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\$2.00 (inc GST)



OVER THE MOON: Beechworth Dragon Boat (BDB) members Connor Taylor (left), Doug Gladstone, GHSF committee member Lorraine Lucas, BDB members Dorian Ellis, Katelyn Shallue, River Scott-Cramer, Heidi Ellis, GHSF committee member Jennie Gilliver with BDB members Rhiannon Shallue and Stella Brinsdon at the Best Easter parade trophy presentation last Sunday. Story page 5. PHOTO: Coral Cooksley

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Walpole is Halliday's best

BEECHWORTH vigneron Mark Walpole from Fighting Gully Road winery has been named the 2024 Halliday Wine Companion Viticulturist of the Year.

The awards recognise the nation's top wines, winemakers, viticulturists, and wineries across the country's wine regions.

This year's honourees and award winners were presented by the Halliday Tasting

■ Fighting Gully Road viticulturist receives top gong in wine awards

Team, chief editor Campbell Mattinson, founder James Halliday AM, as well as expert judges Dave Brookes, Jane Faulkner, Jeni Port, Philip Rich and Shanteh Hale.

The awards also mark the release of the wine-enthusiast's bible, the 2024 Halliday Wine Companion, which is available in stores nationally

from this week. Mr Walpole is known for his passion for sangiovese (of which he is arguably the chief Australian authority) and is also an authority on viticulture.

Established in 1997, Fighting Gully Road commenced planting the Aquila Audax Vineyard, an elevated north-

facing site, just 3km south of Beechworth.

Firstly, planting just cabernet sauvignon and pinot noir grapes.

Mr Walpole described the site as being of low disease pressure due to its exposed open nature and regular air movement.

He was originally inspired

by the climate and varieties found in Bordeaux, which has many similarities to what is found in Beechworth; and the elevated vineyards of the Chianti Classico region of Tuscany, Italy where shaley shallow soils produce grapes with concentrated colour and flavour.

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AM ALPINE MOTORCYCLES

Walpole named Halliday's best

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Mr Walpole has been working to adapt his vineyard to changes in climate including new varieties that ripen later and have better natural acidity; while new plantings are being established to accommodate new equipment allowing reduced dependency on non-organic inputs; and contract labour.

Today, they have expanded with significant areas of sangiovese, tempranillo, shiraz, chardonnay, gros manseng, and more recently grenache and verdicchio with now over 11.5 ha planted to vine. Plus, the black truffle farm alongside.

He has planted several varieties that while often referred to non-mainstream or 'alternative', are becoming increasingly popular in the Australian domestic market and seem very well suited to the Beechworth wine region.

For Mr Walpole, viticulture is the critical link to great wine - without high



PICK OF THE CROP: Mark Walpole from Fighting Gully Road winery has been named the 2024 Halliday Wine Companion Viticulturist of the Year.

quality grapes, good wine is not possible.

"Having great grapes coming into the winery makes our job there easy, ninety percent of the job is done," he said.

"Anything less just makes our winemaking more difficult with a lower than ideal result."

"I believe it is important to have a pragmatic approach to viticultural practices - not being tied to prescriptive methods which reduce flexibility and adaptability.

"We need to be able to respond quickly and efficiently to whatever the season throws at us.

"The past five years have shown exactly what that can be."

Other North East winemakers to be honoured included Dark Horse winner - Anderson & Marsh, Alpine Valleys, Fortified Wine of the Year - All Saints Estate Museum Muscat NV, Rutherglen and Rutherglen's Cofield Wines named the 2024 Halliday People's Choice Award.

