

Bosman's Crossing makes wine history

By [Vittoria Jooste](#)

If you believe that history works in cycles, you may be interested in learning more about a quaint little, understated place, off the Stellenbosch main track: Bosman's Crossing.

Historical Significance

Bosman's Crossing is named after Daniel Bosman who owned this property in the late nineteenth century. In order to facilitate the distribution of the spirits produced at the distillery he had established on the site, Bosman arranged for a link-up to be established to main railway line to Stellenbosch. The initial name of Bosman's Siding was subsequently changed to Bosman's Crossing.

Since its establishment in the mid eighteenth century, the site has been used primarily for industrial purposes: from quarries and brick works to tanneries and jam production, to distilleries and wine making. The headquarters of South Africa wine and spirits giant KWV were located at Bosman's Crossing until 1995. It also appears that William Charles Winshaw, the American doctor who in 1925 founded Stellenbosch Farmers Winery (which in 2000 merged with Distillers Corporation to form Distell), made his first wines around here.

Until the 1960's, the main entrance to Stellenbosch from the Cape Town side was through Bosman's Crossing. It is believed that 'De Steenenbrug', the bridge over the Plankenbrug River (a tributary of Stellenbosch's better known Eerste River), was built in 1691 as the first public works project in the area.

But the history of this site dates back much further than this...in fact, a couple of million years. The more observing visitors approaching Stellenbosch from the western side will notice a stone monument erected on a little patch of grass. This marks the site of the discovery of stone implements dating back to Early Stone Age. The findings were discovered by Dr. Periguy in 1899 inside a borrow-pit.

Urban Renewal Project

What has put Bosman's Crossing on the map in recent times is the outcome of a project which started a few years ago with the aim of reviving, renovating and relaunching this part of Stellenbosch (known as the old KWV Industrial Park) for commercial, retail and residential purposes. This renewal project managed by AfriGroup is intended to turn a historic but neglected part of Stellenbosch into an integrated urban village and tourist destination.

This urban renewal project, which will be the biggest, mixed-use development ever for the quaint town of Stellenbosch, has led to the development of office blocks and open communal spaces connected around the theme of a 'trading village' and realised in a mix of natural materials, with an overall vintage industrial look.

It is not by coincidence that antique dealer Pier Rabe has decided to open an antique warehouse and an art gallery at Bosman's Crossing.

Most notably, the newly developed site at Bosman's Crossing has hosted the Stellenbosch Fresh Goods Market on Saturday mornings for the past four years or so. Although the market has recently been relocated to nearby Oude Libertas, it has nonetheless put the Bosman's Crossing marker on the map, which is set stay for time to come.

Stellenbosch Wine (and Food) Route

For tourists and visitors willing to sample the best produce of local grapes, Bosman's Crossing marks one of the mandatory stops along the renowned Stellenbosch Wine Route. Although there may be no producing vineyard on the site, some excellent quality wines are made here – in a tribute to the legacy of the place - and can be tasted at the Vilafonte, The High Road, Stellegaya and Dalla Cia wineries. The latter is a name that should ring a bell for many a wine lover, in South Africa as abroad. Giorgio Dalla Cia is the passionate wine purist and erstwhile Meerlust winemaker whose brainchild – the Rubicon – has achieved iconic status as the first South African Bordeaux-style blend. Giorgio produced the first quality wines under his family name label in 2001 and, encouraged by the response received, he launched a fully-fledged business in 2004 together with his son George, which they chose to locate at Bosman's Crossing. But the Dalla Cia business is not just wine. In 1996, two years after the legislation making the production of grappa illegal had been repealed, a grappa distillery was set up on the Meerlust farm; this is now located at Bosman's Crossing. Three varieties of grappa are produced under the Dalla Cia label, some of which find their way into the finest Belgian chocolate to produce the most decadent grappa chocolates.

True to the age-old association of quality wine and food, the Dalla Cias have established a 'food and wine bar' next door to their offices: Pane & Vino (bread and wine), which is owned and run by George's wife Elena, an Italian food lover. A quick look at the dishes listed on the blackboard (a few of which are on display in a glass fridge) will have those conversant in Italian quickly salivating, while others will be asking for explanations – or searching for them on the web, thanks to a Wi-Fi connection. There are many ways to describe Pane & Vino: a wine bar, *taverna*, *vineria*. Perhaps the best description is a place of 'slow fast food'. All dishes are fresh and are cooked expressly by Elena's expert hands. The food served is genuinely Italian, the coffee strong and honest, and the wine among the best.

A Blend of Heritage and Modern

The unique mix of old and new that Bosman's Crossing represents is embodied by its architecture, with its marriage of vintage industrial and minimalist styles. It is also embodied, and more significantly so, in a family heritage that comes full circle around a third generation grappa distillery, in a partnership between a father and a son, in the innovation introduced within an age-old culture of quality wines, in a marriage of traditional Italian food and modern comfort.

Bosman's Crossing, GPS co-ordinates: S 33° 56' 25.8", E 18° 50' 50.1"

About the Author

Vittoria Jooste is a wine enthusiast and a fan of Stellenbosch. Vittoria can be reached at info@mvsquared.co.za. [Dalla Cia Wines and Grappas](#), established by iconic winemaker Giorgio Dalla Cia and his son George, has carved a niche for itself with the uncompromising quality of its wine and grappa. This pursuit of quality spills over into the neighbouring [Pane & Vino](#) Italian food and wine bar. Both concerns are located at Bosman's Crossing, in Stellenbosch.