

Bendigo-Ophir Gold Mine

I write from the perspective of somebody who has made his life studying the wines of Burgundy, the world reference point for producing great wines from pinot noir and chardonnay, a production story that has been built over 2,000 years.

The second world reference point for pinot noir is New Zealand's Central Otago, for which the focal point is Lake Dunstan and its associated townships such as Bendigo. The story here is much more recent. 40 years is but a flash on the Burgundian timescale but also a long time in relation to a human lifespan. Wineries are now in many instances run by the second generation and starting to employ the third generation of the original pioneers. The 40-year history should be seen as the first 40 years of potentially a very long run.

The nature of an embryonic fine wine region is to grow, and over a long-time scale. The nature of mining is to dwindle as the finite resources of the relevant mineral dwindle. By which time the damage has been done.

Ask a wine enthusiast anywhere around the world about New Zealand Pinot and they will immediately reference Central Otago. The region and its wine is a great ambassador for New Zealand world-wide, a source of soft power as well as the considerable economic value of this product. The beneficiaries are local and the profits stay in the region.

This should not be put at risk by such a project as the Bendigo-Ophir Gold mining proposal. It must not be put at risk without a very careful scrutiny, which the fast-track proposal does not allow for. Please reject this over hasty proposition.

Jasper Morris MW, author of Inside Burgundy and www.insideburgundy.com

I have visited Central Otago many times since a first visit in the late 1990s, as a speaker at various editions of the Central Otago Pinot Noir Celebration and to visit wineries, originally for importing purposes, subsequently as a wine critic.