

# All things infield

## Newsletter

28 February 2009

### FIRE SEASON

The on-going Victorian bushfires were a probably a timely reminder to all SA grape growers of our vulnerability to bush fire in this state. While some Victorian vineyards were ravaged by fire and there were many near misses only time will tell about damage sustained to vines by the effects of extreme heat and smoke. Fortunately none of our clients were affected by the fire in the Angle Vale area at the beginning of vintage.

Infield extends sincere condolences to all affected by the Victorian bushfires and wishes the wine industry in the effected areas a speedy recovery. There would be few among us that haven't taken a moment to reflect on how precious life is.



### CRICKET

Apparently the ANZAC tradition is still alive and well. When times were tough for farmers affected by the on-going drought, New Zealanders billeted Australian families to give respite from the difficulties they were facing.

Reports have it that at least one NZ grape grower is offering the same to any Victorian family in the wine industry. So yet again Kiwis show they *can* offer something for Australian welfare other than simply allowing themselves to be decimated at the cricket every summer.

### VINTAGE 2009

The season got off to a hot start in more ways than one. Another record heat wave did nothing to promote our usual congeniality and tempers were frayed more in anticipation of problems, than the reality. Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2009, may be long remembered in Infield folklore.

Tom has this to add to the mix >>>

*It is already evident that Vintage '09 will be remembered as **hard** on many levels. Hard on wineries who watched a*

*significant heat wave in January and February adversely affect fruit quality, let alone the global marketing issues they have had to wrestle with trying to sell their wine. Hard on growers, many of whom have seen great looking fruit deteriorate rapidly and tonnages diminish. Hard on grape harvesting machinery and personnel having to deal with the pressure of a concentrated vintage yet again. The combination of low yields, together with low prices is no fun for anyone.*

*This is a year when all of us involved in farming will share a bit of pain. Let's look forward to a much better year next year.*



*From my observations, the Adelaide Hills is far better off than many other regions and may be the "dark horse" into the future.*

### COMPANY PUBLICITY

There are a number of brilliant newsletters and industry publications that come to my attention. In a moment of inspiration I took on the task of compiling our inaugural newsletter that many of you got a copy of around Christmas time last year. My contribution to this process has been to keep my eyes and ears open, learn how to use Publisher, make friends with our colour printer and master the pdf software. Somewhere along the way I also acquired the ability to string a few sentences together.



In all these things there is a degree of plagiarism, not only in the presentation but the overall perspective of the newsletter. A close family member who designs publications for a living sees this as quite inevitable, so it's probably best to look on this as a compliment, if you see something of "yours" in one of our publications. They do say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

In summary, it is our life experience that flavours our writing.

## PEARLS OF WISDOM

“With anything to do with farming you need to be very patient if you want to make any money.” - Saroop S Johal

“If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem.” - Sydney J Harris

## AND ON THINGS ADMIN

(I only mention this because many of you are also employers) Two very interesting publications have come my way on the subject of staff supervision:

From 1943; and on the subject of employing women workers in the transport industry, “Be reasonably considerate about using strong language around women. Even though a girl’s husband or father may swear vociferously, she’ll grow to dislike a place of business where she hears too much of this.” Hmmm ....

From 1970 from a text book titled “Supervision”, I also note the following excerpt ... “most people are neurotic to some degree” (nice to be normal) and gives an example of an operator who meticulously arranges his work place in the same manner every day, who can’t begin his job unless everything is exactly as he wants it. The upside is that these people generally know what they’re talking about but the down side: if they go down, we all may go down with them. ‘Tiz truly a fine line between having a conscientious approach to your work and becoming a full-blown neurotic.

By the way, this book belonged to our erstwhile General Manager, known to have the contented aura of retirement of late.



## INTERNATIONALE & CLAIM TO FAME

Not many of us on the staff can claim to have appeared on radio or television. That honour previously belonged to our very distinguished Managing Director, Tom Ayers, who was a rural broadcaster on ABC radio for a spell in the 80’s.

