



# Bell Ringers

Autumn 2004



## CARAVELS and CORACLES

Dear Readers

It is an interesting time for small premium wineries, not just in McLaren Vale, but around Australia.

The large companies have had a major effect in regions like ours. There is no doubt that their presence is a great benefit from many different angles.

They bring a level of expertise into a region from a winemaking, viticultural and marketing perspective which can often help lift the general standard of winemaking and associated activities.

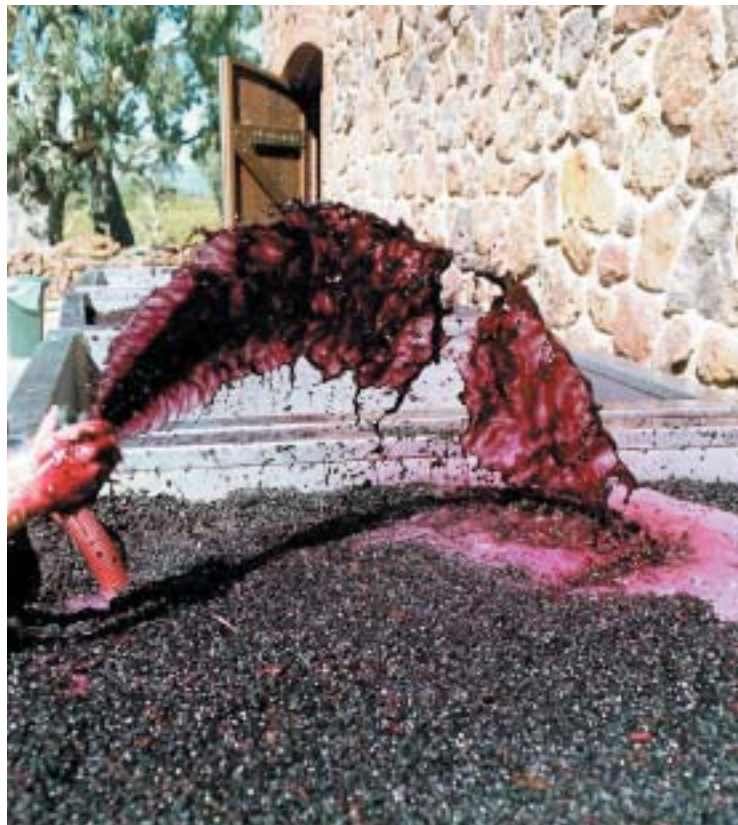
Our industry, in any particular region, has always tended to trade information quite readily and very rarely are we caught out in not being able to borrow some plant or some necessary fining agent or some yeast from a nearby winery. We always reciprocate.

The social gatherings are always great opportunities to soak in more local history, much of which in our region, and many others I suspect, was a combination of both large and very small companies setting the scene in earlier times. They are also occasions to keep creating a continuing history. The Cousins Trott, Roger and Greg, have both been keen contributors, sometimes willingly, of history creation in the region. They, along with people like Jim Ingoldby, the Osbornes, Jack Kilgour (now gone), the Hardy family, Pam Dunsford, Geoff Merrill, the Kays and the Johnstons, amongst many others, have been instrumental in helping the more recent arrivals settle in and prosper.

I applaud the statement that Stephen Millar from Constellation made regarding his support for smaller wineries with respect to the WET tax and his views that the small companies are a vital part of the industry as a whole.

The dilemma that many of the larger companies face is as follows.

In a region like McLaren Vale they increasingly wish their wineries to be seen



Afloat in a sea of superlative red.

as 'boutique' and perhaps slightly distanced from the 'big end of town' tag that can often lead to lower margins and less 'prestige' rub off. At the same time they have a real need use the very effective clout that sheer size and scale can bring. This can often lead to grapegrower discontent and much grist added to the rumour machine in small regions such as ours.

It is a difficult line they walk but all the time it has an impact on small wine companies.

