

THE BEEFSTEAK AND BURGUNDY CLUB, WELLINGTON,
NEW ZEALAND CONVENTION 26-28 MARCH 2010
THE TASTING BUDS OF MARCH

PREAMBLE

This was the nineteenth consecutive Convention that Jill and I have attended and we have found that they are best enjoyed if a holiday can be incorporated into the schedule. There were pre and post conference tours arranged covering several days but we preferred to take a more leisurely look at the South Island over nearly four weeks. It is one of the most picturesque places imaginable and it often took us six or so hours to travel 250 ks, such was the splendour of the scenery. Those who went on the pre tour were conscious of the expense, which was high, but from reports we got, the 37 who attended enjoyed themselves.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON REGISTRATION

From 2pm until 5pm Registration took place at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts at Jervois Quay, a short walk from our accommodation. At Registration we were presented with a Convention Pack and invited to taste wines from Montana, the tasting being but a few paces from where we registered. After attending as many conventions as we have we inevitably find ourselves meeting old (in time not necessarily age!) friends and it seemed an hour or so by the time we had taken those few paces. In fact, I had to ask politely if I could taste the last of the four wines on offer as it was suddenly five o'clock and they were packing up. The wines were: Montana Reserve Brut Rose, 2009 The Original Montana Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2009, Montana Reserve Marlborough Sauvignon Gris 2009 (no, that is not a blend, it is a variety in its own right) and Terraces T Marlborough Pinot Noir 2007. Thanks to the attention to detail of the Convention organizers and the miracle of modern technology for the computer literate, throughout this report I am able to provide website references for your further information: www.montana.co.nz.

FRIDAY OPENING PARTY THE GREAT HALL MASSEY UNIVERSITY (dress: Smart Casual).

At 5.45 buses departed from our accommodation to transport us to the imposing building where the red carpet had been rolled out for our reception. President of the Wellington Club, Ian Young welcomed delegates and invited the Lord Mayor of Wellington, Mrs Kerry Prendergast to add her welcome and to extol the virtues of the city, the Capital of New Zealand. The acoustics were not all that good but I was able to follow her speech quite well until one of those "Monty Python" moments when she spoke of the influence of "The Dutch" between Australia and New Zealand. Baffled by what the Dutch had to do with it I thought perhaps she was referring to Abel Tasman and in a way I was right as she meant The Tasman Sea, often referred to as "The Ditch". As you probably know New Zealanders are remarkably economical with the use of short sounding vowels, doing their best to reduce them from five to three or change them around, thus for example, Jim becomes Jum, cattle becomes kettle, lead becomes lid, and my favourite, six becomes sex! "People in glass houses should not throw stones" and I am sure our Australianisms such as "Owyergoinmateorright?" are just as confusing to overseas visitors.

The theme of the night was an introduction to New Zealand cuisine including wine and food specialties. Wineries represented were ARA www.arawines.co.nz, Dog Point www.dogpoint.co.nz, Fromm Winery www.fromwinery.co.nz, Hunter's Wines www.hunters.co.nz, Jackson Estate www.jacksonestate.com, Seresin, www.seresin.co.nz, Spy Valley www.spyvalley.co.nz, Villa Maria Estate, www.villamaria.co.nz, Wairau River Wines, www.wairauriverwines.com, and Wither Hills, www.witherhills.co.nz.

We did our best to try as many wines as possible but not even old hands like us could get to all the thirty one wines being offered in the time available, nor did we have the capacity to try all the delicious food being offered. Our only disappointments were that the servings of berries to accompany the crème brule dessert were not adequately supervised with delegates helping themselves and inevitably there were those like us who missed out. We noticed that the New Zealanders seemed to be polite people and it may be that they were not prepared for the uncouthness of many of us Australians! The other disappointment was the 9.30 curfew. This is only an hour later than the bad old days circa 1960 and prior in South Australia pre Don Dunstan when all wine had to be off the table by 8.30. The unsatisfactory answer I got from the President was that people are tired on Friday night and want an early night. Our experience has been quite the opposite and we find many people excited by the Convention and keen to carry on. The answer lies in providing an early and a later bus. We found that when dropped back at their accommodation before ten o'clock many headed straight for the Bar!



