

Richard Gregory Trott affected the lives of so many, loved and was loved by a legion of friends. The gathering here today is some measure of the honour we believe he deserves.

Friends, there aren't enough words, nor time in this day, to sketch out a full likeness of such a colourful and complex character, but I'll try to do some justice to this 'marvellous man', this 'dear boy'- those endearments he so often used for others. For those of you who find many parts of this story familiar I beg tolerance.

Trotty was a man of the soil and the seasons. He was born in the Spring, 25th Sept 1934, a season of new life, of excitement, wonder and adventure. And, like good fruit on the vine, he was taken in Autumn, 5th March during vintage 2005, In his last hours, in the house he built on the soil that defined him, he was comforted by those he most loved, Lea and his daughters Catherine and Emily, he supped on fresh raspberries and ice cream, and, blessed by the bishop, died gently to the reassuring sound of rain on the roof. In the dawn that followed they rang out the news on the bell, tolling out his biblical allotment of years, three score and ten.

It would be hard to think of a better end.

But lets find a beginning in the Trott family farm just over the road, bought by Greg's grandfather, cleared by his father and turned to orchard and vines for dried fruit. This is where Greg grew up with his brothers Peter and Derek.

School, in McLaren Vale and then at St. Peters as a boarder, provided no academic triumphs, but a collection of lifelong friends and the beginnings of his passionate love of this beautiful valley, cosseted as it is between the renowned feminine folds of the range and the sea. As he wrote himself in a lovely letter to Tony Parkinson a few years ago:
" As a small boy returning from boarding school once or twice a term, my young heart always took a leap when rounding the top of Stump Hill and seeing the village in the late afternoon sun with those hills as a backdrop. It was home. "

To Trotty, McLaren Vale became home to body, mind and spirit much as we now understand an aboriginal relationship to country. Maybe a bit more Anglican, because he always thought this bit of the morning Prayer referred specifically to McLaren Vale: In His hand are all the corners of the earth, and the strength of the hills are His also. The sea is His and He made it, and His hands prepared the dry land.

Amongst other things Trott also believed the Almighty had invented cricket, and so took to the game with religious enthusiasm. When he left school in 1953 and came home to work the farm with his brothers, they built their own concrete practise pitch and nets to hone their skills.

Trotts stalwart workmate of nearly 40 years, Colin Cameron, still counts as a highlight of his life a Grand Final innings he made of 174 to defeat the McLaren Vale team containing the three troublesome Trotts. This passion led Trotty, in later life, to fall into the company of test cricketers where, armed with quantities of robust McLaren Vale red and assisted by Geoff Merrill, he is blamed for blighting the careers of Willis, Gower and Botham.

The farm produced dried currants, prunes and apricots and also ran poultry, and ,surprisingly for one so close to their production, Greg always counted apricots and eggs as his favourite foods. Lea said she scrambled a breakfast egg or three for him almost every day.

Greg took over the property and suffered the trials and tribulations of rural livelihood. After a couple of disastrously wet summers, that reduced the dried fruit income to near zero, he decided to pull up the orchard and move into wine grapes.



This necessitated getting an income from poultry while they were replanting, first from layers, then hatchery and finally broilers. The chooks drove him mad, he said, but did produce a mountain of gold which, he explained, was the mountain of chook poo that he used to invigorate his young vines. Catherine used to love following her dad round the shed picking out the dead chickens to throw on the pile. The new vineyard took Greg into the wine industry just in time for Penfolds to abandon its McLaren Vale base leaving growers without a home.

Greg was persuaded to help start the Southern Vales Co-Operative to rescue the situation, and had to deal with criticism from the more conservative in the area that the venture was 'communist inspired' to drive down prices.

During this time growers and winemakers were brought closer together, a fledgling Winemakers Association was formed, and the first Winemakers Lunch was held. Greg always noted that it consisted of sandwiches out the back of the Co-Op cellars.

In 1969 Greg decided to go it alone, and, with cousin Roger Trott, start their own galvo winery. While arguing about where to build it, the cousins stared across to this paddock here and realised they were staring at the ruin of historic Wirra Wirra. This consisted of two crumbling ironstone walls and a few brick and slate fermenting tanks, which they determined to buy. This was their Eureka! moment and a decision that set Greg off on the defining quest of his life.

The first vintage was a panic of finding second hand and ancient equipment and renovating the old slate fermenters. An old Horwood Bagshaw crusher dropped neatly onto the bolts still there from its heydays. The vintage was processed in the open air, which might have been a surprise to the authorities who had re issued the Wirra Wirra licence presuming the winery still existed. This was an early example of Trotty's sometimes cavalier attitude to inconvenient rules.

