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<b>Secretary</b>	Gary Campanella	0409 198 884	<b>Committee</b>	Darko Postruzin	
<b>Show Director</b>	Greg Martin	0410 683 793	<b>Committee</b>	Bill Loughlin	
<b>Newsletter</b>	Richard Bortko	9811 8219	<b>Communications</b>	Marcel Theunissen	5962 5153

**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 at 7.45 pm  
**Next meeting: 27 May 2011**

## In This Newsletter:

Next Meeting - 27 May.....	2
President's Press .....	2
The basis of the success of the Guild .....	2
Guild's Slovenian Night at Slovenian Club .....	3
Oak Barrels vs Flex tanks.....	3
Revival of the Guild's Port Club .....	4
Flex tank potential for home winemakers .....	4
Wine Quotes and News .....	9
Trading Barrel .....	9
Sponsors Corner .....	11
Vinvicta Products .....	11
Winequip Products.....	11
Costante Imports .....	12
Cellar Plus .....	13
Australian and New Zealand Winemakers.....	15
Greensborough Home Brewing.....	15
Heritage Coopers .....	16

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## Next Meeting – 27 May

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7:45 pm start at the Eltham Living & Learning Centre, 739 Main Rd. Eltham.

### Agenda:

- Welcome; apologies, guests
- Brief highlighting of coming events - International Night and 2011 Wine Show.
- WOTY - tasting of five member country and grape wines in addition to tastings within the major presentation:
- Major Presentation: *Superior Management of Wine Fermentation and Maturation* presented by Karen Coulston, Wine Maker and Lecturer in Wine Technology at NMIT.

Karen will be covering the subject of malolactic fermentation. She will be explaining the relationship between pH and SO<sub>2</sub> on the malolactic process. She will demonstrate how malo is tested for in the laboratory. Also, practical examples of wines currently going through malo may be provided for tasting and smelling, subject to availability of time and samples. This will be a great educational session providing for tastings and an interactive session.

Guests checking out joining the Guild are welcome as always.

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## President's Press

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*Spencer Field*

### The basis of the success of the Guild

In an interview with **Kevin Furness** recorded in last month's *Press Cuttings*, readers learned how much the Guild had contributed to the successful development of a top amateur winemaker who then went on to establish his own small commercial winery "*Buskers*".

**So what are the key determinants in the Guild that provide members with fulfilling wine education, enjoyment and opportunities for sharing??**

The answer is very simple - you only have to look and listen around you each meeting to see that **it's the members**, including yourself, that provide the sharing, learning and enjoyment that is fundamental to a successful wine Guild.

The next question with an equally simple answer, is **how does the Management Committee (MC) attempt to achieve its objective of meeting the needs of members?**

Members are also the key to the answer to this question. To fulfil its role, the key strategy used by the MC is find volunteers or to **draw on members** asking them to contribute their expertise for the benefit of all the membership. And there is an overwhelming amount of enthusiasm and ability within the membership to be drawn on. Look at the last meeting featuring **Mario & Jeanne Anders** presenting their demonstrated expertise in country wine making to other members, who in turn through their comments and feedback, created a great learning and social environment. While on special occasions we will call on professionals, such as **Karen Coulston** and **Lindsay Corby**, by and large it's the members who very proudly and enthusiastically volunteer their time and expertise to develop and assist the MC in running activities such as International Night,

Winery/Craft Weekends, Wine Shows, workshops and seminars. Then also there are many technical contributions by individual members in writing or demonstration formats, the editing of the newsletters, the administration of the Guild's magnificent website and much more !

The key point is that **the Guild will continue to thrive or fail on the level of contributions, volunteerism and sharing amongst its membership.** The main potential weakness arises if the Guild's many activities depend upon too few members willing to contribute their time and efforts. In this case, hard working members run the risk of burnout, or divorce or both, if they are not at some time replaced with other energised members.

The member survey last year has thrown up plenty of ideas and suggestions for new and better activities for the future. How many of these are implemented will largely be determined by the level of member volunteerism available to implement them. It will be a big mistake to leave everything to the MC. The MC needs active member support and initiative. Some of the best initiatives of the Guild have come from members outside of the MC, for example, the review of and changes to country wine standards and judging, the identification and publishing of good sources of quality grapes, the annual winery weekender, many of the technical articles posted on the website all were initiatives of individuals. Most of these individual endeavours have been adopted and supported by the MC as regular features on the Guild activity calendar.