More recently our Viticulture Manager, Tim Bartsch, had a cameo on the ABC television show, Foreign Correspondent. Tim featured on an episode discussing the wine industry in Thailand in Oct 2008.

Over a convivial lunch and a few glasses of wine Tim was recently invited back to Thailand by the Lohitnavy family to assist setting up their family winery, “Granmonte”.

Tim gave me the low down on his trip >>>

*Arriving in Thailand I knew what I was getting myself in for, as I had worked for the Lohitnavy family a few years ago when their wine was made at an off site winery only a few kilometers down the road, (a convenient location considering there are only 7 wineries in Thailand). The tropical forest surrounding the vineyard was tinder dry and burning unchecked as it does every dry season, yet animal life appeared to thrive in the conditions. What I hadn’t really grasped during our original discussion was how unequipped the winery actually was, no lights, no power, no water, no tanks, the list goes on.*

*The majority of equipment and tanks had been delivered, but fruit was just over a week from harvest and experienced winery labor is very hard to find in the middle of Thailand. My Thai language skills are similarly non existent, as is the English ability of rural Thai workers, so winery operations were explained with a lot of pointing and gesturing, and the help of Nikki Lohitnavy as translator, when she was available.*

*In typical Thai fashion tanks had to be moved into the winery horizontally to fit through the doorway, and then stood upright by hand and moved into place. Luckily labor is cheap in Thailand and very easy to get hold of, even if their work ethic does reflect the pay rates. The arrival of the final pieces of equipment together with the German consultant who designed the winery was most welcome.*

*The final tanks were then able to be moved into place and we hired a generator so that we could test the machinery that needed to be fully operational in only a few days. To everyone’s relief our on-site sparky was able to fix any problems we encountered and the winery had the basics we needed to receive fruit. We decide to make two tonnes of grape juice two days before the wine*

grapes were due to come in, to test the press and all other machinery one more time. This process ran relatively smoothly although the bottling took a little bit longer than expected and only finished at 4.30am.

Two days later we processed 10T of Chenin Blanc and started to bring in the Shiraz. both of which were ripening at the same time. These two varieties are the mainstay varieties of the Thai wine industry, due to their relative hardiness and vigour. This was my final day in the winery and Thailand, and walking out of the winery it was unrecognisable from what it had been a week and a half earlier even if it was still missing its windows and doors.

Hopefully Tim will be given the opportunity to give us a follow up further down the track, and thank you Aunty ABC.



**TECHNICAL NOTE: Harvest dates in tropical viticulture are primarily controlled by the pruning date, because the vines never go into dormancy.**

#### THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT & THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

Every one has their opinion on why, and I've been on this planet long enough to know that it is always those who presides over difficult times who are blamed for the difficult times.

The solutions offered up are not always to everyone's liking, with a great deal of argument as to the pros and cons, populist decisions & etc. But as Harry Truman once famously said, "the buck stops here", but shouldn't that apply to us all?

Although nobody really wants to admit it, a lot of businesses are busy number crunching, chasing up unpaid debts, and talking about cash flow, and this industry is no different. We like to please you but during difficult times we simply have to stand together, and as recent events in Victoria have shown us, we still have the ability to do so.



Infield has traditionally offered its services at very competitive prices and we are loath for that to change. Our suppliers depend on us as much as we depend on them and it takes a while for money to filter to the bottom of the food chain. Asking us to do work for you implies an obligation to both parties to keep the wheels in motion.

Researched, compiled, edited and written (except where otherwise acknowledged) by Wanda Hopkins, Office Manager, Infield.

A special thanks to all who contributed.



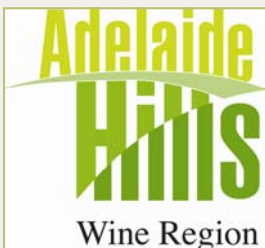
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Proud to be part of the  
Adelaide Hills Wine Region

Meeting the SCI HACCP food safety  
standards for the growing, harvesting  
and dispatch of wine grapes

