

# OFF THE VINE

AUTUMN 2013



TWO RIVERS

HUNTER VALLEY

## 25 YEARS OF TWO RIVERS

We are dedicating this edition of 'Off the Vine' to proudly celebrating 25 years at Two Rivers.

We have taken a stroll down memory lane and had a lot of fun looking through our old photo albums and seeing the development of our vineyard, wine brand and more recently the Cellar Door. It's going to be hard to convey the road we have travelled these last 25 years in just one newsletter, and whilst we have had our share of challenges along the way, we have enjoyed many more highlights, great times and achievements that we are very proud of.

When I look back I vividly remember Brett, Steve and myself along with our other owners Ross Pitts, Steve Pavlovic and my parents arriving here on the 22nd July 1988 for the 'walk in - walk out' clearing sale.

We were faced with the task of selling off everything to do with this property as a dairy farm (including 75 cows that had to be milked that afternoon!) so we were hoping for lots of dairy farmers to arrive to take it all away.



*The clearing sale*

We were due to get underway at 10am but with the sale almost ready to start there wasn't a truck or farmer in sight! Sure enough, at the last minute in they rolled and we had plenty of farmers (and a few curious on-lookers checking out the new kids in town) ready to bid on anything that wasn't bolted to the ground.

Clearing sales back then were considered a great day out for most farming folk and whilst it was very nerve racking for us at times, we thoroughly enjoyed the day. We got to meet our local farming community and we managed to say a very relieved farewell to those 75 cows. We sold all the milking machinery and any other 'odds & sods' lying about the place.

The next day we woke to the challenge of turning a farm that had been a dairy for more than 100 years into a premier vineyard. Luckily, we really were too young to appreciate the enormity of the task ahead, but with great support from so many people we made it happen and the rest, as they say, is history.



*Team Two Rivers circa 1989 - planting the first vines*

## THOSE FIRST FEW YEARS...

The late 80's and early 90's was an incredibly exciting time to be a part of the Australian wine industry. This period was an era of unprecedented growth for Australian wine with massive vineyard plantings and booming export sales. The world had discovered Australian wine and our "sunshine in a bottle" dominated the major wine markets of the UK and USA.

We eagerly undertook our task of planting the 'Inglewood' site to 200 acres of vines, and before we knew it in 1993 we were at it again, planting a further 200 acres on the adjoining property across the river at Dalswinton.

The extra plantings made us one of the biggest individual vineyards in the Hunter Valley - talk about a baptism of fire! Managing 400 acres of grapes with the Hunter River flowing between the two properties was full on and looking back I wonder how we managed to keep it all together.

Somewhere in amongst this we managed to start a family with three healthy babies thrown into the mix and life just felt like one big rollercoaster ride.



*Brett with grapes from the 1996 harvest*



*Harvest in the early 90's*

When the vineyard was fully planted we had laid out enough trellis wire to run continuously between Sydney and Alice Springs, with some 315,000 vines that each needed to be tended by hand.

Our first vintage in 1991 was so exciting - to see those grapes being picked and on their way to the winery was truly something we will never forget. This excitement was only upstaged by trying our very first Two Rivers wine a few months later. With all the hard work and endless hours that had been put in over the previous years, tasting the "fruits of our labour" was a totally overwhelming experience. The late 1990's ushered in an inevitable period of rationalisation for the wine industry and in 1999 we made the decision to sell the Dalswinton property and focus on the best areas of our original vineyard and consolidate our holdings to 170 acres of premium vines.



*Vineyard team Brett, Adrian, Steve and Mark*

In 2006 the momentum and success of our wines turned our attentions to giving our wines a 'home'. Our beautiful Cellar Door was opened in March 2007 and has become a pivotal centre piece for all that we do here at Two Rivers. Its modern contemporary design has proved to be the perfect venue for our Cellar Door customers to relax, enjoy a bottle of wine with a cheese and antipasto platter whilst overlooking the magnificent Hunter River and valley beyond. We have hosted some outstanding events here at the Cellar Door and along the way have managed to take out many major tourism awards in the region.



