



# Eltham & District Winemakers Guild Inc.

Press Cuttings  
November 2006

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**The Guild encourages the responsible consumption of alcohol**

The Guild meets on the last Friday of each month  
at the Eltham Living & Learning Centre at 8 pm  
Next meeting: 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2006

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## Next Meeting

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The main focus of the meeting will be a training session on how to judge wines and how to be a wine steward. It is directed to those who will act as associate judges and/or wine stewards at the wine show. Neil Johannesen has offered to lead us on this journey of discovery. Neil is an obvious choice - if you examine his face closely, you will remark on how closely his nose resembles the shape of a wine glass. That is because he has it stuck into so many standard-tasting-wine glasses to sniff up the elusive aromas that his phenotype has overcome his genotype. I am trying to say that Neil has vast experience to take on this role and it will be an informative and interesting night.

In addition, we have been offered the opportunity to order some cheap but quality red grapes from a vineyard near Bendigo (see Trading Barrel for more information). Damien has made wine from here and he has offered to provide a sample of his wine to help you to make a decision. We need to collect orders because I understand that the excess fruit will be dropped to the ground, elevating the quality of the remainder. For those not attending the meeting, please note the article in this newsletter.

Please bring along wines for tasting. Because of the number of members and the large number of wines available I had to cut short the tastings so that we get home at a reasonable hour. If you have previously been asked to return home with your wine un-tasted, remind me at the start of the meeting so that your wines receive a priority at this meeting.

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## Presidents Press

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*George Wright - President*

The big event for the Guild is almost at hand. This is a very busy time of year for the show committee and the many who have volunteered their time to assist. There are many prizes and lots of interest. A number of distinguished guests have accepted invitations to attend, indicating that the show is attracting attention and the reputation of the show is growing. That's no wonder. We claim the largest amateur wine show in the southern hemisphere (and nobody had disputed our claim) and can be proud of the quality of the wines on display.

An obvious benefit of the show is the stimulus for each of us to improve our winemaking techniques. What is emerging is an equally important benefit. There are groups of people making wines together and individuals challenging each other with friendly bets. I have seen barbed emails crossing back and forth between individuals who denigrate the attempts of others to spur them on to greater outcomes. Some are so vitriolic one could be excused if they were read as venomous. It's only that I know they are created in fun do I recognise that this show had generated great social bonding.

I remember the first wine show I attended which was before I started making wine. I found the lists of judges comments posted around the tasting tables very instructive. There are few opportunities to taste a great variety of wines and compare the judge's comments with your own tastebuds. Commercial tasting notes are useless as they are edited marketing notes. We have the opportunity for unbiased assessment by experts and a vast range of varieties and styles to experience. Just as important is our ability to assess our own wines in the context of the opinions of experts and in the company of friends.

To top it off, we are probably world leaders in information processing. I don't know of another wine show in the world where judges evaluate wines on one day and their comments are published and available on the next so that visitors and winemakers have access to the detailed information at the public tastings. This is due to the wizardry of Tim Ross and Andrew Gillam and the organisational skills of the Wine Show Committee.

It's a lot of work and it's a celebration of our craft and our endeavours. I congratulate you all in advance because the real benefits are in the process of creation and that has been exemplary. The consumption side will be fun.

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## Volunteers Needed for Wine Show

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*Mario Fantin*

I am currently preparing duty rosters for the Wine Show on behalf of the Committee. The Show requires a massive effort to run and we are looking for every member to contribute in whatever way they can. The more everybody gets involved, the less workload there is per person, and the better the chance that everybody can enjoy the event.

We require volunteers for each of the three days associated with the Wine Show as follow:

- **Friday 1 December 2006** - Help with setting up the venue from about 4pm onwards.
- **Saturday 2 December 2006** - Help from 8am onwards with stewarding, catering, data entry etc.
- **Sunday 3 December 2006** - Help with front door duty, stewarding etc (30 to 45 minute rosters only per person)

Note: Associate Judges are selected separately by the Wine Show Committee on the basis of a general assessment of a member's availability, experience and contribution to Guild activities.

If you have not indicated your availability to me yet, you need to let me know ASAP but no later than by the 21 November 2006.

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## Meet the Editor

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*Sue King*

I am known by many names: Mum, Sue, Ken's wife, and yes, that it is Ken King - past president. However, this is the first time that I have carried the title of Editor. I volunteered for this role as I am currently studying Professional Writing and Editing at NMIT and thought it would be a great way to get a little experience. So bear with me as I endeavour to fill the barrels of previous Editor's. I am contactable on 9712 0316 or [sue\\_ellott@yahoo.com.au](mailto:sue_ellott@yahoo.com.au) and look forward to your submissions.

