

HALL OF FAME OAKDENE 2025. GAIL THOMAS.

It all began as an accident when they came across an 80ha property back in 2001. He always wanted a farm where he could run cattle and grow grapes. The house needed work and restumping but they could see the potential for a restaurant or as a B&B. After planting the vines, things just grew, and grew, the garden surrounds were developed and the restaurant opened in 2004.

Today, that foresight, evolution and expansion in our region continues, thanks to tonight's inductees into the Geelong Wine Hall of Fame, it's Oakdene's Liz and Bernard Hooley.

Thanks to Liz's background in fashion design, together with her artistic talents and creative flair the Grubb Road property at Wallington underwent a unique transformation becoming a popular dining destination together with the 1920's guesthouse accommodation and Oakdene's distinctively quirky 'upside down house' cellar door that has also become a tourism attraction.

Oakdene produce two tiers of wine, the benchmark white label and a second tier more drink-now style blue label across sparkling, red and white wines from numerous grape varieties.

Oakdene maintains a 5-star rating in the Halliday Wine Companion and their benchmark wines are consistent trophy winners not only at our Geelong Wine Show but also at other major and regional shows.

The 2022 Liz's Chardonnay took out the 2024 Premier's Trophy at the Victorian Wine Show, one of the highest honours in the Victorian wine industry. At the 2023 Geelong Wine Show the same wine took home the Trophy for Best chardonnay and Wine of the Show while the 2023 vintage repeated the win of Best Chardonnay and Wine of the Show at Geelong. Liz's chardonnay also scored a hat trick at the Ballarat Wine Show taking the Trophy for Best Chardonnay in 2023, 2024 and again recently at their 2025 Show.

The family-owned business expanded in 2016 with the purchase of the 160-acre property Lighthouse farm at Mannerim overlooking Swan Bay and Queenscliff. Consisting of a 6000-tree olive grove, expanded vineyards and two self-contained accommodation offerings, Oakdene now has 32ha under vine.

Known as Quiddity Place this destination venue certainly reflects its name's meaning - the inherent nature or essence of someone or something – distinctive, a peculiarity. Featuring a tasting room and cellar door for Oakdene wines and Lighthouse olive oils, there's also the state-of-the-art Tin Liz Gallery showcasing Australian artworks along with some of Liz's own paintings, while the Little Tin Gallery exhibits works by local artists.

Contributing to this sensory visitor experience, the sweeping landscaped surrounds complete with mature specimen plantings, sculptural works and the eye-catching and colourful resurrected 'Mort Bay Tug' are counterbalanced by the panoramic vineyard and bay views beyond.

At the end of a winding garden pathway is the Hidden Frog restaurant. But it's certainly far from hidden, as clinging to the wall beside the entrance is a towering selfie magnet in the form of a vibrant animated fibreglass frog by local artist Simon Dodds.

Fitted out in a contemporary style and boasting a modern Australian menu focusing on local produce with a European flair, the restaurant also spreads onto the adjoining sweeping lawn area.

So, in recognition for their contribution of putting the Geelong region and the Bellarine on the food and winemaking map and as a tourism destination, it is with great pleasure this evening that we induct Liz and Bernard Hooley into the Geelong Wine Hall of Fame.
