



# Bell RINGERS



June 2008

## Bye, George

Where were you when...?

Those words generally preface a question searching for common ground over an incident that has had a long-lasting and significant impact on our lives.

It's a phrase that those associated with vintage 2008 at Wirra Wirra will be familiar with for some time to come.

On March 6th, 2008 I was at Melbourne Airport, interviewing candidates for a position with Wirra Wirra, when I first met George.

**Daniel**, our CFO was the one who made the introduction – calling me from the winery. At the time I failed to really grasp the significance of George, but by the time I reached McLaren Vale four hours later, it was very apparent that his presence at the winery was most unwelcome.

“George” as it became known after the Wirra Wirra tribe had tired of referring to it as “the accident”, “the incident” or “the collapse”, challenged us all in a fashion that many would suggest they would rather not be challenged again.

However, as so often happens, in times of adversity, George brought out the best in people.

In particular, the way in which our OH&S and Environmental plans clicked into place amid the chaos and confusion; watching staff comfort and care for their fellow workers; how the local community rallied with offers of support and assistance; and the manner in which the Wirra Wirra tribe bravely ensured that vintage 2008 would remain a reality, all demonstrated how fortunate we are to be part of an industry that looks after its own in tough times.

Given the impact that George created, we were fortunate that only one worker suffered injuries of significance. Thankfully, **Greg** the young cellar hand who was injured is recovering well and his positive attitude has been inspiring to all of us back at the winery.

In the wake of George, managing vintage 2008 became a logistical exercise of military proportions for **Sam**, **Lexi** and **Luke**. Grapes were diverted all over the district to be crushed at all hours of the day and night; fruit was being freighted in a similar fashion wherever we could find a free tank to commence ferment; while staff were dispatched in pairs with a “buddy” to work at the assisting wineries alongside the Wirra Wirra wines-in-the-making.

Then the heatwave arrived. The longest extended spell of hot temperatures ever recorded in the state of South Australia.

Somehow, we all managed to cope and despite exaggerated reported wine losses, vintage 2008 remains on target so that you will all be able to enjoy your favourite “Scrubbies”, “Wigleys”, “Churchies” et al, as usual.

While I have already mentioned the herculean efforts of the Wirra Wirra tribe, there are many to thank for getting us over the line with their acts of support and kindness, big and small that we have benefited from over the past few months.

From the sandwiches and cookies sent by Mary from over the road at Hugh Hamilton on Day 2, to the use of crushers and tanks at Boar's Rock and Hardy's Tintara wineries (to name just a couple) and everything in between.

I recognize the following good folk, knowing that we run the risk of excluding someone who has done their bit and if that is the case, I sincerely apologise. They have not sought public recognition, but here we go:



Of course, we are all also indebted to the local police, ambulance and emergency services crews who helped on the day, the Wirra Wirra Board members and the families and friends of the Wirra Wirra tribe.

And to those Bell Ringers who have sent emails and letters of support, your loyalty has been greatly appreciated.

Finally on Monday, May 12th, the business of dismantling, demolition and recovery began and we bade farewell to the physical reminder of George, some 10 weeks after he entered our lives.

Now the rebuild begins and with it, a chance to look forward to the next vintage which will be undertaken with a new structure in place and a team ready to embrace the challenges that it presents, albeit without the intrusion of a visitor named George.

