

A legacy of having a long-established tourism industry on the Mornington Peninsula is the successive generations of families who still operate some of our best-loved facilities and attractions.

People like Dorothy Houghton, who took over running the Portsea Hotel 60 years ago with her husband, and now still runs the Rye Hotel with her son Peter.

Queenslander Garry Crittenden, who married a Melbourne nurse Margaret, and raised their children Zoe and Rollo here. At the same time they helped to pioneer the region's wine industry.

The Whitakers established the Dromana Drive-In during the mid-1960s, when drive-ins graced paddocks across suburban Melbourne and country Victoria. Now there are only two left in the state, but the second and third generation of the Whitaker family are still lighting-up the Dromana night sky throughout the year.



The Mitchells at Montalto Vineyard, the Davidson Brothers at Peninsula Hot Springs and the Savages at Arthurs Seat Maze are just a few of the families who have helped to add a new dimension to the region during recent years.

Max Pagnoni grew-up on the family orchard in Tyabb. He went on to pioneer the concept of the winery-restaurant on the Peninsula at Red Hill Estate Vineyard, which has spawned a whole new range of gastronomic experiences during the past two decades.

The list could go on and on, and the stories behind many of the people and how they started their ventures are often fascinating.

There are probably individuals and families that you know of who have contributed to our region and whose stories are also well worth telling.

If so, please drop us an email (visitor@visitor.com.au) telling us a little bit about them and we'll try to highlight them to our readers in future editions.

As publishers of the Goodlife, Mornington Peninsula Visitors Guide - Peninsula Visitor and the Peninsula Wine Country magazines, we are very proud to be part of this region. We promise to keep highlighting the best of the Mornington Peninsula to you through our pages.

- Mary and Arthur Parsons

The Crittendens

The evolution of the Crittenden Family mirrors the transformation of the Peninsula in recent times. In fact, many would say that Margaret and Garry Crittenden played the major role in initiating the region's image 'make-over'.

The Crittenden name first came to prominence on the Peninsula during the 1970s, when Garry - a Queensland born agricultural scientist - and Margaret - a Melbourne nurse - established a plant nursery in Mt Eliza.

Never one for resting on his laurels, by the early 1980s Garry was ready for another challenge, when he bought land in Harrisons Road Dromana and turned his horticultural training to help establish a local wine industry.

By the early 1990s the Crittenden wine brand was well established. Garry and Margaret then re-focussed their energies into establishing a stylish cellar door facility and fine food café. It was the first on the Peninsula and it heralded a new era of wine tourism that has since transformed the region from a seaside summer haven to a sophisticated year-round destination.

Garry's personalised wine-making style and his savvy marketing ability helped to win the region a significant profile and it saw him as a finalist in the Gourmet Traveller Winemaker of the Year competition in 2000.

Rollo Crittenden finished at The Peninsula School in 1997 and understudied his father for a few years before heading overseas. He then returned to establish a new winery in Tuerong and was its head winemaker for five years.

The family reunited in business in 2007, when Rollo and Garry combined forces to launch Crittenden Estate wines, which embraces Gepetto Wines and the Pinocchio line of Italian varieties.



The Taylors at Mornington's Grand Hotel the Martlands at the Tyabb Packing House, the McIntyres at Mooroduc Estate Winery, and the Stoniers at Merricks, the Nearys at Rosebud's Amberlee Caravan Park, the Gallaces at Sunnyridge Strawberry Farm, the Whites at Main Ridge Estate, and the dolphin-swimming Mackinnon family of Sorrento are just a handful of names who have helped to make the Peninsula a treasure-trove of holiday activity and experiences.

Then there are those who have arrived in more recent times, bringing with them talents and enthusiasm from other places and other careers.

Most have been drawn by the Peninsula's beauty and seaside-rural charms, while others have recognised the business opportunity that a region with a solid residential population and a year-round tourism trade can bring.