Boulcott Street Bistro

Lamb Shank Cylinder on Minted Peas

Capitol Restaurant

Seared West Coast Turbot on Baby Pea,
Broad Bean and Fresh Herb Vignole

Chameleon Restaurant

Slow Roast Beef Tenderloin with a Parsnip Flan, Pan Juices,
Horseradish Foam and Young Watercress

Kapiti Cheese

Kapiti Raclette with New Potatoes and Gherkins

Logan Brown Restaurant

Salmon Gravlax with Wasabi Panna Cotta,
Lemon Olive Oil and Cabernet Syrup

Ruth Pretty Catering

Blackcurrant and White Chocolate Crème Brûlées
served with Summer Berries

Zibibbo Restaurant

Crispy Pork with Chorizo Braised Beans

www.beefsteakandburgundy2010.org

SATURDAY MORNING BUSINESS SESSION

Preamble to Business Session.

Prior to attending the 9.30 Business Session held at The Grand Chancellor Hotel we had an opportunity to examine the contents of our Convention Packs. In addition to a simple printed sheet explaining how to get to the Convention venues a 40 page printed booklet included a welcoming message from the President, details of Special Guests, list of musicians: Hot Club

Sandwich, Zamber Flam and Trad 7 Band. (Regular readers of my reports will be aware of my abhorrence of ear splitting bands which destroy conversation. All convention organizations should take a leaf out of Wellington's book. All the musicians were unobtrusive and provided splendid background music, especially on Saturday night when the music was suitable for those wishing to dance but at a decibel level suitable for conversation, but I am getting ahead of myself. The booklet also covered the Convention programme, catering arrangements, details of recommended places to visit around Wellington, some recommended Wellington restaurants, a list of attending delegates and partners, main accommodation, useful telephone numbers and tasting notes on every wine served during the convention. It was a level of professionalism which was outstanding and a delight to dedicated record keepers such as I am.

The pack also contained a copy of the book "New Zealand Portrait of a Nation" written by Graham Stewart. It was a beautifully presented 340 page book showing a pictorial display of New Zealand since British settlement. There were also tourist pamphlets, a copy of "Dish" magazine, a fine Stolze Chardonnay glass embossed with the distinctive drinking bull logo and "Wellington 2010", printed Tea Towel and a bottle of water. We were not quite sure what the water was all about. Was it a reminder of New Zealand's wowsier past when they suffered years of prohibition? Benchmarks are popular in the country, the most famous at Canterbury Cathedral and it could be this was the measure against which we were to assess our wines. Naturally we were not going to cart this back to Australia and so we drank it. You will not be surprised to read that it was colourless, odourless and tasteless.

Business Session.

At 9.30 Adelaide President Peter Johnston welcomed us all and asked us to join in sympathising with Cobram delegates Reg and Rosa Fazio, fruit growers, who, delaying their departure as long as possible, caught the 3am flight only to be delayed by the airline. As a consequence, they did not arrive until midnight, missing the welcoming function. Peter also acknowledged Mike Amerina, Fortitude Valley Life Member who turns 91 this year. Peter presented him with a 35 years Member Badge.

After the Minutes from Orange had been accepted (I continue to note that we never get a Financial Report), Peter handed over to General Secretary Craig Thornquest. Some items covered included:

- B&Bulletin issued annually, cost \$5,000 to \$6,000. To be reviewed. Do we need it now website is developed?
- Handbooks deadline for printing is 5th September. Still some recalcitrant Clubs with fees outstanding!
- Branch Affiliation Fees increase by CPI 4% App \$15 this year.
- Regalia Sales delays in distribution. Now to be overnight post bag in Australia.
- Life Membership. Used to take 7 weeks to process. If email used can now be reduced to 1 week.
- New Tie? A more modern design being considered.
- Website is continuing Work in Progress. Looking at linking individual clubs into website and standard email address for each club's secretary cost app \$20p.a.
- Website does not include handbook for privacy reasons.
- Members are encouraged to visit other clubs. (I note that we have been doing this for years but during the course of the Convention we found that there are still some Men's Clubs who refuse to have women guests, even when they are members of B&B! They have really not thought this through, so a visiting man is welcome while his wife sits alone back at the Motel waiting for his return! I do not think so. We have

found most men's clubs quite willing to have us both along and the same applies for ladies' clubs if they happen to be meeting when we visit a town or city.)

- Anniversaries; Medals have been struck for the next two years. Clubs are encouraged to submit news and photos to the parent club for posting on the Website.

Peter thanked Craig for taking on the role of General Secretary and committing to improving communication and service.

After morning tea a presentation was made by Toowoomba Wheatsheaf for the convention they are hosting with the assistance of Tabletop Club 3-5 June 2011. Refer to their website www.toowoombabsb.org.au. The email address for the convention is convention@toowoombabsb.org.au.