**In summary, it's the membership and the spirit of generosity of the members that are the essential ingredients for the continuing success of the Guild.**

## Guild's Slovenian Night at Slovenian Club

The 2011 International Night will be held for Guild members, spouses, partners and friends on **24 June** (in place of a normal meeting) at the Slovenian Club in Research. **Darko Postruzin** and **Trevor Sleep** are the organisers for this event and have negotiated a special deal - \$30/head for a several course Slovenian meal catered by the Club, and members may BYO wine.

**The Guild will subsidise the event by providing for a modest number of Slovenian and Croatia wines to complement the meal.** Modest of course, because the Guild is always committed to encouraging **responsible drinking.**

We have well over 30 members and partners already signed up for this year's International Night. We want to see a final count of over 50 attending. See further details later in this newsletter.

## Oak Barrels vs Flex tanks

Quite a few of us utilise oak barrels in our attempts to make top wines, including second hand re-shaved barrels and, at great cost, even new oak. Barrels contribute two very important components that are desirable for good winemaking: 1) a wide variation of oak flavours; and 2) micro-oxygenation (slow transfer of air through the oak into the wine needed for maturation). For amateur winemakers making small amounts of wine, there are a number of major shortcomings associated with the use of barrels. Until recently, the alternatives to barrel use have been quite limited, and available qualities of oak chips and staves (certainly from my point of view) have not provided good substitutes for good American and French oak barrels.

However, recently technical and product advancements have led to alternative maturation options suitable for both commercial and amateur winemakers alike. Fortunately for

Guild members, EDWG member **Howard Devlin** has trialled the new Flextank technology and very generously has provided a good article below setting out his experiences.

*Editors note: Any members who have trialled some of the new, allegedly high quality oak dominos and staves now available, are encouraged to set out here their experiences for other members.*

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## Revival of the Guild's Port Club

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*John Gaffney - Port Club Barrel Manager*

*Editor's Note: A tasting of the Port Club's 10 year old Port will be included amongst the WOTY tastings at the May meeting.. The President supports that time be made available at the July meeting for John Gaffney or Alan Blackman to lead a discussion on the future of the Port Club, including providing for more members to buy in and discussing a management handover to a fresh lot of keen members.*

Just letting you know that the Guild's port is doing well in my garage. We have approximately 180 litres in an oak barrel and it has been maturing quietly for over 10 years now. About 2 years ago I racked the port into a clean barrel.

I topped the barrel up this week and that reminded me that maybe it is time to hand the barrel over to a new generation of Guild members. I have a list of the original 25 or so members of the Guild's Port Club (original cost \$20) and most have received 2-3 bottles thus far. The Port Club has been operating on a cost neutral basis for the Guild with port sales going towards continuing the project.

Currently the barrel needs to be drawn down (say 50 bottles) and topped up with some new fresh wine. The alcohol level is currently a tad too high; however this can be corrected when the barrel is drawn down and refilled.

Hopefully there are one or two members who would like to take over the port's management and also use the opportunity for Guild members to learn about the port making process and enjoy the product.

**Alan Blackman** has been the Port Club's technical advisor for ten years and the port has been kept in good condition under his care.

If you can find another person to take over the running of the Port Club that will be great, and Alan and I can assist in passing on our knowledge and experience. The barrel can be transferred to the new owner's place. In the meantime, the barrel has a good home in my garage.

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## Flextank potential for home winemakers

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*Howard Devlin, EDWG Member*

*Editor's note: Thank you to Howard for this fine article. Depending on member feedback, the MC will consider running a session on flextanks and the types, qualities and use of oak staves.*

For those who have not read the brief article in the February newsletter, Flextanks are a food grade polyethylene maturation vessel for the wine industry. They come in a range of shapes and sizes from 300 litres to 2100 litres. For photos and other details of flextanks, see [www.flextank.com.au](http://www.flextank.com.au).

I have been using Flextanks barrels (300 litre) in my wine making since 2006 and now have four, in which we routinely make a Cabernet from my grapes at Mansfield and a Shiraz from **Peter Raeburn's** Heathcote Coliban Glen.

Flextanks are marketed as alternatives to oak barrels as vessels to mature wine.

Wine barrels have many important tasks in wine making including:

1. To provide a bulk storage vessel
2. Mature wine through the controlled introduction of oxygen
3. Impart to the wine the traditional tannic characteristics of the oak
4. Do all of this for a reasonable cost

## 1. Storage.

I suppose what attracted me first to the Flextank polyethylene alternative to oak barrels was how inappropriate the design of an oak barrel was as a bulk storage vessel.