### Cheers

**Andrew Kay,  
Caretaker in Residence**

Company	Name
Australian Vintage	Linda Jakubans
Ballast Stone Estate Wines	Mark Shaw Marty O'Flaherty
Barossa Valley Estates	Stuart Bourne Kirsty Waller
Belvidere	Mark Turnbull
Boar's Rock	Emmanuelle Requin-Bekkers Mike Familo Beck Kennedy
Booths	Chris McCullough
Bullock & Partners	Chris Burton
Cape Jaffa	Anna Hooper
Chalk Hill	Jock Harvey
Coriole	Simon White
DiFabio estate	Goe DiFabio
Hardy Wine Company	Paul Carpenter Andrew Francis Simon Osicka
Hugh Hamilton Wines	Mary Hamilton
Langhorne Creek Winery	Peter Pollard Chris Graves
Leconfield	Paul Gordon
Leask Viticulture	Richard Leask
Liquid Ideas	Hazel Macrae
Mollydooker	Sparky Marquis Janet Gawith Andrew Jericho
Paul Dawe Electrica	Paul, Dennis Nathan & team
Paxton Vineyards	Toby Bekkers
Penley Estate	Kym Tolley Greg Foster
Plumber	Alan Mahony
Rosemount Estate Rycroft Winery	Charles Whish Andrew Locke
Shaw and Smith	Daryl Caitlin Frank Kruzycki
Tinlins	Warren Randall Steve Pannell Nick Haselgrove
WGA	Michael Armstrong Andrew Press
Winterfold Vineyard	Walter Clappis
Woodstock	Scott Collett
Welder	Frank Kruzycki



## Sea and Vines 2008

Here's a date for your diaries - the June long weekend, when McLaren Vale wineries again play host to the annual Sea and Vines festival. The fun takes place on Sunday the 8th and Monday the 9th June from 11am - 4.30pm and as always, Wirra Wirra will be a focal point for revellers looking to enjoy great music, wine and food.

After the success of last year, we have again engaged the services of hot Adelaide duo, **Two Brothers Catering**, a couple of gun ex-Adelaide chefs who specialize in fine dining catering.

### Food:

**Seafood Dish:** Prawn, Fish and Herb Dumpling and Blue Swimmer Crab Stew finished with Pernod, served with a Cannelini Bean Puree.

**Dessert:** English Toffee and Belgian Chocolate Bread and Butter Pudding with Vanilla Bean Custard. Rio espresso coffee.

### Music:

**Sunday - Pulse** - Groovy Vibes under the vines

**Monday** - Sea and Vines favourites **Silverhair** playing hits from the seventies through to the noughties.

Come along and meet those normally desk bound members of the Wirra Wirra tribe as they devote their long weekend to serve our finest to the masses.

Bell Ringers who plan to join us for the weekend's festivities, please bring along this coupon and enjoy your first glass of Scrubby Rise on us! Just hand the coupon to the friendly tribesperson behind the S&V bar at Wirra Wirra and we will exchange it for your choice of Scrubby Rise Red, or Scrubby Rise Unwooded Chardonnay. Redeemable for one glass only of at Wirra Wirra during the 2008 Sea and Vines Festival, June 8 and 9.

Download the full regional program from [www.mclarenvale.info/seaandvines](http://www.mclarenvale.info/seaandvines)

## Ask and Ye Shall Receive

*"Why don't you make a port for cellar door?"*

If we had a dollar for every time we were asked this question we would have had the car park resurfaced years ago!

Well, dear Bell Ringers, just in time for winter we have released the Sparrow's Lodge Tawny Port, exclusive to the Wirra Wirra cellar door.

It has been some time since we had a port on show and winemaker Sam tells us this wine is a precursor to a Vintage Port (Fortified Shiraz) that will be released for winter 2009.

The Sparrow's Lodge Tawny Port is drawn from parcels of grenache and shiraz aged at the winery in old oak casks. The average age of the material is around 15-20 years which means that Trotty would have played a part in tucking this wine away for a rainy day.

There is no doubt that he would have enjoyed contemplating life's weightier matters by the fire at old cellar door with a warming glass or two.

The Sparrow's Lodge Tawny Port is available from cellar door only at \$25.00 per 375ml bottle.

## Thrown by Catapult



We have had a number of enquiries from Bell Ringers as to where they can lay their hands on the 2006 Catapult Shiraz Viognier which has been earning some handsome accolades of late. The news is good for Bell Ringers

as the wine is available only from our cellar door or in selected restaurants across the country. You won't find it at your local retail outlet. To see what the fuss is about you can order online at [www.wirra.com.au](http://www.wirra.com.au); by phone on (08) 83234701; or drop by and taste it for yourself with our friendly cellar door crew.



**Above:** Old enough to vote. The new Sparrow's Lodge Tawny Port.

## BELL RINGER BONUS



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# Ringling in Trott's View



**Above:** Emily Trott contemplates whether standing on the book may have been a better idea, next to Huon Hooke and Andrew Kay.

