



Vines, Wine and Identity

Project partners newsletter

Issue 2 | 8 December 2014 | Faculty of Education and Arts

Welcome

Welcome to the second partner newsletter for Vines, Wine and Identity. Prior to formal commencement of the Australian Research Council funded project from January 2015, we have continued with the project's pilot work.



Image: (Left to right) Jay Tulloch, Brian McGuigan and Julie McIntyre in Pokolbin on Grand Tour La Vin, 6 Nov 2014.

One of the highlights so far has been our visits to Pokolbin and Broke in the Hunter Valley to conduct interviews with members of the Hunter wine community. You can read more about the oral history process on page 2.

Also, on page 3, Partner Investigator Julie Baird explains why Vines, Wine and Identity is so important to Newcastle Museum.

Our pilot work has also involved putting systems in place to manage the data we will collect. This includes space on the University of Newcastle's server, which will host everything from spreadsheets of statistical information and notes from documents to a database of historical information on people, places and events and sound and video recordings.

As recording of oral history interviews continues, the information will be available in forms approved by participants on the project web page: newcastle.edu.au/research/wine.

Best wishes for Christmas and the 2015 harvest from the project team.

STAY CONNECTED

Visit newcastle.edu.au/research/wine.

Sign up to receive this quarterly newsletter by emailing Jessie.Reid@newcastle.edu.au.

ON TWITTER

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Oral history research and the ethics process

Oral history is a method of conducting historical research where participants identified as relevant to a project are interviewed to document their memories. This method is especially useful when knowledge of the past is of value in the present but the written document record is slight or non-existent.

Paper records held in public and private archives have much to tell us about the past, but if we have particular questions we would like answered, and there are people whose living memories cover the time periods in question, oral history is a very valuable means of recovering the past.



Further explanation and key references on oral history are available from the Oral History Association of Australia (oralhistoryaustralia.org.au), of which Julie McIntyre is a member.

"Oral history has its critics and its shortcomings," said McIntyre. "Critics consider it a flimsy, unreliable way to take account of past people or events. They believe it's the opposite of a 'factual' or objective approach to historical research available from document archives.

"However, in debates about oral history it has also been pointed out that document archives are not necessarily a completely impartial version of the past either. They are also selective in what they tell us, and often they give a limited perspective. Document archives may omit the voices of many people from the historical record: people in rural and regional Australia, working class people, women, Indigenous Australians and non-British migrants," explains McIntyre.

"One of the shortcomings of oral history is that you could ask every person about a single event they were all part of and you would receive a different account from each of them. This reminds us that the value to be gained from oral history interviews is through carefully planned questions of participants. Although, experience shows that it is also important to allow interview subjects to wander with some freedom through the halls of their memories in order to document their specific stories."

To date, the oral history recordings for Vines, Wine and Identity have been conducted by McIntyre, along with Brian McGuigan and Jay Tulloch, during the Grand Tour La Vin field trips.

"So far we have visited the Upper Hunter, Pokolbin and Broke on four separate days to seek out places that featured in the history of the Hunter wine region. Members of the wine producing community and the region's wider community have taken part in these interviews," said McIntyre.

Approximately 12 hours of interviews and reflections have been recorded and are being transcribed by a company that specialises in transcriptions for academic research. Once transcription is complete, these written versions of the interviews will be sent to participants for their approval. They may make any changes they require to the new document record created from the interviews.

This process of participant approval is central to oral history research. In order to conduct this research, McIntyre had to apply to UON's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This is a rigorous process as it's intended to ensure the integrity of the research and to protect participants in the research from distress and harm. Details of the HREC process are available on the UON website (newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/resources/human-ethics) The HREC approved documents for this project are available on request.

Grand Tour La Vin will be completed on 4 December 2014. Oral history interviews will continue in 2015 with the intention of sampling a wide range of historical actors in the Hunter wine region.

Just as the texture and emotions of the past can be recovered from oral history interviews, economic statistics must be used to frame the cycles of wine grape production and trade. Recently, McIntyre has worked with Professor Kym Anderson at the University of Adelaide's Centre for Wine Economics to identify figures from the colonial era that will assist in the Vines, Wine and Identity project.

PROJECT DIARY

15 Oct Hunter Valley Wine & Tourism Association (HVWTA) monthly committee meeting. Julie McIntyre and UON's Faculty of Education and Arts Research Development Manager, Catherine Oddie, presented an action plan on the project to the HVWTA, which was included in the meeting's minutes.

