

# Building BROKENWOOD



**1970** Three Sydney solicitors, driven by a love of wine, defy logic and common sense by paying a record price of \$970 per acre for a 10-

acre block in the foothills of the Brokenback Ranges. James Halliday, John Beeston and the late Tony Albert, exhausted by the sweat and tears in clearing the land of timber, name the vineyard Brokenwood.

**1971** The land, originally planned in 1909 as the parish playing fields, was planted with shiraz and cabernet sauvignon in July.

**1973** The first harvest makes its way to the winery in the boot of Len Evans' Bentley, and yields 75 dozen Hermitage Cabernet Sauvignon.

"I remember in 1973 climbing out of the first Brokenwood vat and giving my toenails intense scrutiny. Like the rest of my feet they were adorned with an indelible purple coating. It was, in fact the first Brokenwood Cabernet Sauvignon. I was very reluctant to lose all that magnificent colouring matter, but still, toenails being what they are, I decided that perhaps I should not add that extra degree of strength to the wine." -John Beeston.



**1975** A new winery is built for fermentation tanks, oak barrels and, importantly, accommodation for conscripted friends, who get rations of food and wine. Many of Australia's prominent wine identities will serve time here.



**1976** First wine-show success. The 1975 Hermitage Cabernet Sauvignon wins a gold medal and trophy at the Hunter Valley Wine Show.



**1978** Deciding they need more exercise, the original Big Three partners invite long-term helpers The Small Six to join Brokenwood and buy the neighbouring Graveyard Vineyard.

The land appears as the Cemetery Block on the parish map, although was never used as such. The wines nevertheless have great body.

**1979** The 1978 Hunter Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon Hermitage is released, starting a tradition of premium grape sourcing - "All the right regions for all the right reasons".



**1982** The tenth Brokenwood vintage, including a brave foray into whites - semillon and chardonnay. Around 3000 cases of wine are now being sold to mailing list and cellar door customers.



**1983** Tired out and wanting more white wine to drink, the partners appoint their first employee, luring Roseworthy graduate Iain Riggs from McLaren Vale. A new insulated winery is built, with improved facilities for white wines.

**1984** The first Graveyard red is released, the 1983 Graveyard Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon.

Brokenwood invites supporters on its mailing list to a lunch at the winery, which has continued ever since as The Graveyard Launch Weekend.

**1985** The first Graveyard Vineyard Hermitage is released, the 1984 vintage.



**1986** Permanent staff doubles with the appointment of the first assistant winemaker, Wayne Donaldson, known as "staff".

**1987** The Cricket Pitch label is introduced with a 1986 Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon. The label is inspired by the Rothbury parish map which shows the original land as a sports ground.

**1990** The first sauvignon blanc semillon is released - later to become Cricket Pitch White - combining sauvignon blanc from McLaren Vale with Hunter semillon.

**1991** Graveyard Vineyard Shiraz is included in the first Langton's Classification of Australian Wines.

**1992** No grapes picked off 5 ha of Graveyard shiraz vines thanks to drought.



**1993** The first, and only, vineyard manager is appointed - Keith (KB) Barry. The Cricket Pitch label is extended with the return of a red wine, the 1991 Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon.

**1995** The first Rayner Vineyard Shiraz, the 1993, is released and wins the Restaurant and Catering Trophy at Royal Sydney Wine Show for Best Wine from a Small Producer.

**1997** First ILR Aged Semillon released, the 1992.

Brokenwood initiates the prize for Dux of Second Year at the University of Adelaide winemaking degree course. The first recipient is Michael Sykes.

**2001** The 1999 Rayner Shiraz wins two trophies, including Best Red Wine of Show against 5500 reds, at the International Wine Challenge in London.

**2003** Brokenwood's 2003 Semillon wins Trophy for Best Australian White



Varietal under £10, and Best International Dry White under £10 at the inaugural Decanter World Wine Awards. Iain Riggs is presented with the Graham

Gregory Award for services to the New South Wales wine industry.

Brokenwood releases the first wines from the Indigo Vineyard, Beechworth.

**2004** The new barrel shed is completed, allowing high quality controlled maturation for whites and reds, and greatly expanded party space.

The last chardonnay vines receive their marching orders from the Graveyard. The vineyard is now entirely planted to shiraz.

Brokenwood completes the move from cork- to screwcap-finished closures.

**2006** The Albert Room opens for business.