This year's Bell Ringing ceremony to ring in the 2008 vintage took on a celebratory feel, as friends of Wirra Wirra and McLaren Vale came together to announce the long-awaited launch of "McLaren Vale - Trott's View", commonly referred to during its prolonged gestation and subsequent release as "Trott's Book".

The book is a labour of love, emanating from one of Trott's many grand schemes, although for a time it was feared the finished article would never see the light of day. Trott sought to hold a mirror to the place he loved and he enlisted the services of some of SA's finest photographers, **Milton Wordley, Don Brice, Christo Reid** and **Eric Algra** to capture thousands of images of McLaren Vale and its inhabitants during the year 2000.

While Trott's health waned and other matters took priority, the book was placed on the eternal back-burner, until a group of determined individuals made a pact to resurrect the project following his death. So with the assistance of the Trott Estate, sponsorship from the City of Onkaparinga and contributions from the likes of old mates **Tony Brooks, Philip White, Lance Campbell, Gerald Viergever** and the aforementioned photographers, "McLaren Vale – Trott's View" was gently coerced into life.

The result is a magnificent coffee-table tome, featuring hundreds of glorious photographs capturing the spirit of the district and its people – all looking a little more svelte and younger as the new millennium dawned!

So to February 2008 and as reigning Bushing King and Queen, **Scott Rawlinson** and **Maria Maglieri** of Serafino Wines rang in the early

vintage on our much-loved Angelus bell, guests heard from speakers including Greg's daughter Emily and wine writer **Huon Hooke**, about Trott's passion for the McLaren Vale district and his mission to see it protected from commercial and residential development during and beyond his lifetime.

The book serves as a wonderful testament to one man's sense of place and a stunning pictorial showcase of the people and places that set McLaren Vale apart from the ordinary.

"McLaren Vale - Trott's View" is available from the Wirra Wirra cellar door for \$79.95.



**Above:** Australia's Most Wanted? Lance Campbell, Philip White, Eric Algra, Don Brice and Tony Brooks toast "Trott's View".

## Sam's Mailbag

*Dear Sam,*

*If we as Aussies are able to blend wine from all over the country to make a good drop, then why do we hear so many good and bad reports about vintage conditions here or there? What does it matter if we can "fix it in the mix"?*

*Yours truly,*

*Bemused of Burnside.*

**Dear B.O.B,**

Well firstly, let's get one thing straight. When referring to "we" and "Aussies" in the same sentence, please leave me out. I was born and bred a Kiwi, so as much as I like it here, an Aussie I will never be.

Secondly, while the rules and regulations (or lack thereof) in Australia have been a key to this country's success in producing wines of consistent quality, year in year out; as people's interest in wine develops, it is often partnered by a desire to learn a bit more about where the wine came from.

That is when the discussion of regionality rears its head. Why does McLaren Vale Shiraz taste different from Hunter Valley Shiraz; or Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon differ from that which is grown in the Margaret River?

There are a bunch of reasons for this, too great to go into detail here, but much of it has to do with climate – and importantly micro-climates, the soil types where the grapes are planted and the location of the vineyards. It's what the French call terroir and what we winemakers get excited about when we try and create wines that express a distinct regional character.

For example, in McLaren Vale we are blessed with a maritime climate (most of the time!) where the proximity of the sea, ushers in cooling breezes in the evening after the sun and heat of the day. We also have numerous different soil types – often within the same vineyard – that have been dated back 450 million years! These are the type of influences that winemakers look for the world over in order to produce outstanding wine and what help to make McLaren Vale wines unique.

Why we would we want to blend that away?

Sam.



**Above:** Marketing Manager Bec, dreams of the day she can safely wear her Jimmy Choo's to work at Wirra Wirra.

## Despair for Shoe Repairs

Some things take time. At the winery we occasionally refer to things happening in “Wirra Wirra time”. One such example is the resurfacing of the cellar door car park which has been muted for a mere 10 years or so. This car park has tested the driving skills of many Bell Ringers as they sought to negotiate the numerous potholes that magically appear throughout the course of the year. It has also claimed a few pairs of shoes and kept the car wash businesses of Adelaide afloat as these holes filled with muddy water in the winter months.

