



# **WINEWISE**

**THE CONSUMER'S WINE GUIDE**

**June 2014**



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## BLEASDALE – OLD IS NEW AGAIN

**W**inemaker Paul Hotker arrived at Bleasdale late in 2007 during a prolonged drought when water levels in Lake Alexandrina fell from 0.85 metres above sea level to -1.10 metres below.

As well as having to deal with an acute water shortage, Paul grappled with the problem that both Bleasdale and Langhorne Creek lacked regional identity. He refers to the situation as “Barossa Envy”. As a result Langhorne Creek wines were too big and ripe, giving them an “anywhereness”, something he wanted to avoid.

*Frank Potts was born in 1815, three weeks after the Battle of Waterloo, into an England of hope and glory. Salt seemed to seep through his blood, for he joined the Royal Navy at the age of nine, taking his first commission on Nelson's famous HMS Victory. Barefoot and bare-chested he sailed around the world avoiding cholera and the cat of nine tails before arriving in South Australia in the first landing party in 1836, with just a chest of carpentry tools to his name.*

*He started colonial life as a 21 year old boat builder in Port Adelaide, was promoted to harbour master and pilot, constructed his own ketch Petrel, and became a trader of onions, wheat, sea birds, seal oil and skins from Kangaroo Island to the mainland.*

*Selling his boat and first home in Port Adelaide, he purchased the first sections of land on the fertile Bremer River at Langhorne Creek, cleared the land and started farming.*

*He planted his first vines in 1858 selling wine to Thomas Hardy, before expanding his holdings to 30 acres in the 1860s. This was the beginning of Bleasdale. **From the Bleasdale web site***

Paul’s plan was to make wines that typified Langhorne Creek without straying too far from the house style “We’re much cooler than McLaren Vale and the Barossa,” he points out, and “we pick at similar times to the warmer parts of the Adelaide Hills.”

Over the past seven years Paul has worked towards his aim of creating an expressive Langhorne Creek range of wines. That process has included re-trellising vineyards and replacing spray irrigation with the more efficient and environmentally sound drip method. Both changes impacted vine yield, bringing cropping levels back into balance. Picking red grapes before sugar levels rose too high and shrivel occurred completed the transition.

## The top Bleasdale Langhorne Creek Wines

**2013 Bleasdale Old Vine Verdelho** A vineyard planted in 1930 is a pretty rare resource. The fruit was ending up in fortified or cheap table wine so Paul decided to see if he could make a premium quality dry white from it. This is the first vintage after re-trellising. It shows lemon sherbet aromas and is intense and fresh, with delicious fruit and balanced phenolics. (\$29.00) **Highly Recommended**

*Winemaking was kept simple to showcase the vineyard. The grapes were hand-picked and pressed to stainless steel tank for cold-settling. Then the juice was racked off solids after three days and fermented cool in stainless steel. After that the wine was left in tank for six weeks, where periodic lees-stirring took place.*

**2012 Bleasdale The Powder Monkey Shiraz** Great pure blackberry nose with hints of licorice and subtle oak. Very rewarding in that pure varietal sense. The tannins have a delightful savoury edge which complements the impressively long flavour. (\$55.00) **Outstanding**

*The grapes were totally destemmed and allowed to macerate pre-fermentation. The wine was racked into oak post-fermentation after spending up to 12 days on skins. Oak maturation took place in French oak puncheons and hogsheads, 37% of which were new.*



**Paul Hotger**

**2010 Bleasdale The Iron Duke Cabernet Sauvignon** This single vineyard wine was made in 2008 and 2009 but was used in blending. Vintage 2010 reveals the quality of the site with its ripe blackcurrant characteristics given a cedary/leafy uplift typical of quality cabernet. The palate delivers in all aspects - fruit, oak, fineness of tannins and balance. (\$65.00) **Highly Recommended**

*The grapes were totally destemmed and pumped to open fermenters. Post-ferment draining and pressing took place after about two weeks' skin contact. Only French hogsheads (36% new) were used in the 16 month maturation phase.*

**2010 Bleasdale Double Take Malbec** Very intense and powerful, showing dark berry and mulberry. A "super malbec" in every sense, including freshness of fruit. The tannins are fine and the finish is long. (\$80.00) **Outstanding**

*The grapes were totally destemmed and pumped to open fermenters for pre-ferment maceration. Post-ferment draining and pressing took place after about two weeks' skin contact. It was matured for 11 months in two year old French puncheons.*