McLaren Vale is a very safe viticultural region with the potential to consistently produce red and white wines at an exceptionally high quality. This always requires producers of good fruit but grapegrowers have been sent wildly fluctuating messages in recent years. This has unfortunately prolonged the wait before winemakers and grapegrowers meet on common ground. It would be readily agreed, by most, that large companies have had a positive effect on vineyard quality but often their financial mallet is wielded in a most unsettling, damaging and even brutal arc. Smaller wineries have many arrangements

with growers that are 'hand shake' deals. These have, in the past, been seen as 'solid' contracts by both parties. The difficulty now is that large fluctuations in fruit prices continually disadvantage wineries that are not self sufficient from their own vineyards. They can often be locked into agreements, whether they be handshake or written, at prices that are way above the regional averages for a number of years. This is hardly a sustainable situation. Viticulture in reality is just another agricultural pursuit that many would argue should and does reflect the global situation in which we operate.

A farmer's grain harvest return, for example, will fluctuate annually determined by the season, the quality, the world price. The advantage currently enjoyed by the grain growers is that quality and therefore price can be immediately determined

at the silo and all parties involved understand this situation. Presently the determination of grape quality is a much more complex task and relies to a much greater extent on one party, the winery. This fact has not helped to build a level of trust between winery and grower.

There are a dedicated band of researchers that continue to explore the task of objective quality measurement and I do suspect that there will continue to be some unease until this situation is resolved.

In the meantime, it continues to be of prime importance for wineries such as Wirra Wirra to work as closely as we can with those growers that continue to supply us the best fruit they can. We need to remain as open and transparent as we can about fruit and subsequent wine quality and continue to build on our quality reputation.

**Tim James,**  
Managing Thinker, Cox and Bosun.

In many ways Ken Maxwell was an unsung hero of our region. He was a man who never sought attention or got involved in many district activities unless he saw something that he felt justified in supporting. Sadly many have missed out on this extraordinary man's ability to both create and impart knowledge for this very reason.

Ken was born at home on 26th of May 1915 in Hyde Park Adelaide. Ken's father Jack was a civil engineer with the S.A Railways so the family lived as far away as Pt Lincoln and Peterborough. Ken had a variety of schooling ending at the Adelaide Boys High School, by which time the family had settled in McLaren Vale on a dairy which was also had an orchard and vineyard.

Ken and his brother Reg helped their father run the farm where Ken acquired his very practical knowledge and learnt the use of his hands and mind in adaptation, fixing and building machinery.

When WWII was declared Ken joined the AIF in the Armoured Regiment ending up as an instructor in tanks. However, as his father was ill and unable to maintain the property, he was granted compassionate leave.

In 1948 he married Margaret Kearney and lived on the family farm 'Daringa' raising their two sons, Mark and Guy.

Ken dispensed with the dairy and concentrated on almonds, grapes and poultry.

In 1960 times changed quite a bit and Ken helped David Hardy on his property 'Benwerrin' at Seaview north of McLaren Vale. His creativity and inventiveness knew no bounds. They built an enormous fibreglass trimaran, a glider, self-opening and closing gates, innovations to the farming of chooks, vineyard equipment, wine making and much more.

In 1969, Ken helped David Hardy and David Dridan formulate 'The Barn' restaurant in the Main Street of McLaren Vale and was the first manager of this iconic eatery, wine bar and art gallery.

Ken, with his two fit young sons, laboured for months helping me rebuild the massive ironstone walls of Wirra Wirra from its meagre ruins and set it on its path to success.

Wine being a part Ken's life caused him to eventually build his own winery with Ege Dennis in 1973. Mead was actually the catalyst as he had very successfully revived this mediaeval drink and had been producing for some time. It still remains an important part of Maxwell Wines. Ken went on to build two more wineries bearing his name. Ken and Margaret were Bushing King and Queen in 1978 and 1980, an honour won for having made the best wine in the region for that year. His son Mark continues the great enterprise his father and mother created. Margaret was the star at the cellar door. She has been and is a great asset to Maxwell Wines and the district in the way she handles every visitor – all most welcome and looked after personally.

One of Ken's great loves was food, supported by wine – actually that should be reversed. He was the prime mover in the Bacchus Club – a food and wine society. In the 1950's, 60's and 70's he gave this club some great innovation, drive and sense of culinary adventure. He will always be remembered for this wonderful contribution.

I could spend pages telling of Ken's feats – maybe that will come later. But for the moment this intellectual, philosopher, inventor, builder and winemaker has left a permanent stamp on our beloved region. He will be sadly missed by his family, his many friends and, not in the least, by myself.



