



Hundred Acre

Ancient Way Vineyard

Single vineyard Shiraz from the Barossa Valley, South Australia



The following are excerpts from the Hundred Acre mailing list letter written by Jayson Woodbridge.

After five years of intense work at Hundred Acre and over a hundred flights across the Pacific Ocean and months spent away from our families every year. Hundred Acre is releasing the wine that is the sole reason for these sacrifices... **Hundred Acre, Ancient Way.**

Everything by Hand

In Australia almost every aspect of farming a vineyard is mechanized. Machines harvest and crudely prune the vines, human decisions about what clusters to pick, how to shape the vines and when to lighten the load on a given vine are not possible from the top of a harvester.

Yet they must work this way, as there are just not enough people to do otherwise. With that in mind **we continue to follow the Hundred Acre path of farming by hand.**

“I cannot express how difficult and costly this is yet I know this is the right way.” JW



“I have always greatly admired Shiraz, it’s definitely equal to Cabernet Sauvignon ”

Jayson Woodbridge
Owner and Winemaker
Hundred Acre



Over the last twenty years I have sought out Shiraz from every wine region that is lucky enough to produce it. I found one area that has over all those years kept me constantly intrigued, the Barossa Valley, South Australia.

After years of being taunted by the Barossa's amazing wines I finally could not take it anymore, I got on a plane and headed for the Barossa. I fell in love with the valley instantly and was surprised to learn that most of their

greatest Shiraz did not even get outside Australia.

Faced with such beauty, warm people, incredible soils and climates, and in the presence of the

wines I knew the Barossa was truly the greatest home of Shiraz in the world and that I had to make my own wine, that *my life would not be complete if I walked away.*

After multiple visits to the Barossa I found two incredible vineyard sites, land that was first planted to vines back in the 1850's. The barn where I lay my head and cellar the wine was built in the 1840's. This is not garage wine. We make it in a wind swept-field completely exposed to the elements... Oh how I envy the comforts of those "garagistes".

The Vineyard

Ancient Way is the name of the first of my vineyards planted on the far side of the world. The other vineyard you will hear about in four years and is pictured above being prepared for planting. The other picture is a view from the edge of the Ancient Way.

Let us step back for a moment; many of the vines in the Barossa are original Shiraz stock predating the destructive spread of phylloxera in the late 1800's. They are the ancient ones, brought to





Australia in the 1830's on square-rigged wood ships. These cuttings came from vines planted in Europe during the 1700's, all a direct bloodline dating back thousands of years to the beginning

of Shiraz somewhere in the very cradle of civilization itself. The Barossa is a rarity; phyloxera has never existed there. These vines live in the land that time has forgot.

The Ancient Way is no ordinary vineyard. Rising to the top of a hill overlooking Greenock Creek Winery, it presides over some of the finest vineyards in all of Australia; it is in the core of what

the call the Golden Mile. It is the ancient gateway to this valley and the most beautiful countryside that one could hope to see. The land itself is one of the oldest vineyard sites in the country. Yet this is not what takes it out of the ordinary...



The Soil

In the wine world, one of the true "Holy Grail" soils is a rare sequence known as Terra Rossa, red soil over fractured limestone.

The mineral rich red soil merges with the limestone in cracks and fissures. The vines slowly work their way down into the limestone extracting the very small amounts of water that are usually found deep in the limestone layer.

In Australia and in the Barossa one will see plenty of red soil. Yet there are very few true Terra Rossa sites.

Ancient Way is a true Terra Rossa vineyard.

Despite the vineyard having an irrigation system, it is supplied by the equivalent of two garden hoses stretched out over forty acres. The water sometimes just drops to a trickle; *we are after all on the driest continent on earth*, wedged between a giant desert to the north and the Great Southern Ocean to the south. The vineyard is therefore dry farmed, what little water we have is used to prevent total devastation on the hottest days, without the small amount of moisture in the limestone the vines would simply die.



The Vines

One of the Barossa Valley's top viticulturalists planted the Ancient Way; it was his very own vineyard. At the time he worked for Penfolds and according to him he selected cuttings from Grange's core vineyards near the Ancient Way site.



