



NICK FLANAGAN

GLANDORE WINEMAKER

THE JOURNEY

There is a vineyard I love visiting in the Hunter. She provides us with Shiraz and a bit of Semillon. Over time it has gone by a few different names as it has changed hands over the years but I know it as Maluna. That's how we all think of it. Winemakers and growers alike.

To call this vineyard off the beaten track is a bit of an understatement. The drive off the road involves six gates, 4 cattle grids, dirt roads often in poor shape, a steep climb, a flea-bitten horse, numerous cows, a couple of majestic bulls and some treacherous corners but when you get to the top, the view is simply breathtaking. You look back over Lindemans towards the old Rothbury Estate (now Hope). You can't see them but that's the general direction. You are in fact looking at the entire history of the Hunter Valley spread out before you and in the far distance, usually misty and other times as clear as if I could reach out and grasp them, is the stunning Barrington Tops World Heritage area. Watching over my shoulder with timeless patience is our beloved Brokenback mountain range. Dark, brooding and ancient.

We've been graced with the fruit from this amazing vineyard since 2017 and I've been up there countless times. In near 50 degree heat, blustery southerlies and depressing rain but regardless of what the fruit is like: pristine and juicy, under ripe while patiently maturing, sun burnt and struggling or even wrapped in a cocoon of choking bushfire smoke, I've always just taken a moment to simply stop and and take it all in. Over the years I have shared beers on the back of the ute while the sun set, lightning cracked and storm clouds gathered over distant peaks but most recently I spent time patiently waiting for the vineyard manager to pull my car out of the fence when the slope was too steep and the ground too wet.

I must say though, I love the drive in. I love stopping to open gates, and making sure we close them. Waving to the cows and horses as we pass and wondering why those four concrete water tanks were dumped halfway up an old steep sloped vineyard, serving no purpose that I can see. Why there? If it wasn't for the shadow of the old terraces where the vines once stood, they surely would have just rolled away. We are in steep farm country and the people that work this land are that. Farmers working the land to grow the best fruit they can with the cards they are dealt.

In 2020 things didn't work out and we are holding our breath in 2021 because we need this rain to go away. We need the fruit to ripen and it won't with all this water. Nonetheless, I'll continue to make my twice weekly visit to this beautiful vineyard site because, for me anyway, as in life (as it is in wine) sometimes the journey is every bit as satisfying as the destination.

Nick Flanagan - Glandore Winemaker.
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