

Travelling North: Wednesday November 16

Martin Strong & Kathryn Beggs

Following another good breakfast at the excellent Old Woolstore buffet we are ready to go. Surprise surprise, everybody was packed and ready to board the bus on time. The headcount is efficiently done by Pam Eagle. It was clear that she has done headcounts on buses before.

Leaving Hobart and heading north it is a clear day. On our left we can see the snow that fell overnight and yesterday on top of Mount Wellington.

We passed through the historic village of Richmond, passing places we had visited on previous days - satellite dishes, a cheese site and wineries. At Derwent Bridge we turned left towards New Norfolk.

A few kilometres along the Derwent River we arrive at the Derwent Estate cellar door. It was a beautiful setting overlooking the Derwent River.

As hoped for, Graeme finally was able to join the group for a tasting.

Our host at Derwent was Angela Morgan. Thankfully our session was changed to an indoor model and not the originally planned outdoor setting. Angela gave us a presentation on Derwent Estate from an entirely different perspective from normal, that of someone who fell in love with the winery's chardonnay decided she had to work there.

We had a comprehensive tasting of the full range of their fine wines. We particularly liked the Chardonnay and Pinot. Others liked the Sparkling, Rose and Riesling. Tasmanian Chardonnay is not like mainland Chardonnay which is a mouthful of sunshine. The chardonnay we tasted is more like the winter sun on a cold morning. You get the cleansing acid, the white stone fruit flavours coming into play and the crisp dry finish.

After this excellent but exhaustive tasting we are running behind schedule so we quickly boarded the bus heading to our next stop, Old Kempton distillery. We arrive at the distillery, an old bluestone coaching house in the town of Kempton. We were met by John who took us to the distillery room and gave a talk on distillation. In the distillery room was the former coach house and stables. It had two copper swan neck stills to create their whisky. A slightly larger one was used in their first distillation and a smaller one in their second distillation. There was a third-round squat still in the room, which is used to create their gin. The stills were all locally made in Hobart.

John explained that Australian whisky matured earlier than Scotch due to the climate and storage conditions which resulted in increased expansion and contraction of the staves of the whisky barrels. Once the talk finished, we headed to the tasting rooms for tasting flight. On taste were the Embezzler gin, two whiskies, a classic malt and a pinot barrel-aged whiskey, and a lavender liqueur. As someone who likes a wee dram Martin was expecting to

prefer the whiskys to the gin. This turned out not to be the case. The gin was aromatic, with complex flavours and only needed a little tonic to make it palatable. The lavender liqueur was flavoursome and slightly sweet like a good Italian digestive. Once the tasting flight was finished and we had made our purchases, we staggered back to the bus and headed off for lunch.

Lunch was just down the road in the historic 100-year-old Huntington Tavern where we had a hearty two-course meal with wine (thanks to the efforts of Di and Lynne).

Then it was back on the bus to head off to Launceston. Full of good food and alcohol I don't think I was the only one who nodded off on this journey.

When we arrived at the Tamar Valley Resort at Grindelwald, we were thankful to find a tasteful Swiss village and not a Harry Potter theme park as we had been imagining. We had a couple of hours to unpack and relax before the *Welcome to the Tamar Valley* dinner.

The *Welcome to the Tamar* dinner wasn't quite what we expected with Guest Speaker Andrew Pirie busy in Sydney. But we still enjoyed the three-course-meal with a selection of Tasmanian wines. We were seated in the Lakeside Function Room with a lovely outlook over a lake with local birds doing what they do around a lake. After the dinner we all rolled back to our rooms for an early night to reenergize in preparation for an exciting sparkling Thursday morning.