At last we can report that we have a brand spanking new car park, which even has its own section for the Wirra Wirra tribe so that they don't steal all the best parks from visiting Bell Ringers.

It all looks a bit fresh and new, so please feel free to come and break it in over the next few months and check out the new release winter reds while you warm yourself by the fire in our cosy cellar door.

## Bill and Pierce's Big Adventure

As talk of Olympic ambitions heats up across the globe, our very own Caretaker in Residence, **AK** and International Man of Mystery, **Mike “Hollywood” House**, jetted off to Beijing recently as part of a whistlestop tour through Korea and China, to spread the good word about Wirra Wirra.

The Korean leg was partly to accept the accolades being bestowed upon our wines following the Korean Wine Challenge, where our 2006 Woodhenge Shiraz won a trophy and the 2006 Catapult and 2005 Church Block each picked up gold medals.

However, most of their travels centred on China where they hosted a number of wine dinners and tastings for journalists, trade and members of the Aussino Wine Club. Aussino Fine Wines are our importers in China and they also own nearly 200 high quality wine stores, which retail to their members and the general public.

They list among their highlights devouring a plate of sea urchin; climbing part of the Great Wall just outside of Beijing (no sign of rabbits); “Hollywood” being mistaken for Bill Clinton and **AK** for Pierce Brosnan (Not sure who we should feel more sorry for, Bill or Pierce? – Ed.); and most definitely the great welcome and friendship shown by our Chinese guests at the wine dinners and tastings.



**Above:** Pre-dinner entertainment against the Dalian skyline.



## POP Psychology

Some of you will remember pics last year showing eager cellar hands stomping in the open fermenters in a quest to create our first ever Pinot Noir. The grapes that were getting up close and personal with our tribe members pedal extremities, were the first crop from **Jeff and Ann Gower's** pinot noir plantings at their Lenswood vineyard in the Adelaide Hills, home to our 12th Man Chardonnay and Hiding Champion Sauvignon Blanc.

Twelve months later, we have our wine. But what to call such a delicate, yet demanding creature?

A few years back when Greg Trott learned of the demise of an impressive pipe organ at an Adelaide Hills church, his fertile mind started ticking. He secretly purchased the remains of the organ before presenting new winery construction plans - inclusive of organ - to the Wirra Wirra tribe.

And what an organ! A 30 rank, 3 manual, electro/pneumatic action pipe organ by the British maker Dodd, dating back to 1900. Lovingly resuscitated, it awaits a new life at Wirra Wirra when space can be found and our accountant's back is turned. Because for



bean-counters, a winery organ makes as much sense as conjuring a hatful of pinot noir to satisfy a winemaker's lust for Burgundy.

Which we did.

Some wines simply name themselves - The 2007 Adelaide Hills Pipe Organ Pinot Noir.

**Now available exclusive to Cellar Door for \$30 a bottle.**

## A Tweet Story

Long time (but forever young) WW cellar door marvel, **Jilly McIntyre** had this to report after a recent weekend of tending to the hordes that descend upon our cellar door.

“A couple of months ago I met a lovely lady in cellar door. She came in with Ruth Baxendale (Wirra Wirra's next door neighbour) and was the grand daughter of Jack Sparrow – RS Wigley's foreman for the original Wirra Wirra winery. Naturally she was interested in the Sparrow's Lodge range of cellar door wines which was named after the house at the winery where her grandfather had lived. The really lovely thing she told me though, was that her maiden name was Sparrow and she married a Goldfinch. She had a great sense of humor about it.

Two weeks ago, a younger man came in telling me he was the great grandson of Jack Sparrow. We then worked out that it was his mother who was in before. I said “you must also be a Goldfinch!” He laughed rolled his eyes and said, “Yes! This is what you get when you cross a Sparrow and a Goldfinch”.

And people think we make this stuff up.



