

TROTT OUT THE CELEBRATIONS

James Halliday 19th October, 2008

“The idea of a birthday celebration is appropriate for this much-loved and wonderfully eccentric man who, with his cousin Roger Trott, brought Wirra Wirra back to life in 1969.

The pattern for the celebration is already written in stone: an all-day event featuring appropriate food at lunch and dinner; some serious wine tastings of present and upcoming releases (serious but not too long); an exercise with teams blending a shiraz viognier from two shiraz components plus viognier (the percentages left to each team, the winners to receive a magnum each of their blend); and drinking back vintages at the gala dinner.

In a sense, these are subordinate to the operation of the trebuchet (jointly owned by Yalumba), a medieval device used to catapult large rocks and incendiaries into and over castle walls, with watermelons taking the place of rocks; and the competition for the Woodhenge Cup, with a famous father and son duo taking turns to partner each guest in sawing through a log using a double-handed crosscut saw. Stuart Gregor, of Liquid Ideas, shows he really should be a bookmaker as bets are taken on each starter, with \$100 in Monopoly money given to each person, the winning bets (on the fastest time) converted into real money to be donated by Wirra Wirra to Flinders Medical Research Foundation for bowel cancer research.

Truth being stranger than fiction, Wirra Wirra was built in 1894 by Robert Strangeways Wigley (hence Wirra Wirra's top of the tree RSW Shiraz), who was every bit as eccentric as Trott. Photographs show his eyes pointing in different directions, which did not stop him from becoming a state cricketer (this being one of Greg Trott's many passions). Nor did it stop Wigley commandeering a horse and cart from the Adelaide City Council and riding it through the city streets at full gallop, resulting in a fine, which he later paid by riding his horse into the Adelaide town hall.

To avoid further scandals he was sent to McLaren Vale, where he became a vigneron. He began building his house at the same time, abandoning his efforts four times before deciding on its precise location. He never married. His home was run by an Irish housekeeper who was able to cope even when, in stormy weather, he would take to his bed in coat and hat, refusing to leave until the weather turned fine.

He died intestate in 1924 and the vineyards were sold by his family, the winery coming into the ownership of Vern Sparrow, son of Wigley's foreman Jack Sparrow. By 1936 it had fallen into disuse, and only two walls and some fermenting tanks remained when Greg and Roger Trott purchased it in 1969.

Greg Trott and an enthusiastic band of friends spent the ensuing five years rebuilding the winery: he shared with Len Evans the love of collecting things large and small, useful or useless, and incorporating them in buildings (a \$450,000 pipe organ remains to be installed in the winery or the cellar door complex completed in 2004).

Greg Trott was not a winemaker but engendered loyalty, bordering on love, in all who worked at Wirra Wirra. It was inevitable that this would result in great wines and that whenever a position became vacant in the team, it would be filled by winemakers, who did not wait for an advertisement, simply offering their services.

It is also fitting that Samantha (Sam) Connew should head the winemaking team, having studied law in New Zealand, and that among the many accolades she has received should be International Red Winemaker of the Year last year from the International Wine & Spirit Competition in London.

She has a sounding board second to none in the form of the avuncular Tim James, who was chief executive for several years after leaving Hardys before handing over to the likable incumbent, Andrew Kay. James, who remains a director, has a great palate,

an unequalled depth of knowledge about the wines of McLaren Vale and an even better sense of humour.

It's a winning team of which Greg Trott would wholeheartedly approve.”

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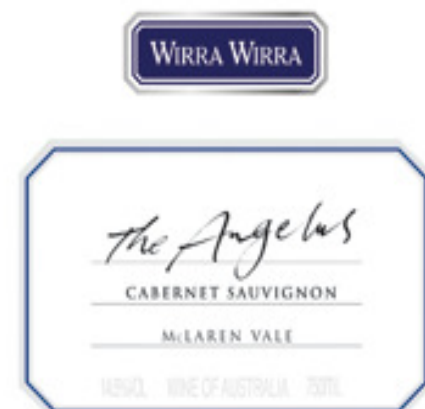
“Wirra Wirra has a portfolio of 14 wines in five ranges starting with Scrubby Rise at the bottom, then Mrs Wigley, Church Block, the RGT (regional) Collection and, finally, the much-lauded and prolific award-winning flagship range of The Angelus Cabernet Sauvignon and RSW Shiraz.”



2006 Wirra Wirra RSW Shiraz

95 points

“It is hard to visualise a wine with more regional character than the 2006 RSW Shiraz, the dark chocolate a translucent veil for the blackberry fruit, with outstanding texture and structure on the back palate and finish.



2006 The Angelus Cabernet Sauvignon

95 points

“... sits in perfect union beside the RSW; it has great colour, an elegant and complex mix of blackcurrant fruit, cassis, cedar and dark chocolate, the tannins ripe and perfectly balanced.”