter can be finished picking grapes before the Barossa starts. It's that early.



L-R – Wayne Dutschke, Dutschke Wines - Chris Vyenielo-Frank Family Vineyards, Napa Valley - Kim Crawford, Loveblock Wines (formerly of Kim Crawford Wines), Marlborough, New Zealand - Todd Graff, Frank Family Vineyards, Napa Valley and Rob "Sticks" Dolan, Rob Dolan Wines, Yarra Valley, VIC. And the two ladies in the mirror taking the photos are Susie Selby, Selby Wines, Healdsburg on the left and Brenda Dutschke on the right.

During January of 1986 I was busy running the bottling line, putting wine to bottle to help clear tank space, when the vintage casuals started to arrive. It was bit of an international mix with three Americans, a couple of New Zealanders, and one or two extra Aussies to make up the numbers.

It wasn't long before grapes started to arrive for processing. We were soon sorted into teams to work rotating 12 hour shifts. When not working it was a walk back to the appropriate house for a bite to eat and a short, but solid sleep before it was time to start work again. This routine went on for 5 or so weeks with a couple of quick trips to the supermarket to top up supplies and one or two journeys to the Beach Hotel in Newcastle slotted in between shifts. As you would imagine we all got to know each other pretty well by the end of vintage, working and living in such close quarters.

It could have all ended in tears, but amazingly enough a good number of us have remained great mates for 30+ years now. Over the years we have been to weddings, had regular visits while travelling overseas, and have heard occasional stories of each other's antics through the grapevine.

One of our good American buddies from those days, Chris Vyenielo, had the idea of us getting together to celebrate 30 years since that infamous 1986 Arrowfield vintage. We were all a bit slow to take the idea on, but we finally did it, celebrating our 30th anniversary with a 31 year reunion on the Hawaiian island of Maui this year.

With Chris and Brenda driving the search for a home that could accommodate 5 winemaking buddies and families, a home on the water's edge with a bed for each of the 16 people was found and booked for a week's stay last July. We spent our days paddling and swimming with turtles, watching fireworks on the 4th of July and even a couple of golf games were played. Families took turns to cook the evening meals and many late nights were had under the stars with the waves crashing in the background, sharing stories and plenty of laughs about life at Arrowfield and other things that have taken place since. Of course, much of this occurred while enjoying a glass or two of each other's precious drop.

A great time was had by all and now a plan is in place for more regular catch ups over the coming years.

Thought I had better mention that Arrowfield Winery has changed hands since those days and now operates under the name of Hollydene Wines. The homes that we lived in alongside of the winery are gone and so are many of the grapevines, all making room for racehorses.

One of the fun memories of our time back at Arrowfield was the great phrase from Todd Graff. Todd, having come from the Napa Valley, California was not used to the isolation of the winery on the hill in the Upper Hunter Valley. He was often heard saying; **"It's not the end of the earth, but you can see it from the top of the hill"**.



Taking a break from the paddleboards for a well earned Mai Tai.

Border Collie World Record

Every dog has its day. And on Sunday, the 24th of September, our beloved Cody had his.

Border Collies from around South Australia gathered for a world record attempt for the most Border Collies gathered in one location. Organised by the Border Collie Owners of South Australia, hundreds of black and white 4-legged friends (and a few others of various colours) gathered on the Willaston Oval about 15 minutes from our little winery on Gods Hill Road to try to beat the previous world record. Set in 2013 by celebrity vet, Dr. Katrina Warren, the record earned then was 513 Border Collies. This year, Cody helped to make up the numbers and was very excited to meet the other dogs. Many of which could unknowingly be brothers, sisters, cousins, or other distant relatives meeting for the first time.... similar to what happens during our cellar door period with the visiting Dutschke's, but without all of the sniffing. Aside from one incident when Cody tried to get fresh with a lovely lass, he was very well behaved and so was the whole pack. Plenty of poo bags were passed out to keep the oval tidy, treats were on hand to reward their good behaviour and in the end, 576 was the record smashing number. The Guinness Book of World Records doesn't recognise breed specific records but they still made it into the good books of all those who attended.



Cody doing his part for doggo world records.

2017 Vintage Summary



Spring and summer of 2016 were wetter and cooler than average for the Barossa. Weather conditions we haven't seen for many years. All was set for a healthy-looking Vintage.

It was wonderful to see the grass and vines all green at the same time. The moisture in the ground gave support to the vines for good fruit set in November. Vine canopies showed healthy growth and of course the rain assisted in replenishing the subsoil moisture. With extra moisture available, grapevine yields were expected to be higher than we've seen over recent years.

With anticipated higher yields and cooler conditions it was likely too that we would be starting Vintage somewhat later than we have in recent years. Over the last 10 years, we have always started harvesting in February, (and often finished in February too). This year we were on target to only start grape picking in March. One has got to look back to 2006 to find vintage starting in March.