*THEN... how our Cellar Door (dairy shed) looked in 1996*



## TIMELINE AND AWARDS

**1988** - Purchase of property "Riverview" in Denman for the establishment of the Two Rivers' vineyard

**1989** - Planted first vines

**1991** - First vintage under the Two Rivers label was produced comprising only two wines, a Chardonnay and Semillon Sauvignon Blanc

**2000** - Two Rivers wins the Hunter Vigneron of the Year and then goes on to become the overall winner in the Hunter Farmer of the Year Competition run by NSW Agriculture Department

**2000** - Brett takes out the Muswellbrook Shire Northoak Award for contribution to agriculture

**2007** - The Two Rivers Cellar Door opens, creating a genuine home for our wines

**2008** - Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce Hospitality and Tourism Award

**2009** - Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce Hospitality Award

**2009** - Hunter Region Business Excellence Award for Customer Service

**2010** - HVWIA Hunter Legends Awards, Viticulturist of the Year

**2010** - Hunter Region Business Excellence Award for Customer Service

**2010** - Muswellbrook Chamber of Commerce Tourism Award

**2011** - Sydney Morning Herald and The Age Good Wine Guide, winner Best Value White Wine in Australia

**2011** - A stellar year for Two Rivers - trophies were awarded to three wines from this vintage. The Stones Throw Semillon, Hidden Hive Verdelho, Rocky Crossing Cabernet Sauvignon

**2011** - Five star winery rating in the James Halliday Australian Wine Companion



*NOW... our Cellar Door today*

# MESSAGE FROM MANAGING DIRECTOR ROSS PITTS

Two Rivers - our vision, 25 years on. Two Rivers was created from a belief in the future of superb viticulture on the Hunter River at Denman.

John & Mary Muddle planted a famous viticulture enterprise nearby called Richmond Grove in the early 1970's. The river flats were near the junction of the Goulburn and Hunter Rivers and the wine quality created a famous label that today is not only recognised in Australia but also around the world.

Their daughter Linda was raised on the Richmond Grove vineyard and remains today dedicated to the Upper Hunter and its superb regional wines. The quality of the wine starts in the soil, with true success related directly to care and attention and an understanding of the elements of nature. Experience is invaluable.

Brett is a man of the land, a believer in natural produce as a result of knowing the elements. Likewise Stephen Kendall, who has managed the practical issues, a day to day responsibility vital to outcomes and fruit quality.

On the 16th June 1988, all three were standing on the property and cheered when we received the news that we have successfully purchased the property formally known as 'Riverview'.

It is remarkable that since day one in 1988 the same people are still engaged, daily, and remain supremely confident of our future.

Well done to all our dedicated people.

## 2013 HARVEST REPORT

Although it is 25 years since we first started Two Rivers, the first couple of years were totally dedicated to planning and planting the vineyard so the 2013 harvest was actually our 23rd vintage in the Hunter. After this long you would think that we had seen it all before but in true Hunter form, we have learned to expect the unexpected and 2013 was no exception!

This growing season was dominated by hot, dry, windy conditions with record temperatures throughout Eastern Australia. This was a total contrast to the previous year where the temperature only exceeded 35 degrees on four occasions! Fortunately the good winter rain ensured healthy vines with lush canopies that produced well balanced, clean fruit. All this made for one of the earliest starts to vintage that we have seen and by Australia Day (when we would normally look at getting started) we were 90% finished!

It's a bit of a cliché to say that crops were down and quality was up but that's exactly how I see the 2013 vintage. I am really excited about this year and I think the Semillon, Chardonnay and Verdelho will be the stand out wines from this vintage.

*Brett Keeping*



*Brett and our winemaker Liz Jackson inspecting fruit before vintage 2013 begins*



*Newcastle Herald, 2000*

## CHARACTERS OF NOTE

We are lucky to work in such a wonderful industry and in our past 25 years at Two Rivers there have been many people who have helped and influenced us along the way. Some notable mentions are:

**Ross Pitts** – Our fearless leader and Managing Director, “Ross the Boss” has been a constant source of support throughout our time at Two Rivers. He is fiercely proud of Two Rivers and has true passion for the Hunter.

