

ELTHAM AND DISTRICT WINEMAKERS GUILD

ESTABLISHED 1969

FEBRUARY 2026

The Guild encourages the responsible consumption of alcohol.

The Guild meets on the last Friday of each month *(except December)*

**** at the Eltham Living & Learning Centre ****

8 pm start

Next meeting: Friday February 27th, 2026

Guests who are interested in finding out more about the Guild are welcome to attend any of our regular Guild meetings

 Contact info@amateurwine.org.au for meeting details

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President's Press | February

Angela Harridge

January Guild Night

Welcome Back BBQ | @ The Leenaerts'

Once again, we gathered to welcome the new Guild year for a relaxed afternoon with members and our Wine Show trophy winners. It was a chance to relax, socialise and have a chat. We also took the opportunity to present some of the (updated) 2025 Wine Show trophies.

This year we were back at the Leenaerts' – on another scorching Summer's day. We were grateful to be able to shelter in the comfort of the cellar space. The day was spent catching up whilst sharing our wines and fabulous food. John filled us in on their winemaking journey, conducted tours of his winery, cellar and vineyard, and we tasted and compared the differences in his 2025 Shiraz aging in French and American Oak barrels.

A huge thank you to John and Dana for hosting the first of our 2026 social gatherings.

February Guild Night

Friday 27th February | 8:00pm Open That Bottle Night

Our first guild night back at the Living & Learning Centre will be our annual Open That Bottle Night – where the night is dedicated to sharing the stories (and wine!) behind those special bottles we've had stashed away waiting for that 'one day'.

For more information, check out the main Slack Channel.

Grape Harvest | Vintage 2026

This vintage is certainly presenting some challenges for winemakers, with several regions experiencing a trifecta of – unseasonal spring frosts around budburst – an intense hot and dry summer – and bushfires! These have significantly impacted vineyards across Victoria, leading to significant crop reductions in some areas, and an earlier start to vintage.

It will be interesting to see how the quality of the grapes has been affected – reports are hinting that in some areas there is great promise of lower yield, higher quality fruit. The availability from your usual suppliers may also be a challenge – but our main EDWG Bulk Fruit Purchase from Chalmers is running along nicely – with Arneis having already been delivered and Montepulciano, Teroldego and Pecorino almost ready (if you want to order anything you need to let them know asap). There are other smaller groups who have arranged to order from other sources – and the availability of fruit from vineyards that have contacted us (for personal orders) is listed in the Other Fruit Sources Channel on Slack.

As a maker of Country Wines, I'd like to encourage you to have a go at making some non-grape wines this year. Fruit, vegetables and herbs are readily available over these warmer months – and honey can always be sourced for making meads. If you'd like to have a go, but would like a helping hand, contact me and we'll get you going. We will be running both the Introduction to Winemaking and Introduction to Mead making courses this year – so keep an eye out for information as we get organised.

Jo Ilian 2026 | Best Rosé

A reminder that this year's Jo Ilian will be awarded to the Best Rosé in the Wine Show. If you don't already have previous vintages available, then this is the year to have a go at making a rosé. You may want to order a smaller amount of a red grapes of your choice for this purpose – or set aside some of your current order. There are several members who regularly make rosé, so ask on Slack if you'd like to have a chat.

New Members | Welcome

You may notice some new faces around Guild Nights, fruit pick-ups and on Slack – please make our new members feel welcome: Marcello Mattia, Lachlan & Georgia Ross, Andrew Cewravolo, Francois Kirsten and Tammie & Lou Zarro ... if I've missed anyone – let me know!

Cheers,

Angela

Committee & Committee Meeting Dates

President	Angela Harridge	General Committee	Adam Domicich
Vice President	Richard Martignetti		Trevor Sleep
Secretary	Mike Wilson		Mario Fantin
Treasurer	Trevor Roberts		John Leenaerts
Past President	Richard Martignetti		
Wine Show Chief Judge	Luca Barbon	Newsletter Editor	Glen van Neuren
Wine Show Director	Wayne Harridge	Fruit Purchase Co-ord	Trevor Roberts
Webmaster	Mike Wilson		

Members elected to positions on the Guild Management Committee meet at 8pm on the second Wednesday of each month, via ZOOM.

Guild Committee Meetings

Agenda items relate to General Guild Business and/or Eltham Wine Show Business, with the emphasis based on the requirements at the time. The Eltham Wine Show Chief Judge is invited to the meetings when the agenda requires their input.

Agenda items will normally relate to: Guild Night Program, Membership, Education Initiatives, Finance & Governance, Social Events, Promotion & Marketing and Sponsorship.

Additional agenda items relevant to the Eltham Wine Show: Judging, Logistics and IT.

