



THE WIRRA WIRRA Bell Ringers

Dear Readers,

May I borrow a moment or two of your attention to mark the passing of a cherished champion of this region, my old friend Cuthbert Thornborough Kay.

Since the first days of Kays 'Amery' Vineyards, well over a century ago, diaries have been kept recording the daily happenings at this historic winery overlooking the undulating vineyards of the whole McLaren Vale region stretching to the sea - the Gulf of St Vincent.

The 1914 diary notes on June 16th... 'Mrs Kay had a son', and so began the legend of a man who made some of the best wines ever made from fruit grown in McLaren Vale.

Not only were his wines marvelous, but the man we all knew as Cud, as a person was even more so, much loved by all who came into his company.

Educated at St Peter's College, he left school during the Great Depression to help his father Herbert and his uncle Fred through those extremely difficult times. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Cud joined the Army and served until the end of 1944 to again return to help the family in trying times.

Although not formally trained as a wine maker, Cud did spend some time working under the great John Fornachon where he presumably learnt the analytical work so necessary in winemaking. His day to day practical knowledge was gained at Amery.

Cud helped run Amery until he took over the reins himself in the late 1940's. One of his first and notable moves in 1947 was to plant riesling, and on contours as well. This caused much consternation among the vineyard team who couldn't understand why the rows weren't straight!

His Riesling became famous in the Eastern states, greatly helped by two notable merchants Harry Brown in Sydney and Val Morbita in Melbourne.



Cud Kay in fine form at Wirra Wirra celebrating vintage, with riesling in hand, holding court with Jim and Mary Ingoldby and Trott.

Cud's Riesling also formed the basis of the Seaview Riesling in the late 1950's and 1960's.

While on the subject of riesling, Roger Trott and I used to supply Cud with muscat grapes from some old vines which were quite valuable for his fortified wines. As growers however we couldn't make any money out of them so we informed Cud of our plan to pull them out. Naturally he wasn't pleased, but he was still willing to help.

He asked what was I going to plant? Not sure, I asked his advice.

"Well it's fairly heavy sandy loam over clay impregnated with some ironstone, so I suggest you plant riesling as it quite likes sandy conditions", said Cud. So in 1971 I did just that. To this very day this fruit continues to form the heart of our Hand Picked Riesling, possibly the biggest seller of riesling from McLaren Vale.

I must add that in 1971 Australia was in the middle of a huge red wine boom so it was quite profound advice and it saved Wirra Wirra when the red boom stopped suddenly in 1976.

During his reign, Amery built up one of the best cellar door businesses in the country with exceptional wines. Cud himself carried practically every

case purchased to the boot of the customers car. It was a personal 'hands on' approach for which Cud was justly rewarded. He helped enormously in building the McLaren Vale brand.

Along with many others I loved his reds, as the Amery area produces some of the best cabernet sauvignon and shiraz in the region. Another such acolyte, Douglas Perry Jones, Chemist for nearly 30 years in Main Street McLaren Vale, would purchase 100 barrel flagons (2.25l) at a time and store them under his tank stand at the back of his house beside the shop. At 5.30, or maybe 6pm if the suspense could be endured, several of the towns desperates would gather in Doug's kitchen to enjoy yet another of Cud Kay's reds. A lot of problems were discussed, but I remember precious few of the solutions! Must have been the weather, certainly not the wine.

Cud's own loves were his beautiful wife Barbara and his children. Colin, the eldest, continues the daily diary and runs the Company. Cud loved to wander his vineyards or go camping, in more youthful times, with mates Jim Ingoldby, Ege Dennis, d'Arry Osborn, Ford Trott and, at times, John Standford. He loved those Sundays of golf at Victor Harbor. After the obligatory bottle of red (per person) at the same Club table each Sunday the fairways were transformed.

Cud's protocol decreed the seventh and the thirteenth were 'steading time' with an obligatory brandy.

On the third of August last, at the age of 87, Cud set off down that misty fairway to another clubroom, another vineyard and the strains of another orchestra. We will mourn the absence of this marvelous and gentle man just as we will rejoice in his rich legacy.