11 Dec Partner meeting with Newcastle Museum.

GRAND TOUR LA VIN

6 Nov Brian McGuigan, Jay Tulloch and Julie McIntyre to Pokolbin.

20 Nov Jay Tulloch and Julie McIntyre to Broke to meet John Tulloch and Neil McNamara

27 Nov Brian McGuigan and Julie McIntyre to Upper Hunter to meet with Richard Hilder, Keith Yore and Brett Keeping.

4 Dec Jay Tulloch, Brian McGuigan and Julie McIntyre in Gresford, Lower Hunter.

Highlight

JULIE BAIRD

Partner Investigator &
Deputy Director
of Newcastle Museum



The Vines, Wine and Identity project solves an important problem for cultural industry partner Newcastle Museum. The Museum is the largest in the Hunter Valley and has long sought to represent the region's wine community.

Previously, this has not been possible due to the absence of well-contextualised historical knowledge and a lack of access to suitable artefacts.

While germane archaeological digs have occurred, the artefacts are largely uncatalogued and stored outside of the Hunter.

These are only some of the Hunter wine artefacts known to be dispersed, uncatalogued and uncontextualised that will be considered for exhibition by Partner Investigator Julie Baird from Newcastle Museum, in collaboration with the Chief Investigators and Partner Investigator Brian McGuigan from Hunter Valley Wine and Tourism Association (HVVTA).

"Newcastle Museum aims to be a centre for and about Newcastle. The combination of multiple local social history strands involved in the Vines, Wine and Identity project made this an important topic for us," said Baird.

"The possibilities and opportunities are so mutually beneficial not only to the institutions but also to a general community that the Newcastle Museum was excited to become involved. The Museum will benefit from this new and important academic research, the winemakers will have an opportunity to spread their story to an estimated audience of 70,000 visitors to the Museum, and the University will benefit from our long experience of exhibition development and curation."

Baird has 20 years professional experience in the museum sector. Since 2002, she has been at Newcastle Museum and was part of the small team who redeveloped the museum in 2011 – when it reopened in its new location.

Her career focus has been to spread knowledge about history and museums in unusual or popularised forums, working with communities as broad as embroidery guilds and pay TV audiences to female prisoners, bike clubs and the punk band: The Hard Ons.

The intersection of industry and community has been a theme in Baird's major contributions to the museum sector. She has a strong interest in material culture including industrial, personal and domestic assemblages.

Baird's skill in researching and interpreting industry has led to the award winning permanent installation,

'Coal', which is a major draw card for visitors to the Newcastle Museum.

Her experience working with community has also resulted in a number of successful exhibitions, including the award winning 'A Newcastle Story', which is a permanent installation in the Newcastle Museum Redevelopment Social History Gallery.

The Vines, Wine and Identity project exhibition at Newcastle Museum, scheduled for 2017, will include relevant material culture such as vineyard and winery equipment, barrels, bottles, labels, reference books, business and marketing material. For example, UON's Cultural Collections recently acquired a promotional poster from the first Hunter Vintage Festival in 1973.

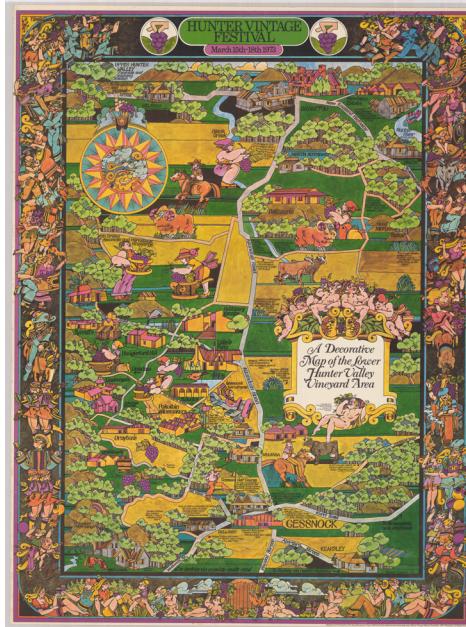


Image: Promotional poster for the first Hunter Vintage Festival in 1973. Artwork by Russell Coulson.

Oral history interviews collected prior to, and during this project, will augment the exhibition.

Interviews on 1233 ABC Newcastle and Radio 2NUR-FM will be used to alert the wider public to interest in artefacts.

"When someone mentions the Hunter region, the majority of minds instantly think wine – but what do we actually know of the human legacy behind the bottle on the shelf," said Baird. "I hope this project will humanise the wine making story and allow us to understand why our regional identity is so connected with wine."

PROJECT TEAM UPDATE

Since the previous Vines, Wine and Identity newsletter there have been changes to the project team.

Dr Julie McIntyre has moved from being a Chief Investigator to take on the role of Post-Doctoral Fellow.

Dr James Simpson from the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid has stepped back from being an official Partner Investigator on the project due to his commitment to a project funded by the Minister of Education in Spain. However, he will remain informally involved with the project.

Hunter wine history in the Australian Dictionary of Biography

Located in the Australian National University's National Centre of biography, the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB) is the nation's key resource for reliably researched short histories of eminent people.

