

## **JOHN SANDERSON - TRAFFORD HILL - FLEURIEU PENINSULA**



In the 'Australia and New Zealand Complete Book of Wine,' compiled by Len Evans and published in 1973, the Fleurieu Peninsula concludes in a viticultural and winemaking sense near Willunga, just south of McLaren Vale. It's still a great book today, probably a landmark publication in a historical sense together with classic photographs. It shares however, with many subsequent books, right up until the present a perspective on regionality that is fairly rigid.

I first heard of Trafford Hill in January last year by way of an Adelaide friend who had a family holiday in the area and felt duty bound to call in at the Cellar Door. At the time I had with me another classic book: 'The Wine Regions of Australia' by John Beeston. I dragged it out of my bag and in the index was Trafford Hill. There is a description of how early 19<sup>th</sup> century settlers typically planted some vines even if only to see what happened. "By 1876 the Southcote vineyards at Port Elliot extended over 180 hectares. The vineyard was destroyed by massive bushfires in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were also several other vineyards flourishing at this time but by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, viticulture and winemaking was in decline and would not be revived until the 1970s, when Sanderson's Trafford Hill vineyard was established."

Soon after reading this, it was into the car and down to Normanville and Trafford Hill to meet the energetic winemaker. But before walking through the Cellar Door you drive up a steep driveway into a spectacular view down to the reaches of the Normanville Beach and out into the Gulf of St. Vincent. What a knock out blow it must be to wake up to such a stunning outlook every day!!

From this distraction it was into the tasting area to meet John and the Sanderson wines. It is always a pleasure to meet people in winemaking who reflect a high degree of enthusiasm for what they do and in such an unabashed way. Many months later John described himself as the "quintessential public servant in a previous lifetime who managed to follow a dream." It all makes sense in hindsight.

"The journey that John and Irene Sanderson made to Trafford Hill was one that many of their baby – boomer colleagues dream of. "Leave the rat race, buy some acres in a wine region and establish a boutique vineyard and winery and live a Provençal' lifestyle happily ever after."

From their early days in South Australia, some thirty years ago the dream was followed. John was a senior public servant for some twenty odd years and Irene had a career in the fashion industry, but all the while the "wine dream" was chased.

After several wine education courses, involvement in wine clubs and wine tours, they resolved to take a more professional approach and during the late 1980's and early 1990's John studied wine science and table wine making through part – time and distance education. Irene took courses in horticulture and a Graduate Diploma in Viticulture and the seeds were set.

In 1994 they purchased Trafford Hill, at Normanville on South Australia's Fleurieu Peninsula which had a run down, unkempt 20year old vineyard of some two and a half acres. Unbeknown to most people it was right in the middle of the soon to be "Southern Fleurieu" grape growing region and alongside land that had been used for grape growing in the 1850's and 60's. (Robert Norman, founder of Normanville had 40 acres of vines alongside Trafford Hill 1860. Sadly these were allowed to die and the land was returned to pasture as the areas economic base declined.)

Irene set to rejuvenating and extending the vineyards and John having worked the 1992-3 and 1993-4 vintages at two small wineries set to making the first wines in 1995. This was carried out under the guidance of Alan Dyson a legend in McLaren Vale winemaking for 40 years.

The first wines, a Riesling and a Rhone style red were produced and sold out in a matter of weeks from release, spurring John and Irene to look to greater commitment and expansion.

With expansion came a cellar door facility and investment in good oak for the red with modern tankage for the Riesling.

Trafford Hill is committed to quality premium wine making and this pursuit starts in the vineyard with "appellation controllee" approach to pruning and a sustainable, organic fertilizer regime. A minimalist approach to chemicals is followed both in the vineyard and winemaking

The vines are rarely irrigated as rainfall usually in good quantity and at the right time is a feature of Trafford Hill's micro climate.

Given it's proximity to the sea, about 2km. as the crow flies, the maritime influence ensures long even ripening.

Now entering vintage number 10 the Sandersons have stabilized their production at around 650 cases per annum and are trying various wine making techniques and practices, such as pre-chilling the Riesling grapes, cooling before crushing, continued use of a basket press and varying oak variety and length of maturation for the red wine.

Six wines are produced, a 100% Rhine Riesling, a Rose, A Sparkling Shiraz, a full-bodied Shiraz based red and two ports. Our wines are only available in Normanville at the 'Normy Hotel,' Normanville Beach Café and 'Min Place' or at Cellar Door. Enjoy Trafford Hill wines, they are hand crafted with care and passion and represent the best of the emerging premium wine region of the Southern Fleurieu Peninsula.

The motto of Trafford Hill is----- 'Where the making of Premium Wine is our only Concern'."

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