During the following Herculean task of reconstruction, assisted by many friends such as the Maxwell family, Greg displayed his penchant for building and architecture, with many pencil sketches taken from rare photos of the original cellars, being turned doggedly into the splendid structure that became the new Wirra Wirra .

One day, close to finishing the building a local councillor called past and congratulated Greg on the fine job but added that he couldn't remember seeing a building application come before council. Greg replied that he hadn't submitted one, and then explained to the slightly apoplectic official that it wasn't necessary as these were only a few repairs and a bit of maintenance. Trotty insisted that the cellars should be functional but also a place of entertainment and good times for friends and visitors. After all he himself was going to spend a lot of his time in the cellars. Four open fireplaces and a minstrel gallery were incorporated in the plan, as well as a tasting area with a view and another warm fire.

The cellars reverberated with music from an industrial sized Hi-Fi set up, his favourite Beethoven, Bach and the haunting strains of pan flutes and organ that were the rave at the time.

So Wirra Wirra was reborn.

From a plucker of orchards, a herder of chooks and tender of vines, Trotty had become a fermenter of grapes and a builder of dreams.

Wirra Wirra was at the heart of his McLaren Vale and, like Camelot, it was a concept as much as a place. To further that dream he gathered a Round Table of friends and advisers with brawn and brains, with energy and ideas. Those adept at business and the skills of the winemaker such as the innovative tyros of the time Brian Croser and Tony Jordan. He also gathered those skilled in art, music, and words. He continued to finesse his ideas for the winery, extending as we have seen, bit by bit, adding the Angelus bell and Woodhenge the magical fence as finishing touches. Room for a library of cricket and wine books and the long dreamed of inside toilets have only just been incorporated.



Funnily enough in the early nineties Greg had a luncheon here for all the local winemakers still alive who came from the open fermenting era. It was to mark the passing of this art as technical control and stainless steel took over. Yet now, this vintage, there would be few local wineries that won't have some fine shiraz bubbling away in an open fermenter, rediscovering the complex character and richness lost in the rush to innovate.

Trotty travelled the globe but always took McLaren Vale with him, defending it fiercely, praising it loudly, seeking new converts. He loved the history of the place and the escapades of its colourful inhabitants.

His enthusiasm and energy have propelled many projects that have showcased the district to the world at large.

With David Hardy and a small group he started the Bushing Festival in 1973 with the great Elizabethan dinners at Tatachilla. Len Evans said it was one of the best parties he had ever been to, and at the time from such an authority, this was a great accolade.

As chairman of the Winemakers he helped retain the function of the Bushing King and elevated the Winemakers Luncheon to its grand status.

With David Dridan and Tony Parkinson he created a visual arts festival, the Fleurieu Peninsula Biennale with the nations richest prize for landscape.

He was statesman-like in that he often put the district's interests before his own realising any benefits would flow to all, including himself.

He campaigned against the threat unrestrained housing development posed to the industry and lifestyle of the region.

He campaigned for the retention of Glenthorne Farm at O'Halloran Hill as a new focus for research and education in the wine industry and was impatient, as is the Premier Mike Rann, at slow progress on this project.

He campaigned about water and its conservation as an essential to life, especially that of the wine industry.

In between these worthy undertakings he continued his penchant for building.

He created a grand house on the site of the one his father had built. Like the Cellars it had massive stone walls and a timbered interior of generous proportions. It included a central hallway long enough for a cricket pitch if the weather outside was inclement and a particular stroke had to be demonstrated to dinner guests.

With Lea he bought and rebuilt the Flying Fish Restaurant, establishing it in the national market for its unique location, quality and ambience.

Then there were his other projects, and dreams:

- The residential cricket ground he wanted built nearby to attract visiting teams and the stars of the international game, until all the available land went under vines in the recent boom years. Les Burdett was ready to create the pitch. All it needed was a pot of gold at the right time.
- The ill fated venture into vermiculture to pioneer a new vineyard fertility based on worms.
- The bells he wanted installed in each winery and significant building in the district, including a ten tonne monster in the gateway at the top of Stump Hill. He was investigating the feasibility with bellfounders in the UK.



- The sixteen stop Pipe organ he bought and is most of the way through restoring in the hope it could be installed in the cellars to create a unique venue for musical performance.
- The medieval siege machine, a catapult that could fling a flagon hundreds of metres, with which to challenge other wineries, and the world.
- The book of exquisite photography of the region he has commissioned, to show the world his beautiful McLaren Vale, its life and its people.

