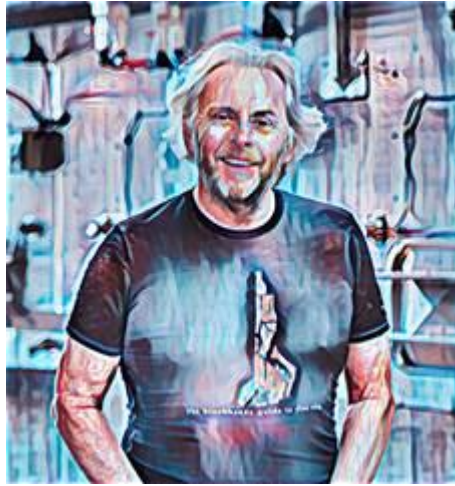




WINE CHARACTERS



NIGEL GREENING, FELTON ROAD WINES

Nigel's early career as a blues guitarist failed miserably and led to a substitute plan as a creative working in photography, film, and major events. He abandoned that after 25 years and fled to New Zealand where he hatched a plan to subsidize his costly Burgundy habit by swapping sides and planting his own Pinot Noir. 25 years on from that decision, he has yet to think of a better idea. When not at the winery or harassing the local trout, he retreats to his workshop where he makes acoustic and electric guitars.

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What's the ONE THING most unique, authentic, & memorable about your brand?

There is always a single aspect to us that never ceases to astonish me... that is the human story that underlies the existence of Felton Road. Wine is a human construct, it uses place and fruit as its tools, but what makes it Felton Road is this collision of personalities, their history, and the extraordinary stories of how they came to collide... A Kiwi boy who thought he'd go to college to learn to grow apples, signed up to take a spell at Oregon State University and discovered this stuff called wine. That starts a journey from New Zealand to California and back to Oregon, triggering a bizarre series of coincidences with an array of characters who became icons of American winemaking as well as buddies. Then, his choosing to leave Burgundy to make wine for his old college mate in New Zealand.

That's just a very quick glimpse of one of a dozen of us who together make this thing click. I could (and, sadly do!) stand up and spend an evening just weaving down one of these human narratives that binds Blair, myself, Gareth, Sarah, Tracy, Annabel, Larissa, James, Nicky, Nicola, and Ingrid... and the list goes on. Of course, they don't all shape the wine itself, but Felton Road is a lot more than the wine it makes. It's about lives and, in quite a few cases, lives that people have chosen to dedicate to making Felton Road happen. Add to that the incredible emotional investment of so many of our customers; people we've never met will describe themselves as Felton Road people! How humbling is that?

Brands are human constructs and ours seems to be supercharged in that respect.

Describe how and what you'd do with your winemaking career or winery business if you were not constrained. Sky's the limit!

Is it really sad to say I wouldn't change a single thing? Is that suffering a poverty of aspiration? Or is it some sort of hubris that we've achieved what we need to? I don't think it is either. My role is as navigator not dictator and I know that Blair feels the same way. I've learned that ambition doesn't make wines better, it just interferes with them, makes them shout. What makes winemaking so special is that we don't really know what will come next; we are discovering the produce of each vintage and hopefully gaining a little wisdom from that discovery. How can you make that process better? I just don't know, other than to continually embrace curiosity. I'd hate it to be bigger, would exciting new vineyards stimulate us, or distract us? Perhaps I could ask for the gift of another few decades of life to see where all today's ideas work out?

What is the One Wine most emblematic of your brand and/or winemaking style? Tell us its story.

So, now you're asking me to turn on some of my children to pick a favourite? What kind of monster are you? After 28 years we've settled at 12 wines. The time it took from our most recent: MacMuir, to the previous newcomer was 14 years, so we aren't exactly innovative. We've never redesigned our label from the first one that Stewart ordered in a hurry from a printer in Invercargill, when he had an unexpected chance to sell a barrel of wine to a prospective merchant. No new logo, (in fact the logo wasn't even new to us, it was stolen from Hugh Johnson's book of British trees! Blair had to apologize to him when they first met!).

If you asked a customer or a critic, it would probably be **Block 3**. It was made in our first vintage when Blair saw how distinctive the fruit from Block 3 of Elms Vineyard tasted. In those days, New Zealand wines were normally divided into a regular wine and a winemaker's reserve, so, a human construct, based on the knowledge, or ego, of the winemaker. Block 3 might have been the first Pinot Noir in New Zealand to be named for its specific place. That is important, for it requires that the winemaker acknowledges that they are subservient to the place and not dominant. So, in that first vintage Blair was, unconsciously perhaps, starting his journey of finding the 'somewhereness' in New Zealand Pinot Noir. So, yes, that wine would be emblematic of Felton Road. But on a Desert Island? Not sure it would be Pinot, Riesling might go better with the oysters! **Stay Tuned for the Block 3 Wine Review, coming soon!**

What are your wholehearted convictions related to the wine business?

If we talk about the wine business, as opposed to the wine industry, perhaps we can restrict ourselves to the artisan sector. Then it's simple. We are a gang. We don't compete, we conspire together. We teach each other, console each other, help find our fellow members a decent distributor in a new country, train their children, hope that they receive ours for training, We drink their wines when we get home, not our own. Is there another place other than wine where this happens with such open generosity? If so, I have yet to experience it. If we were in a community where we could only succeed by beating our colleagues and bettering them, then I don't think I would have stayed. WINE IS NOT A COMPETITIVE SPORT! Long may it remain that way.