I was making wine in a small winery where space was tight, and at the time I was doing only one type of wine each vintage, but required two barrels to overlap maturation with vintage. I found oak barrels:

- a. Heavy and difficult to manhandle even when empty
- b. Leaked until their timber was swollen up after having been left between bottling and the next vintage unless left full of sterilizing solution
- c. Difficult to see inside to check for cleanliness
- d. Difficult to clean
- e. Difficult to sterilize (I cannot believe burning sulphur on a suspended metal spoon is not a pagan ritual!)
- f. Problems of ullage and topping up and lost wine.
- g. Inefficient shape for storage. I concede that wine barrels must be one of the most iconic shapes and probably will remain a symbol of wine making for ever and I still keep a couple around the vineyard and winery (they are just the right height to rest a glass).

In terms of storage, the polythene Flextank wins hands down. The size of the 300 litre Flextank is approximately 600mm in diameter by 1100 mm in height and weighs less than 10 kg.

I can now store four Flextanks on the same floor space as I could with two barrels.

The lid is about 400 mm wide and, when screwed off, allows easy access to the inside for cleaning, inspection, sampling, etc. The large lid also has a small opening about the same size as a barrel opening and the tanks can be fitted with an inspection valve for sampling, etc. All of my tanks are from the first version which has an o-ring seal. While this seems to seal adequately, the o-ring does not sit in a groove and can roll out if over-tightened. A later version has a much better sealing and closure mechanism.

I pick up and move the tanks easily by myself when empty (and although not recommended, I have managed to slide the polythene tank with 300 litres of wine small distances across a painted concrete floor).

I clean and sterilise the Flextanks the same way I do my other equipment. I use high-pressure water, "Oxyper" and "Proxitane". The Flextanks come up like new and can be stored sealed until next required.

My vineyard produces between 200 and 350 litres of Cabernet wine (depending on the season). The Flextank has a floating lid so does not need to be full. In 2009, I matured only 150 litres in a 300 litre vessel. (this is impossible in a 225 litre oak barrel)

Even with a floating lid this is a very large ullage volume and care needs to be taken in maintaining the SO<sub>2</sub> levels. I use CO<sub>2</sub> and sit some SMS in an open dish on the floating lid.

## 2. Maturing Wine

Flex tanks are a food grade polyethylene tank designed to have an oxygen transmission rate of 20-30 mg/ltr/yr, - the same rate as a new oak barrel.

The pore structure of the polyethylene is quite different to that of oak, in that it is more regular in size and has the advantage that it does not permit the transmission of larger molecules, such as volatile aromatics, water or alcohol.

This means that the wine should retain more aromatics and provide a better nose.

The pores in oak barrels also clog over a period of time, so oxygen transmission is slower in older barrels. The polyethylene tank remains consistent and predictable over its life.

Voids in oak also provide opportunities for spoilage organisms to flourish and can make them difficult to eliminate. Oak barrels are constructed of interference fit planks that rely on liquid to swell the timber and seal the joint, whereas the Flex tanks are “rotamoulded”, and have no joints to leak or trap liquid.

### 3. Oak

Surprisingly, what I thought would be the Flex tank’s greatest weakness for me looks like it may turn out to be its greatest strength.

The more I muck around with wine, the more I discover the importance of oak in the development of the complex flavours of (red) wine, how the oak, French, American, light, medium heavy toast and length of exposure play key roles in developing the final product. Commercial wine makers can mature portions of their wine in differing oaks and toasts, etc. and then blend to achieve the outcome they require.

Yet for an amateur, small quantity producer, many of the blending options are not possible. This is now changing as micro oxygenation (another way of maturing wine in non-oak storage) has become a significant component of wine making. This has created a market for oak additives, ranging from shavings, “teabag” chips, recycled barrels, offcuts, planks, rejects in the barrel making industry and even oak extract.

These oak additives have tended to be made using the non prime material, while the best oak was destined for the prime barrels, but the oak suppliers now see an opportunity to supply prime oak product into the non-barrel sector.

Five years ago it was difficult to find quality oak to add to my Flex tanks.

For the 2011 vintage, I can source prime quality oak planks of the same quality as those used in high quality barrels.

In addition, I can source packs of planks of French or American oak with several different toast levels, which I can mix and match to achieve the blend I am looking for or I can even buy packs already pre-blended to achieve a particular outcome.

An additional advantage is that I can modify the oak addition by removing a particular component (say heavy toast American), or I can stop it altogether by removing all the oak, but continue to age the wine because the polyethylene barrel continues to breathe. I can even put the oak back in or add different material.

