

Pioneer Vignerons:

Thomas HARDY: (1830-1912)

There was a time when Thomas Hardy of Bankside Vineyards, Underdale, was known far and wide as South Australia's most experienced vigneron. Along with colleagues such as Dr. A. C. Kelly of Morphett Vale, he was a tireless promoter of Australia's fruit and vine industries.

He was born at Gittisham, Devon, England, on 12th January 1830, the son of James Hardy and his wife Eliza (nee Anstis). He arrived in Adelaide on the *British Empire* in August 1850 and worked for a year on the farm of John Reynell (q.v.) at Reynella before going to a cattle property at Yankalilla. He subsequently drove a mob of cattle to the Victorian goldfields and on his return to South Australia in 1853 bought 15 acres on the banks of the River Torrens, just west of Adelaide.

The property was named Bankside and Hardy planted Shiraz and Grenache vines and two acres of fruit trees. He made his first wine in 1857 and two years later visited England with samples of his wines. He bought or leased more land during the 1860s, some of it in what is now Hardy's Road, Torrensville. In addition to wine grapes, he also planted olives, citrus, almonds and table grapes at Bankside.

Thomas Hardy married his cousin Johanna Hardy on 20th May 1852 and they had four daughters and three sons. Johanna died in 1868 and on 6th September 1871 Hardy married her sister Eliza. His sons James, Thomas and Robert all joined the family business.

By 1865 Hardy was producing 14,000 gallons of wine each vintage and within ten years this had increased to 53,000 gallons, made from his own grapes and from those purchased from about forty other growers. With limited expansion possible at Bankside, he acquired the nearby Tintara Vineyards in 1876 and two years later purchased a disused flour mill at McLaren Vale (now the Dridan Fine Arts Gallery). He soon turned the fortunes of Tintara around and by 1901 had 540 acres under vine. His sons entered the business, which was known as Thomas Hardy & Sons Ltd., and they had wine stores and offices at Mile End and in Currie Street, Adelaide. Much of the expansion was due to the buoyant wine market to England through agents such as P. B. Burgoyne & Co. and W.W. Pownall & Co.

Hardy was an active figure in the wine world, lecturing and writing widely on the wine industry and olive growing. He was Chairman of the wine committee of the South Australian display at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in 1886, was a member of the Phylloxera Board in 1889 and was President of the Wine Growers'

Association in 1891. He toured the wine-growing regions of Europe, America and South Africa, and examined the workings of the Covent Garden fruit market in London. In addition to this busy schedule, he regularly judged displays at local horticultural shows.

He was Vice-President of the South Australian Agricultural and Horticultural Society and of the Chamber of Manufactures, Chairman of the West Torrens Education Board of Advice and a Justice of the Peace. He wrote regular articles in the local press and the *Garden & Field Journal*, often signing himself 'T. H.' or 'Bankside'. He published two books, *Notes on Vineyards in America and Europe* (1885) and *A Vigneron Abroad, Trip to South Africa* (1899).

In his later life Hardy remained active but was beset by sadness and disappointment. His old Bankside winery was destroyed by fire in October 1905, and two of his sons died, James in 1904 and Thomas in 1911.

Thomas Hardy died at his Bankside home on 10th January 1912 and was buried at Hindmarsh Cemetery. An obituary stated that he was 'generally regarded as the father of the wine industry in South Australia' and in 1936 a memorial to him was unveiled in the main street of McLaren Vale.

Source

John Healey; *S.A.'s Greats – The Men and Women of the North Terrace Plaques*, Historical Society of South Australia Incorporated; 2001

adelaide.sa.gov.au website

Prepared March 2018 by Kevin Gogler and Barry Philp