Darwin is making a bid for the 2012 convention from 1-3 June. We were all very impressed by the sound of beautiful tropical sandy beaches but there is the slight catch in that they are infested by stingers and crocodiles! Nevertheless it did sound appealing and we hope that they are successful with their bid.

Following the meeting there was a short slide show detailing the adventures of "the duck" of which you have read about in my reports of previous conventions. It was an entertaining journey well thought out by Holdfast Bay Club who passed on the duck for safekeeping with Max Bourne on behalf of Toowoomba Wheatsheaf until the next convention.

There were no organised activities for Saturday lunch at this convention as it is generally recognised that both a generous lunch and gala dinner in the one day are a bit much for delegates to digest. We joined Phil and Joan Klienig and Brian and Sue Lilley for a light lunch of fish and Brookfields Unwooded Chardonnay at Shed 5 Restaurant nearby.

FORMAL GALA DINNER AT TSB BANK ARENA-dress code, black tie

At 6.30 we made our way on foot the short distance from our hotel to the dinner site. As usual the men all looked very smart in their dinner suits and the ladies glamorous in their evening wear. Formal dress always seems to create a feeling of excitement and expectation of a pleasant evening. Bevan De Berry and Brett Newell, Winemasters for the Convention had selected wines from regions other than Marlborough and Martinborough, apart from the opening Daniel Le Brun Sparkling wine www.lebrun.co.nz. They did a fine job. It took quite a while by the time we were seated and ready for our dinner and I took the opportunity to thank Graham Stewart for autographing my copy of his book, which we had received in our Convention Pack. When I took it to the Business Session and passed it around for delegates to autograph I had not realised that I was in the presence of the author!

Master of Ceremonies Ray Henwood kept us amused with little stories during the night and we were treated to a most enjoyable dinner. Unfortunately, as often happens with steak, ours arrived a little tired and grey after being cooked too long, but nevertheless was quite tender. There was a genuine choice of main course rather than the usual rudeness of alternate drops that we often get at weddings, but I think this did slow proceedings down a little. Jill, who is a diabetic, was most impressed by her individual menu showing fresh fruit for dessert. My apologies for spilling a drop of red wine on her menu. We shared our table with Alan and Bridgie Pollock (Wellington), Warwick and Jocelyn Vrede (Kapiti NZ) and Rob and Lucy Rathborne (Broadbeach Qld). It was a pleasure to be able to chat with them throughout the night without being drowned out by the sound of Zamba Flam, who provided the music. Wines served with our dinner were Pegasus Bay Sauvignon Semillon 2008 Waipara, North Canterbury www.pegasusbay.com, Nuedorf Nelson Chardonnay 2008 www.neudorf.co.nz, Felton Road Pinot Noir 2007 Central Otago www.FeltonRoad.com, Villa Maria Cellar Selection Syrah 2006, Hawke's Bay www.villamaria.co.nz (I think that this wine may have

been specially selected for the Australians present as it was easily the fullest flavoured wine of the night and a treat to drink.) Not far behind in flavour was the TeMata Coleraine Cabernet Merlot 2007, Hawke's Bay www.temata.co.nz and Milton TeArai Vineyard Mistelle July Muscat, Gisborne www.milton.co.nz. What a task the winemasters must have had in coming up with these excellent wines which, despite the quality of the wines served on Friday, were a step up in drinking enjoyment.

We do not know where the evening went as suddenly we found ourselves to be the only little group remaining and so we made our way back to our hotel where we retired at about 1.30.



SUNDAY FAREWELL LUNCH dress code- smart casual.

Despite the late night we rose reasonably refreshed. I am a great advocate that if you want to feel well after a night of drinking make sure that you drink fine wine, and once more my theory proved correct. By 9.40 we had walked the short distance to the Wellington Railway Station for our 9.55 train departing for Wairarapa. The weather had taken a turn for the worse and there were drizzle and an icy wind. We boarded our train and waited 25 minutes while the brakes were checked. It did not seem to affect the timing of our day too much. At Featherson station we disembarked and caught our designated bus which took us to the beautiful little town of Martinborough. Founded by an eccentric Englishman the main part of town has its streets set out in the shape of a Union Jack! Our first port of call was Palliser winery where we tasted their wines and some from Escarpment, personally served by the Winemaker, Larry McKenna, who learnt his trade at Roseworthy College in South Australia, having been raised at McLaren Vale. He specialises in Pinot Noir.

