

New kids on the block sew the seeds for vintage crop JANE SEHL MEIER

For Tony and Mary Betteridge, becoming the Southern Highlands newest winemakers was entirely serendipitous. "We were looking for a property last year after moving over from South Africa, and the Howards Lane opportunity just came up for us," she said.

One year later, the accidental vigneronns have embraced their new life in the Highlands and produced their first vintage this year. "It hadn't been our intention to enter the wine industry, but we have taken to it like ducks to water," said Mrs Betteridge. "It has been a wonderful exercise, and the whole thing has just lent itself to a great opportunity to meet people rhin the area."



Since acquiring the Howards Lane Vineyard, the Betteridges have named and labelled their stock of wine, planted a new vineyard and built and opened their cellar door. Producing their first vintage was an enjoyable experience, with their son and his friends hand-picking the harvest, and neighbour and winemaker Anton Balog bottling the wine*.

Mrs Betteridge said it was a privilege to be a part of the vibrant Highlands winemaking industry. "It has been a lovely entry into a local industry full of lovely people, and there is a wonderful atmosphere between all the vigneronns in the Southern Highlands," she said.

Howards Lane Vineyard spreads below the northern slopes of the Gibbergunyah bushland adjoining Bowral and Mittagong.

The winery's three and a half acre Corrie vineyard was one of the first established in the region ten years ago and produces almost 8000 bottles of Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon each year. The farm climbs to 800 metres above sea level at its peak ensuring ideal cool climate growing conditions. The newly developed McCourt vineyard is well on its way to doubling Howards Lane's production within the next few years - introducing a Shiraz and Sauvignon Blanc range. All vines are pruned by hand and the grapes are selectively hand harvested.

Wines currently available from Howards Lane are a 2002 Chardonnay, 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon, 2001 Light Red, 2001 Chardonnay and 2000 Chardonnay.

For more information about the Howards Lane Vineyard, visit www.howardslane.com.au or call 02 48721971. email: editor.highlandnews@ruralpress.com.au

*Correction: Previous vintages were made by Anton Balog, current vintages by Michelle Crockett