**Bleasdale Fortis et Astutis** This is a fortified wine made from approximately 54% verdelho, 44% palomino and sundry other varieties. It's the result of a stocktake of barrels conducted by Paul Hotker who discovered some ancient stocks reduced to "syrup" and freshened them with younger material. Tasting this wine is quite an experience. First there's the bewitching Madeira-like orange peel nose. Then there's the lusciousness of a 300 gm/litre residual sugar palate. However, the finish, which seemed to go on forever, has a pleasing dryness to it. Brilliant blending. (\$114.00) **Outstanding**

*Fortis et Astutis is the Potts family motto. It means "bold and crafty".*

There had to be a reason why Bleasdale, a winery that had been around forever, "suddenly" won two medallions at the 2014 Winewise Championship. Much of that reason is winemaker and trained viticulturist Paul Hotker, but Paul had to have the material to begin with, and that's where the Bleasdale heritage came in – a heritage that manifests itself today in the form of precious old Langhorne Creek vines.

<http://www.bleasdale.com.au/>

Lester Jesberg

## TWO PINOTS

**2013 Lerida Cullerin Lake George Pinot Noir** This is a balanced delicious strawberry/raspberry pinot noir with appropriate structure but no hard edges. It's a great choice if you want a satisfying pinot to drink over the next couple of years. (\$35.00) **Highly Recommended**

**2013 Catch Cry of Tasmania Pinot Noir** This one is definitely pushed to the solid end. It's firm and muscular but that will suit some red wine drinkers. (\$24.00) **Recommended**

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## McLAREN VALE SCARCE EARTH SHIRAZ

**M**cLaren Vale Scarce Earth encourages the release of single block Shiraz wines to allow us to continually learn more about our region and to also further explore the relative influence of geology, soil, climate and topography on wine style.

All wines come from a single block, a small plot of land with a unique flavour profile and personality.

A panel consisting of three local winemakers and three independent experts, assess each wine to ensure that site is expressed in the glass and the wine free of overt winemaking influences.

The 2012 vintage tasting panel comprised an eclectic selection with local winemakers Paul Carpenter, Michael Fragos and Charles Whish and independent experts Huon Hooke, Michael Andrewartha and David LeMire MW.

Over time, McLaren Vale Scarce Earth will be an invaluable resource for our local winemakers and grape growers, as they strive to gain an unparalleled understanding of shiraz, Australia's most significant variety.

The project gives wine lovers at all levels the opportunity to explore the influence of site and the chance to taste wines from some of the region's best shiraz vineyards.

**From** <http://mclarenvale.info/scarce-earth/single-block-shiraz/>

This site also provides a considerable amount of information on the geology of McLaren Vale.

We applaud any project that explores diversity within in any wine region. Regionality, to many people, implies uniformity, but myriad combinations of soils, aspects, altitudes and drainage within any single region bring about significant differences in wine style. The winemaker's hand is, of course, another major factor. Picking times, oak (type, size and age) and tannin management are just a few of the human influences.

In Australia we're trying to achieve in decades what the monks of Burgundy took centuries to do - that is, map the differences between sites within a given region.

The Scarce Earth project in McLaren Vale is at the forefront of such research, and exciting research it is. However, we found that not everything came up smelling of roses.

**All wines were tasted "blind" by Deb Pearce & Lester Jesberg.**

## Outstanding



**2012 Wirra Wirra Whaite Old Block Shiraz** We've rarely encountered young McLaren Vale Shiraz that could match this one. The colour is deep and vivid, and the nose and palate are fresh and intense, showing blackberry and dark chocolate. The oak merges in beautifully. You'll start seeing just how good this wine is after a decade. (\$130.00)

<https://wirrawirra.com/ecommerce/catalogue.aspx>

*From Vintage 2012 we selected our best single vineyard parcels of shiraz to blend the wine that would become RSW. Of these, we identified the Whaite block as being exceptional and set aside two barrels for the Scarce Earth project. Just 45 cases of this wine were made, making it a rare example of the unique character of the Blewitt Springs sub-region of McLaren Vale. **Wirra Wirra***

## Highly Recommended

**2012 Five Views Vineyard Creepers Cut Out Shiraz** Perfect purple. The nose is beautifully perfumed and the palate is rich and rounded, with nicely integrated oak. It's firm but balanced, and acidity that is a little "twangy" at the moment is all that held it back from the highest category. Made by Linda Domas. (\$38.50)

