

Australian Wine Tasting

19th September 2026

by Ormond Smith

While it may not have been an ad verbatim “G’day coppers”, there was certainly the usual warm Goustevin greeting for members and guests as they descended on Connetable Nicol’s house in Inverness for the much anticipated Australian wine tasting. With an interesting selection of varietals from wide ranging vineyards, the evening would certainly show the that country’s wine industry is not all about Chardonnay and jammy, high alcohol Shiraz. On arrival we were offered a glass of **2024 Pikes (Traditionale) Riesling** from **Clare Valley**, north of Adelaide in South Australia in the Polish Hill sub-region. The 2024 vintage is the acclaimed Pike family owned winery’s 40th consecutive Riesling release and has the ability to age for between 6 and 10 years. 100% free run juice is used for this top quality wine, vivid and bright in the glass with aromas of white floral and kaffir (Asian) limes. The palate is intense and concentrated with mouth-watering acidity and the finish is lingering



Connetable Nicol outlines the format of the Tasting



Rapt attention is being paid

and satisfying, seemingly as refreshing (and according to one wine critic) as satisfying as crunching down on an ice cube.....each to their own!!

Following the Connetable’s welcome and explanatory comments on format of the evening, Events Committee chair Caroline Duncan gave a brief discourse on the selection and characteristics of the tasting wines (for which she had undertaken all the research and procurement) and the accompanying canapés, referred to as “fusion canapés” as they combine, in this case, Asian spices and ingredients – almost traditional Oz “amuse-bouches”. Our thanks and appreciation to Caroline for

the amount of effort she put into creating the many and varied delectable tit-bits.

The opening wine of the tasting was from the Western Australia region, the extreme south-westerly point of the continent, from the **Xanadu** vineyards of **Margaret River**. This **2025 Yarri-Karri Semillon/ Sauvignon Blanc Blend** comes from a wine area with temperatures very similar to Bordeaux with boutique wine estates making top notch Cabernet Sauvignons and Chardonnays. There are also high quality Sauvignons Blancs and in Bordeaux fashion, they are often blended with Semillon. The **Xanadu Winery** was established in 1977 on land belonging to the indigenous Wadandi people of the Noongar Nation. The blend is 70% Sauvignon Blanc and 30% Semillon and the nose exhibited enticing citrus and basil notes, the palate unfolded with lime cordial nuances combined with hints of

lemongrass, nectarine and melon flavours. A most enticing wine which combined well with Asian fishcake canapés.

Our second white wine of the evening was something of a surprise. Fiano wines are normally associated with Campania in southern Italy and also Sicily, producing wines with a rich and almost waxy texture with potential ageing. This **2021** example is grown on a single estate in **Clare Valley** and is imported and produced by Gluck & Bray in the UK and retails under the name “**Change of Scene**” **Fiano**, the name emanating from an inspiring road trip taken by the winemakers and a change of direction from making classic Clare Valley Riesling to something different. Interestingly, the wine is produced by two pickings of the grapes, the first picking fermented on the skins with the second picking taking place slightly later and pressed prior to fermentation.....the result – stone and orchard fruit character with a marvellous textural feel on the palate derived from the contact with the grape skins. The Good Wine Shop describes it as “a gem of a Fiano from Australia. A nose full of sweet ripe golden plums as well as pure and crisp nectarine and pear. The palate has bite and a crisp texture”. The writer would not disagree!

As conversation flowed and opinions shared on the white wines, we moved onto wine 3 of the tasting and the first red of the evening, a **2021 Moorooduc Estate Pinot Noir** from the **Mornington Peninsula**, south-east of Melbourne in Victoria. As a hint to the quality of Pinot Noir from this state, each year the Mornington Peninsula hosts an International Pinot Noir Celebration and for obvious reasons, several of Burgundy’s better wine producers are usually invited. They tend to arrive in Australia’s greatest concentration of Pinot Noir vineyards with an air of scepticism.....but leave impressed! Founded in 1982 by Richard and Jill MacIntyre, Moorooduc Estate is a small family run business that has developed an enviable reputation for complex and food friendly wines – they were among the very earliest grape prospectors to see the potential of making great Pinot Noir on the peninsula. Their land is organically dry farmed with minimum use of chemicals and with wild yeasts fermentation (total of 20 days on the skins) and minimal intervention winemaking as well as a nod to traditional Burgundian techniques, they allow their wines to express their site terroir, production being around only 5000 cases per vintage. Onto the wine itself, bright garnet in the glass with a nose that exudes red cherries, violets and an earthy complexity with just a hint of liquorice and spicy notes.....while on the palate cherry fruits, some savoury undertones and firm velvety tannins lead into a long, mouthwatering aftertaste. In this case, the phrase “class in a glass” accurately describes this Pinot Noir!

