



FELTON ROAD

Recent Reviews

Pinot path

WINE RAY JORDAN



The West Australian
September 2015

Felton Road Bannockburn pinot noir 2014 (\$73)

Beautifully lifted aromatics. There is some nice spice and sour cherry, a hint of raspberry and sweet confectionery character. The palate has a deep lingering intensity with power and finesse. This is a classy wine of great poise and expression. There is a trace of minerality with schisty gravelly loam displaying a beautiful purity. This is from different vineyards in Central Otago, hence different soils with different rootstocks and clones adding to the complexity.

96/100 (Best drinking: Now to 2025. Alc: 14%)

Felton Road Bannockburn chardonnay 2014 (\$54)

A beautifully precise wine displaying the modern expression of NZ chardonnay. Crisp melon and mineral with a trace of citrus. Nice cereal oak influence with plenty of depth. A very good vintage in Central Otago. A delicate wine with some finesse and delicacy yet with plenty of intensity and palate length. Typifies the Felton Road hands off approach to winemaking with very little new oak – about 10 per cent – allowing the terroir and schist gravel soils to express themselves.

95/100 (Best drinking: Now to 2020. Alc: 14%)

Felton Road Cornish Point pinot noir 2014 (\$85)

There is a distinctive difference between this wine and the Bannockburn. It has a deeper, fruitier character on the nose, with soft and more generous tannins and fruit concentration on the palate. Lush, black-fruit characters with a nice oak and chalky tannin combination working so well on the palate. Has a slightly warm edgy finish, although that is more acidity. This is a wine that will certainly handle some extended cellaring.

96/100 (Best drinking: Now to 2027. Alc: 14%)



2014 Felton Road Calvert Pinot Noir

96



Scented, savoury aroma with tantalising sweet plum, rich spices, wet earth and Bovril character. The wine offers an intriguing mix of fruit and alcohol sweetness balanced by ripe tannins to give a gently drying finish. Deliciously drinkable now but with good potential. Drink 2015 to 2025

2014 Felton Road Riesling Bannockburn

95



Flavoursome Riesling with typical lime, floral and mineral flavours. Purity and lightness are two distinguishing features together with an appealing sweet/acid tension that is more pronounced than Felton Road Dry Riesling.



Tasting Report: Felton Road, *The Handsome Prince of New Zealand* Pinot

September 21st, 2015

If Central Otago was the Côte de Nuits, then Bannockburn would likely be Vosne-Romanée and I'm going to hang it right out and say that Felton Road would be the top gun, the DRC.

And Blair Walter, the winemaker at Felton Road (though I want to find a better title that sums up his all-encompassing oeuvre), operates with the humility and respect that is a reflection of both the man himself and the reverence he has for the land he works with. Don't get me wrong, he can cut loose in the right circumstances, but where wine is on the table he is most often entranced by it.

The success of Felton Road is certainly not all down to Walter though. The fact that someone like Nigel Greening owns the joint cannot be underestimated. Greening is a man whose mind circumnavigates the world of thought at a satellite-like height whilst his oft-bare feet stand firmly on earth. His mind is as inspiringly sharp as it is perfectly offbeat and I've often thought that Felton Road is therapeutic for him, it keeps him grounded.

And then there's Gareth King the resident vineyard whisperer at Felton Road who, alongside Walter, has a keen eye for vine health. If you ever meet King you'll know. He's the dude with the "I'm the luckiest man on the planet" smile. You'll find him in the vineyard. Enough said.

Walter visited Australia recently on an extended tour and I caught up with him in Melbourne to taste some current and new wines, as well as a few back vintages. He's a great presenter. Softly spoken, he talks a brand logic, honesty and humility that is not often seen in the world of winemaking.

He likes the new wines of 2014, a slightly cooler vintage, where greater definition is the reward in the warmer Bannockburn district of Central Otago. Walter likes these cooler years better than the warmer years (like 2013), he sees the cool edge as giving the wines a kind of x-factor in terms of balance, it sharpens them up.

He regards the recent 2012 vintage as the finest to date for Felton Road, delivering wines with more of a mineral edge, keenly detailed and very precise. The 2014 wines aren't quite as pared back as the 2012's, they're slightly more sweet-fruited and opulent, yet they have clearly defined, precise and complex character.