***Excellent Value***

For information ring 08 8186 0445

**2012 Penny's Hill Footprint Shiraz** Bright deep colour. Powerful, dense, fresh blackberry in the classic Vale style. Very attractive sweet fruit. It's a rich but approachable shiraz, although its best is a few years down the track. (\$65.00)

**2012 Shingleback Unedited Shiraz** The nose delivers everything a young McLaren Vale shiraz should. This is a vibrant, powerful wine that definitely needs time. The acidity shows a little too obviously on the finish, but that shouldn't be a problem in the long term. (\$70.00)

**2012 d'Arenberg Tyche's Mustard Vineyard Shiraz** This is a rich, fresh blackberry style with hints of dried herbs and coconut oak. The palate finishes long and firm, with a tweak of acidity. (\$99.00)

**2012 d'Arenberg The Amaranthine Single Vineyard Shiraz** Very intense dark berry aromas with hints of chocolate and spices like cardamom. A big but fresh shiraz that is tight and backward, with an acid lift. (\$99.00)

**2012 d'Arenberg The Eight Iron Single Vineyard Shiraz** Vibrant blackberry and plum backed up by a dash of classy oak. It's intense, fresh and stylish, albeit a little raw and acidic right now. Needs years to show at its best. (\$99.00)

**2012 Coriole Galaxidia Shiraz** The colour bothered us, but we forgave it because the nose showed the classic blackberry and dark chocolate of the Vale. There's plenty of richness in the balanced palate, but we doubt that this is a long term wine. (\$55.00)

**2012 Battle of Bosworth Braden's Shiraz** Here we have big, but fresh, dark berry aroma and flavour backed by appealing vanilla oak. There's a hint of mint and the palate is dense, but has the balance for cellaring. (\$45.00)

### **Recommended**

**2012 Chapel Hill The Chosen House Block Shiraz** Strays into blackberry jam territory but retains freshness. Intensely flavoured but comparatively simple. (\$65.00)

**2012 Kangarilla Road Alluvial Fans Shiraz** Intense, fresh, brooding blackberry. Good new oak. Too ripe and simple but will have appeal. The acidity is a little too obvious. (\$45.00)

**2012 Mr. Riggs Scarce Earth Shiraz (cork)** Very fresh dense blackberry plus a lot of oak. The acid is a little too dominant. Disjointed, but cellaring may soften some aspects. (\$55.00)

**2012 Chapel Hill The Chosen Road Block Shiraz** Very fresh blackberry/dark chocolate characteristics. Good fruit and balanced tannins, but is slightly too oaky and acidified. (\$65.00)

### Agreeable

**2012 Hugh Hamilton Black Blood I Shiraz** Big hits of blackberry, dark chocolate and vanilla. An oaky style without finesse. (\$70.00)

**2012 Shottesbrooke Single Vineyard Blewitt Springs Shiraz** Slightly developed colour. Richly flavoured but shows over-ripe fruit characteristics. (\$45.00)

**2012 Maxwell Eocene Ancient Earth Shiraz** Ripe but pruny. Firm and big, but lacks balance. Drying finish. (\$45.00)

**2012 Dowie Doole The Fruit Of The Vine The Architect Shiraz** Mature colour. Slightly jammy. Shows a lot of oak. (\$45.00)

### Acceptable

**2012 Vinrock Block 20 West Shiraz** Mature colour. Nose spiked by some volatility. Oaky finish.

**2012 Cradle Of Hills Row 23 Shiraz** Poor colour. Inky prunes. Big but drying on the finish. (\$45.00)

**2012 Coriole Willunga 1920 Shiraz** Poor colour. Lacks vibrancy. Very dry finish. (\$55.00)

**2012 Haselgrove The Ambassador Single Vineyard Shiraz (cork)** Advanced colour. Too developed. Finish already drying out. (\$85.00)

**2012 Hugh Hamilton Black Blood II Shiraz** Far too advanced and oaky. (\$70.00)

**2012 Gemtree Vineyards Stage 7 Shiraz (cork)** Developed colour. Big, slightly medicinal and pruny. Hard finish. (\$35.00)

**2012 Hugh Hamilton Black Blood III Shiraz** Very weak colour. Far too advanced. Drinkable now. Grave doubts about its future. (\$70.00)

We haven't looked into the selection process for these wines, but if the object is to take the top 20, 25 or whatever, it's doomed to failure. It would be better to judge under show conditions with a panel of three and award the "seal" to agreed silver medal or above. I would also suggest the panel have one local judge (at most) to remove even a whispered suggestion of bias.

