

# Function Report - Waurm Ponds Coach Tour

**2nd April 2005**

The weather forecast was for a fine day, with a top temperature in Melbourne of 32C. At Narre Warren, where the first pick up was to be conducted, it was a nice balmy morning, with the thermometer touching about 22C. All the people were there anticipating a great tour of Waurm Ponds wineries, part of the Geelong Wine Area. Quick trip to Murrumbeena to collect more members and guests, and finally to Doncaster Shopping Town to collect the balance of the 33 people who were traveling on the coach for the whole day.

It had been arranged that we would meet our President, his wife and another guest at Werribee. There was some slight confusion to the actual rendezvous, but with the wonders of modern science, the ability of Optus and Telstra phone systems to recognize each other, communications were established, and we all met up to partake of the normal bread rolls with pat , salami, cheese, muffins and coffee. Our thanks to all who contributed to this repast, and to the traffic police who kindly absented themselves while we unloaded the car in a bus stop.

President Bob had brought along some grapes for us to taste, and there was a competition to identify the variety of the grapes. Names were drawn from a hat to decide the winners. Elizabeth Scott successfully identified the chardonnay grape, and long time member Don Reymont used his knowledge to pick the pinot noir grape variety. Both winners were presented with a bottler each of wine from Waybourne Winery that we visited later in the day.

The first winery we visited was St. Regis Winery, where our hosts were Viv and Pete Nicol. St. Regis is a family run, boutique winery specializing in estate grown Shiraz, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. It was interesting to note the amount of netting covering the vines. St. Regis has eight acres of vines, including about two acres of Shiraz, 2½ acres of Chardonnay and 3½ acres of Pinot Noir. They produce about 8,000 bottles per year. The winery has been open for business for two years, and the Shiraz vines were planted in 1997. The Chardonnay and Pinot vines were planted in 1999.

Mr. David Pettavel was born in Boudry, Switzerland, and immigrated to Australia in 1842 aboard the barque Platina. Upon landing at Port Philip, Pettavel continued directly to the hills of Geelong to plant the first vineyard in the region. Pettavel's first vineyard, and the wine produced from it was such a success that he immediately began plans for rapid expansion throughout the rolling hills of Geelong. The shortage of skilled labour became the major constraint to Pettavel's plans of expansion, so a recruiting trip was planned to his homeland. Pettavel returned to Switzerland in 1856 to convince family and friends to follow him to Australia and assist him in the expansion of vineyards and wine production in Geelong. The rapid expansion and development of the wine industry in Geelong halted abruptly in the late 1870's with the passing of the driving pioneers and the arrival of phylloxera and its associated devastation on the vineyards. The nearby gold rush also proved a temptation too great for many vigneron, and labour shortages prevented vineyards from being replanted.

The Geelong vineyards were destroyed in 1881 as a result of the Victorian Government's attempts to eradicate phylloxera. In recent years there has been a return of the vibrancy that characterized the Geelong Wine Region of the mid 19th century.

The present day Pettavel Winery and Restaurant began in 1989 when Mike and Sandi Fitzpatrick purchased a property in the Sutherlands Creek region of Geelong and began developing vineyards. Mike Fitzpatrick is a descendant of Michael Francis Fitzpatrick who was one of the first arrivals to the Mildura region and spent his early years constructing irrigation channels that would later allow him to plant and grow grapes. Mike Fitzpatrick, grandson of Michael Francis, and his wife Sandi have continued developing the family trade of grape growing.

Pettavel Winery is set on the top of a hill and dominates the surrounding area. The approach to the winery reminded those who had been on the Coonawarra trip of a few years ago of the Rymill Winery. Pettavel Winery has a magnificent sandstone faade that houses a beautiful restaurant tasting area and function room.

Pettavel Wines have three ranges of wines; Evening Star, Platina and top of the range, Southern Émigré. They have 30 acres under vine at Waurnd Ponds, and a further 160 acres of vines at Bannockburn. Pettavel also has 25 acres of olives planted at Waurnd Ponds. The waste product from the wine making process is composted and then used to mulch the olive plants. Pettavel crush about 650 tonnes of their own grapes each year, and another 650 tonnes of grapes under contract.

Pettavel mainly use French oak barrels, but do use some American oak for their Shiraz. Shiraz is kept in the oak for about 18 months, and Chardonnay for 10 months.

We were lucky to see a rotary filter in operation. Long standing Guild members remarked that they had seen the filters on many winery trips, but had not often seen one actually working.

The tour of Pettavel concluded with a tasting and purchasing session, and some members were fortunate to be presented with a nice ball point pen to remind them of their trip.

We then traveled to The Grovedale Hotel for a pleasant two course luncheon, and tea/coffee, before traveling on to Waybourne Winery. \$4 million has been spent on refurbishing the hotel in the past year. The décor is beautiful, and the service was very good.

Just a few kilometers from Geelong, the Waybourne vineyard and winery are located on a ridge parallel to Colac Road and easily accessed from Anglesea Road. One glance at the surrounding Barrabool hills explains the choice made by the early Swiss settlers for establishing their vineyards on this land.

The owners, Tony and Kaye Volpato, offer wine tastings every weekend and during school holidays, as well as finger food functions for groups of 20 or more.

With spectacular views from the tasting room and wines made with excellence as the goal, Waybourne is well worth a visit. Planting began in 1978 and has continued until recently with Shiraz being added to the other established varieties of Riesling, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Cabernet, Merlot, Trebbiano and Muscat. A sparkling wine was introduced in 2003, ensuring a wine for every palate. Kaye Volpato injured herself as we arrived at the winery, but soldiered on despite her very sore hand, and provided a great tasting.

The views from the tasting room are great, and overlook the five acres of vines, mainly Riesling, Trebbiano, Muscat, Shiraz, Pinot Gris, Chardonnay and Cabernet Merlot. The small holding reminds one of the small holdings of vines in the Burgundy area of France.

After leaving Waybourne Winery we moved on to Longboard Winery at Bellbrae Estate, which is a direct reflection of a coastal lifestyle. The wine is a contemporary style from the estate, and selected cool climate fruit of the Geelong area. It is styled to complement fine food. The labels feature local surfing identities including "China" Gilbert, Joe Sweeney, Joan and Dick Garrard, Brian "Kanga" Lowdon and Alan Reid.

Matthew di Sciasco, the winemaker told us that the winery is built on 10 acres, and has been open for three years. Vintage started today (2 April 2005). Longboard picked 20 tonnes in 2004, 10 tonnes in 2003, and hope to pick more this year.

After a pleasant tasting of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Shiraz, we traveled back through Torquay to Werribee, where we had afternoon tea of rolls, paté, cheese etc (with some Sparkling White Wine or Brandy for some). And so on to meet the traffic jams of Melbourne. Unfortunately there were a few hold ups, which delayed our arrival back at Doncaster. However, 30 minutes delay arriving back is a small price to pay for what had been a most enjoyable tour.

One feature of the day was the construction of basket from vines. They were quite large, and most attractive to look at, though I doubt their utility.

Our thanks are extended to all the winemakers and their staff who all gave us a great insight to their wines. Members are encouraged to support the wineries that helped us today. Further information on how to contact the wineries is available at [www.winegeelong.com.au](http://www.winegeelong.com.au) and select the wine regions

(Waurm Ponds). We also are indebted to committee members who provided the muffins, rolls, coffee etc.