



Bell Ringers

Spring
2003



The 29th Church Block Wirra Wirra's Forte Reaches Full Bloom

Dear Readers,

Time Passes, sometimes in a flash.

In the last few weeks we released the 2002 Church Block, 30 years since the debut of this label – the 1972 Vintage, and I am reminded of the significant midwives and tutors that have contributed to the birth and graduation of this favourite offspring of the Wirra Wirra team. In those far off times the blend was 80% Grenache with 20% Shiraz pressings from the basket press – double pressed. Due to the floral nature of Grenache and the heavy, often bitter shiraz pressings these two varieties blended wonderfully well to make a wine that was fruit driven but soft and eminently drinkable.

This recipe wasn't mine, it was d'Arry Osborns. Because we had oodles of Grenache from Roger Trotts vineyards and my own, we needed to make a wine for the multitude to embrace. Speaking with d'Arry and telling him of our dilemma, he said that the Bethany area, where Wirra Wirra resides, is one of the best Grenache areas in the district. Grenache was by far the most predominate variety in McLaren Vale. d'Arry said his 1967 'Burgundy' which had won some 30 gold medals and heaps of trophies, was 80% Grenache and the balance shiraz pressing. "You should give it a go", he said. We did.

The 1972 was a wonderful example of this blend. Cud Kay of the famous 'Amery' vineyards was so impressed he said we should enter it into the Adelaide Wine Show. Of course I never got around to doing so. The trouble was Grenache was held in such low esteem we had to find some other way of describing the wine on the label. d'Arry like others had dubbed his wine 'Burgundy', but we settled on the nickname of that section of our vineyards, near the little Bethany church, which supplied the best Grenache. So it was christened 'Church Block' which continues to resonate with our dedicated disciples.

Here, I would like to acknowledge the great contribution of Alexander Angus Johnston, my cousin from Pirramimma down the road, to the making and blending of this wine. I was a complete greenhorn in the art of winemaking. I was much better at knowing where the best fruit was, which is a great help – almost the most important. Johnno gave me instructions in the rudimentary making of wine – I did the hackwork and he kindly did the analytical bit. He helped with the final blend of the 1972 Church Block – the very first one. We made some 1200 dozen in 750ml bottles. We put some to the old barrel flagon – I think 600. The balance, would you believe, went to 70 x 20 litre bag-in-a-box. Sadly in those days the corks we used weren't too good and so there was quite a bit of bottle variation after some 7-10 years. I've still a few left but they aren't too flash.

The recipe of Grenache-Shiraz pressings was maintained until 1982. We had a disastrous vintage in 1974 so didn't bring out a Church Block. Also, in 1981 we weren't happy with the wine and again didn't bottle any. The 1982 vintage saw a complete change to the make-up of Church Block. We invited both Brian Croser and Dr Tony Jordan to join the Wirra Wirra team, as shareholders and technical directors in the winemaking. Brian, in those days, had strong opinions about which varieties were capable of producing stylish, structured wines, and I'm sure had great difficulty in even pronouncing the word 'grenache' and wasn't a real fan of shiraz. He loved the Bordeaux stars of cabernet sauvignon and merlot, as I must confess, I do also. With both these varieties available in our vineyard, the 1982 Church Block changed its plumage. It was risky, but the market place didn't flinch.

The following year Brian was away and so Tony and I did the blend. We both agreed there was a 'hole' in the middle palate, which needed filling out. Into the blend of cabernet and merlot went about one third shiraz (not pressings). Since 1983 the blends have been largely cabernet sauvignon (approx. 55%) shiraz (approx. 30%) and merlot (approx. 15%) and the make-up of this wine over 30 years has not let us down (touch wood). It has been remarkably consistent, guided carefully by our winemaking teams led mainly by Ben Riggs and now Sam Connew, and is the flagship for Wirra Wirra.

The 2002 Church Block is as good as we have ever made. I cannot remember one that was better. Because of the 2002 year the blend has changed marginally. Cabernet was 46.6%, Shiraz 32.4% and Merlot 21%. There was intense richness in the cabernet sauvignon, which meant we didn't need the normal amount in the blend. The shiraz and merlot that went into this wine looked bloody wonderful also – it was such a good year. It's made a marvellous wine.

I do hope you enjoy it –
I don't think you will be disappointed.

Greg Trott
Original Blender

Right:
The cloister
is calling just
one sip and
you'll be
converted.