The search for sub-regional identity is a noble one, but to show that identity wines must be made from perfect grapes and not be heavily oaked. The poor, developed colours of some of these wines troubled us because we have never seen young shiraz with advanced hue do anything but fade in bottle.



## ITALIANS ON THE ROAD

**H**ere are some notes on wines I tasted in Italy during June. I've limited this selection to wines made by producers that export to Australia. Where possible I've included the Australian price.

### WHITE

**2012 Roycello Fiano di Salerno (Tormaresca)** Impressively fresh and well made. Perfect phenolics, long palate, lively acidity. I don't think this wine has yet made it to Australia, but the importers should place it on their priority list. *Highly Recommended*

**2013 Guiseppe Traversa Langhe Arneis** Fresh. Slight mango/pineapple. Good fruit and acid. Some CO<sub>2</sub> spritz. *Recommended*

**2012 Greco di Tufo (Fuedi di San Gregorio)** A flinty, lemony white with a long, satisfying palate balanced by just-right phenolics and acidity. (\$34.00) *Highly Recommended*

**2013 Pinot Grigio Trentino (Mezzacoruna)** Fresh and straightforward, showing elements of peach, banana and tropical fruits. Low level residual sugar with balancing acidity. (\$19.00) *Agreeable*

### SPARKLING

**NV Astoria Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore** A fresh, clean, simple sparkling wine with a lively dry finish. (\$40.00). *Agreeable*

**Note:** Purchased for \$21.00 in Venice

### RED

**2010 Peppoli Chianti (Antinori)** Drinking beautifully, with tobacco leaf bottle-age complexity. Good fruit. Fine savoury tannins. (\$25.00) *Recommended*

**2011 Prunotto Barbera d'Alba** Fresh dark cherry. Impressive fruit. Slightly too much acid, but good with pizza. (\$24.00) *Recommended*

**2012 Barbera d'Alba Tre Vigne (Vietti)** Fragrant and clean, with very fine tannins and a mouthful of red plums and cherries. It has depth, correct acidity and balanced, fine tannins. (\$42.00) *Highly Recommended*

**Note:** This wine is \$18.00 per bottle in Italy, and I enjoyed a very generous glass at Vincafe in Alba for \$6.00.

**2009 Fontodi Chianti Classico** Very good indeed for its classification, packed with dark cherry and bun spice with a whiff of tobacco. Beautifully balanced. (\$40.00) *Highly Recommended*

**2012 Valpolicella (Speri)** Fresh and typical but a little too light. *Agreeable* (\$25.00)

**2012 Fontanafredda Langhe Nebbiolo** Impressive rose petal aromatics together with rich varietal fruit and appropriate grip. (\$28.00). *Recommended*

**2012 Castel Firmian Trentino Marzemino (Mezzacoruna)** This is an excellent example of the variety. It's packed with plum and blueberry flavours supported by balanced tannins and acidity. (\$30.00). *Recommended*

### Italian Travel notes

**Alba, Piemonte** Alba is one of the world's great eating and drinking cities. This time we discovered **Vincafe**, a centrally located wine bar which we strongly recommend.

<http://www.vincafe.com/ita/index.asp>

Our favourite restaurant in Alba is **La Libera**. It's delivered the goods for many years. Very friendly welcome and excellent wine list. For the tripe fans out there, this visit I had the best I've ever eaten. <http://www.lalibera.com/en/>

**Lake Como** We've stayed at **Villa Belvedere, Argegno** several times. It's just changed hands and has undergone a refurbishment that has improved it significantly. The food served in the restaurant is now of very good standard and the wine list does it justice. Be sure to book a lake view room. A ferry wharf is only 50 metres away. From there it's easy to reach towns like Bellagio and Como. <http://www.villabelvedererelais.it/eng/albergo.asp>

**Venice** We were delighted with a two-bedroom apartment we rented. It was right on the Grand Canal at Cannaregio, with plenty of space and magical views. It's easy to spend more money on an average hotel. Send me an email if you require contact details. We enjoyed dining at **Anice Stellato**, a Cannaregio restaurant which is off the normal tourist track. It serves excellent frittura mista, the Italian equivalent of tempura seafood.