Meeting Dates

March 12th, April 09th, May 14th, June 11th, July 09th, August 13th, September 10th, October 8th, November 12th

Member Participation

All members are encouraged to raise any issues, new initiatives, and suggestions with a committee member for discussion at meetings. Members are welcome to attend committee meetings as visitors and should contact the President or Secretary a few days prior to the meeting date.

Guild Contacts

President	president@amateurwine.org.au
Secretary	info@amateurwine.org.au
Wine Show	cheers@amateurwine.org.au
Newsletter	newsletter@amateurwine.org.au

Forward Program for Guild Events

We will keep you updated on the final details via SLACK and the [Website](#)

... so keep  ...

DATE	ACTIVITY
Friday, February 27 th	<p>Monthly Guild Night: Eltham LLC <i>Open That Bottle Night: Angela Harridge</i> The night we come together to taste wines and hear the stories behind them.</p> <p><i>Tasting: Members' wines with a story</i> Bring along a wine from your cellar that has a story to go with it.</p>
Friday, March 27 th	<p>Monthly Guild Night: Eltham LLC Tony Winspear: <i>Winemaker / Balgownie</i></p> <p>Tony will share his journey as a winemaker, approach to winemaking and practices.</p> <p><i>Tasting: Balgownie + Members' wines</i> Wines to share and discuss.</p>

Welcome Back Lunch @ the Leenaerts' Wilhelmina Estate

Photos: Larissa Wilson | Angla & Wayne Harridge

For the January Guild 'Night' we gathered at *Wilhelmina Estate* – John & Dana Leenaerts' vineyard and cellar. It was a chance to relax, socialise and have a chat. We also took the opportunity to present some of the (updated) 2025 Wine Show trophies.

While we grabbed a glass of wine and snacked, John filled us in on their winemaking journey, conducted tours of his winery, cellar and vineyard, and we tasted and compared the differences in his 2025 Shiraz aging in French and American Oak barrels.



The remainder of the afternoon was spent sharing some amazing food and a fantastic array of wines ...



... and celebrating Graham Scott's 90th trip around the sun – even if he did insist on the candles reading 09!
A very Happy Birthday from all of us at EDWG Graham – you are proof that 90 is only a number – we can only hope we're all still making wine and are as active in the community as you are when we're 90.



We ended the day with presentations of the updated trophies to the 2025 Wine Show winners ...

Best Country Winemaker David Hart



For some reason the *Eltham-Frankston Winemakers Showdown Best Country Wine Trophy* (commonly referred to as the *Hillside/Bayside Trophy*) hadn't been awarded since 2022 – by EDWG or FAWG. So, after consulting with the Frankston Guild, we awarded the trophy for all 3 years:

2023 The Harridge Family | 2024 David Hart | 2025 The Harridge Family.



A huge thank you to John and Dana for hosting the first of our 2026 social gatherings – and to everyone who attended – your food and wine selection was impeccable!



Wayne Harridge

Eltham Wine Show Update

Planning for the 57th Eltham Wine Show has commenced! Again, the committee are searching for the best possible venue at an affordable price – any suggestions from our membership will be considered.

The wine show will be scheduled for early November, we are not locked into a specific date.

The Jo Ilian trophy will be presented for the Best Rosé in 2026.

There have been some great rosés exhibited in recent shows, so this year should see a great battle with many entrants in Class 13.

There are several styles of rosé, but who knows what the judges will be thinking? What style do they prefer? When you make rosés for this year's show, consider making several different styles and entering them to get the best chance of picking up the prestigious Jo Ilian.

If you have any ideas for any additions or changes to the wine show for 2026, please contact any committee member or post your ideas on Slack.

Cheers,

Wayne

Did You Know ...?

Richard Webb: Richard's Recapitulations ...

<https://tinyurl.com/bdh7uv98>

Winemakers hit hard losing homes, vineyards and stocks in Victorian fires

[Sexism, harassment and inflexibility drive women out of winemaking](#)

Among the main factors contributing to women leaving Australia's wine industry were sexism, discrimination, and a lack of flexibility, a nationwide study has found.

[The Best Rieslings of 2025 | Wine-Searcher News & Opinion](#)

For this year's greatest hits, Riesling leans to the drier side. Read the latest wine news & opinion on wine-searcher

<https://tinyurl.com/2aeiypbf>

Australian wine's supply and demand imbalance worsens

John Leenaerts

We are now deep into summer, and the vines are doing their thing beautifully. I am constantly monitoring the vines moisture and nutrient levels during my ritual morning vine walks to make sure they're channelling all their energy exactly where it needs to go into developing those precious berries.

The apprehension from the unusually cold and wet spring has gone, fortunately this has been rewarded with what has been a perfect summer for the vines.