And whilst I (and no doubt you) have always associated Felton Road foremost with pinot noir and secondly with riesling, I have to confess that since tasting the 2012 Block 2 Chardonnay I've been madly curious about where they're heading with this grape.

The answer is they're moving away from new oak, sticking with full malolactic fermentation and they are hitting Chablis-esque notes. Walter brought a vertical of the Bannockburn Chardonnay to the tasting, along with new releases and a vertical of the now maturing Cornish Point Vineyard Pinot Noir.

Contributing Editor Nick Stock is a renowned Australian wine writer, author, presenter and filmmaker who reports on his worldwide wine tasting experiences for JamesSuckling.com

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98 ★★★★★

2013 Felton Road Block 5 Pinot Noir, Central Otago, A\$110/NZ\$92

A fragrant nose with the scent of dark berries, violet and wildflowers. Concentrated palate with a stronger fruit focus together with a savoury, spicy influence. A smooth, rich texture and impressive power on the finish.

97 ★★★★★

2013 Felton Road Block 2 Chardonnay, Central Otago, A\$65/NZ\$52

This is a dense, rich and complex wine that's deliciously drinkable now but will offer much more with extra bottle-age. A sophisticated and powerful wine that gives a strong nod in the direction of Burgundy.

96 ★★★★★

2014 Felton Road Calvert Pinot Noir, Central Otago, A\$85/NZ\$70

An intriguing aroma of plum, mixed spice, wet earth and Bovril character. A core of fruit and alcohol sweetness is balanced by fine, ripe tannins to give a drying finish. Hard to resist now but with the potential to age well.

96 ★★★★★

2014 Felton Road Block 3 Pinot Noir, Central Otago, A\$110/NZ\$95

Made from biodynamically grown grapes, this wine exhibits plum, dark berry, licorice and spicy oak characters together with Felton Road's signature savoury briar/herb undercurrent that adds attractive complexity.

THE WINEFRONTNZ

SINCE 2002 100% INDEPENDENT WINE REVIEWS

Mike Bennie
August 2015

December 31, 2015, Issue 222

Felton Road Chardonnay Block 2 2013

Fine flighty perfume shows some flinty notes, subtle walnut husk-like oak character, green apple, stone fruit. Very tight, racy wine, but with great inward concentration. Think green apples, citrus, ginger and lemongrass spice, but with a course of slate-and-flint mineral character driving through. Finishes long, so fine, so fresh. Superb wine here with refreshment factor and great flavour in tow. **95 Points**

Felton Road Bannockburn Chardonnay 2014

Relatively early picking. Thirteen years of biodynamic farming on this site, and winemaker Blair Walter says the vines are really in the zone. Same old thing in winery, whole bunch press and straight to barrel. Natural ferment usually takes up to a week or more to start, then bubbles along for anywhere between weeks and months. A haze in 2014 meant that the wine needed a filter, which it normally doesn't get. Suitably fresh scented – grapefruit, citrus pith, fine marzipan aromas. High toned and pretty. Tightly wound, licked with nougat oak flavours but feels brisk and citrus driven with a flicker of saline mineral feel throughout. Finishes tight, lightly chalky, tangy. Beautiful, sleek, straight forward chardonnay. **93 Points Drink: 2015 - 2022**

Felton Road Bannockburn Pinot Noir 2014

Has some meatiness and ashy oak sniffs over dark berry and dark cherry fruit characters. Whiff of green herbs, some briar, pepper – good, deep perfume. Slides across the palate with some concentrated sweet berry fruit feel, almost jammy, but pinched with ashen tannins and finishes with good build of crushed slate mineral feel and lemony acidity. Powerful pinot noir, but finds harmony in fresh acidity and lithe texture. Bold statement pinot noir. **92 Points**

Felton Road Cornish Point Pinot Noir 2014

Cornish Point tends to be a little bit softer in texture and weight, with lower acidity from the site in general. Around 20 to 30% whole bunch, crushed to tank, left to sit and ferment wild. I oscillate on fully enjoying Cornish Point over the Block wines, but this release had me from a wink across the room. Fine truffle note over black cherries. Smells like fine chocolate fondant, touch of Xmas cake spice, whiff of mahogany wood, then something fresh, frisky, gently herbal and floral. Slides across the palate with ease and a seamless, smooth feel. Great energy in the wine. Vibrant, harmonious, great balanced but distinctly also a relaxed, open weave feel that makes the wine so good. Really delicious. Really good. **95 Points. Drink: 2015 - 2025**