From its inception in 1957 the ADB was published in hard copy form. To access its thousands of entries, researchers had to visit libraries that held copies of the multi-volume dictionary.

Since 2006 the ADB's more than 12,000 entries have been available through an open access website: adb.anu.edu.au. The ADB's move to an online format is a globally-recognised digital humanities project. This and the National Library of Australia's digital newspaper archive and libraries catalogue, Trove, have genuinely revolutionised research access for academics, family historians and others interested in the Australian past.

A quick search for "wine" on the ADB site turns up 434 entries. They vary from vine growers and wine makers to wine merchants and entries about Australians who loved drinking wine.

As the Vines, Wine and Identity project considers the relationship between wine producers, distributors and consumers, it's interesting that many wine merchants are listed in the ADB. However, few women are listed. This will change in future entries because of the rise of the number of notable women in the contemporary wine industry.

Of the 434 entries on wine, 24 relate to the Hunter Valley. These include George Wyndham, Richard Windeyer, Alexander Brodie Spark, Henry Lindeman, Edward Oglivie, Audrey Wilkinson, Johnnie Walker and Maurice O'Shea.

William Keene's entry is a reminder of the depth of historic links between wine and mining in the region. A geologist, Keene arrived in the Hunter in the 1850s to work as an examiner of coalfields. He supplied collections of valuable rock deposits for international exhibitions in London, Paris and Melbourne.

Keene belonged to the Hunter River Vineyard Association and served as its president in the mid-1860s. Having worked in France before migrating to Australia, he argued strenuously that southern French wine making methods should be adopted in the Hunter over German techniques, though the proliferation of German vinedressers – and comparative absence of French expertise – prevented Keene's preferred approach.

The influence of different European wine growing traditions in the Hunter is a theme of the Vines, Wine and Identity project.

The ADB editorial committee has invited Julie McIntyre to contribute an entry on Glen Maxwell McWilliam and 'Jack' McWilliam, which is due for submission in September 2015.

What can we learn from historical wine business records?

The largest known single collection of colonial business records in Australia are from the Dalwood property of the Wyndham family at Branxton. These papers are held in the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW and will be used in Vines Wine and Identity research.

Another significant collection of material for this project is the McDonald Papers held at Central Queensland University archives. These papers are now being digitised using pilot funding.

To the casual observer these records may seem obscure but they contain a wealth of data about how vineyard and winery owners conducted their business at the turn of the 19th century. For example, funding solutions to vineyard pests and diseases were a fundamental driver of early agricultural innovation in Australia. From the 1890s, the New South Wales Department of Agriculture provided centralised research and dissemination of knowledge about vine growing and wine making.

Among the weather details and other particulars of late wine business in the McDonald papers is a recipe for "Spanish clay for fining". Fining is the process of removing grape solids from wine after fermentation.

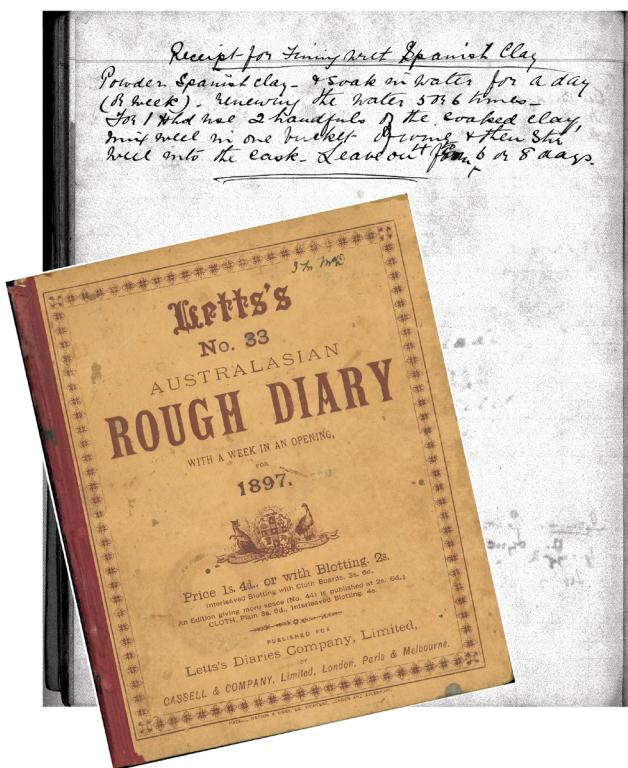


Image: Cover and page 63 (recipe for 'Spanish Clay for fining') of the 1897 McDonald Family Diary. Held at Central Queensland University archives (libguides.library.cqu.edu.au/macdonald-family).

Methods of fining have changed over time and members of the wine industry, and some wine drinkers, are interested in past approaches. The MacDonald record is useful for this and reminds us of the broad canvas of European wine making from which Hunter wine makers drew their expertise – even a century ago.