

Two Paddocks Pinot Noir 2001 Central Otago

9 Sep 2003 by JR

Writing up tasting notes from my recent NZ trip, I came across this old article which seemed to have dropped its meaty middle while migrating from the old site to the new. Hence its recent update, which includes my new, improved knowledge of the subregions of Central Otago.

After several years of being curmudgeonly about New Zealand Pinot Noir I am now thrilled by the number of exciting Pinots that are emerging from these two islands, particularly from this, the most southerly wine region in the world in the south of the South Island close to New Zealand's ski country.

I've had genuinely interesting wines from Black Ridge, Carrick, Cornish Point, Felton Road, Mount Difficulty, Mount Edward, Quartz Reef, Rippon and Valli - all of them producers in what I call Otago and what many a Kiwi calls 'Central'.

Now, just in time to coincide with Lord of the Rings Mark II, shot in NZ, here is an exciting offering from NZ's own homegrown movie star, no less, Sam Neill. I could burble on for hours - or metres - about the story of Two Paddocks but it is told much more eloquently on www.twopaddocks.com, one of the most agreeable and useful winery websites I have come across for some time. There's a modest spiel from Mr Neill himself who wastes no time taking any credit for the wine (nor is there any mention of him on the label). Instead credit is given to Stephen and Jim Moffitt for the vineyards and to Dean Shaw for the winemaking. (Rudi Bauer of Quartz Reef made a couple of vintages in the late 1990s at the Central Otago Wine Company contract winemaking facility.) Apparently this, Neill's fifth vintage, is the first truly from his two 'paddocks', one in Gibbston and the other, more recently- planted vineyard, the 'Alex[andra - hotter than Gibbston] paddock, an austere beautiful terrace above the Earnscleugh Valley'.

I liked the wine because it has what strike me a true Pinot flavours (no jam, no cough medicine, no beetroot). It's delicate rather than light with only the lightest vegetal note and real grace. To be drunk now rather than cellared, I think - even chilled as a late summer/ early spring drink (depending on your hemisphere and local weather).

At £14.75 a bottle from Haynes Hanson & Clark in the UK this seems a very fair price to me considering how expensive some other Otago Pinots are. For importers, stockists and prices elsewhere around the world, visit the admirable www.twopaddocks.com.

(And to those who read my account of meeting Gérard Dépardieu in purple pages last May, I *promise* this wine of the week is motivated by enthusiasm for the wine itself. I'm not sure I've ever seen one of Sam Neill's films.)