

The Elms Vineyard

14.7 ha

History and Location

The Elms Vineyard, at the end of Felton Road, lies in a gently sloping, north facing valley cut into the Bannockburn hills at the southern extremity of the Cromwell Basin. Immediately above the vineyard lies Stewart Town and a large dam, where water was stored for sluicing the slopes of Bannockburn during the gold-rush, which started in 1862. The fact that this valley was untouched by the gold miners is possibly a reflection of the deep benches of heavy soil that form much of its structure: soils unlikely to hold significant amounts of gold. After the gold miners departed, the slopes were left for sheep to graze until 1991 when Stewart Elms discovered the site's potential for great Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Riesling. He started to plant in 1992 and Felton Road began.

Soils

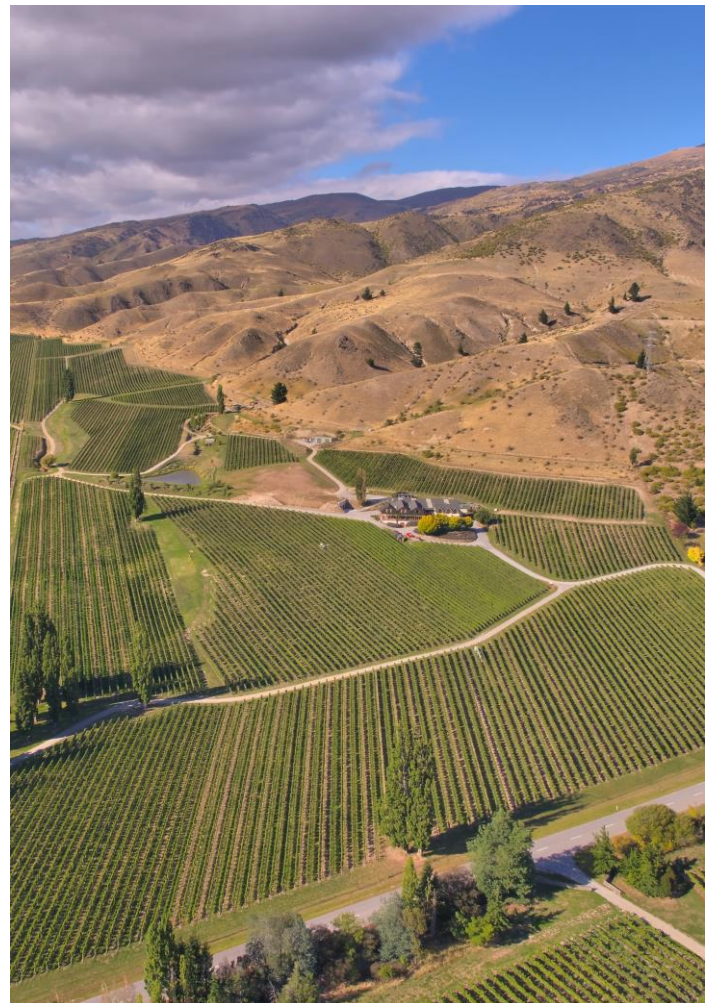
The vineyard has two principal soil types. Our preferred soil for Pinot Noir is the deep swathe of *Waenga* soils that form a bench at the base of the hills. The parent rock is schist and tertiary sediments and the soils have developed on fan detritus from schist alluvial materials with an average 40cm cover of wind accumulated loess. Deeper down there are fine dendritic calcium carbonate accumulations overlying fine gravels and lake-bed sediments. The roots can easily penetrate through the profile and can be readily found at depths of three metres on 15 year old vines. The *Waenga* soils are of moderate fertility with good water holding capacity. The *Lochar* series is another fan soil of schist gravels with a thin loess covering. The schist gravels can be seen coming all the way to the surface and reach depths of three metres and more. The very friable sandy gravels are interspersed with bands of sandy clay loam that can cement the gravels into pans, yet are still easily penetrable by vine roots. It is on these soils where we plant Chardonnay and Riesling.

Planting

The vineyard was originally planted over two phases: Blocks 1-9 were planted from 1992-1994 at vine densities of 2667 vines/ha and Blocks 10-13 were planted in 2001 with vine densities of 4000 vines/ha. Replanting of Blocks continues where we feel new plant material and higher density will outperform vine age. The vineyard is comprised of 7.7 ha of Pinot Noir, 4.9 ha of Chardonnay and 2.1 ha of Riesling. A wide variety of clones and rootstocks has resulted in a complex patchwork of viticultural trials. VSP canopy management is employed using a cane pruned double Guyot. The viticulture is 100% organic and biodynamic and is fully certified by Demeter.

Vineyard Characteristics

With the complex variation in soil, slope, elevation and aspect; fruit from The Elms Vineyard is very varied in personality. Pinot Noir from the deepest parts of our *Waenga* soils in Block 3 display power and complexity. The same bench extends across into Block 5, which also includes a band of clay in the middle and *Lochar* gravels at the very south of the Block. This generates a unique finesse and depth to the wine. The east sloping Block 2 (and Block 4) is entirely comprised of *Lochar* gravels and is ideal for Chardonnay and Riesling, while the heavier soils give extra weight to Riesling in Block 1. Block 6, is again, *Lochar* gravels but on a steeper north facing slope. Farther up the valley nestled against the steeper hills to the south and west, a swathe of heavy *Waenga* soil occurs again in Blocks 10 and 11. These Blocks are later ripening due to losing the sun earlier and their higher elevation (330 metres compared to 260m of Block 2).



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Elms Vineyard Layout

