



# Adding a touch of spirit



WINE  
JOHN LEWIS

A love of history, horses and family flavours the wines at Millamolong.

ACCORDING to owner James William Ashton, some of the farm-stay guests at his 4050-hectare Millamolong property near Blayney have reported seeing the ghost of a young girl who was murdered by a jealous lover.

The victim's name was Isabelle and she lived in a former Cobb and Co coach house, which has been converted into guest accommodation at Millamolong.

The tragic story inspired the Ashton family to name their inaugural merlot Isabelle's Ghost, a move in keeping with the Ashtons' understandable penchant for linking their wines with history.

James Ashton's orthopedic surgeon son Andrew, who helps in the polo pony breeding, farming and grazing, winegrowing and hospitality activities on Millamolong, is sceptical about stories of Isabelle's ghostly appearances – noting that there is a definite correlation between the details of the apparition and the amount of wine consumed.

The \$20 2007 Isabelle's Ghost Merlot is one of three new-release wines to come to my tasting table from the Millamolong wine business owned by James Ashton and

members of his family – Andrew and his wife Melanie and daughter Sally and her urologist husband David Jefferson.

The two other releases are the Millamolong 2007 56 Miles Shiraz and the 2007 24 Goals Riesling.

I particularly like the riesling, which is reviewed today in *Uncorked*.

The Ashton family's extraordinary success in the world of polo is behind the naming of the 56 Miles, 24 Goals and 26 Ponies wines.

James William Ashton's grandfather, James Ashton Senior, was NSW minister for lands in 1920 and bought the Markdale sheep and cattle station at Goulburn for his four sons – James Hay, Bob, Geoff and Phillip.

When a retired British army officer introduced polo to Goulburn, the Ashton boys took to the sport with passion, riding 90 kilometres to matches and practices.

The four became the top polo team in Australia and developed a lucrative sideline to woolgrowing at Markdale by breeding cavalry horses and polo ponies for India.

In 1930, they took a huge gamble by sailing off with their team of 26 ponies to compete in

Britain and the US.

They triumphed against the world's best polo teams, gaining a combined polo handicap of 24 goals, and sold their ponies in the US, netting a profit that allowed each brother to buy his own property back in Australia.

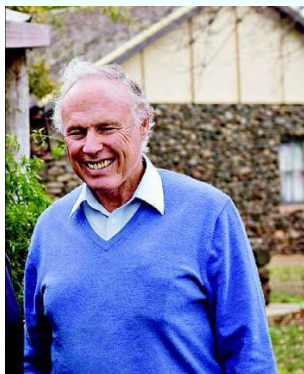
James Hay acquired Millamolong and it later passed to his eldest son, James William, who has played polo around the world and has a key role in the International Federation of Polo.

Millamolong is on the Belubula River and was first settled in 1836 and produced its first wines in 2003. It has plantings of shiraz, chardonnay, cabernet sauvignon, merlot and riesling.

The Millamolong wines are made by Orange-based, French-born contract winemaker Chris Derrez.

The property's name, pronounced "Milla-molong", comes from the original Aboriginal inhabitants and means "sick man's creek" – a reference to the medicinal properties of the calcium, magnesium and other minerals in the Belubula River water.

The wines can be bought at the cellar door or on [www.millamolong.com](http://www.millamolong.com) or on 6367 5241.



FAMILY AFFAIR: James Ashton runs the 4050-hectare Millamolong property with his children and their families.



**GOOD TASTE**

**UNCORKED**



**\$20**

**Millamolong 2007 24 Goals Riesling**

THE 28-hectare Millamolong vineyard is 600 metres above sea level in the Orange wine region and, as this wine shows, does riesling well. The 2007 24 Goals Riesling is pale straw in the glass and has kiwifruit scents. Smooth ruby grapefruit flavour shows on the front of the palate and subtle croissant and green apple characters, with a light underlay of lime marmalade, chime in on the middle palate. Flinty acid refreshes at the finish. It would go nicely with sushi, seafood cocktails or grilled fish with anchovy butter.

**Ageing:** three years

**Rating:**



**\$18**

**Blue Pyrenees 2006 Cellar Door Release Viognier**

BLUE Pyrenees vineyards were established at Avoca in western Victoria by France's Remy Cointreau group, which after more than 40 years of ownership sold the operation in 2002 to a syndicate headed by Sydney businessman John Ellis. This viognier is a welcome relief from the over-the-top products of the variety I've tasted recently. It is light gold with olive green tints and has lychee scents. Restrained, crisp apricot flavour shows on the front of the palate and musk and orange zest characters, with lightly applied spiced oak, come through on the middle palate. Tight steely acid features at the finish. It can be bought by logging on to "Shop" at [www.bluepyrenees.com.au](http://www.bluepyrenees.com.au). Try it with seafood wontons, prosciutto, rocket and egg tart or chicken schnitzel and tabouli salad.

**Ageing:** one year

**Rating:**