**Above:** Tanya, the beautiful bride beams, while Dan wonders whether the honeymoon could be tax deductible.



**Above:** Lee-Ann's angelic demeanour is fooling no-one.

## Magic Roundabout

Love is in the air; three generations of tribal members and a couple of new faces are aboard the Magic Roundabout for this edition.

**Moneyman Dan**, shattered the fantasies of young women across the nation last month when he wed his long-time sweetheart Tanya, before heading off to Thailand for their honeymoon and a well earned break from counting the beans at Wirra Wirra. The tribe revelled in his absence and with the purse strings loosened, upgraded the biscuit selection in the office kitchen.

Vintage 2008 will be remembered for a number of things, but perhaps the most pleasant was having three generations of the Hill family in the winery at the one time. Mr. Fixit (and BBQ Chef Extraordinaire) **Craig Hill** has been a staple of life at Wirra Wirra for over 14 years while his daughter **Rhian** has helped out over vintage from the moment she could drag a pump. This year Rhian returned to work in the winery office after giving birth to her (and Craig's ) pride and joy, Allira. Amid the usual chaos of vintage, serenity could be found at Rhian's feet, where Allira lay, offering the occasional gurgle or smile to passersby.

New kids on the block this edition are, **Lee-Ann Guy**, the smiling face and voice at Reception who has settled in like we have known her for years (including a best on ground performance at the End of Vintage Party – Ed.); and **Matt East**, our new Market Manager in Victoria, who takes over the mantle as our ambassador in that state, working with our distributors and trade customers to help spread the gospel according to Wirra Wirra.

## Robin's Redgum Reminder

In the midst of all the fuss about 20/20 franchise teams and Indian Superleagues, comes a humble reminder of the simple beauty of the game of cricket.

To coincide with the recent launch of "Trott's Vision" the pictorial account of the McLaren Vale district inspired by the late founder of Wirra Wirra Vineyards, Greg Trott, Willunga folk artist **Robin Turner** has revealed his latest excursion into cricket themed sculpture at Wirra Wirra

Turner, whose earlier work – a massive redgum cricket ball – holds pride of place at our cellar door, fulfilled an earlier promise to extend this idea throughout the winery grounds.

The piece, which sits over 9m high is in keeping with Wirra Wirra tradition. Trott always liked to make big visual statements, so when Robin approached us with this idea, it seemed to make perfect sense in a Wirra Wirra kind of way; remembering Trott's obsession with the game of cricket.



**Above:** It was only once the sculpture was complete, that Robin realised he had forgotten to build a seat.

The sculpture features a giant set of stumps and bails and massive redgum bat and ball carved by chain-saw from local materials and stands proudly in its natural environment, surrounded by gums at the winery.

As Wirra Wirra is an aboriginal name, meaning "amongst the gums", this is certainly the perfect home for Robin's latest work. It almost looks like a Pro Hart painting brought to life!

## www.WirraWirra.com

Tracking marginally behind the car park upgrade in flying the flag for "Wirra Wirra time", has been the redesign of our informative, but somewhat dated website.

The good news is that we should be up and running by the end of June, with our new, improved site featuring all the latest reviews and notes on our latest release wines, along with more than you will ever need to know about life at Wirra Wirra.

One of the main developments is designed to make life easier for Bell Ringers who wish to order from cellar door online and to streamline our communication with you.

As part of this, we are setting up a new on-line ordering system. Bell Ringers will be able to order securely via the website, using their own personal Member Code. We will advise you by email, prior to the launch of the new site of your Member Code for online ordering. We will also be asking you to update your contact details and if you would like to receive the BellRingers Newsletter electronically in the future – saving a few trees and easing our carbon count.

Of course, we don't have all our Bell Ringers email details, so if you want to be set up for online ordering, simply email us your details at [info@wirra.com.au](mailto:info@wirra.com.au), or contact our friendly cellar door crew on (08) 83238414 and they will sort it out.

Naturally if you still wish to order by phone (08) 8323 8414 or fax (08) 8323 8596. CJ, Tristan and the crew will be happy to take your order.

Check it out for yourself at [www.wirrawirra.com](http://www.wirrawirra.com).