**R.G. Trott,
Chairman, Caretaker**

Revolutionary Rare Riesling Recalled

Wirra Wirra's innovative early years included an enthusiastic adventure into Stelvin caps for the Hand Picked Riesling in the mid to late 70's. Abandoned after a sustained burst of suspicious hurrumphing from our more conservative retailers, this bold attempt was consigned to the archives till now, when of course we find not one bottle left in our museum stocks.

Naturally we are now itching to find out how the Riesling has survived the 20 or so years under the currently fêted closure. So, if there are any devoted Bell Ringers out there who may have a bottle or two of old Hand Picked lying around in dusty corners or in the bottom of deep buried cartons in the cellar, please let us know.

We will most gratefully swap a generous amount of current product or (if absolutely necessary) money. Please ferret through your collections to see whether there are any of these gems hidden and feel free to do in any recalcitrant who may prefer to keep such things to their selfish selves. We anxiously await your call!

From the 'Ivory Tower'

(Chapter One, First edition of the King James Version)

Well that's vintage 2001 in tank, barrel and some already in glass!

The move to Stelvin for our 2001 Hand Picked Riesling (the second foray for Wirra Wirra into this excellent closure, the last time being in the late 70's) has been received very positively by our customers. This is the twenty-seventh consecutive vintage of this wine and the 2001 is right up there with the best we have produced.

2001 represented a huge vintage for Wirra Wirra and the whole crew was stretched to cope. Cope they did though, and the resultant wines are a credit to them and the loyal band of growers that produce fruit for us.

We recently had a preliminary meeting with most of our growers to look at some of the wines we made and to discuss the future directions for Wirra Wirra. (see photo). As always, these meetings flush out the odd challenge the winery presented to growers during the grape delivery process and we need to get onto fixing these prior to vintage 2002.

It is obvious that a number of the bigger wineries in the region have put considerable pressure on some of their growers with respect to the growing of better quality fruit and this will become a recurring theme for some time to come. We intend to have a very open liaison with our growers on this issue.

The meeting also presented us with the opportunity to introduce our newest Wirra Wirra family member, Tony Hoare, our viticulturist. Tony has worked in the Hunter Valley for Ablington Vineyard Australia and established an immaculate vineyard there from scratch. He will spend the next month or so getting around to each of our growers in person and gearing up for vintage 2002.

As most of you know by now, Ben Riggs, Wirra Wirra's winemaker for 13 vintages is leaving to venture out on his own. Ben has set an excellent style path that managed to stand us apart from the pack and establish Wirra Wirra at the premium end of the quality stakes in this country. We thank him for that and for the large part of his life that he has passionately imparted into the core of Wirra Wirra's being. He will be missed.

Samantha Connew has taken control of



Weeping quietly, our contract growers learn the horrible fate that befell their perfect grapes (Crushed? Oh no!) before being thrashed and given more homework by Wirra Wirra's vineyard and vintage prefects.

From L-R; Tony Hoare, Vikki Contouris, Mary Mennillo, Richard Leask, John Petrucci, Ben Paxton, Sharna Petrucci, Des Budich, Joe Petrucci, Toby Bekkers, Ron Voss, Sally French-Kennedy, Ian Kennedy, Sam Connew, Jeff Gower, Jonathon Baker, Alex Ringwood, John Pargeter, King James, David Paxton

the winemaking duties and we know that Sam will continue to make Wirra Wirra's mark on the winemaking world.

Our building programme continues and the eastern wall of our barrel store is nearing completion. It is ironstone, to match the existing building and Dean, Eric, Carl and Richard have done a great job in putting it up, despite the tricky weather. Harry has constructed massive doors to match the existing ones in the old building and all has been coordinated under the early morning watchful eye of our Chairman, Greg Trott, (always directing the builders in finer details - ie. 'that's not how I did it', 'can you use less mortar and more stone', etc., etc.)

I spoke at an ASVO seminar in Melbourne recently on the future of Australia's Wine Show system. This has been a particular hobby horse as I have concerns over the ever increasing size of classes that we judges are asked to point in many of the current shows. (Some classes have 200 or more wines in them!) We need also, to ensure that regional shows, like the McLaren Vale wine show, become stronger and more closely reflect the strengths of the region.

It is perplexing to realise that a particular wine may be entered in about 10 or 11 shows in one year in the hope of

gaining a medal. This puts increased pressure on class sizes. It also adds to what may, to the casual observer, be erratic results appearing. It must be good to have more than one chance, but 11! Wirra Wirra only enters about 3 shows per year.