**John Muddle** – Founder of the legendary Richmond Grove, father of Linda and mentor to Brett. His experience and wisdom were invaluable in the early establishment years.

**Brian McGuigan** – Wine industry power house and former employer of Linda when she worked for Brian & Fay at Wyndham Estate back in the early 80's. Brian's advice, enthusiasm and unwavering commitment to the wine industry continues to inspire us.

**Jay Tulloch** – Jay has been a long-time friend of Two Rivers since we first sold him grapes in 1992. There is not much Jay hasn't seen and done in the wine industry and he has remained a close friend, mentor and advisor to this day.

**Pat Auld** – We sold Pat grapes for nearly 15 years and maintained a strong friendship throughout. Pat has always been a great supporter and believer in Two Rivers.

**Sandy Oatley** – Sandy was at the helm of Rosemount for our first 15 years in the Hunter and was a great source of inspiration for us. What the Oatley's achieved with Rosemount from their humble beginnings in Denman is nothing short of outstanding.

**Jim Chatto** – Jim was our winemaker for 7 years and his skill and passion for his craft puts him among Australia's finest. A great talent and a great bloke.

**Liz Jackson** – Liz is the Senior Winemaker at First Creek and has been making our wines since 2009. Liz is an absolute star of the Australian wine industry.

**Greg Silkman and the First Creek team** - We have enjoyed a long and successful association with our winemakers at First Creek. Greg has been at the helm throughout this time and he has created an outstanding wine operation enterprise in the Hunter Valley. It's great doing business with such dedicated and professional people.



Steve, Brett and Linda

## STOP PRESS

The Two Rivers 2012 Stones Throw Semillon is following in the footsteps of its illustrious forebears by taking out a Gold Medal at the prestigious 2013 Royal Sydney Wine Show.

We are understandably very proud of this award for our Stones Throw Semillon and over the years this wine has achieved incredible success and an almost cult following which has resulted in a sell-out of our past vintages. It is very exciting to see our most recent vintage continuing this success. This wine has been a consistent high achiever winning 16 gold medals from vintages, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2010, 2011 and now 2012 with the 2011 winning 5 gold medals and a Trophy. Now that we have picked the 2013 Semillon and it is in the winery, we have high hopes that this vintage will continue the wining tradition.

Join us and order online at [tworivers.com.au](http://tworivers.com.au)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 4 - Upper Hunter Wine and Food Affair** - Join with us in celebrating the Affair's 10th anniversary. If you haven't sampled this amazing event, mark it in your diary and come and say hello to us in the main street of Denman. Gourmet foods and of course your favourite wines from Two Rivers. Live (and free!) street entertainment. The Hunter's Best Street Party awaits...



Find out more information at [www.upperhunterwineandfoodaffair.com.au](http://www.upperhunterwineandfoodaffair.com.au)

**May 5 - Recovery at the Rivers** - Relax at Two Rivers under the shade of the trees at the Cellar Door. Enjoy a glass or two of the best Two Rivers has to offer.

**September 14 - Rock'n at the Rivers** - Two Rivers loves to support the Denman Children's centre with their annual Fundraiser which is a fabulous day out for the whole family. Enjoy listening to the sounds of local bands whilst you relax and soak up the friendly country atmosphere that this day has become renowned for.

**November 9 - Peter Byrne** plays live at Two Rivers.



International singer and creator of the greatest tribute to Neil Diamond, Peter Byrne is one of Australia's most talented and versatile performers. If you are looking for a spectacular nights entertainment, Peter Byrne's 'Forever Diamond Show' will guarantee to have you singing, dancing and clapping all night.

It's 40 years since the release of Neil Diamond's *Hot August Night* album, so break out the flares, don the body shirts and join us for a night to remember. Details of ticket sales will be provided shortly.



Our office team - Tracy, Anne, Linda and Stella



Our vineyard team - Kaye, Leanne and Janice



Our cellar door team - Ingrid, Mandy, Snezana and Alison

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