

TASTINGS BY HUON HOOKE

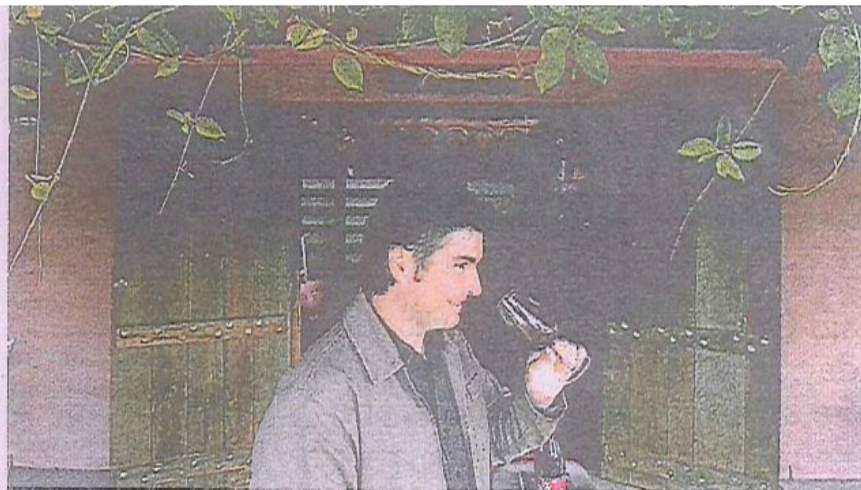
MAST HONOURED

Friends of the late Trevor Mast, the winemaker at Mount Langi Ghiran and, before that, Best's Great Western, have backed a new trophy named in his honour for the best shiraz in the Royal Melbourne Wine Show. Starting from this year's show, to be judged in spring, the Trevor Mast Trophy will be awarded to the best shiraz of the show. Shiraz is a significant class at the show, last year amounting to 775 out of the total 3278 entries, or 23 per cent. It will be the first time the show has had a trophy specifically for shiraz. Mast played a vital role in the evolution of cool-climate Victorian shiraz and was a judge and supporter of the show, judging every year from 1987 to '96.

BUCKETS OF TALENT

Daniel Binet, nicknamed "Bucket" by his former employer, the late Alasdair

Sutherland of Capercaillie, has found his feet since taking over winemaking duties at Hunter winery Ballabourneen. The 2010 Ballabourneen Alexander the Great shiraz (\$50) is simply one of the most delicious shirazes out of the Hunter in 2010. Soft, succulent and complex with spice and gently meaty characters, the wine was named after the winery's owner, Alex Stuart. Stuart was honoured with an OAM in the 2012 Australia Day honours, for his services to the construction industry (think bridges and hospitals). Alex and Di Stuart established Ballabourneen in 1994, and recently took over the former Evans Family Wines cellar door on Broke Road, Pokolbin. Binet has also distinguished himself, being nominated twice for the Wine Society's Young Winemaker of the Year award, in 2005 and 2006. It makes sense that Ballabourneen's



Great work ... Daniel Binet's Alexander the Great shiraz is delicious. Photo: Kitty Hill

"second" label is called Buckets. Phone 4998 6505.

DURHAM GOES TO RIOS

Distinguished West Australian winemaker John Durham has left Plantagenet winery in the Great Southern for the boutique winery

del Rios, at Anakie in the Geelong region. Del Rios makes a particularly good marsanne and is in expansion mode. Its 10-hectare vineyard was planted in 1996 by the owner, Gus del Rio. Durham will also be making wine in partnership with Doug Neal, winemaker at Paradise IV vineyard at

Batesford, near Geelong. Their joint venture, named Hildegaard, will debut this year with a rosé and a Beechworth shiraz. Durham was the long-serving chief winemaker at Cape Mentelle before Plantagenet, and Neal has been a below-the-radar consultant to Giaconda for years.

OATES HEADS HOME

Catherine Oates, a native West Australian, is the new winemaker at Plantagenet at Mount Barker in her home state. She has been working in New Zealand, where she was group winemaker for the Mud House Wine Group, based in the Waipara region of the South Island, whose brands include Mud House and Waipara Hills. She also worked as a flying winemaker for Kendall Jackson in California at its La Crema winery, and in Italy. She holds a science degree in viticulture from Curtin University and a postgraduate diploma in oenology from the University of Adelaide.