An Arpeggio of Notes from the Timebook

A good wet winter behind us but there have been dangerous and damaging frosts around us and we hope that our growers have not been overly troubled.

I have just returned from my first visit to China at a request from our agents Aussino based in Guangzhou. I visited five cities in ten days, with a Winemakers dinner every night bar one. That night was a gala dinner in Beijing with about fifty guests and five other winemaking groups present. The chef was Paul Beech, along with Alex Macdermid, from the Le Cordon Bleu School in Adelaide. A long way to travel to meet people from our hometown!

Wine consumption in China is one third of a litre per head and with about 1.3 billion people it's a sizeable market. Ninety five percent is local brands, some of which are blended from imported bulk wine, but there is ample room for Wirra Wirra on wine shop shelves in major cities.

On my way home I visited the Napa Valley in California where it was over 104° on the old scale. Vintage was well underway and the scorching weather left the scent of panic in the air!

In San Francisco I caught up with Jon Hesketh and together we experienced a phenomenal drop in temperature, from over 104° in the Napa to 70° due to the fog rolling in. Amazing.

Closer to home it's been interesting to witness the Lehmann battle with Allied Domecq and Hess. We all understand Peter Lehmann's previous scrap with the big end of town – must be a very deep battle scar.

Wirra Wirra has always had close relations with Lehmanns so we are glad the situation appears resolved to the satisfaction of the shareholders and family.

We were deeply saddened to hear of the loss of Dr Robyn van Heeswyk, and our thoughts have been with husband Dr Peter Hoj and his family throughout Robyn's long fight. Robyn's many colleagues, her friends and in particular Dr De Ann Glenn, have been by her side throughout this ordeal.

Following Samantha Connew's great performance at the Len Evans Tutorial in the Hunter, she will be judging in a number of wine shows. Great experience for her, and a real benefit to Wirra Wirra.

The building program is running well thanks to Harry and Craig. We are very close to having inside toilets for the first time in our history. The rest of the building and the landscaping is a work in progress with encouraging comments on the stonework.

Our new releases are now on the market. Keep a look out for '03 Mrs. Wigley Rose and the '03 Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc, as they will be snapped up quickly. The '02 Church Block will soon hit the stores and I am really pleased with the body and softness of this wine. Sam, Paul and the cellar crew have done a great job with our wines and Tony and his team have started to get our own vineyards to produce the goods on a regular basis.

I encourage you all to have a really good look at our recent range of wines, the whole winery/vineyard team is justly proud of the results and I guarantee you will enjoy them.

Tim James

Head Prefect and Ablutions Monitor

Let me translate. When Tim says 'encourage' he means this is an order, when he says 'really good look' he means rip the tops off all the '02's and '03's and tip a good dollop into those neglected mouths, and when he says 'enjoy' he means eyes closed, silly smile, and deep sighs of satisfaction. When he says 'justly proud' he means that if asked, each member of the team claims credit for every wine and will recite its credentials and who begat whom right back to Abraham – or Trott – for whom he is often mistaken. ED.

Below:

**Admirable
Erection
Exposed by
Clean Creek**



A new Frock for Church Block

There is some sage advice when it comes to packaging that a wise old man once dispensed. It was; 'Don't muck around with the labels – just when you're getting sick of them, is just about the time your consumers are getting used to them!'

So we've promptly ignored this advice, and given Church Block a new evening dress. Inspired largely by the labels from the mid eighties, it follows the traditional Wirra Wirra theme of the blue logo, and less is more. We hope you don't notice, and promise to leave it alone for at least another five years.



Vale John Chandler

On Saturday the 28th of June 2003 the Queensland wine industry and Wirra Wirra lost one of their most loyal and valued friends at the age of 50.

John Chandler was well known throughout wine and hospitality circles in Queensland as a loveable rogue. His infectious personality touched all those that met him. Known to be controversial at times, John was always stretching the boundaries and was never shy in voicing his opinion. Those that knew John understood his quick wit and sarcasm and it is these, and many other personality traits, that endeared him to so many.

John's first serious taste for wine came when he joined the Twin Towers Services Club at Tweed Heads. He later moved to Conrad Jupiters Casino celebrating its opening as sommelier for its top restaurant, Charters Towers and was named sommelier of the year while working there. He then moved on to the Pines Country Club, Sanctuary Cove as manager.

