



HAMILTON RUSSELL VINEYARDS

A Brief Timeline History

400 million years ago

The Bokkeveld Shale on which the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyards are situated was laid down under the shallow Agulhas sea.

330 million years ago

The beginning of the formation of the Cape Folded Mountains.

290 million years ago

Cape Folded Mountains formed and Bokkeveld Shale along with its iron and clay-rich soil lies on the surface of the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley.

million to 250,000 years ago

Homo Erectus roam the valley, leaving their discarded Acheulean hand-axes across the clay-rich soils in particular.

250,000 to around 400 years ago

Nomadic Homo Sapiens hunter-gatherers regularly visit and hunt the valley, evolving into the San (Bushmen).

A few thousand to 300 years ago

The San are outcompeted by the Khoi semi-nomadic herders who occupy the valley, particularly “Atta's” tribe after whom Attaquaskloof is named.

1480’s

The first Europeans visit the valley, the Portuguese, on a voyage to the East Indies. They leave a small cross carved into a rock at the top of Hamilton Russell Vineyards.

1739

Dutch settlers lease land from the Dutch East India Company in the Hemel-en-Aarde Valley for grazing cattle.

1847

The first land was sold in the valley, freehold, by the British occupying the Cape.

1847 to the early 1900’s

Cattle grazing becomes sheep and wheat farming and the valley is parceled into smaller and smaller agricultural units - which eventually become barely economically viable.

1975

Johannesburg based advertising agency owner, Tim Hamilton Russell buys the 170 ha undeveloped Hemel-en-Aarde Valley farm, Braemar, from Mr. Carstens for R58,000.

1975

Braemar, Portion 13 of the once much larger farm Hemel-en-Aarde, is named Hamilton Russell Vineyards by founder Tim.

1976

The first vines, including Pinot noir, are planted on Hamilton Russell Vineyards, pioneering the area for modern viticulture.

1979

The first winemaker, Peter Finlayson is hired from Franschhoek.

1980

The first wine cellar is built on Hamilton Russell Vineyards.

1981 (February)

The first wines are made on Hamilton Russell Vineyards - including the Grand Vin Noir - a Pinot noir - sold for R5.95 per bottle.

1981 (October)

Instigated by Tim, the appellation Walker Bay is created as a "Wine Ward".

1982

The first Chardonnay is made on Hamilton Russell Vineyards, the Grand Vin Blanc (first release was the 1983 vintage).

1985

Wine quota laws are dropped (largely due to Tim), enabling fully legal winemaking on Hamilton Russell Vineyards and therefore the vintage and variety on the label.

1987

The first trial export of wine to the UK was made.

1990

Gail Kreusch-Dau hired from Stellenbosch as winemaker.

1990

Nelson Mandela released from prison.

1991

Tim’s son, Anthony Hamilton Russell, returned from Management Consulting in London to take over Hamilton Russell Vineyards

1992

Wine range narrowed from 10 wines to focus on Pinot noir and Chardonnay and a commitment made to only work with own-grown grapes.

1992

Barrel maturation cellar built.

1992

First exports to the US as trade sanctions are lifted.

1993

First Olive Oil pressed on Hamilton Russell Vineyards - the first for a South African wine producer.

1994

Anthony buys Hamilton Russell Vineyards from Tim, becoming the second generation family owner.

1994

Sister property Southern Right is founded.

1995

Kevin Grant hired from Bonnievale as winemaker.

1996

Hamilton Russell Vineyards releases first South African wine over R100 per bottle.

1996

The Manor House, Braemar, is built on the property.

1996

Sister property Ashbourne is founded.

1996

A pre-school is founded and built on Hamilton Russell Vineyards.

1997

Hamilton Russell Vineyards registered as a Wine Estate, at the time meaning the brand name could only be used for 100% Estate grown wine.

2000

The Millennium is celebrated by building dressed stone foundations for a farm chapel

2003

The 21st vintage of Hamilton Russell Vineyards Pinot noir - the 2001 - wins the trophy for best Pinot noir at the IWSC in London.

2003

Anthony initiates the process of creating the 3 Hemel-en-Aarde appellations within the Walker Bay.

2003

The authorities are successfully lobbied with the help of Dave Johnson of Newton Johnson, to make Walker Bay a District not a Ward.

2004

Walker Bay becomes a District, enabling the formation of the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay focused Hemel-en-Aarde appellations within it.

2004

Included in a book on the “Great Winemaking Families of the World” - one of 19 family-owned producers worldwide.

2005

Hamilton Russell Vineyards becomes a WWF Conservation Champion - for an exceptional commitment to sustainable farming and conservation.

2005

Hannes Storm hired from Hermanus as winemaker.

2006

Hemel-en-Aarde Valley and Upper Hemel-en-Aarde Valley appellations are made official. Anthony donates the registered name to the area for that purpose.

2009

Hemel-en-Aarde Ridge appellation is made official.

2010

Formation of the area’s Hemel-en-Aarde Nature Conservancy formalized.

2011

The 30th vintage of Hamilton Russell Vineyards Pinot noir - the 2010 - receives the first classic score (95) for a South African Pinot noir in the US Wine Advocate.

2014

Organic viticultural practices are implemented along with regenerative farming - including elements of biodynamics.

2014

Emul Ross hired from Franschhoek as winemaker.

2015

This vintage of Chardonnay was ranked number 11 in the Wine Spectator Top 100 Wines of the year worldwide.

2018

Hamilton Russell Oregon founded and first Oregon Pinot Noir made.

2019

First Oregon Chardonnay made by Hamilton Russell Oregon

2020

Two recent vintages of Hamilton Russell Vineyards Pinot noir and two recent vintages of Chardonnay receive classic scores (95) from Decanter UK.

2020

40th vintage milestone celebrated.

2021

Wines are sold on allocation in more than 60 countries.

"Hamilton Russell has today become one of the most recognised brands in the U.S. market.” **Wine Spectator, 2020**

"Today the winery is one of the most recognised brands on the market (UK), and rightfully so, as it has become the flag bearer for Pinot noir and Chardonnay from South Africa.” **Bordeaux Index, 2021**

And onwards