The show system will continue to improve and hopefully the meaning and relevance of Gold, Silver and Bronze medals may return. My judging for the rest of the year will be as Chairman of the Barossa Wine Show, Deputy Chairman in Adelaide and Judge in Canberra - a busy schedule for late in the year!

Tim James, Managing Director and Acting Assistant Caretaker.

(You will note, dear reader, that this column has been dubbed the King James version. This has been possible as resident King Ben of the Bushing has left the realm to go crusading leaving the Wirra Wirra crown to T.J. When the original King James went broke and on-sold his glorious translation of the Bible to a jobbing printer, the first edition was known as the 'Sinful Bible' as it contained a wonderful typo in the Commandments, the Seventh being rendered as 'Thou shalt commit adultery!' Members of the tribe now wait, fingers crossed and breath held, for some similar license to be proclaimed in these pages under the M.D.'s seal. Ed.)

The Hon.Member for Wirra Wirra

No, there hasn't been a redistribution, but we did get a mention during August proceedings in the Federal Parliament when Minister for Health and shiraz fan

Michael Wooldridge substituted the above for Mark Latham's electorate of Werriwa. With Wooldridge retiring at the imminent election we need another "Champion of the Chook Block" to promote our political profile in the cauldron in Canberra. Any takers?



Samantha Connew trying to suppress the glint of megalomania as she takes the winemaking reins.

Litany of the Latest

We regale you often in these pages with the triumphs and tribulations of the tribe from vineyard, cellar and marketplace, but sometimes neglect the product of these various labours.

So here we wax indulgent with a litany of lovelies that debut this season.



1999 Chardonnay

Traditional Wirra Wirra style. Sophisticated oak treatment of elegant and intense fruit giving melon and peach flavours with nutmeg and cashew-like overtones. *Complex but fresh.*

2001 'Sextons Acre' Unwooded Chardonnay

No makeup, no stockings, ripe young chardonnay showing all the peaches and melons with a bit of zippy citrus. *Capture the moment.*



2001 'Hand Picked' Riesling

Another signature wine from Wirra Wirra, blending the rounder, riper flavours of McLaren Vale with the intense, more austere fruit from cooler Fleurieu areas. Strong lime and green apple combine with a heady floral perfume. *Arise Dame Riesling and sing!*

2000 'Church Block'

Our most revered blend, the elegant structure of cabernet sauvignon, the depth and warmth of shiraz and soft merlot in the middle. Blackberries, spice and savoury. *You can't go wrong.*



1999 McLaren Vale Shiraz

It's simply McLaren Vale shiraz in all its glory. Wild berries, dark chocolate, molasses and velvety tannins. Mouth filling flavour from the heartland McLaren Vale variety. *Feel the beat.*



2000 Scrubby Rise - Red

Shiraz, cabernet sauvignon, petit verdot. An unusual blending of varieties with the petit verdot giving red and black currant characters to a rich, spicy, mouth filling shiraz-cabernet blend. *Mardi Gras at a Lenten price.*

2001 Scrubby Rise - White

Semillon, sauvignon blanc, chardonnay. The more familiar zesty semillon/sauvignon blanc blend with ripe citrus and tropical characters is given a satisfying fullness with the addition of chardonnay. *Chorus line charms.*

1998 Vineyard Series: Penley Cabernet Sauvignon.

Outstanding is the only epithet to describe this combination of vintage, variety, region and grower. Amazing depth and concentration to this tightly structured cabernet sauvignon from Kym Tolley's beautiful Coonawarra vineyard. Aromas of blackberry and plum, generous brambly fruit flavours and finessing tannins. *Aristocratic, potent, enduring.*



1999 'The Angelus' Cabernet Sauvignon

Intensely fragrant, lingering deep, black fruit flavours, elegant ripeness with minty overtones and fine tannins from the Coonawarra components. *The answer to a prayer!*

1999 'RSW' Shiraz

If we were animist like Bali's gentle denizens, we would leave votive offerings at the base of McLaren Vale's shiraz vines each morning. The gods live here but they can be rowdy as well as opulent, warm and generous. The art is in harnessing these deities to sing a complex harmony - not as a bludgeon but an epee to sharpen our senses and prolong the sensations. Dark purple, intense spice and ripe blackberry fragrance with wild berry flavours in a lace mantle of tannins. *Opulence and power - like a huge choir singing Mahler - quietly.*

1999 Merlot

Our Merlot usually snuggles its way into the Church Block blend, but some outstanding fruit has been set aside to sing solo. Spicy mulberry and blackcurrant with a delicious earthy softness in this inky, plum purple beauty.



