

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

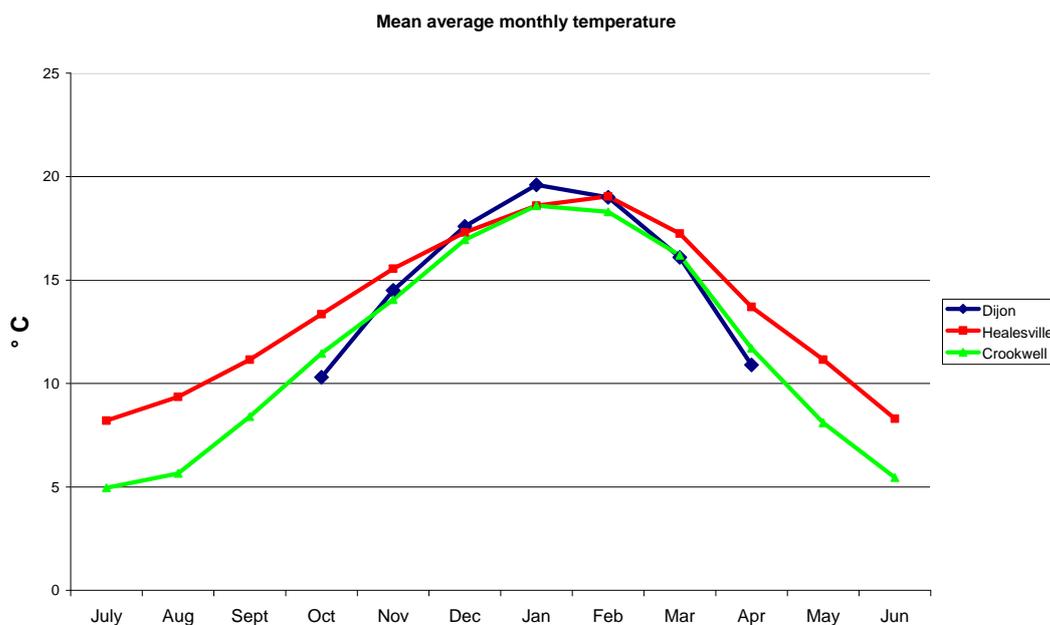
The site

Hatherleigh vineyard lies on an east facing slope above the village of Laggan, near Crookwell, in the Southern Tablelands of New South Wales. The topsoil lies over a red cracking clay derived from Ordovician/Silurian mudstones and siltstones with quartzite inclusions. The soil retains water through spring, but dries rapidly in summer.

The vineyard lies at 910 metres altitude and close to the top of the Great Dividing Range. Rainfall is predominantly in the winter and early spring. There is nevertheless significant summer rainfall, but this is mostly from thunderstorms, which dump their rain quickly and then allow the vineyard to dry out. The area avoids the humid, drizzly weather found in the Southern Highlands, some 90 km to the east.

The climate is cool continental, with a mean January temperature of 18.6°C and temperature summation of 1127 HDD.

	MJT	HDD
Crookwell	18.6°C	1127
Healesville (Yarra)	17.9°C	1250
Dijon (Burgundy)	19.6°C	1146



The history

Nick Bulleid and Susan Herborn bought the property in 1994 and named it after the Parish of Hatherleigh, near Bolehead Farm in north Devon, UK, from which Nick's name is derived. We established a raspberry farm and in 1996 planted the first few rows of Pinot noir, clone MV6. The vines are planted on spacings of 2.4m x 1.5m. The vineyard was expanded and plantings largely completed in 1999, mostly with MV6 and unintentionally D5V12. Two rows of clone 777 are beginning to bear fruit and we are grafting the rogue D5V12 vines over to clone 115. The total area is a little less than one hectare.

Vineyard management

We cane prune the vines to about 20 buds per vine and use a VSP trellis. We use minimal herbicide in a very narrow strip, no synthetic insecticides whatsoever and largely organic foliage sprays, although we will not seek organic status. Budburst is almost invariably in the first week of October and veraison in the second week of February. Yields are typically less than 5 tonnes per hectare.

The wines

We make these at Brokenwood, in the Hunter Valley, where they are supervised by *PJ* Charteris. We use typical "modern" Pinot techniques – a large proportion of whole berries, 10 to 20% whole bunches (depending on the season), five day cold soak which sometimes starts a slow spontaneous fermentation, temperature rising to roughly 35°C and pressing shortly after cap-fall. The wine spends about 14 months on lees in French oak, less than 20% of it new and the balance one and two year old.

1999

The tiny first crop lost to frost on 28th October 1998 and second growth crop lost entirely to currawongs.

2000

A cold season with a miserably wet autumn and 19 rain days in March. A small quantity of weak wine was sold off in bulk.

2001

A warm, dry season but with useful, well spaced rain. A very attractive, lighter weight wine was made and a small amount released under our second *Laggan* label.

2002

Broadly average weather during the growing season but with a deluge in February and an unusually warm April. The grapes were picked on 28th April. The wine appeared to lack weight when bottled and we have been selling it under the second *Laggan* label. It has surprised us, however, by developing real perfume and depth of flavour and it will clearly age further. It nevertheless shows some sappy young vine characters and lacks the length of the later vintages.

2003

A warm, dry spring and summer, but with good rain and cool weather in autumn. Grapes picked on 6th and 14th April. The earlier pick was affected by a road accident – see press release – the loss of some grapes and about 30% juice run-off, which has

resulted in a quite firm tannin structure. It has full, savoury flavours and will develop for several years.

2004

A warm summer after a bitterly cold October. Grapes picked on 25th April and 2nd May. This is a very stylish, finely structured Pinot with silky tannins and the rich, plump middle palate I'm looking for. There's just a touch of young vine sappiness, but also good length. It will age well.

2005

Above average spring rains. Overall a moderately warm year with a cool March and a warm, very dry April. We picked on 25th April and 1st May. This is our best wine to date, not unlike the 2004, but showing greater vine maturity and sweet fruit. It will be released in late 2007 or early 2008.

2006

Yet another warm season with a very wet spring but an appallingly dry autumn. It was a struggle to keep the vines healthy from February to April. The grapes were picked, probably 10 days late, on 17th and 23rd April. The wine has considerable weight, but I'll delay judgement until it has been in bottle for a while.

2007

Our warmest year yet. The steadily increasing temperatures each year are worrying. Frost, frost again, drought and bird damage hit the vines hard. (There was little else for the birds to eat. Currawongs tore holes in the nets and foxes enlarged them to get to the carcasses our terrier *Poppy* left around). Occasional scattered storms in March saved the day and kept the vines healthy. We picked a little more than half our normal crop on 15th April.

The funny side of viticulture

When installing end-posts, we heard a muffled cry over the tractor. Two post holes back, there was a pair of upside-down blue gum boots waving just above soil level. Three year-old Hugo had been reaching into the hole for a stone and... The post in row 12 now bears the initial *H*.

We bought a 12 metre shipping container as a tractor shed. Unfortunately, the truckie couldn't get it onto its site because of wheel-spin after rain (hard to believe in 2007). A tractor from a local spud farmer would have fared no better. A hand-winch from Kennards, several round logs (which pushed waves of mud ahead of them), two days and a large amount of sweat moved the shed 50 metres uphill to its current position.