It was then on to Martinborough Vineyard where we were treated to an educational visit to the vineyard. The viticulturist explained the importance of the cultivation of the vines and the control of weeds and diseases while minimising the use of chemicals. They are pretty much down to using only sulphur based sprays and have built up the quality of the soil by encouraging the presence of worms by using compost materials. It was then into the winery where the winemaker took us through a tasting of their three Pinot Noir wines: Burnt Spur, Te Tera and the top of the range Yellow Label.

It was then on to the bus again and back to Palliser Winery for lunch served in a marquee. The weather by then had improved. On arrival we were treated to glasses of Margrain Vineyard 2006 La Michelle Methode Traditionelle and Palliser Estate Methode Traditionelle 2006 served by waiters and waitresses of the most pleasant disposition one could possibly imagine. I think that they really enjoyed their work. It is my understanding that the caterers, Ruth Pretty Catering employ students part time for this purpose.

When invited in to the marquee we found it a bit of a scramble to find a seat but eventually we did, fortuitously opposite Adelaide Club's Paul Kershaw. It was very interesting chatting with him as he has the extraordinarily heavy responsibility of being all of Cellarmaster, Winemaster and Foodmaster for the Club in what appears to be an ongoing basis! At least he has the opportunity to manage the cellar entirely at his own discretion. Plates of oysters and abalone had been placed on each table and we set about doing them justice until called upon table by table for our barbecue lunch comprising fish, cuts from T bone steak and whole cooked suckling pig served with various salads and vegetables. I cannot go into too much detail as regrettably no menus were supplied for this function. There was a delicious selection of cakes for dessert served with various summer berries and fresh cream and biscuits, blue cheese, sultanas and walnuts to follow. Sixteen wines from the Martinborough region were available but we did not have the mobility nor the capacity to drink a glass of each of them. Wineries represented were Ata Rangi www.atarangi.co.nz, Coney Wines www.coneywines.co.nz, Dry River www.dryriver.co.nz, Escarpment www.escarpment.co.nz, Margrain Vineyard www.margrainevineyard.co.nz, Martinborough Vineyard www.martinborough-vineyard.co.nz and Palliser www.palliser.co.nz. Also available were Steinlager beer and Te Waihou water. At our table diners were particularly impressed by ATA RANGI CELEBERE 2007, a blend of 40% Merlot, 30% Syrah (Why do we have to have different names for the same grape? We call it Shiraz) and 30% Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc. I also thought that their 2008 Pinot Noir was an outstanding wine and a worthy accompaniment with the pork. It had been an outstanding luncheon and after brief farewell speeches including a well earned applause for our caterer, Ruth Pretty, supported by her husband and staff, it was back on the buses at 4.45, on to the railway station and back to Wellington. Many of us gathered at "The Loaded Hog" for refreshments and later Jill and I had dinner at Shed 5, reflecting on what had been a very pleasurable weekend.

CONCLUSION

When we look back at this convention it all seemed to be pretty simple which of course means that it wasn't! When things run smoothly you hardly notice and the reason this convention ran so well was due to the professionalism and attention to detail of the organisers. As we learnt from President Ian Young (who, by the way is a Life Member of the Wellington Club and has been a member for 40 years), planning began six years ago. Congratulations to Wellington. It was a pity that they were not better supported by many other New Zealand Clubs, nor past hosts from Australia. Only two couples attended from

Hamilton, our hosts in 2001 and none from last year's hosts, Orange. This is unprecedented in our years of attending B&B Conventions. I wonder what the reason was as they seemed very keen last year. As Ian said, "That was their loss." I could not agree more. 263 did attend representing 37 clubs. Early bird cost for the convention was NZ\$875 per person approx A\$700 and our accommodation at the Holiday Inn was NZ\$229 approx A\$183 per night double.

On a personal level, I had approached this Convention with some trepidation as I have not been a big fan of Sauvignon Blanc nor Pinot Noir. We did not drink much Sauvignon Blanc but drank more Pinot Noir in three days than I have in a lifetime. To say that like Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, that there was a blinding light and then the scales removed from my eyes might be an over dramatisation, but I must say, I was most impressed by their quality. Gone were that off putting barn yard nose and watery flavours which were replaced by cherry nose, complex flavours and soft tannins. The New Zealand wine industry is still in its infancy with the oldest vines a mere 30 years old and so the future is very promising.



Jim Freebairn
3rd April 2010



Jim and Jill Saturday dinner

Below; Our jolly group of Saturday dinner diners



The much travelled duck in formal attire and drinking well in South Australia