Litany continued;

These last two debs are a bit more Rubenesque



2000 Late Picked Riesling

Lemon zest and marmalade in a wonderfully concentrated yet fresh style. Voluptuous but not cloying - a "sticky" for all seasons.

'Empire Series' - Fortified Muscat

Aromatic toffee flavours identify this great Australian wine style. 'Cooked' in barrels under the corrugated iron verandah, there are baked apple and caramel aromas with a rancio nuttiness and a honeyed mid palate. *Whatever the problem - this is the cure, efficacious with pudding and roasted nuts.*

A PUDDING, A PUDDING, MY EMPIRE FOR A PUDDING!

At last, you pudding freaks, the Festive Season is at hand and that means it is time to construct that culinary Albert Hall, that tribute to love, beauty, rectitude and abundance, the traditional Christmas Pudding. Trott is the keeper of a recipe from old Mrs. Strout that for some years was constructed for the McLaren Vale Bacchus Club. However, due to its vagueness as to the quantity of brandy to be used and whether it was to be poured into the pudding mixture or the pudding mixer, this recipe caused so much mayhem as to have it banned unless under police and medical supervision. To save overloading our Emergency Services, Pip Forrester of the revered Salopian Inn has unchained a recipe that will produce a voluptuous and heady pudding that will improve if well hung. (If well hung I would have thought

further improvement was uncalled for. Ed.) The pudding described below will go well with virtually any Wirra Wirra product but, if you turn the airconditioner to 'winter', try any of the 'Empire Series' fortifieds. Assuming the recumbent position before such feasting is advised.

Salopian Inns Christmas Pudding

Makes 8-10 puddings

Ingredients

1.5 kg flour	1kg dark brown sugar
1kg Butter	600gm fresh bread crumbs
16 whole eggs	2 teaspoons mixed spice
80gm bicarb soda	600gm currants
1 kg raisins	800gm dates

500gm dried figs 400gm citrus peel
Zest of 4 lemons 1.5 cups sago
2 x 750ml bottles stout
400ml brandy

Method

Steep all chopped fruit in stout and brandy for 24 hours. Cream butter and brown sugar together. Add eggs one at a time. Fold in fruit mix, flour, bicarb soda, mixed spice and breadcrumbs. Brush a cloth circle with melted butter and dust heavily with flour. Spoon mix onto centre of cloth, then pull sides of the cloth up and tie tightly. Steam for 4-6 hours. Once cooked, hang in a cool place to dry. Reheat in steamer.

Like all good things it will improve with age. Serve with brandy custard.

New arrivals at the clinic:



Tony Hoare ignoring the viticulture going on right behind his back.

Tony Hoare - Viticulturalist

A Melbourne lad, he survived a period as a chorister including an encounter with Zar Brooks when similarly afflicted with the soprano voice. Graduated in horticulture from the Burnley College and worked as a landscaper before moving to Adelaide to do the Roseworthy Viticulture Degree at Adelaide Uni's Waite campus. Then to the Hunter Valley in NSW for 5 years to establish and manage a vineyard for the Becker family in the heart of Pokolbin. Accepted the role of Vineyard Manager at Wirra Wirra during a minor episode of insanity which was of course what got him the job. Settling in nicely with the other inmates although the soprano does return in moments of terminal amazement or tractor maintenance.

couple of years "apprenticeship" out in the vineyards and in the cellar and now calls Wirra Wirra's cellar door home. Speaks fluent 'Grommit' but after giving visitors a tasting of our "wicked wines that will leave them spewin" now is restricted to English.

Colin Stone - Laboratory Technician

Married with 2 kids (boys). Twelve years experience in the industry with the last 8 years down the other end of the road where Trott's cousins the Johnstons make wine at Pirramimma. Lured away by the bright lights and suspicious bursts of laughter at W2.