The lack of rain and humidity has been brilliant as there has been virtually no disease pressure on the vines, this has resulted in minimal spraying this season (a stark contrast from last year!).

This is exactly what every vigneron wishes for heading into vintage.

The vines seemed to have predicted the dry summer as the amount of fruit on the vines is down from last year, the yield is looking like it will be lower this year.

During December just a single spray for downy and powdery mildew was applied to the vines on the 22nd December, there was still residue remaining on the leaves from the previous application in November, nevertheless I wanted to ensure the vines were protected as I was going away for 4 weeks.

On return from holidays in January, the top trellis wires urgently required lifting and tensioning as the vigorous growth over Christmas had the vines virtually intertwined between the rows.

This process raises the vine canopy to keep the fruit zone open to allow sunlight exposure and air movement to minimise disease and promote ripening of the fruit.

The fruit was certainly developing nicely.

Early February saw the onset of Veraison. This is the onset of ripening of the grapes where berries soften and rapidly increase in sugar and decrease in acid, the colour of the berries transition from green to red then purple.

Veraison of my shiraz commenced on 6th Feb and virtually overnight the berries had fully changed colour to red and are now a deep purple.

This is also when the birds become very interested in the grapes, so the need for protection by the (dreaded) bird nets.

Before the application of the nets a final spay was done to ensure protection of the vines through too harvest.

A big thanks goes out to **Paul Finn** for the newly acquired sprayer as it was certainly a game changer from my previous backpack sprayer.

Harvest is certainly not far away, and I will commence monitoring the fruit Baume soon.

What's happening in the Vineyard? ... Dec, Jan & February 2026 Photos

Attached are the following photos:

1. Vines before trellis wire tensioning
2. Vines after trellis wire tensioning
3. Shiraz Grape development
4. Commencement of Veraison 6th Feb
5. Veraison 7th Feb
6. Spraying the vines before Nets
7. Bird nets placed over vines

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



Jo Ilian Awards – Forward Thinking

Keep an eye on the Jo Ilian Awards beyond this year and the next few years.

Show Year	Class	Winner
2026 (Grape)	Best Rosé	TBA
2026 (Grape)	Other Variety & Blended Whites, Any Vintage	Fantin O’Callaghan
2024 (Country)	Best Liqueur	Richard Martignetti
2023 (Grape)	Best Pinot Noir	Richard Martignetti
2022 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Less Common Variety Red	Steven Ney
2021 (Country)	Best Berry Wine	David Hart
2020 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Chardonnay	Danny Cappellani
2019 (Country)	Best Stone Fruit Wine	Noel Legg
2018 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Cabernet Sauvignon	Geoff Neagle
2017 (Country)	Best Mead Wine	Trevor Roberts
2016 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Pinot Noir	David Hart
2015 (Country)	Best Country Wine	Gary Campanella, Hamish Lucas
2014 (Grape)	Best Current Vintage Dry Grape White wine, Any non-sparkling style, Any Varietal	Danny Cappellani
2013 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Red Blend	Danny Cappellani
2012 (Grape)	Best Previous Vintage Shiraz	Gary Campanella, Jid Cosma
2011 (Country)	Best Hybrid	Neil Johannesen
2010 (Country)	Best Herb, Grain, Flower, Veg	Mario and Jean Anders
2009 (Grape)	Best Current Vintage Rose’	Peter Belec
2008 (Country)	Best Sparkling County Wine	David Wood
2007 (Grape)	Best Current Vintage Sauvignon Blanc	NHE Johannesen
2006 (Country)	Best Berry or Currant Wine	David Hart
2005 (Country)	Best Other Fruit Wine	Vinko Eterovic
2004 (Grape)	Best Shiraz	K. Furness, D. Markwell
2003 (Country)	Best Mead	Harry Gilham
2002 (Grape)	Best Riesling	Richard Skinner
2001 (Country)	Best Raspberry	Jacques Garnier
2000 (Grape)	Best Pinot Noir	Philip Hellard



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Local Food Connect

Local Food Connect (LFC) is a not-for-profit, community group which connects local growers and eaters.

Operating across North East Melbourne, but mainly in the Nillumbik and Banyule areas, we encourage, support and promote events, actions and enterprises which help to put your food back into your control.

info@localfoodconnect.org
0416 203 067

<https://localfoodconnect.org.au>



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Note: If you want a **FAST** response **Slack** is the best place to advertise ...
Slack is instant, whereas the newsletter is only published monthly!

The Trading Barrel is the place to list ...

- For Sale or Want to Buy items
 - Sponsor special deals
 - Member announcements – give-aways, winemaking Garage Sales etc
 - Availability of wine-related produce – grapes, honey, apples etc
-