The Elegant Maxwells at The Wirra Wirra Centenary

## Kenneth Lawrence Maxwell Aged 89 years

# A Salute to the Love of Living

It is a sobering thought that apart from taxes the only certainty is death and it seems that the older one gets the greater the impact of each becomes.

Funerals of my contemporaries have overtaken weddings as the main reason for the tribe to gather. We mourn each loss, we refresh and treasure the memories and we look to our fellow survivors with a resurgence of care and appreciation. We honour these friends with eulogy and obituary, we will their souls speed to paradise, but we salute them best by loving life and our fellows enthusiastically, as they did.

My two friends mentioned below have left a great legacy in memory and an obligation to live life to the full. I was delighted to have the Maxwell family ring the Vintage bell this year in Ken's honour and some of Stephen's ashes were spread among the shiraz vines. So read on my friends, and remember we have been given a job to do.

## Trotty

Elder of the Wirra Wirra Tribe.

## Stephen Tracy Aged 54 years

Tracey was an Englishman, Tracey was a friend, Tracey loved his cricket and sadly it's come to an end.

This wonderfully generous man – truly a proper gentleman – has been allied to the wine, spirit and packaging industry for most of his time in Australia and New Zealand, where he had lived longer than he had in his native England.

In his time with the wine and spirit game he met hundreds, probably thousands, of people all over the world. Those who travelled with Stephen were constantly amazed that he had not just contacts but good friends where ever they were. City after city – Stephen always knew somebody and knew them well, a true testimony of his way with people.

He had many loves in his life including girls. He loved his food and wine, and was a fountain of information about where to eat – no matter what city you were in. Luncheon or dinner in Stephen's company lead to a wide range of contentious subjects which, almost without fail, always ended with a debate on some aspect of the great and noble game of cricket.

Stephen played quite a bit of cricket for his club, Coleshill, just out of Manchester. It will celebrate its' 150 years of cricket next July and Stephen, with some of us along to help, was planning a wonderful trip to celebrate this great occasion. Sadly he won't be present in person but certainly will be in spirit. His friend from childhood, Graham Penson, is taking some of his ashes to England to spread on this historic wicket that Stephen often played on. The ball, I am sure will play all sorts of tricks that day.

Stephen's fight with the big 'C' was something to behold. He was tall, and, for such a gentle soul, very strong, and he fought a great fight. He will be missed by legions, even more so by his very close friends.

We will miss him at the Adelaide oval and at that restaurant.



Tracy living at full throttle.

# Treasures From The Crypt

Down in the cobwebbed recesses of the cellars in a walled up area hidden from the barbarians we keep our reserve and museum stocks. Occasionally we overestimate the amount of 'evaporation' (a polite euphemism for the ravages of Trott, James, Connew and the marauders from Marketing who borrow a bottle or two for special occasions) and are able to offer a rare package to a few Bellringers. A special six bottle set has been boxed in a burnished presentation case comprising one bottle each of our flagship wines the RSW Shiraz and The Angelus Cabernet Sauvignon for the vintage years '93/'94 and '95. This represents an unrepeatable chance to see how these great wines flourish with age.

All wines have been to the 'clinic' and are in top condition. Don't muck about, blue moons happen more often.

## New Releases

The following four new release wines have had their tasting notes crafted in the main by our champions in the new Zealand market, Christine Comerford and John Forgie from Eurowines. This gives a ring of authenticity to the descriptions rather than the suspect ravings of a 'cellar palate', but the reference to 'black or blackboy peach' has the locals scratching their heads. Despite this strange Kiwi allusion the wines are stunners.



### 2002 Adelaide Hills Chardonnay

#### Colour

Brilliant straw green.

#### Bouquet

Fine just ripened nectarine and peach.

#### Palate

Ripe stone fruit flavour, good intensity but also with enticing softness through the middle palate. Fine, firm, tightly knit framework with long fruit on the finish.



### 2002 Scrubby Rise Red

#### Shiraz · Cabernet Sauvignon · Petit Verdot

#### Colour

Rich and deep crimson.

#### Bouquet

Showing bright cassis, plum, and fruit cake aromas with some light oak evident.

#### Palate

A predominantly fruit driven palate, with dark chocolate and berry fruit, spices & Christmas pudding characters. Fine soft tannins complement the mouth filling spicy fruit, liquorice and velvet like tannins.



