



# R Y M I L L

COONAWARRA

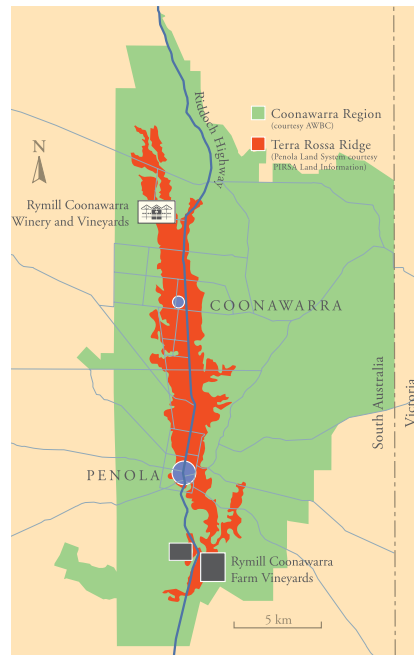
## COONAWARRA BOUNDARY

After nearly twenty years of contention, the official boundary of the Coonawarra Region was finally determined in January 2003, the name of the district registered and its international reputation protected. The matter was initiated when the European Union demanded that, if the name Coonawarra were to be used on wine labels, the region had to be clearly defined. Furthermore, it was expected that such a region would historically have produced wines of recognisable character and quality.

The Geographic Indications Committee attempted to define Coonawarra principally in terms of its soil and climate, but soon realised that these attributes failed to provide an accurately discernable boundary. In fact, how the boundary was ultimately decided by the various legal authorities remains something of a mystery. All the grape-growers who participated in the final appeal to the Federal Court for inclusion in the region were successful, which helps to explain its unusually irregular outline.

One matter not in dispute, however, was the fact that the reputation of Coonawarra is firmly founded on its distinctive cigar of terra rossa soil in which John Riddoch first planted vines during 1890. Although vineyards have now spread onto other adjacent soil types, the Federal Court identified 'the location and dimensions of the cigar as corresponding to the area of the Penola Land System delineated in mapping...published by Primary Industries and Resources of South Australia.'

This land system, as can be seen from the map, is a narrow ridge 27 kilometres long which averages only 1.8 kilometres in width. It comprises 4820 hectares, and accounts for just 12% of the official Coonawarra Region.



Geologically, the backbone of the ridge consists of ancient marine sandstone that was laid down nearly a million years ago. This was then covered with a younger mantle of white limestone deposited during subsequent inundation by a freshwater, Coorong-like lagoon. When these waters eventually receded, the surface of the newly exposed limestone was dissolved by rain, which is slightly acidic, leaving a layer of unique terra rossa soil.

It was in this rich soil of the Penola township, at the higher southern end of the cigar, that Scottish settlers initially found grape vines would grow to perfection over 150 years ago. Today, visitors remark that reading the winery signboards as they drive along the Riddoch Highway, which follows the crest of the Coonawarra ridge, is just like reading the wine list of any first class restaurant.

This impression was confirmed by the market research of Dr Johan Bruwer from the University of Adelaide Wine Business Group, which found in 2003 that 'Coonawarra is the most preferred region in Australia for red wine'. Wine lovers from around the world are rapidly coming to the same conclusion, and furthermore can now be confident that when they see the word Coonawarra on their bottle of wine, they will know precisely its provenance.