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## A Warm Spring or a Frosty Start to the Season?

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*George Wright*

I awoke to a fine morning on Sunday, October 22 - cloudless with the promise of yet another perfect spring day in Melbourne. It was cold but appeared unremarkable as the drought had produced a series of bright fine mornings. It took several days to register how cold it was.

Several days later I visited my vines to mow between the rows. As I'm a volunteer in the local brigade I was pretty sure there had not been a fire in my vineyard but I had to look carefully to verify the fact. The vigorous leaders were black, the stems drooping and the leaves brown and curled. Was it a fungus plague? It took several minutes to recognise that it was frost. I had a light dusting of frost early after budburst but it was nothing like this. This was a wipe-out.

Damn. Two years previously my resident mob of kangaroos developed a liking for grapes after almost a decade of symbiotic co-habitation. I provided green grass between the rows and they gave me the joys of nature in my backyard. After I had erected my nets, they used them as trampolines, making gigantic holes to let the birds in for a feed. The foxes then entered to catch the birds. By detailed examination of scats and vines I worked out that the foxes ate up to the fruiting wire and the roos and birds cleaned out the remainder.

Last year I thought I was prepared. I strung a wire from my house to the vineyard to provide power for an electric fence. This was difficult as the slopes are twenty degrees and the forest makes for good supports for the wire but the leaves tend to short out the electricity. I don't recommend climbing up an extension ladder on 20 degree slopes but I did manage to complete the task without riding my ladder as a surfboard down into the valley. The vineyard was corralled in electricity.

I don't know what went wrong. Perhaps the wire was shorted out; perhaps there were insufficient wires around the vines; perhaps the roos jumped over the wires. Whatever the reason I lost last season's grapes also.

I spent last winter with my nets rolled out along the driveway as I sewed up the holes. This was going to be the make-or-break season where I grew grapes or the roos regained their habitat. We won't know the outcome this year because there will be no grapes for the roos or me.

Indeed, because the fruiting buds are set in the year prior to fruiting, I have also lost most of next year's crop also. We'll have to await 2008 to test the super-doooper roo-scooter electric fence.

While I pine for my half acre of vines, my heart goes out to commercial grape-growers in Victoria who also lost their crop. For me - this is a hobby and does not dramatically affect my lifestyle. For others - it is their livelihood. It's been difficult enough with the glut of grapes and wine. A famine on top of that for selected vineyards is catastrophic.

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## The Four Liquid Stages of Life

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Zenon Kolacz



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## Climate Change to hit Australian Wines

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Sue King - AAP, Monday 23/10/06

Global warming will force changes to Australia's A\$4.8 billion wine export industry, threatening the very existence of some varieties as temperatures rise, a scientist said on Monday. With Australia in the grip of its worst recorded drought and heading into a searing summer, the country's biggest science organisation, the CSIRO, said wine growers needed to re-think plans to cope with climate change or face possible ruin. "With earlier harvest in a warmer climate, the temperature of the ripening period in some regions will become too warm to produce balanced wines from some or maybe all grape varieties growing there now," lead researcher Leanne Webb told Reuters. Webb said temperatures in most Australian wine regions were projected to rise by as much as 1.7 degrees Celsius (3 degrees Fahrenheit) by 2030. That in turn, she said, would reduce grape quality in some regions by 12 to 57 percent, with the temperamental Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc grape varieties, as well as some Chardonnay varieties, almost disappearing from Australia's mainland. "What we will have to do is select different varieties to plant. The industry may need to breed grape varieties to suit these warmer climates," Webb said.

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## 1880 Wine Judging

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*Stan Gower*

At the 1880 International exhibition in the Royal Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne, there was a wine competition. The Aussies got "duded", but won out in the end!!

Wine was illustrative of a general problem, that of balancing expertise and impartiality. The commissioners had anticipated that the exhibiting countries would supply jurors in those classes in which they were interested, thereby relieving them of responsibility. When this did not happen, they had to fall back on the services of interested locals who were not themselves exhibitors. Chairman of the twenty-two strong wine Jury was the little-known merchant and commission agent, Bryan Champney Burstall. He was joined by nominated individuals from Britain, Austria, France and Italy. Among its local members were the Chief Inspector of Distilleries, I. A. Moody; the Melbourne wine merchant Henry Gooch; and the European born Australian winemakers Charles Brache and Leonce Frere.