Colin Stone with the contraptions of his arcane occupation.

Craig Vivian - Cellar Rat

Total local. Hails from Moana, but being adventurous, has now moved to Willunga. After 12 months viticulture study he started at W2 late February and is still trying to find words that describe the event called vintage. Loves eating, drinking, surfing and has the full kit to go with these pastimes, namely Tyra the Kelpie, Chili the Red Heeler and a 1960 FB Holden Special.



Craig Vivian doing what he does best.



Toby Goode (right) admiring Harvey's demo of Cellar Door suave.

Toby Goode - Cellar Door

Grew up just north of McLaren Vale and weened on good reds courtesy of an indulgent old Dad. Surfed 'round Oz and toured various parts of the world, but still found himself drawn to the 'Vale. Served a

Tangled in the Web

Oh what a complex web we weave. Church, chooks, and children are the threads in this tale of a grower family, the French-Kennedys, and they all lead back to Wirra Wirra.

First there was the 18' Trimaran that Tony was building when not milking cows at Bakers Gully. When the emerging pocket cruiser needed to be turned over Tony enticed his friends with numerous flagons of Wirra Wirra Dry Red. They were most appreciative and it only cost \$2 a hit. But the strangely engaging character at the cellar door was full of ideas for a more appealing name than "Dry Red". Something to do with the block over the road near the old church

Many years down the track saw Tony and Sally buy some land over the road from Wirra Wirra, and begin restoring that glorious block by the old Bethany church. Now in its eighth year of reborn production they hope soon for a vineyard release of the "original Original Blend Church Block".

The connection with "Chook Block" was far too close for comfort. Someone with a misguided sense of history thought the old well filled with rubbish was at an intersection of positive ley lines. It was too sacred to let lie in its sorry state as a breeding site for snakes.

The first five feet of household detritus barely maintained anthropological interest with old letters long forgotten and broken brandy bottles. Lassoing huge brown snakes lived things up a bit. But then they hit the feathers and beaks. A little research uncovered a terminal disease incident. Fifteen feet of it, consigned by the naughty chook strangler turned winemaker from over the road. It's amazing what anaerobic conditions do to preserve the worst state of partial decomposition. Suffice to say the nose on the "Chook Block" is



Sally and Tony French-Kennedy among the 'babies' on that hallowed Block

a damn sight better.

And the children? When Tony is not bumping around the vineyard on tractor, or explaining the mystery of ignoble rot to cellar door customers, he's looking after 160 children and numerous staff as Administrator of the Willunga Waldorf School. And guess where the school has its genesis? At the old Bethany church of course. Greta French-Kennedy and 7 other cherubs muscled out the veteran cyclists and became the first Kindergarten class in the church hall with the falling down wall. Like stonehenge the stone sandpit remains as a testament, built by the same madman who wrestled brown snakes and chook ghosts down the well, and built the Wirra Wirra Woodhenge fence by the by.

But what of the vineyard? Being eclectic agnostics, Tony and Sally have applied a mix of conventional, biodynamic, and organic principles in vineyard management. They are dead set against hydroponic grapegrowing and focus on nurturing a healthy soil. Beneficial bacteria and fungi are being

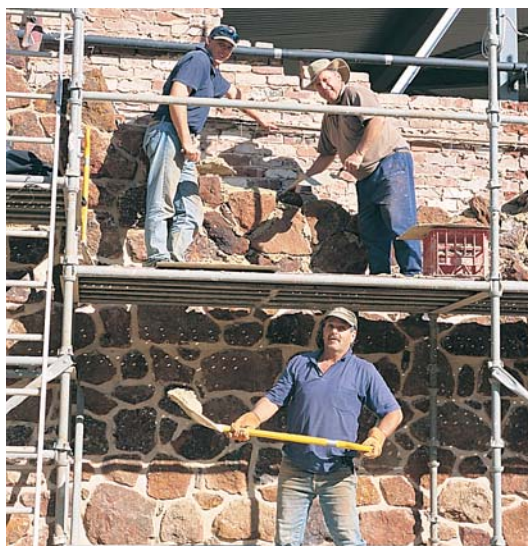
brewed in the shed ready to let loose every couple of weeks when the weather warms a little. We'll see if they do their job munching on powdery and botrytis spores thereby avoiding the need for conventional fungicides. And there's always whey powder...