The fourth tasting wine of the evening was again something a bit different – a **2015 Yangarra Estate Mourvèdre**, this wine coming from **McLaren Vale, South Australia**, just south of Adelaide and benefitting from its Mediterranean type climate and diverse soil compositions. The actual Estate vineyards were started in 1946 by Bert Smart (and named after his wife Yangarra) and are in the north-eastern corner of the wine region, nestling in the shadow of the northern end of the Sellick Hills Mountain Range : 250 acres of vines in 35 individual blocks spread amongst 420 acres of creeks, native vegetation and nature corridors. It’s here in their state-of-the-art winery that “*Australian Winemaker of the Year 2016*” Pete Fraser crafts his elegant wines, full of concentration, complexity and texture. Yangarra is an aboriginal word meaning “from the earth” and Yangarra Estate is devoted to producing wines from the best grape varieties of the southern Rhone valley in France and its combination of rare geologies, moderate altitude, abundant sunshine and cool evening breezes make it perfect for growing varieties that thrive in these moderate maritime environments. To the wine itself : well aged at eleven years and deep purple in the glass, the nose has hints of black fruits, eucalyptus and star anise which may sound too extreme but in fact harmonise beautifully. It is bright and spicy, even perfumed and the palate exudes gamey meats, leather, wet earth and wild

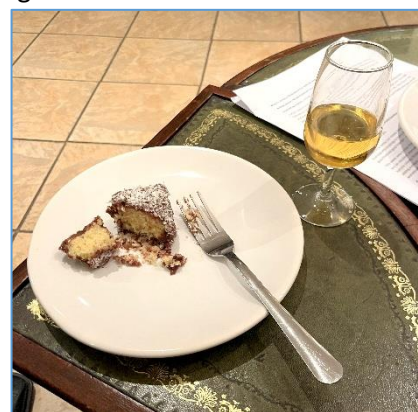
Mediterranean herbs with a touch of smoke, leading to a satisfying aftertaste. It was so satisfying that it seemed a shame that we were limited to a “mere” 50ml each.....but at £26 a bottle, quite understandable.



The very appetising Barossa Beef Stew

The evening continued with the serving of the main supper course, perhaps appropriately named “*Barossa Beef Stew*” and prepared by Steve Hulme of Prestige Highland Catering (and not a single kangaroo was harmed in the preparation!). This succulent and filling repast was accompanied by a **2022 Hollick Estates “Tannery Block” Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot** from the south of **Coonawarra, South Australia** and very close to the state line with Victoria. Horrick Estates was founded in 1975 in Coonawarra’s unique “terra rossa” soils (well drained reddish clay) and pays tribute to Bordeaux blends with intense Cabernet Sauvignon softened with Merlot. In fact Cabernet Sauvignon is king amongst the grape varieties in this region. Deep ruby red in the glass, the Cabernet in particular offers hints of eucalyptus, menthol and graphite that is unique to this little region of Australia. whilst the Merlot offers rounded, plummy fruit to make for a blend that drinks as well on its own as with food. It’s matured in oak creating a rich, nutty flavour with cassis notes and soft tannins that compliment rich red meats and roasted dishes perfectly. It paired with the Beef Stew perfectly and was well received by the attendees.

The repast was rounded off with a dish named “Sticky”, a Lamington –a traditional Australian cake made from square pieces of sponge cake, dipped in chocolate and rolled in desiccated coconut and this proved to be a most popular offering and our thanks to both Caroline and Sallie Fraser for their expertise in producing this delightful dessert. To accompany this was a **2020 De Bortoli DB Family Reserve Botrytis Semillon** dessert wine from **New South Wales**. The De Bortoli vineyards are located in Bilbul, near to Griffith in the Riverina area of the state, an area of flat plains and a warm, fertile environment which, under specific wet autumn conditions encourages *Botrytis cinerea* (noble rot) to concentrate the sugars in the Semillon grapes. Interestingly, the tag line on the De Bortoli website reads “good wines, good food and good friends”.....very much aligned with our Goustevin principles! The noble rot dehydrates the grapes on the vine, concentrating the sugar content (as noted above) whilst adding a unique marmalade flavour profile to the wine. Light orange in the glass, both the nose and taste exhibited dried apricot and citrus flavours (reminiscent of mild marmalade), sufficient acidity to balance out the sweetness and a long delightful aftertaste. Interestingly this wine would also accompany fruity desserts, blue cheeses or pâté.....but I digress. A delightful climax to a most interesting and enjoyable evening. Our thanks are due to Nicol and Beverley for hosting this somewhat unique evening, tasting really good quality Australian wines but of distinct European heritage.



The Lamington

Wines of the evening:-

Pikes Traditionale Riesling (75cl), Clare Valley from Tesco @ £13

Yarri-Karri Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon Blend (75cl), Margaret River from Marks & Spencer @ £14

“Change of Scene” Fiano (75cl), Clare Valley from Great Grog, Edinburgh @£21

Moorooduc Estate Pinot Noir (75cl), Mornington Peninsula from Woodwinters @ £28

Yangarra Estate Mourvèdre (75cl), McLaren Vale from Woodwinters @ £26

Hollick “Tannery Block” Cabernet Sauvignon/Merlot (75cl), Coonawarra from Majestic @ £12.50

De Bortoli DB Family Reserve Botrytis Semillon (37.50cl) New South Wales from Sainsburys @ £7.50

*** Footnote:- If you would like to order the “Change of Scene” Fiano from Great Grog (Edinburgh), please discuss with Caroline Duncan who might be able to help with some discount! Of the other wines, some may be on special offer with the suppliers, worth checking if the wines interest you.*

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