In 1993 John joined Negotiants Australia (national distributor for Wirra Wirra) as Area Manager servicing hundreds of clients on the Gold Coast. It was not long until John's abilities were noticed and in 1996 he was appointed State Sales Manager.

John's passion for wine, food and people were the perfect ingredients to successfully run a wine distribution business and today, in Queensland, you can find Wirra Wirra almost everywhere.

Not only did John enjoy great food, complex wine and lively conversation, he loved music. Sitting down as he knocked out a tune from his acoustic guitar, usually after a few reds, is a happy memory that will remain.

John is survived by his partner Debbie and children Rachel, Tim and Holly to whom we offer our condolences.

His infectious personality touched all that met him.



Thrashing the Creek to put Wirra Back in the Picture

Wirra Wirra's McLaren Vale property is split in two by an unnamed creek. It once flowed from the hills through a forest of red gums –wirra in local Kurna dialect –which gave the place its name.

For many years this creek has served as a dumping ground for rubbish (by anonymous passersby). The creek was also choked by noxious weeds such as rogue grapevines, briar roses, almond and ash trees and bamboo. The remnant river red gums were slowly being suffocated and any natives at ground level were long gone.

The Scrubby Rise vineyard adjoining the creek was constantly susceptible to the Powdery mildew surviving on the feral vines in the creek and the thick wall of trees stifled natural wind ventilation causing hot spots for the disease in the Cabernet.

After a discussion Tim, Sam and I decided that we needed to be more proactive in improving our local environment. The creek was the perfect place to start. It is part of the Onkaparinga Water Catchment Management zone, Michael Garrod (OWCMB) and I hatched a plan to bring the creek back to its former glory.

After Vintage the vineyard boys Kevin, Richard, Craig, Michael, and Andrew went berserk guided by my energetic arm waving and exhaustive finger pointing. In two weeks, 700 metres of thickly weed-infested creek were cleared. Joe Petrucci and others took advantage of the free firewood and it took over 3 solid days to produce 100 cubic metres of mulch out of the rest of the rubbish which has since been composted and will be used on the new cellar door garden.

While the creek was dry the stumps of the large trees were cut off at ground level and poisoned to prevent regrowth. The stumps with their root systems have provided the reinforcement of the banks during the wet winter months to stabilise the bare ground while the new native plantings establish themselves. After a follow-up weed spray to knock out winter weeds, (using a frog - friendly spray) about 3000 native plants were introduced to their new home. A mixture of Acacias, Casuarinas, Gums and Grasses will provide a native corridor for fauna and will filter runoff water to improve water quality running through the region and eventually into the sea.

Overall the experience has been very rewarding for everyone involved. There is now a wonderful view of our vineyard and of the new winery through the beautiful gums, which are responding well to the lack of competition with a new flush of growth. The new plantings are progressing well and over the next year or two the creek should be looking as it did before our arrival. The best part is that many locals and some of our own growers have since started similar projects on their own properties.

Tony Hoare
Vineyard Viking

Below Left:
Tony Hoare
lines up the
Invaders.

Below:
A 'Wirra'
(gum tree)
breathes
easy, now
the ratbag
neighbours
have gone.



Oh my God! What have we done?

No doubt, one of the first things you would have noticed about this edition of the Bell Ringer is the bigger envelope and new layout. All those rainy days our readers have spent waiting by the front window for the postman to arrive, have suddenly become all the more rewarding!

No longer folded and stuffed into your standard envelope, the new format will ensure that the Bell Ringer lives up to its questionable reputation, and will keep it in the waiting rooms of the finest surgeries, the coffee tables of the best houses and the toilets of the very best retail outlets.

What we have not touched (sadly you may be thinking) is the style of the written content. Editor Tony Brooks has kept his job for another year (we advertised nationally but got no responses), so please rest easy knowing that the usual array of fictitious words [*sic, bloody sic I say. Typical of the homework submitted by the illiterate rabble I endeavour to cajole into intelligible intercourse. ED*] sarcastic comments [*Quoi Moi?*] and typos will continue. Please send complaints [*or elaborate, heart felt and even cloying compliments, and tokens of esteem.*] either by Carrier Pigeon, to info@wirra.com.au, or trust Aussie Post by sending correspondence to PO Box 145, McLaren Vale, SA, 5171.

J.H.