Felton Road Block 3 Pinot Noir 2014

The famed Block 3. Some prominent new oak in the mix, a feature of the wine. Block 3 in 2014 was 'very good', yields to standard, (around 5ish tonnes per hectare). Whole bunch use in the ferment is around 25% of the whole ferment. I remember when I was in retail-land that the Block 3 and Block 5 were strictly allocated wines, almost mythical, right up there with the scarcest and most sought after. I wonder if they still get sold that way. Regal perfume of dark fruit, fireplace, wet slate, briar, pepper and amaro herbs. Dark fruited to taste, lick of sweet fruit, prickle of saline acidity. Even flow across the palate, floods the palate, fine, powdery tannins set a frame and drag flavours long. Very elegant, lacy, fleshy feel to the wine and a persistence that speaks of quality. Even, pitch perfect. Great release **Rated: 94 Points. Drink: 2015 - 2027+**

*"New Zealand: Part 1" - Lisa Perrotti-Brown***FELTON ROAD Pinot Noir Block 5 2014 – 93+ points**

"Pale ruby colored with a hint of purple, the 2014 Block 5 Pinot Noir is a little reticent and broody at this youthful stage, with faint notes of pomegranate, red cherries and raspberry leaves plus a touch of forest floor. Light to medium-bodied, it offers restrained red berry, floral and earth laced flavors with very finely grainy, silky tannins and lovely freshness, finishing with great length."

FELTON ROAD Pinot Noir Block 3 2014 – 93 points

"Pale to medium ruby-purple colored, the 2014 Block 3 Pinot Noir is fragrantly scented of freshly tilled earth, Ceylon tea, warm cranberries and red currants with a touch of Provence herbs. Medium-bodied and wonderfully elegant in the mouth, it fills the palate with satin textured red berry and earth flavors, finishing with great freshness and length."

FELTON ROAD Chardonnay Block 2 2014 – 91+ points

"The 2014 Block 2 Chardonnay has fresh peach, honeyed pear and grapefruit notes with hints of struck flint, baker's yeast and marzipan. Very elegant and refined in the mouth, the light to medium-bodied palate has a lovely satiny texture and tight-knit citrus and savory flavors, finishing long and minerally."

FELTON ROAD Cornish Point 2014 – 91 points

"Displaying a bright, medium ruby-purple color, the 2014 Cornish Point Pinot Noir has notes of ripe red cherries, mulberries and black raspberries with suggestions of violets and red roses. Medium-bodied, it fills the mouth with perfumed ripe red berries flavors, supported by soft tannins and finishing long and fruity."

FELTON ROAD Pinot Noir Calvert 2014 – 91 points

"Pale ruby-purple colored, the 2014 Pinot Noir Calvert has pronounced, youthful aromas of Bing cherries, black raspberries and mulberries with hints of earth, menthol and sage. Medium-bodied, elegant, fresh and lively on the palate, it offers layers of bramble berry and earthy flavors, finishing with good length and chewy texture."

Robert Parker's Wine Advocate**FELTON ROAD Bannockburn Chardonnay 2014 – 91 points**

"The 2014 Bannockburn Chardonnay has ripe apple, white peach and clotted cream notes with hints of cashews and rising bread. Light to medium-bodied and finely structured in the mouth, it offers wonderful intensity with a great balance between fruit and savory notes, finishing long."

FELTON ROAD Bannockburn Riesling 2015 – 89+ points

"The 2015 Bannockburn Riesling has a reticent nose at this youthful stage with subtle notes of lemon juice, fresh limes, honeysuckle and orange blossom with a touch of chalk dust. Medium-dry with tight-knit honeyed citrus flavors and wonderful freshness, it finishes with mineral nuances."

FELTON ROAD Bannockburn Pinot Noir 2014 – 89+ points

"Pale ruby-purple colored, the 2014 Bannockburn Pinot Noir has a ripe cherries, red plum and dried lavender scented nose with a waft of dried leaves. Medium-bodied, it offers a good concentration of plush red berry flavors and soft tannins, finishing with a herbal lift."

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