This opens up a range of possibilities that were not available to me as a small wine maker using oak barrels.

### 4. Cost

Cost is always a difficult issue and perhaps a heading of “value” would be better.

Just to qualify a few things - I make wine because it is great fun, a challenge that I never expect to master and has a nice blend of science and artistry.

As I tell my wife, I have a great advantage over commercial wine makers because I know how much money I am going to lose at the start of the year. Real wine makers have to wait until they sell it.

This is to say cost saving was not my main reason for using Flex tanks, but let me give you some costs as a comparison.

A new 300 litre Flex tank with floating lid is about \$700 (inc GST) and effectively will last forever. I was paying between \$250 - \$350 for quite good 3 - 4 year old barrels. I tended to use them for one or two years but they can be shaved and toasted for a reasonable cost to rejuvenate them.

A new French oak barrel costs between \$1200 and \$4000 and can last for 4 or 5 years, however the quality and quantity of the oak extracted decreases over time. So in the first year to age and oak, the wine would require one new barrel for say three months and an old barrel for 9 months.

Oak for Flex tank is incredibly variable. Enough chips for 300 litres of wine can cost as little as \$5 or up to \$60 for a pack of top quality pre-blended oak planks.

So I think this makes the cost of Flex tanks extremely competitive but, moreover, they provide for me greater ease of operation and more options for how I age and oak my wine.

## **5. Results**

I have not done any double blind scientific trials to determine if Flex tanks produce better or worse wine than traditional oak barrels. The wines I have produced in the Flex tanks have all been submitted for judging at the Eltham and the Victorian Wine Shows. The wines invariably are judged as being well balanced. The results have been mainly silver and bronze and perhaps they would have all been gold if I had used oak barrels!





## INTERNATIONAL NIGHT



THE GUILD INVITES MEMBERS, FAMILY & FRIENDS TO THE SOCIAL HIGHLIGHT OF THE YEAR, THE INTERNATIONAL NIGHT. THE THEME THIS YEAR IS:

### ‘Slovenian’

**Have Fun! Wear Your Favourite ‘Clothes’ (Red, White & Blue colours)**

**FRIDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2011**

*Slovenian Club  
82 Ingrams Road Research  
( Melway Map: 12, G11 )*

PRE-DINNER DRINKS AT 6:30 PM – “**B.Y.O.**”  
With Guild funding a range of Slovenian & Croatia wines

MEAL COMMENCES AT 7PM SHARP

Traditional Slovenian Meal @ \$30/head  
Three-course meal will be served:  
Beef soup, Vienna schnitzel,  
Roast pork with potatoes and vegetables  
Dessert  
Apple strudel

- Prize for best dressed in line with theme and dancing polka
- Prize of DVD Discover Slovenia for the best answered Trivia on Slovenian history.



Call Darko Postruzin  
Ph: 9434-2617 BH 96105625 AH



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## Wine Quotes and News

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### Articles wanted

Articles of interest, whether they are quotes or newsworthy, are requested from members. If you have a draft version or need some assistance, I'm happy to assist for its inclusion.

(Ed.)

### Wine Quotes

*"I can certainly see that you know your wine. Most of the guests who stay here wouldn't know the difference between Bordeaux and Claret."*

- John Cleese (Basil Fawlty of Fawlty Towers)

*"He said that few people had intellectual resources sufficient to forgo the pleasures of wine. They could not otherwise contrive how to fill the interval between dinner and supper. "*

- Samuel Johnson

Boswell's Life of Johnson

*"Wine is bottled poetry."*

- Robert Louis Stevenson

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## Trading Barrel

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**BUY / SELL SERVICE FOR MEMBERS** - Ads need to be lodged with the editor by the 14th of the month to be included in the next Newsletter.

**DEMIJOHNS:** In excellent condition, available for 50% of the retail price of new ones

54ltr x 4

33ltr x 2

25ltr x 1

20ltr x 2

15ltr x 2

10ltr x 2

**Fermenting vats** in excellent condition:

700 ltr - \$150

500ltr - 125.

Kevin Furness tel 0408 067 288

### FOR SALE - GLASS FLAGONS

For sale pairs of clear glass flagons, one 5 litre and one 2 litre.

Ideal for country wine making or storing small quantities of grape wine. \$5 per set.

Mario Fantin 9846 7092.

**FOR SALE - MODULAR PINE WINE RACKS**

Total storage capacity of 28 dozen bottles but can be assembled in any dozen combination.