Democratically
Elected Scapegoat



Recipe from Salopian Inn & Stefano De Pieri

Easy Prawns

Tip Ingredients

Use fresh prawns
for best results

3 large uncooked prawns per person (peeled, heads on)
2 tablespoons olive oil (good quality)
1 teaspoon garlic cut into thin slithers
1/2 glass dry white wine
1 tablespoon shredded basil
1 tablespoon butter
Salt and pepper to taste

Method

In a pan, heat the oil until smokey.
Add the prawns (no more than 6 at a time).
Cook one minute each side.
Season with salt & pepper.
Add garlic, when coloured, add wine, evaporate,
then add basil and butter.

Serve with side salad of delicate greens.



Wirra Wirra Screws Up

We're sure you will notice the use of Stelvin Screw Caps at Wirra Wirra is increasing at a rate which is even surprising us!

It is only two years since we challenged commercial logic and bottled the entire vintage of 2001 Hand Picked Riesling this way, and the acceptance has been fantastic.

The roll out has also been alot faster than we could have dreamed of two years ago. All whites are now closed under Screw Cap, with the exception of the Adelaide Hills Chardonnay, which will join the fold with next year's release of the 2003 vintage.

As for reds, our recent trial with the 2001 Church Block was a resounding success. Not simply due to the cunning Bell Ringers who took our advice and stocked up for the cellar, but we were pleased (and a little surprised) at how quickly we began to see positive differences between the wine under Screw Cap and the wine under cork. If you happened to buy both, open one bottle of each and do your own comparison.

You again have a choice of Stelvin or Cork with the 2002 Church Block, and Scrubby Rise Red will be moving this way shortly. Although tradition clings firmly, maybe even desperately to our limited release premium reds, at this rate it will not be long before all our wines are closed this way!

So what are the down sides?

There are many traditionalists who enjoy the act of pulling the cork on a bottle of wine. There is no doubt that this ceremony holds a special sense of anticipation, and we happily confess to enjoying it too.

There are many imbibers who are simply not aware of the benefits, and still associate Screw Caps with cheap plonk. We continue to put neck tags on our wines to help educate consumers, and are confident that education is all that is needed to convince anyone for whom quality is paramount.

On a final note, please consider this from a novel perspective.

Imagine if you would, that we have been using Screw Caps for centuries, and someone comes to you with this new wiz bang closure called a cork. It's great, because you can use your knife with a flourish to open the capsule that goes over the top (try not to cut yourself!). You then need a special screw type implement, which you drive skillfully into the cork, and then pull it out triumphantly – upon which it makes a loud “pop” noise, which enralls your guests.

There are but a few catches!

- There'll be anything from a 5% to 20% chance that the wine will be affected by a thing call Trichloro anisole – or TCA – or cork taint. It's ok though, as most people won't really know what it is and will assume it's the wine that tastes bad.
- You will encounter random oxidation at some point or another, which will take all the freshness out of your wine. This is also ok, as imbibers will again assume it's the winemaking at fault.
- It's also not as good as Screw Caps for aging the wine, as you'll end up with variation in freshness between all the bottles in your cellar. Don't worry though, as variety is the spice of life!
- You may encounter difficulty extracting the cork, as well as putting it back in.
- The bottle probably won't fit in your fridge door with the cork sticking out the top.
- Oh, and whatever you do, don't lose or forget the Cork Screw!

J.H.

Just a Thought:
The size of the typical (just over 700ml) wine bottle was chosen as it was considered the amount the average person would drink at a sitting. So, when you uncork or uncap throw it away and finish the bottle as a salute to our ancestral thirst. You don't have to do it alone mind you.

Left:

A little twisted - so very Wirra Wirra



Recognised despite the Heavy Disguise

Normally happy to urge from behind the scenes and preferring to be the unsung champion for the region, Trott was recently embarrassed by two fulsome arias of praise for his good works rendered by the great and the good. In full voice singing his attributes was Mayor Ray Gilbert presenting the City of Onkaparinga Award for services to the community, to art and to wine. Waxing lyrical also was the Premier of South Australia and Minister for the Arts the Hon. Mike Rann who presented The Premiers Award for Greg's untiring and outstanding contributions to the arts, the wine industry and tourism.

This is some recognition for Greg's devotion to the success of McLaren Vale as a wine growing area, as an ideal environment, a cultural hub and as a community.

Above Right:
The Hon.
Mike Rann
presenting
the Premiers
Award to
our Trott.



