

# The Local

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Australia Day



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The Local - The Heart of the Highlands

# Our newest Australians



**Z**IG Zag Wines owners Harriet and Henry Churchill became some of the nation's newest citizens on Saturday night – but not until they had given their son Albert, aka Albie, his second birthday party that morning.

The pair, originally from England, have been in Australia for almost eight years, and bought their farm and vineyard, just outside Malmsbury, two years ago.

Harriet said becoming Australian citizens was a natural step towards fully embracing their new home.

“We obviously love Australia and love living here and are just so delighted to be a part of this Australian story. We live just outside Malmsbury and it is an incredible community in every sense and I just feel like we are a part of that bigger story now.

“Our livelihood is our farm and vineyard and winery and we look forward to that being our permanent home – and of course we already have an Australian son.

“The other thing is to also have a political voice and a vote. We are really connected to the community, we live in regional Victoria and have a business and a stewardship of our land, and we really want to be able to have a voice.”

Harriet comes from South London while Henry is from Oxfordshire but the couple met in Bangladesh while working in sustainable agriculture.

“So we have known each other nearly 10 years. Henry came over here to Australia and I followed him and he wined and dined me on the Great Alpine Road. We went camping and swimming in rivers and I just fell in love with the country and it was a pretty easy choice to make to live here. Now it's home – although it breaks my heart a little bit to say that.”

The couple moved to Melbourne which Harriet says she thought was like “Utopia” with affordable and uncrammed public transport and everyone being very polite, but it was the country life that was calling.

“We bought the business 13 days before we had Albie and it was terrible timing. The previous owners let us move in a few weeks early just in case I went into labour. And I was 38 or 39 and we were new to viticulture, new to wine making and new to parenting. But we just thought ‘let's go for this’. We couldn't be happier than where we are now.”

Harriet said the Malmsbury and Macedon Ranges community had been incredible with both personal and business support – and two years on, Zig Zag Wines is thriving with the cellar door open Thursday to Sunday from 10am to 5pm.

“We genuinely really love the business. The only things that tug at the heart is family (being in England) and I am particularly close to my mum and dad and brothers, and a host of cousins.

“They have said we are doing a personal Brexit but I am lucky that they are the sort of people who understand we have to make a go of it here. And we travel there once a year when the vines are dormant and they come here in February when it's freezing there.”

But Harriet said while family was far away there were many people who were willing to dig in when needed. Not just for the “glamorous jobs like picking” but all year round.

To honour those people, Harriet and Henry have created a new label, Kind Folks, which is all about what it says. A more natural, down to earth wine. Just like those kind folk they are surrounded by. “Without them we couldn't do what we do.”

Harriet said Saturday's plans included Albie's party, an afternoon break, a drink with close friends, the ceremony itself and then dinner in Daylesford – with Albie being looked after by a “kind folk”.

The second celebration will be a walk, hike or overnight stay in the country – something to take in and appreciate the Aboriginal heritage and significance of their new land.

“We have been doing a lot of research, because we are new here, and will hopefully also get some guidance for something we can do as a family to take in this ancient land and culture. Albie was conceived on the Larapinta Trail in the Northern Territory so he already has this kind of story and we want to celebrate this together, as a family.

“We have so much to learn, coming in from the outside but we have been so welcome and embraced by the community, we are really keen to learn what we can.”

**Words: Donna Kelly | Image: David White**