Apart from once a year spot spray around the trunks, weedicide use has been replaced by a new fangled Braun dodge plough. The brew in the shed, together with bio-dynamic preparation 500 (cowpoo transformed underground over 6 months), is used to stimulate microbial and microflora activity in the soil. And the lack of weedicide should mean they have plenty of algae in the soil to feed on. Add a bit of mulch and the worms should turn their single neurone to reproduction.

The children have moved on from the church hall so now the shiraz, cabernet sauvignon, malbec, and merlot get watched over like babies. Not too difficult when they are playing in the 5 1/2 acres just out the kitchen window.



Harry "The Builder" Kalitis painting the gold bars with which the winery is reinforced so that they look like rusty iron.



Dressing the new barrel store with a flimsy coating of ironstone and brick to match the original cellars are "those dark satanic Mills": in this case Carl and Dean, with Dickie Oliver slinging the mud.



The purpose of an unexplained door in the new bell tower perplexed the tribe, even the architects, who dismissed it as a slip of Trots building pencil, until we caught the phantom bungee jumper checking in for a 'drop'.

They have the wings so they fly - like eagles.

After a year as Bushing King Ben Riggs is adopting another royal Medieval tradition by going on a crusade to convert the infidel. Leaving the comfort of the Wirra Wirra kingdom he will be consultant winemaker to several neighbouring growers, such as Parkinson, Paxton and Hardy who are marketing wines under their own labels. International demand for his services continues but his heart and soul belong to McLaren Vale. His own vineyard at Kangarilla is developing and will support a label in future.



Mr Riggs as few will recognise him, but remember the name.

As many of these wines will be made using Wirra Wirra's facilities Ben's figure will still be a part of the landscape, and you won't have to go far in the region to find a wine with the sure and stylish Riggs touch. If the success he has brought to Wirra Wirra filters out to some more of the districts emerging vintners it will be a boon to the whole region. Let there be happiness, health and wealth for that riot of Riggs', Ben and Baxter, Annie and Austin.



Steve Brunato before being fitted with burnous and camel.

Steve Brunato, until a moment ago the Vineyard Manager hereabouts, has been enticed by the romance of foreign parts. Steve grew up in the Vale and spent time in China as a youth but it's not Peking duck and opera that's calling on the wind, this time it's dukkah and bellydancing.

Steve hopped the airplane to Tunisia and parachuted straight into vintage. He is working with other McLaren Vale expats for the Italian wine company Casa Vinicola Calatrasi.

Urgent demand from his new employers made his departure so hasty he appeared to have forgotten to pack his trusty and triffic wife Heather. However, with the help of Interpol she has now located his desert hideaway and at this minute is joining him on the fantastic North African adventure. Like all initiates of the tribe there will always have a place at the table that sits at the centre of Wirra Wirra's web.

The lick, stick and... click competition.

"Wirra Wirra on the wall, who's the most daring Bellringer of all!"

We've had these neat stickers produced featuring the Wirra Wirra logo and its region proudly emblazoned. Although they will be useful for many mundane winery purposes our twisted minds were awakened. We have often had Bell Ringers reporting seeing the Wirra Wirra label in interesting locations so we thought a challenge might provoke some entertaining quests. We want to get these stickers into the most unlikely, impossible or inappropriate spots you can think of. Once the sticker has been placed, the daring Bellringer should **photograph it and send the pic to us where it will be judged, with the winner awarded a prize of wines to the value of \$500 from our cellars.** Winning pics will be published in the next edition of the Bell Ringers O.A. Some suggestions to trigger the neurones for possible locations: Saddlecloth of the Melbourne Cup winner; Nosecone of a Nuclear Missile; The Popemobile; Prince Charles Polo Mallet; Mawsons Hut; Near the star on Julia Roberts' location trailer; The helmet worn by silly mid on; The horns of a bull during a corrida. Stickers will be included with every order and can be picked up at cellar door. If you are desperate ring and we will post one out to you, maybe....

Bon Chance Mes Amis, but remember, if captured, we will deny all knowledge of you or your mission.

The stylish and complex characters of Wirra Wirra wines



.....are all in the BREEDING!! So, Keep at it - we certainly will!

Happy Christmas!

Le sticker est comme ca!



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