He chose "their very best vines" its' what "makes the vines so wonderful, the fruit so intense, the berries so small and dark", naturally "the site is remarkable for these vines".

I really have no idea whether he did this with their blessing or not but happily for me the results have been marvelous.

Jim Barbour, my head viticulturist in Napa Valley describes the vineyard as:

"one of the most incredible vineyard sites I have seen in the world."

The Weather and Why There is So Little Wine

Every year just weeks before harvest the sky will turn red and temperatures soar. At night the temperatures plunge and it becomes very cold. In 2004 I nearly collapsed while working in the vineyard as the wind hit 40 mph and the temperature reached 122 degrees at Ancient Way. A massive sandstorm swept through and *took half of our crop in two days of blistering heat and wind.*

In Napa Valley the very best vineyards are producing at 2 - 3 tons per acre. The Kayli Morgan vineyard has ranged between 1.4 - 2.5 tons per acre each year. In the Barossa tonnages are generally higher, as most vineyards are drawing the scarce water from the Murray River through a pipeline. In addition, Shiraz also produces a heavier cluster than Cabernet Sauvignon and crop loads are therefore larger. Only a few of the Barossa's top wineries are exceptions to this rule



In the 2004 vintage the Ancient Way Vineyard produced 0.8 tons per acre and 1.2 tons per acre in the 2005 vintage. The berries were minute and the cluster weights were extremely light.



The intensity is nothing short of incredible and the volume of wine produced was miniscule...as a Winemaker I have come to accept this as the necessary sacrifice but as an owner it is painful and has stressed me financially to the brink.

The Fruit, Equipment and Barrels

All of the fruit was picked into small baskets normally used to pick cherries hundreds of miles away. We had to custom build a sorting table locally exactly like our table in Napa Valley; I could not buy a table, as they are very rare in Australia. Vignerons and locals alike came to watch twenty of us hand sort each berry on the table.

They generally shook their heads and went off to the pub murmuring that I must be completely crazed. Our Delta E1 destemmer was air freighted to the Barossa from Napa Valley, the first one to arrive in the country. We also loaded a container with our Hundred Acre barrels and shipped them to the Barossa from Napa Valley. It was the only way at the time, now they go direct from France.

The Wine

In September, 2006 we will release the Hundred Acre, Ancient Way single vineyard pure Shiraz. The wine has spent two years in the very finest all new French Oak.

Despite Ancient Way being almost twice the size of our Napa Valley, Kayli Morgan vineyard, we will release half as much wine.

The wine is labeled and packaged exactly the same, as Hundred Acre except it will have the Ancient Way designation on the back with Shiraz noted rather than Cabernet Sauvignon.





Shipping

The wine is bottled in the Barossa in the same Hundred Acre glass we import from France and is then shipped in a refrigerated container back to us here in Napa Valley **at a constant temperature of 55 degrees**. The only wine we know of that is protected from the heat of the equator in this way. Naturally it is sealed in our wood boxes and protected for storage or shipment.

The Experience

In my own experience tasting the 2004 Ancient Way vintage brings me back to the 2002 Hundred Acre, Kayli Morgan they are very similar in complexity and texture and yet one is Shiraz and therefore, *totally different in a very magical way*.

Ancient Way is unique. It is Hundred Acre to the core. Purity and balance rule over a monolithic wine, yet still creamy with very complex layers both aromatically and on the palate, an extremely long finish, intense and almost black in color;

“Definitely amongst the best wine we have ever made”

JW

If I could describe it with only one word, *modesty to the wind*: Epic. If you love our Cabernet Sauvignon you will fall head over heels with our Shiraz.

My friend and fellow winemaker **Philippe Melka describes the wine best “Incredible”**. Naturally he says it with a charming French accent that I cannot adequately convey in print.

Respectfully,

Jayson B. Woodbridge
Owner/Winemaker
Hundred Acre



Crossing the land via old Land Rover...God how I love wine!