<http://www.osterianicestellato.com/>

Lester Jesberg

## THREE AUSSIES

**2014 Grosset Semillon Sauvignon Blanc (Clare Valley & Adelaide Hills)** The grassy aromatics lean much more to semillon than sauvignon blanc, and there's even a hint of tropical fruit. A full-flavoured, acid-fresh palate offers plenty of enjoyment. Good drinking already. (\$35.00) *Highly Recommended*

**2013 St Huberts Yarra Valley Roussanne** An impressive wine which combines aromas of peach and hazelnut on a very fresh nose. The palate is long, dry and satisfying, with a talc-like texture and excellent oak balance. (\$30.00) *Highly Recommended*

**2013 Hubert The Stag Yarra Valley Pinot Noir** One of the best-value pinot noirs made in Australia. This latest release is packed with fresh dark cherry varietal character. The tannins are very supple. Delicious. (\$22.00) *Highly Recommended*

## RECENT REDS



**2010 Tim Adams Aberfeldy Shiraz** Here's an exceptional wine. It's concentrated and long, but not heavy and over-oaked. It's strongly varietal and regional – without being minty. It's the epitome of finesse. Tim Adams has made some marvellous wines over the years but none are better than this one. I have never been more impressed with a young Clare shiraz. Cellar ten years at least. (\$50.00) **Outstanding**  
<https://www.timadamswines.com.au/buy-wines/>

**2010 Mitchelton Print Shiraz** This is a voluptuous dark berry shiraz that carries a whiff of spice. It will certainly cellar well but it's so drinkable that temptation will prove too strong for many. (\$65.00) **Highly Recommended**

**2012 Wirra Wirra Woodhenge McLaren Vale Shiraz** The nose delivers fresh blackberry varietal aromas with a faint hint of mint. Length and balance are the keynotes of a palate that finishes fresh. (\$35.00) **Highly Recommended**

**2010 Kaesler The Bogan Barossa Valley Shiraz** It's as big as expected, but balanced, and doesn't taste excessively ripe or alcoholic. The mouthfilling palate finishes fresh and the oak and tannins are kept in check. (\$50.00) **Highly Recommended**

**2012 Kaesler Alte Reben Barossa Valley Shiraz** There's a real vibrancy to this wine which is comparatively restrained. It shows some oak but the red plum flavour carries it well and the tannins are well balanced. (Not yet released) **Highly Recommended**

**2012 John Duval Wines Entity Shiraz** An excellent example of the fresh, modern Barossa style. The palate flows beautifully, the high quality oak is perfectly integrated and the tannins are polished and fine. The finish certainly doesn't lack acidity. (\$50.00) **Highly Recommended**

**2012 Singlefile Frankland River Shiraz** There's a lot of shiraz in the bottle here. The freshness of dark berry aroma and flavour is exemplary, and the palate is long and fine. It's not a blockbuster but it certainly has presence. (\$37.00) **Highly Recommended**

**2012 Elderton Neil Ashmead Grand Tourer Barossa Valley Shiraz** We enjoyed the previous release of the GT and this one is even better. It's restrained and savoury, with many different complex nuances. Distinctive and successful. (\$75.00) **Highly Recommended**

**2012 Sidewood Adelaide Hills Shiraz** The berry/spice aromas are enticing as are the persistence of fruit and savoury tannins. Drinking well now but will go at least 3-5 years. (Not yet released) **Highly Recommended**

**2012 Wirra Wirra Catapult McLaren Vale Shiraz** A fresh, straightforward dark berry style that is beginning to drink nicely. Enjoy it over the next couple of years. (\$25.00) **Recommended**

**2012 Mt.0° Grampians/Alpine Valley Shiraz** A fresh red berry style that finishes with almost tart acidity. (\$25.00) **Agreeable**

**2012 The Yard Riversdale Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Larry Cherubino)** A cabernet that's absolutely packed with varietal flavour. For all its richness, it still retains the classic firm, fine structure into which oak is beautifully integrated. (\$35.00) **Highly Recommended**

**2009 Queens Pinch Vineyard Mudgee Select Cabernet Sauvignon** Here's a wine that began with a great idea of producing a classic long, dry cabernet. It almost got there, but excessive drying oak is the spanner in the works. (\$28.00) **Agreeable**

**2012 Bajondillo (Bodegas Jimenez-Landi)** This delicious red hails from the Toledo region of Spain and is a blend of grenache, shiraz, tempranillo, merlot and cabernet. It's a vibrant, beautifully made young wine that is packed with red fruits flavour and slips down easily. Why pay ridiculous amounts for Spanish wine when you can have this? (\$20.00) **Highly Recommended**

<http://www.eastendcellars.com.au/category-list/red-wine/jimenez-landi-bajondillo-grenache-shiraz-tempranillo-merlot-cabernet-2012.html>

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