### 2002 McLaren Vale Shiraz

#### Colour

Dense crimson red with a bright cherry rim.

#### Bouquet

Aromatic and complex. Cassis, blackberry ripe cardamon.

#### Palate

Concentrated and complex - ripe entry of blackboy peach stretching to incorporate all the features of the bouquet. A lovely subtle finish which leaves the palate clean and fresh.



### 2002 R.S.W. Shiraz

#### Colour

Very deep red crimson with garnet rim.

#### Bouquet

Dense and lush with black peach, exotic spices and savoury notes.

#### Palate

Milk chocolate, cinnamon, cardamon and rich earthy characters. Richness is balanced by copious very fine ripe tannins. There exists in this wine a wonderful balance of components.



**Wirra Wirra**  
Vineyards

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# A Quire of Quotes from a Choir of Quauffers



**2003 Scrubby Rise White**  
Sauvignon Blanc · Semillon · Viognier  
Silver Medal – Royal Adelaide Wine Show 2003  
Brisbane Courier Mail, December 2003

"The inclusion of a percentage of viognier in recent vintages has given this wine a touch of class. Enjoy the fresh flavours with hints of tropical and stonefruit notes."  
- Ken Gargett



**2003 Hand Picked Riesling**  
Silver Medal – Royal Hobart Wine Show 2003  
Brisbane Courier Mail, December 2003

"Good wine, very worthy, good for warm region, spicy, fresh, great texture, light body."  
- Peter Scudamore-Smith



**2002 Wirra Wirra Church Block**  
Sydney Morning Herald, Good Living, March 04

"The best Church Block I can recall, and even better if you buy the screw-capped version. It's a rich, smooth, easy drinking red of real flavour and character. Medium bodied, with anise and dark berry fruit, plus hints of dusty oak and jam. Best within five years."  
- Huon Hooke



**2002 McLaren Vale Grenache**  
Gold Medal and Trophy – McLaren Vale Wine Show 2003 Class #9 Best Straight Varietal Grenache of Region  
TOP 100 Blue Gold Medal and Trophy – Sydney International Wine Competition  
Silver Medal – Royal Hobart Wine Show 2003  
91 Points

"Here's a wine with stacks of underlying fruit intensity, which it delivers with poise and refined elegance. The spicy mix of raspberry and plum is blended carefully with a combination of French and American oak. I like the ripe juicy fruit characters and the light savoury touch on the finish. Excellent drinking from now to 2007."  
- Ray Jordan

## Double The Discount and Decimate Our Price

In a flamboyant gesture of generosity worthy of a Treasurer going into an election campaign we have decided to double the 5 per cent discount offered to our faithful Bellringers when they order from our cellar door list. Now you can save a further 10 per cent on the already modest prices, which should encourage a flurry of faxes and e-mails laying claim to our latest releases. We know there are occasional 'give away' bait prices out there in the strange land of retailing that perplex our regular Bellringers, but they don't last. This is no election sweetener, no pre-budget bull and is completely lacking in either hoo or ha. Our discount is here to stay. [I'm sure that's a Gershwin tune-Ed.]

So Bellringers, live like there's no tomorrow, drink like there's another bottle, and buy like you're stocking up for Armageddon.

# A Rayner and Spain to Star Again

There are a lot of Rayners in McLaren Vale, and not just on the plain but back in the hills as well. The connection with Spain is that once maligned grape Grenache or garnacha that originated there before spreading throughout the viticultural world.

Wirra Wirra has sought out special parcels of old vine Grenache for its traditional blends over the years and for some time had treasured the fruit from a few acres of vines on a property owned by Jean Otterwell at McLaren Flat.

Two years ago the Rayner family bought the vineyard and have continued to coax superbly concentrated fruit from these 29 year old vines. Matt Rayner who runs this 10 acre patch is the fourth generation to tend vines since his great grandfather Will established a property on Kays Road, Lower Tintara and began growing grapes for Hardys. Grandfather Gill and father Brian have continued the tradition.

Although there are a few remaining bush pruned classics round the Vale, these vines have been disciplined to the wire to take some of the backache out of picking and pruning. However, like the old bushes they are spur pruned to control crop size and encourage concentrated flavour. The fruit has contributed to the stunning success of the 2002 McLaren Vale Grenache which has harvested a brace of trophies and a medal or two for Wirra Wirra.