The 2017 Vintage for us started on the 15th of March (a month later than 2016) with the harvesting of Shiraz from Wally's Block and Peter and Sharon Gilmore's 'Max's Vineyard', both being components of our GHR Shiraz. Interestingly, it was almost the same date as when we harvested the same blocks in 2006 (17th & 21st of March 2006).

Weather conditions remained on the milder side during harvest with the odd sprinkle of rain. The picking of grapes was steady without being rushed, even giving us one week without picking any grapes at all. Our last pick for 2017 took place with the harvesting of St Jakobi Shiraz on the 7th of April, just 2 days before a cool change came with 8mm of rain falling.

In 2002 this same block was harvested on the 22nd of April. (2002 goes down as being the coolest summer on record). As mild as it was during the 2017 harvest we still finished a couple weeks ahead of where we did in 2002. No records broken this year!

Overall, we are very happy with the quality of 2017. Higher yields of very good quality grapes gave every reason for both growers and winemakers to be happy. It's also quite nice to have a few extra barrels of this juicy red gear in the shed.

Cheers!

Barossa. Be Consumed.

Back in July, Nathan and Lloyd made the trek from Adelaide to Melbourne to be a part of the inaugural Barossa Be Consumed event.

44 wineries, along with a dozen local Barossan food growers and producers and 1,000 ticket holders all flocked to the Meat Market in North Melbourne for a day of immersion in the Barossan way of life. This also included the opportunity to play on a Kegel bowling lane, custom built for the event. And for something totally different, we also celebrated International Penuche Fudge Day with you all with a plate of fudge that Lloyd made.

The event was busy, it was loud, and it was loads of fun. Lloyd and Nathan had a great time in Melbourne, sharing what we do here at The Shed with everyone that dropped by. We saw some familiar faces in the crowd and met plenty of new folk. Thank you to those that came past.

The day highlighted plenty of great Barossa wines, and provided a literal taste of life here in the Barossa. It was fantastic to be involved in this idea from the beginning. Barossa Be Consumed will return to Melbourne next year, and you're likely to see us in another east coast city, too (sorry Perth!). We'll be sure to keep you up to date as more details are announced.



The many winemakers and producers at Barossa. Be Consumed.

Cellar Door Dates

This year we opened The Shed for our annual Cellar Door on the 26th of May, finishing on the 12th of June. We were busy from start to finish, and once all was said and done, we realised that this has been our busiest Cellar Door period yet. A massive thank you to all that came along and made the three weeks fly by.

It's wonderful to meet new folk, and it's incredibly humbling to see so many people who have visited us here every year since we started back in 2010.

We look forward to seeing you all again next year for Cellar Door between May 25th and June 11th, or anytime during the year for a private tasting by appointment.



Dutschke Medal

It's known to some that the AFL's Brownlow Medal has a nickname of The Charlie, being named in honour of Charles Brownlow, former president of the VFL and club secretary of the Geelong Footy Club for 38 years. It's not known to many, but the **South Australian Women's Football League has the Dutschke Medal**. Named after the founding president, Gina Dutschke, the medal is awarded to the Best and Fairest player from Division 1. Perhaps this should be given the nickname "The Gina!" Maybe it already has?

In the early 90's, Gina Dutschke, who is the wife of Wayne's cousin Michael, became frustrated watching the men's footy, because she too wanted to play. She plucked up the courage and called "KG" (Ken Cunningham), a recognised Adelaide radio personality and ex-football umpire and asked if there were any women's Aussie rules football leagues in Adelaide. He said there wasn't and much to her dismay KG suggested she take up soccer or jogging instead. Wrong answer! And so began the South Australian Women's Football League (SAWFL).

Gina was able to get the ball rolling with publicity, phone calls and setting up a round robin of scratch matches for any girls that wanted to give footy a shot. In that first year, 6 teams were organised, an administration committee set up with Gina as the founding president, legends were born, life members were inducted and awards were won. Fast forward to 2017 and there are now 27 clubs, 46 teams and over 1500 registered players in the SAWFL, and starting this year, a women's national AFL competition. **Well done! Good on you Gina!**

The 2017 winner of the Dutschke Medal is Rachelle Martin, a first-year player from the West Adelaide Football Club, pictured here with Gina Dutschke. Rachelle debuted this season after moving from the Yorke Peninsula to Adelaide to attend university. She also won the Rookie of the Year award.



Scoreboard

2014 Oscar Semmler Shiraz

96 points, James Halliday Wine Companion 2018
95 points, Tyson Stelzer, Wines of the Year 2017

2014 St Jakobi Shiraz

95 points, James Halliday Wine Companion 2017
95 points, Tyson Stelzer, Wines of the Year 2017

2014 Sami Cabernet

92 points, James Halliday Wine Companion 2017
91 points, Tyson Stelzer, WBM Magazine July/Aug 2017

2014 80 Block Merlot

90 points, Tyson Stelzer, WBM Magazine July/Aug 2017

2015 GHR Neighbours Shiraz

94 points, James Halliday Wine Companion 2018

2015 Uncle Shiraz Merlot Cabernet

91 points, James Halliday Wine Companion 2018

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