



THE  
WINE  
MAKERS

De Pury family, Yeringberg, Yarra Valley, Vic

When Guill de Pury was growing up in the 1930s and '40s, his playground was the old weatherboard winery built in 1884 for his grandfather, Baron Frédéric Guillaume de Pury, by David Mitchell, Dame Nellie Melba's father. Wines made there had won gold medals in Europe, India and the US but the winery wasn't operational when young Guill played there: production had stopped in 1921 because Australians had simply not developed the taste for Yeringberg's light, fine table wines.

Still, the big, disused building offered a world of potential to the young boy: "At one stage I set up a

badminton court in the middle of it," says Guill, now 81, his eyes twinkling.

Yeringberg is full of history. The house where Guill lives with his wife Katherine is crammed with letters and photos recording the de Pury presence in the Yarra since Guill's grandfather arrived from Switzerland in the 1850s.

The vineyard established in 1863 was in its heyday one of the most famous in the colony of Victoria. Reminders of that legacy abound. Facing the old winery across the yard are magnificent brick stables, built in 1886, testimony to the importance of horses – for farm work, hunting and racing – in the late 19th century.

**History:** from left, Sandra, Katherine, David, Guill and two of the boys

In 1969, Guill and Katherine decided to replant the vineyard and start again. The boutique wine boom was beginning to take hold across Australia and industry legends such as Ian Hickinbotham and Max Lake – people who knew of the Yarra's history and Yeringberg's place in it – would visit, bringing grapevine cuttings. Today Yeringberg's wines, particularly the white blend of marsanne and roussanne, and the cabernet blend simply labelled Yeringberg, are once more among the valley's finest.

Little wonder that Guill and Katherine's children, Helen, Sandra and David, were also bitten by the wine bug. Helen, 55, studied winemaking in Bordeaux and now has a family wine shop in Normandy; Sandra, 52, trained and worked as a chef, then did an MBA and worked as a management consultant before taking on the role of winemaker from her dad; and David, 50, studied agricultural science and obtained a PhD in plant physiology before coming back to run the vineyard and sheep and cattle on the farm.

"In a way, what I was doing for all those years away from the place was perfect training for being a winemaker," says Sandra. "Winemaking's the perfect combination of intellectual, physical and sensory engagement. And with David specialising in growing plants and me having a background in taste, it's a bit of a no-brainer that we've ended up back here."

Three generations now live on the property: David and his wife have three boys; Sandra has two. The boys, aged from eight to 16, have the winery for a playground. "The kids all have a sense of Yeringberg as very much where they're from, and it's good that the boys are growing up with their cousins," says Sandra. "Although it definitely has its moments..."

"We've got a lot of prima donnas around here," says Guill mischievously. "Sometimes it's a bit of an armed truce, but everyone gets on."