Greg Trott says that some of the great wines of the district over the years relied heavily on Grenache as did his icon brand 'Church Block' for many years. Trotty, slipping seamlessly into his other favourite theme, observed that cricket as well as wine flowed thickly in the Rayner veins as he had played with Gill in his heyday.

"He was a star bowler who could swing the ball late, both ways and many said that if he had shifted to the city he would have made the State team," he said.



Matt and Brian lift the skirts of a venerable Grenache

## WAVING OUR WILLY

In a region blessed with some excellent eateries one of our favourites is the Willy Hill Café/Restaurant. It popped up about 3 years ago with owner Steph McLeod and chef Shana Dunn gathering a truck load of fans since. The Wirra Wirra team, looking industrious as though they are going to get grape samples from the vineyard, often sneak off to Willunga for a feed of fabulous dishes like this autumnal one below. Give it a try maybe with a glass of our '02 McLaren Vale Grenache which has the luscious fruit to match the spice, or, if you are reluctant to say goodbye to summer, a slurp of Mrs Wigley Rose.

By local direction you will find the place going up the hill in Willunga's main street between the middle pub and the top pub. Hence the name.

## Black Pepper Chicken with Red Lentil Dahl

Recipe from Shana Dunn

### Chicken

- 6 Chicken Breast-skin on
- 1Tbs cracked black pepper
- 2Tbs sweet soy
- 1Tbs corn Flour
- 1tsp sesame oil

Mix all marinade ingredients together and rub onto the chicken, leave for about 2 hours. Heat a heavy based frypan to hot, put breast in skin side down, seal until brown, turn and reduce the heat to medium. Continue to cook for 12-14minutes or until cooked.

### Dahl

- 1.5 cups red lentils
- 1 tin coconut milk
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- 2 tsp garam masala
- 1/2 tsp fenugreek ground
- 1 med onion finely diced
- 1 clove crushed garlic
- 1 tsp ginger finely chopped
- 3 Tbs ghee or clarified butter

Bring the lentils to the boil with 3.5 cups of water, simmer for 20 minutes. Fry off the onion, garlic, ginger and spices. Drain the lentils and add to the onion mix with a can of coconut milk. Cook for a further 15minutes or until thickened. Check for seasoning.

Serve with crisp fried Shallots, Naan Bread and Steamed Greens.



# An Art To Ringing The Vintage Bell

Costumes, crushers, comedians and confusion all conspired to make the annual ceremony of Ringing In the Vintage a delight. The McLaren Vale tribe gathered at Wirra Wirra under the belfry to discuss the 2004 vintage and enjoy one of those occasions our occasional 'preacher' Tim James describes as 'opportunities to soak in more local history'. Sermons on the Vale and The Vintage were orated by Tim James and Kevin O'Brien as the McLaren Vale Wine and tourism Industry Chairman and Bushing King '03/'04 Tony Walker officiated resplendently in his robes and crown. As the Adelaide Festival of Arts and Fringe had just finished, a group of international performers and stand-up comedians from shows like 'Twelve Angry Men' and Theatre Simple came down as special guests. They had a wonderful time as they weren't required to 'thesp' and were able to petanque themselves to a happy standstill. Willy Hill supplied super food, Trott confused the dates and had to rush back from town and the bus collecting our artistic guests got vaguely lost but the Maxwell Family rang the Vintage Bell with gusto in honour of Ken. He would have revelled in this typical, wonderful McLaren Vale occasion.



## Chariot Racing Finals

Wirra Wirra's guiding hands on the whips and reins, Tim James and Samantha Connew have been nominated as one of the eight Finalists for the prestigious Qantas/Australian Gourmet Traveller 'Winemaker of the Year' award. Our winemaking charioteers have trained an outstanding team of thundering 'horses' this year including the George Mackey Trophy winning 2001 RSW Shiraz, the trophy winning 2002 Grenache, the seductive 'Mrs. Wigley' Rose, the 'best ever' 2002 Church Block and the special release Watervale Riesling and Adelaide Hills Chardonnay. The citations are encouraging with Nick Bulleid MW saying "I've always thought Wirra Wirra was at the forefront in McLaren Vale, but since Tim and Samantha took over, the wines have gone to new heights." Huon Hooke dubs Wirra Wirra's wines "...benchmarks for their fine sense of style." The competition will be fierce with teams from Glaetzer, Yering Station and Torbreck nominated so far and four more to come.