The judging was an arduous affair. A total of 1,502 wines from thirteen countries required assessment. These included wines from Victoria (357), New South Wales (159), South Australia (149), New-Zealand (33), and Western Australia (13). Among the international entries, the main exhibitors were France (256), Germany (209) and Italy (195), with additional entries from Austria, Portugal, Spain, South Africa and California. Even with three section teams, the task occupied sixty meetings, which suggests that some members experienced difficulties in assessing the wines. All were tasted 'blind', the jurors having no particulars before them save the country of origin (itself something of a giveaway to a professional palate). Probably, the biggest problem was not lack of expertise but the number of judges. Concern had been expressed that experienced and professional tasters would not dominate the jury, but the results proved doubly controversial when local winemakers learned that a second-division award was the highest category any new world wine could aspire to. Only wines from 'world-renowned European vineyards' were permitted to receive first-class awards. Yet Australian wines had received first-class awards at Paris in 1878. The Victorian vigneron Adolph Mueller claimed that 'the gentlemen of the jury have aimed a severe blow at one of our most important industries by the announcement, implied by their verdict, that Australia cannot produce, or at least has not yet produced, a first class wine'. In their defence the jurors claimed that they had sought a special category for the elite European wines but had been refused this.

The controversy coloured, and may well have provoked, the (Australian) wine industry's great triumph at the exhibition. This was the prize of Emperor Wilhelm I of Germany. The gift was the responsibility of UrFrancis Reuleaux, the indefatigable chief commissioner for Germany. It was to be awarded to 'the most Meritorious Australasian exhibit' and consisted of a silver table set of seven pieces for the outstanding Australasian exhibitor as selected by the chairmen of each of the thirty six jury sections. Each section could nominate one entrant, although only nineteen believed they had entrants of sufficient worth. The finalists therefore represented the best of Australasian entrants in the exhibition and an additional small gold medal and certificate were offered to each to mark their success.

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# Zen and the Art of Amateur Winemaking

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Chris Ramsay

As I was bereft of inspiration for a wine related article this month, I thought about a story I was reading on the Web during the week that a work colleague had referred to ... so for a start, here is the story.

## Learning the Status Quo

Start with a cage containing five monkeys.

In the cage, hang a banana on a string and put stairs under it. Before long, a monkey will go to the stairs and start to climb towards the banana.

As soon as he touches the stairs, spray all of the monkeys with cold water.

After a while, another monkey will make an attempt with the same response - all of the monkeys are sprayed with cold water. Keep this up for several days.

Turn off the cold water.

If, later, another monkey tries to climb the stairs, the other monkeys will try to prevent it even though no water sprays them.

Now, remove one monkey from the cage and replace it with a new one.

The new monkey sees the banana and wants to climb the stairs. To his horror, all of the other monkeys attack him. After another attempt and attack, he knows that if he tries to climb the stairs, he will be assaulted.

Next, remove another of the original five monkeys and replace it with a new one. The newcomer goes to the stairs and is attacked. The previous newcomer takes part in the punishment with enthusiasm.

Replace the third original monkey with a new one. The new one makes it to the stairs and is attacked as well. Two of the four monkeys that beat him have no idea why they were not permitted to climb the stairs, or why they are participating in the beating of the newest monkey.

After replacing the fourth and fifth original monkeys, all the monkeys which have been sprayed with cold water have been replaced. Nevertheless, no monkey ever again approaches the stairs.

Why not?

**"Because that's the way it's always been done around here."**

Source: <http://www.wowzone.com/5monkeys.htm>

As I was reflecting on the story, suddenly the relationship with wine drinking occurred to me ... surely this must be the only explanation for why Pinot drinkers like Pinot ?!?!?

Thank you, thank you - I'll be here all week ...

Actually, I think I'd better leave town - all the Pinot drinkers will be after me ...

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## Trading Barrel

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**BUY / SELL SERVICE FOR MEMBERS** - Ads need to be lodged with the editor by the 15th of the month to be included in the next Newsletter.

### Medal Stickers

If you would like self adhesive Gold, Silver or Bronze medal stickers for your Wine Show prize winning wines, you can purchase them from the Mario Fantin. Please send a stamped self addressed envelope together with payment to 50 Websters Road, Templestowe, 3106. Cost is 3 for \$1.

### Great Grape Opportunity

Kevin Furness

I have spoken to Joan Carr who has a vineyard near Bendigo. She will be very interested to hear from Guild Members, to reserve your grapes for 2007. When I contacted her she was in the Vineyard checking on my row of Merlot, this I think emphasises her commitment.

Available grapes are; Shiraz, Cabernet and Merlot. The price is likely to be under \$1/kilo.

Perhaps we could choose a day for picking and make it a social event? We pick up here pretty early compared to you southern icebergs.

George has indicated that he will take orders at the meeting. If you can't make it to the meeting email me before 7 December at [furnfare@hotmail.com](mailto:furnfare@hotmail.com).

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