Full Kit & Kaboodle

Touched by the pathos of Heskeths whimper at the prospect of a sub zero November sojourn in Winnipeg and realizing there may be other Bellringers who have been enticed north for white Christmases, sleigh bells, hurling, curling, rugby and roast chestnuts, the Wirra Wirra corporate outfitters have come to the rescue.

Toby the Terror of the Tasting Room toggged up for the catwalk. He looked fetching in monogrammed beanie, and rugby jumper over matching polo shirt. The classy apron catches the grease from the roast haunch of beef he will be fed and stops the burnt chestnut shells from marking the fur-lined jeans (his own). The midnight blue Trotters dress gumboots with the aid of extra socks, will deal with the snow and slush on the dance floor or in the queue outside Harrods. To complete the Wirra Wirra winter collection, Tob's is holding a 'McLaren Vale Stubbie' of Church Block to warm the cockles, although we suggest an Empire Series Fortified may be better endowed calorifically.

All these items, except Tob's trousers and various smalls, are available as Christmas gifts for the fashion conscious.

Right:
Toby the Terror
of the Tasting
Room toggged
up for the
catwalk.



New Releases White Table Wines



2003 Scrubby Rise White Silver Medal Adelaide Wine Show 2003

The 2003 Scrubby Rise white is a blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon & Viognier and for the first time the entire production has been bottled under screwcap. And what a bottle full of fresh, vibrant, racy white grapes this is. With no oak contact and the viognier component adding a complexing character to both nose and palate this is the Summer wine of your dreams – who dreams about summer wine? We do!



2003 Hand Picked Riesling New Release

The 30th Anniversary of Hand Picked Riesling is something about which we are justifiably proud. This wine has become a staple at many of the best restaurants in Australia and always offers plenty of honest Riesling flavour and enough acidity and structure to allow it a good decade in the cellar. This year we also have a small amount of a wine we have sourced from a single vineyard in Clare Valley's Watervale sub-region. The vineyard source is one of the finest in the Clare and this wine, while a one-off, shows how seriously we take our Riesling down here at Wirra Wirra.



2003 Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc New Release

The 2002 vintage of this wine received a mountain of accolades and was a star performer in the Adelaide Advertiser's Top 100 wines of 2002. Well the 2003 vintage is a pretty good follow on. The same lifted varietal characteristics are evident although the spectrum of aromas and flavours is a little riper than in 2002. Again the fruit has been sourced from Jeff Gower and Scott & Kerry Heysen-Hick's vineyards in the cool Adelaide Hills.



2002 Adelaide Hills Chardonnay ★★★★★ Five Star Wines

"Wirra Wirra has ventured forth from its home base in McLaren Vale with impressive results. This wine, a worthy successor to the excellent 2001 – and its second Chardonnay from the Adelaide Hills – offers delightfully attractive fresh flavours of white peach and grapefruit, with a hint of ripe rockmelon. Finely balanced, it confirms the calibre of the vintage. Oak handling is supportive, not intrusive. This is a complex and intensely flavoured effort, suggesting that even better things lie ahead. Would be an ideal combination with grilled barramundi."

Ken Gargett
Australian Gourmet Traveller Wine
September/October 2003



2003 Mrs. Wigley Rosé New Release

Everybody's favourite pink pussycat is back for a second visit. Mrs. Wigley was, to our surprise, the smash hit of last year, selling out in record time, meaning we have been out of stock for more than six months. Well the 2003 Mrs. Wigley follows the form set by the inaugural wine with a cornucopia of varieties blended to create a fresh, pink, raspberry and cherry dominant bottle full of fun. Grab Mrs. Wigley while she lasts.



2001 Scrubby Rise Red ★★★★ Four Star Wines

"Young floral notes with sweet mixed berry and bubblegum highlights. Good medium-weighted palate with fine tannins and firm acidity. Bright fruit flavours dominate, overlaying good toasty oak character. Hints of spice come through on the finish."

Winestate Magazine,
September/October, 2002.

New Releases

Red Table Wines



2002 Church Block New Release

Church Block just keeps on keeping on and the 2002 could just about be the best Church Block of the past decade. As ever we have relied heavily on cabernet sauvignon and merlot with a bit of shiraz to add some texture and spice to the palate. After our successful little experiment with a few thousand bottles under screwcap last year, we have bottled more under screwcap this year and hope, if you get the chance, to try the wine secured under what we believe is the closure of the future.