Good condition. Can be collected at Doncaster East or could be delivered within a 10 km radius.

Price - \$250 or best offer.

Arthur Stubbs on 8822 3458

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## Sponsors Corner

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Suppliers of Quality Products to the Wine Industry - Bucher Vaslin - Anchor Yeast  
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### Winequip Products



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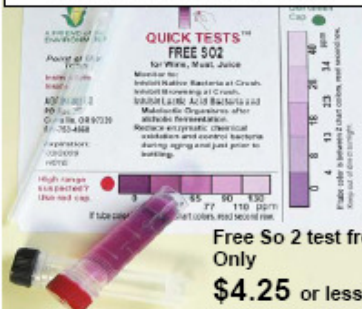
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# Special Product Offers This Month

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**QUICK TESTS™ FREE SO2**  
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Monitor for:  
Instant Native Bacteria at Crush  
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during aging and just prior to  
bottling.

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Only  
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Pack of 10 or 20 for testing  
Malic acid, Lactic acid, residual  
sugar, Ph test, free SO2 & more  
Or 28 mix pack of every test type  
which is great for mates to share

Offer ends oct 31st, 2010  
or while limited stock lasts



**ALGOR  
WINE  
TANK  
Deal**

4 units only

100 Lt rrp \$ 475  
Now \$375  
300 Lt rrp \$ 735  
Now \$545  
500 Lt rrp \$ 985  
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Italian 81 Bottle  
Drain Tree or  
Bottle SO2 Rinsers  
For only  
**\$19.90 ea**  
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Corker with  
fold away  
leg  
Rrp \$149  
**NOW  
\$99**



Italian Wine  
corks - purple  
d 21 x 40 H

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From grape snips at Harvest, to filters and screw caps come time to fill your bottles.

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Showrooms: (Australian Olive Oil Supplies Pty Ltd.)  
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**Cellar Plus**  
Winemaking, Brewing & Food Equipment Specialists

Distributors Stamp:

Cellar Plus also has now in stock Accuvin wine test kits from the USA , which are a low cost way for testing every thing from Free SO<sub>2</sub> sulphur in wine, your pH or malic acid to see MLF ferments are complete. It could be a cheaper and simpler option, for those who are unable to leave samples at the Cellar Plus store, for their more analytical laboratory testing service which is still available with results returned usually within 24-72 hrs.

## Some Helpful Products For you to Consider !

***From:*** Cellar Plus

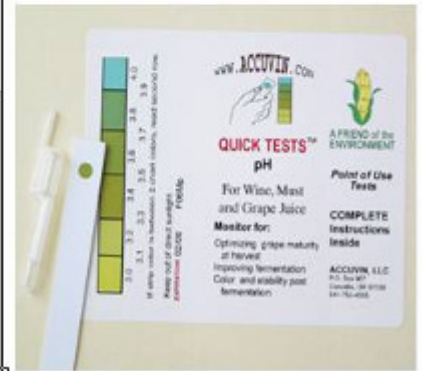
• *Importers of all winemaking, brewing and food Equipment.*

*With The Worlds Best Brands, Great Prices and Service To Match*

**QUICK TESTS™ Products**

**AV-pH**  
Code: 201  
Price: (Price per test: \$ )

The pH Test Kit includes 20 tests, 20 samplers, and an insert with complete how-to-run test instructions. The insert also includes a Summary Interpretation explaining how to use the test results. The label with the color chart is on the front of the kit. [Order Now](#)



**Cellar Plus has moved** its Epping retail / trade Showroom from Yale St just around the corner on to the main road at 218 Cooper St (near the Medical Centre), with an expanded display space which allows the wine enthusiast an improved opportunity to roam around the many tanks, pumps, presses on display, and not to mention an internal cool room with ample yeast for all us winemakers and plenty of hops styles to please the advanced brewers.

## Australian and New Zealand Winemakers



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Special Offer**

Mention Eltham Wine Guild  
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**The one stop shop for Winemaking**



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- Books
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- Oak Barrels
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- Yeasts

Winemaking equipment hire - including motorised crusher / destemmer (750kg / hr), basket press, corker and more.

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Greensborough Home Brewing  
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Tel: 9432 0283



## Heritage Coopers

### WINE BARRELS FOR SALE

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Local service at Diamond Creek

- Ex-winery barrels shaved and toasted
- Re-conditioned (completely re-coopered) barrels from 50-150 litres
- Shaving and toasting

For all your cooperage needs contact

Neil on 9438 1790 or 0402 015 138

Enquiries welcome

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