## Stop The Presses!!!

And news just in from London... Following our success in the 2007 London International Wine Challenge - when we were crowned International Red Winemaker of the Year – we have scored again, awarded a gold medal for our **2006 RSW Shiraz** at this year's event.

Two other reds in the stable also caught the judges' eye, with both the **2006 Catapult Shiraz Viognier** and the **2006 The Angelus Cabernet Sauvignon** awarded silver medals.

Over 400 judges tasted 9000 wines from 40 countries to make their decisions.

The following night, the **2006 Angelus** won gold at the Decanter Fine Wine Awards, with the **2006 Church Block** grabbing silver.

Yet more evidence of what a great vintage 2006 was and an "appetite whetter" for the release of our 2006 flagship reds later this year.



## It's Big and It's Red

Aussie wine scribe **Campbell Mattinson's** star has been on the rise in the past few years. Campbell has garnered both industry and consumer support with his straight talking wine prose, coupled with the prolific output across his website, newsletter, and three major books releases.

His most recent publication is *The Big Red Wine Book* – an unofficial bible for lovers of Australian red wine. It includes reviews for more than 1000 red wines, including more than 500 new reviews across all prices and styles. Each wine is rated and judged on its price, investment value and value for money.

And why are we plugging it so shamelessly? Possibly because in the inaugural edition of *The Big Red Wine Book*, Wirra Wirra has been named "Winery of the Year".

To quote Campbell himself:

### **The Big Red Winery of the Year Wirra Wirra**

*"Samantha Connew is the chief winemaker, and she's got the place singing. I suspect she's incapable of making an ordinary wine. All of Wirra Wirra's wines are now leaders in their class - they are a small winery in McLaren Vale and yet, remarkably, they have five wines in this guide scoring over 90 points and two super wines in the Top 100 list of reds priced at \$20 or less. For glugging down on a weeknight; for savouring on a Saturday night; for cellaring - Wirra have a top red wine to suit. No wonder they have been grabbing a good deal of international attention of late. It is a pleasure to award them the Big Red Winery of the Year."*

The Big Red Wine Book is available at discerning book stores and the Wirra Wirra cellar door for just \$24.50.

## Vote 1 Wirra Wirra!

Trailing just behind the battle for leadership of the Democratic party for newsworthiness in the USA, has been the return to this significant export market of Wirra Wirra wines. Undeterred by a booming AUD and a US economic meltdown, we are officially back in the US with our wines represented by **Gillett Johnson** of International Vines. Gillett is a seasoned campaigner with over 20 years of US wine industry experience in building both Australian and international wine brands. This will be pleasing news to the many Americans who email us each year trying to find our wines in their homeland and Bell Ringers wanting to share the local nectar with their expat relatives overseas.

For those trying to find our wines in the US, or who wish to turn up the heat on their local retailer, contact Gillett at [gilletjohnson@yahoo.com](mailto:gilletjohnson@yahoo.com).

## Ruby-Esque

A little while ago we told you about the **Zephyr Quartet**, the acclaimed innovative Adelaide-based string quartet who is garnering acclaim the world over for their passionate and eclectic performances. Embracing jazz, contemporary, electronica and multi-media as well as conventional string quartet repertoire, Zephyr's music is described by the girls as "boundaryless".

To add to their unique position in the music world, they are also one of the few music performers, who can boast a wine sponsor, with Wirra Wirra providing vinuous accompaniment to their exclusive performances.

2007 closed on a high for Zephyr, picking up the prestigious Ruby Award at the SA Arts and Cultural Awards, in the category of Innovation for their electro-acoustic project and releasing their world music-inspired second album **Esque**, at a series of showcase gigs.

June and July are shaping up as particularly busy months for Zephyr with an exciting collaboration with the wonderful **Leigh Warren and Dancers** at the Space Theatre at the Adelaide Festival Centre; and they will be working again with the fabulous **Katie Noonan** and her show in the Adelaide Cabaret Festival.

To order their stunning new CD **Esque**, simply go online to [www.zephyrquartet.com](http://www.zephyrquartet.com) where you can also find out more about their upcoming shows.



**Above:** The delightful Zephyr Quartet, pictured just before wrecking their hotel room and throwing a TV set out of a second story window.