2000 McLaren Vale Organic Shiraz

This wine was made organically at Wirra Wirra, from grapes grown in Jock Bosworth's organic vineyard at the heart of McLaren Vale. Bucking the organic trend, this wine satisfies all the criteria for official certification, without compromising on the quality & classic attributes of McLaren Vale Shiraz. Enjoy this wine knowing that all the creepy crawlies are still nestled safely amongst the vines.



2002 McLaren Vale Grenache Trophy - Best Grenache McLaren Vale Wine Show 2003

The quality of the 02 vintage is evident with the pure expression of Grenache from the hints of raspberry on the nose to the soft, slightly savoury palate and robust flavours. This wine sits securely in the middle of what is the increasingly strange world of Australian grenache. This wine is not sweet, simple and raspberry lolly-ish, nor is it hugely alcoholic, aldehydic and dominated by oak. No this is well balanced, savoury and quite complex – just how we like all of our wines.



2001 McLaren Vale Shiraz 91 Points - Wine Spectator October 2003

An outstanding Shiraz, in fact one of the most exciting Wirra Wirra wines to be released. Opaque black purple colour. Superb perfumed nose of vanilla, spice and violets with the violet notes dominant. The palate flavours explode with plum and spice dominant over a very peppery back palate. Fine grained tannins, perfect balance, followed by an exceptionally long blackpepper spice aftertaste. A classic Shiraz with very good cellaring potential.

Exceptional value!

Vintage Direct
April 2003



2001 The Angelus New Release

The reputation of the Angelus has never been higher than it is at the moment. With consistent accolades from the leading wine writers in the country the Angelus stands fore-square at the pinnacle of modern day Australian cabernet sauvignon. The 2001 vintage is a blend of 40% McLaren Vale and 60% Coonawarra and quantity this year is down to just 800 dozen.



2001 RSW ★★★★★ Stars

"Wirra Wirra's top-line shiraz is a dense, mocha, licorice/anise and bitter chocolate-flavoured red which is big, solid and fleshy in the mouth. It has serious structure, with some blackstrap licorice flavours and spicy tannins to close. A marvellous multi-layered shiraz."

Huon Hooke
Sydney Morning Herald
August 2003

Super Fruit Drought affected Vines

McLaren Vale is not a particularly drought prone area but one of the newer vineyards to supply Wirra Wirra is. However the Drought in this case is spelt with a capital and is the surname of Michael and Julia and their four musical teenagers, Miriam, Lucy, Tom and Annabelle.

They run a boutique vineyard on the rise overlooking Tatchilla which once boasted the largest single vineyard (one square mile or 640 acres) in the southern hemisphere. Theirs however is only 5.5 acres with another 3.5 acres on the way.

Michael, a cabinetmaker, and Julia, a teacher, moved their expanding family to the property in 1994 because they needed a bigger house. They had no farming experience and could well have pulled out the vineyard as prices and demand were floundering and they were unsure whether it was worth all the effort.

As the shiraz, grenache and riesling were planted in 1969 with cuttings from Penfolds Magill vineyards, it is fortunate they decided to persevere with plenty of neighbourly advice until Michael completed the TAFE viticulture course.

The vineyard now gets more TLC than a newborn babe with everything done by hand, the sort of indulgence only possible with small holdings.

The Droughts insist on minimal chemical use, but going completely organic is impractical as large surrounding vineyards have other conflicting regimes. They are able to control weeds with cover crops, mulch and a well-worn whippersnapper, so avoiding herbicides.

Michael finds sacs of spider eggs in the vineyards at Rosemount, where he now works, and brings them home to boost the natural predators in his own patch.

The aim of all this concerned cossetting is to exhort these wonderful 40 year old vines to produce the consistent crops of intensely flavoured fruit of which they are capable in this McLaren Vale heartland. With less than 10 acres to look after, it is possible to lavish individual care on the vines and adjust to varying conditions in a way large commercial vineyards find impractical.

With technical advice and encouragement from Wirra Wirra's vine maestro Tony Hoare, the Droughts are excited at the prospect of their Shiraz or Grenache being in the A-Team for the brand in the McLaren Vale regional series and hopefully gracing the RSW or a release in the prestigious Vineyard Series.

With this gem of a vineyard, a fine family, a superbly positioned lifestyle property – it even has 'sea views' from a fencepost in the top corner, chooks, goats and a gathering of dogs, the Droughts have certainly found "The Good Life" in McLaren Vale.

'Good Life'?
Rubbish - I'd
call it bloody
near ideal! Ed.