## The Racing Team Vintage 04

Dayshift

Steps (L-R):

**Nina Stocker, Mick Purton,  
Colin Stone, Craig Hill, Tim James**

Front (L-R):

**Brendan Findlay, Sheldon McNamara,  
Michael Sawyer, Matt Attalah,  
Samantha Connew**

Nightshift: All aslumber in readiness.

**Paul Carpenter, Stephanie Lambert,  
Brendon Keys, Liz Heidenreich,  
Kirk McDonald, Andrew Hill, Alan Milano**



# Winsome Wagging – Winning Ways

As with the choosing of the next Dalai Lama the essential qualities for Official Winery Dog were recognised at an early age in a pup brought to the cellars by winemaker Paul Carpenter. According to her master she is a five and a half months old Chocolate Brown Labrador. He chose the name from memories of working in Beaujolais at Chateau de Bluizard. The Madame would shriek the name every morning at their dog who was expert at stealing toast off the breakfast table. Apart from the occasional calling card and indiscriminate chewing Zoe has won most hearts but we are waiting with interest to see her develop a true Wirra Wirra identity- excellent, exceptional and eccentric. Will she bark at the Bell, appear magically at lunchtime, attempt to catch the boules at petanque like her predecessors? The possibilities are intriguing.



## New Guard Takes The Watch

The dark and strangely handsome Jon Hesketh has crossed the moat with Trish and the boys to the land of the long white cloud and a position with Lion Nathan's Distinguished Vineyards.

It could have been something we said but more likely it is to commune with the hobbit oracles of sauvignon blanc and rugby, and seek a career in arcane films once his vowels have been flattened.

With the suddenly empty chair threatening to trigger insurrection, there has been a jostling of positions to calm the Sales and Marketing principality. The McLaren Vale 'Tiger' Andrew Tierney leaps from domestic to the mayhem of export and a firm grip on the tiller of the Sales and Marketing ship. A quick circumnavigation of Wirra Wirra's outposts and international trading partners has disabused him of the notion that this promotion is all playdough and party hats .

Stepping up to the plate as Sales and Marketing Manager Domestic is a new face, Julian Forwood, who comes to us from 12 months with Moet Hennessy as an account manager in Adelaide and previously with Negotiants Australia working with – guess who-Andrew Tierney. [The lad must be a sucker for punishment-Ed.]

Julian will be welcomed to the lions' den where he'll have to fight for survival and the comfortable chair with the two vivacious Valkyries Delta Robins and Kymbo Pilkington, and the keeper of the key to the Cellar door, Toby Good.

Rear:

**Robins, Tierney**

Front:

**Hesketh (oi, wot's he laughing at?) and Pilkington**



Julian Forwood



# Neither Joshua nor Trumpet but the Walls Came Tumbling Down

The long trek across the lawns to the 'ablution arcade, Wirra Wirra's brick toilet block by the creek, is no more. The palatial new parlours in the new building have been finished and the ancient WC was demolished. But rather than a cheer for the passing of this 'inconvenience' there came a wailing and gnashing of teeth as fond memories were recalled, and pilgrimages were made to bid farewell. Some were even surprised in their communing by the suddenness of the demolition.

Rather than being as solid as a brick shithouse the facility had an air of rustic impermanence. Realising he needed a public toilet before he opened his Cellar Door in 1975 Trott contacted Mr. Bishop the Town Planner at Willunga Council who provided a recipe, an elaborate set of instructions for such a building. Liberally interpreted this resulted in a construction of second hand bricks, basins and pedestals, a stainless steel urinal from the Earl of Zetland hotel in the city and a roof made of timber and corrugated iron from the old chook sheds. This lid was prone to leak through the multitude of nail holes. Still, comfort was regained in its sometimes draughty environs for nearly 30 years and it was often a refuge from tiresome tasks and tyrant telephones before the advent of the dreaded mobile. A few dreamy souls no doubt will still end standing perplexed by the creek, for old habits---can be very embarrassing.



Luxury



Toast to a lost civilisation



Oi, this isn't Big Brother!



All the comforts of quiet contemplation



The final flush



Too comfortable