

## SEPPELT'S Labyrinth Wines

By Paul Foster

'Industry Ground Breaker' reads the announcement, and in their overworked way the PR people are right. The recently released Seppelt *Labyrinth* label takes its title from the drives and underground cellars of the historic Seppelt Great Western winery and a tonne or two of topsoil and rock was certainly mined in their making.

Seppelt was once one of our leading wine names but the label largely lost its way in the tough business of modern corporate takeovers. Recent rationalisation, though, like the sale of the beautiful historic *Seppeltsfield* winery in the Barossa, has seen things looking much better and old Joseph Seppelt and son Benno should both be resting a bit more serene.

Joseph had arrived in Adelaide from Hamburg in 1849 and planted a vineyard for wine. Then with little warning he downed and died of DTs and Benno - who studied chemistry and must surely be a first wineman who did - was the one who made Seppelt what it was. By 1900 Benno owned an extraordinary 1500 acres in the Barossa and was winning fame with his wines in London. Then in 1918 he acquired the Seppelt Great Western vineyards that are midway between the towns of Stawell and Ararat in what is classified, now, as the Grampians region of Western Victoria.

Digging for 'The Drives', those labyrinthine tunnels, had however been begun by Joseph Best (of Best's Wines) in 1865, and extended by the gold miners of the 1880s. Benno bought the site from his friend and then owner, winegrower Hans Irvine.

Three wines comprise the new range, a Riesling, a Chardonnay and a Shiraz.