Below:

Michael
(about to
take the
whipper
snapper to
the Riesling)
Julia and
Dogs spell
contentment.



Hesketh's Hints for Tranquil Travellers

As I find myself sitting on yet another aeroplane its probably appropriate if I dispense some more observations about the joyous world of travel.

1. As my plane returns to the terminal without leaving for a second time, it occurs to me that you should expect everything to take twice as long as it should. The lower your expectations, the happier your travels will be.
2. Ask for a window seat – Its better to be the 'climber' than the 'climbee'.
3. Ask for an exit row – legroom is an underrated commodity – and if you're brave like me, you can be first out in an emergency.
4. When boarding, either be first or last. If you're not first, then sit down and relax whilst everyone else joins the cattle run down the aerobridge.
5. Never put headphones over your ears before plugging them in to your arm rest – unless you enjoy temporary deafness. The simple act of changing channels cannot only prove awkward, but is also risky for the same reason. Airline engineers have a strange sense of humour.
6. Upon arrival, don't stand up to get off the plane until the doors are open and the aisle is moving at your section. There really is no need to stand contorted under the overhead bins, with your head jammed sideways – but entertain yourself by watching others do it.
7. When you get to the baggage carousel, wait for your bags with the guy with the sore neck, and sweaty clothes from racing off the plane and down the terminal.
8. When lining up to go through customs, make sure you have a good book that will entertain you while you wait. Whatever country your entering (except Australia), there will always be ten customs officers servicing a hundred or so nationals, and two painfully slow ones servicing a couple of thousand foreigners. They will always check through the one way glass for the queue to drop by 80%, before dragging themselves away from the latest daytime TV to man the 15 empty stalls.
9. When re-entering Australia, refer to the above but bring two books - and a biscuit for the sniffer dogs.
10. Don't rely on duty free shopping for presents to take home – unless a carton of smokes and a litre of Gin is your wife's thing.

J.H.
Frequent Flyer

This display of arcane aerotrivia is like unnatural skill at billards or pool - it is conclusive proof of a misspent youth!
The galling thing is the swine still has some left to misspend. Ed.

Just a Thought:
A Frequent Flyers Reward is not to be one.



A Single Vineyard release to celebrate a 'Hand Picked' milestone

Dear Imbiber,

Thirty years ago Wirra Wirra produced its first 'Rhine Riesling' from grapes grown on our House Block vineyard in the heart of McLaren Vale.

Five years later, following an enthusiastic discussion with fellow winemakers Geoff Merrill and Jim Ingoldby on the merits of hand picking over machine harvesting, we decided to state on our label (in small writing) that the fruit for this wine was indeed harvested by hand – As a result, Australia's first "Hand Picked" Riesling was born, and it has remained so ever since.

In celebration of this milestone, we have siphoned off a small portion of the most outstanding fruit from this vintage, and bottled two thousand four hundred and twelve bottles of anniversary Riesling. The fruit for this wine was harvested on 11 March to small bins from Jason and Anna Flowerday's vineyard in Watervale then transported via refrigerated truck from Clare to McLaren Vale. Upon arrival, the grapes were whole bunch pressed and the free-run juice separated from pressings, resulting in a fine and austere Riesling in very much the celebrated Clare Valley style.

In an interesting twist, Anna Flowerday is the granddaughter of Ruth and Alec Baxendale, who are neighbours to Wirra Wirra's century old cellars and the original owners of our Scrubby Rise vineyard.

Packaged in a fashion that reflects the original 1974 bottle, Wirra Wirra's distinctive labels were the only ones ever to be developed by friend and former BBC set designer Roger Liminton. Roger was, amongst other things, responsible for set designs of the famous Dr Who television series, as well as Steptoe & Sons and the early Monty Python shows. Not constrained by tradition, the label's size, layout and colours were radical at the time, and proved to be the genesis of our blue logo that is now the hallmark of Wirra Wirra.

In the interests of quality and cellaring potential, we have sealed the 2003 Hand Picked Watervale Riesling using a Stelvin screw cap. (This ironically was the other topic discussed with Ingoldby and Merrill on that same evening in 1979.) The Stelvin closure will ensure that this wine will be enjoyed exactly as we intended, and that cellaring for eight to ten years will be significantly rewarded – provided of course, that you can resist the temptation to relieve the bottle of its contents earlier!

Good health.

Greg Trott

Chairman