Some will remain as just wonderful ideas. Some, like the organ, the book and the siege machine, will be finished in time by others to continue the legacy.

Well they were some of the things he has done, but lets have a look at the man. He was quixotic, attractive with an understated charisma. He could entrance, and capture as friends, people in all walks of life. He was interested in other people, he gave them his personal attention. He was charming , entertaining, amusing. He was a mentor, from the time he coached the local age cricket teams, to the many young winemakers and marketers who passed by the cellars, and now achieve their own fame, to the new generations that have been sitting at his feet in recent months seeking insight and guidance.

Trotty encouraged people. Gave them courage to try their arm, to seek their own dreams.

People want to be in Gregs company. A request to lunch or to have a drink was irresistible. Two of his great friends who predeceased him, Steven Tracey and Kit Stevens even wanted their ashes scattered at Wirra Wirra just to stay close.

He gave freely of his time, his interest, his money, but also had that essential ingredient of the truly generous, the grace to receive. He loved conversation , argument, anecdote and wit and the company of like souls. He loved the company of women and they adored the attention he gave them in that charming, amusing, old-fashioned way.

He was of course not perfect, thank heavens.

He could be infuriating.

He was very subject to the opinion of the last person he talked to - until he had digested all options and come to his own conclusions. So there was a few circuits of the mulberry bush before decisions could be made.

He was never on time.

Having lost a watch given to him by his father in 1947, he resolved never to have the responsibility of such a valuable object again. He maintained the fiction that he could accurately estimate the time from the sun. This meant he was an often an unreliable guest arriving hours and sometimes days late. He was usually, but not always, willingly forgiven.

He even missed vintage once. Having promised on several occasions to cook breakfast for the vintage crew he wandered in to the lab where Ben Riggs, Steve Pannell, Kerry Thompson and Matt Pellew were working and said "Hows Vintage going". Matt replied 'Its Finished Trotty!'

He had a habit of wandering away from the winery saying to the staff he was going to look for something in the shed or to slip into the Vale to get some chops from Ellis's. The next they would hear would be a phone call from Melbourne days later where Trott would be at lunch with the great and good still in his botrytis affected jumper and gumboots. He would have been diverted along the way by curiosity, chance meetings, irresistible opportunity and an inbuilt aversion to being restrained.



On one of these spur-of-the-moment trips he packed good clothes in a case and threw some dirty washing into another to drop off at his mothers and headed for the airport in his work clothes. You know the outcome and which case accompanied him..

On another trip, after visiting the Mitchells, he was short of cash so thought he would catch the train into the city from Lillydale and the airport bus to Tullamarine. At one station the train stopped opposite the Mens toilet and Trott thought he would have time for a quick and welcome leak. The train left while he was in mid stream taking his briefcase and valuables with it. Trott talked the Stationmaster into stopping the train a few stops down the line to remove his case. Then scrabbling 25 dollars in loose change and bits and pieces he persuaded a suspicious taxi driver to chase down the train and his case, then get him to the airport in time for the plane, all for what would normally be considered a tip for such a journey.

He led an often charmed life.

The only explanation for these frequent unpredictable absences was that Trott was practising to be an Olympic Hiding Champion.

Hiding, he discovered, could also be a great technique for dealing with problems, because if you leave them alone they often solve themselves. Although asset rich Trotty was often income poor and would let the bills pile up on his chaotic desk on this principle. However the cheques to cover the bills would also be in the official looking envelopes he was reluctant to open. Hiding is not without dilemma and distress.

And now to the women in Gregs life. Don't panic, I won't mention every one.

Trott was lucky to share his life at significant times with some wonderful women. Their particular influence provided the inspiration and stimulus for many of his achievements.

Greg married the gorgeous Joanne Schmidt in 1962, a blond, vivacious schoolteacher, and they moved in with Gregs parents for a year till the elder Trotts moved to a new house. The young marrieds worked the farm, endured the hard times, and took on the grand project of building Wirra Wirra. In this time Greg,s two beautiful daughters were born, Catherine and Emily, who have been his great joy and support since. These were the 60's and 70's, great times, great friendships, great fun.

When Joanne died tragically in a car accident in 1982 the trauma cast a cloud over all their lives. Another feisty school teacher turned caterer, Pip Forrester, came onto the scene and shared Gregs life in those difficult years when he was ungrounded and found it hard to be around his old home. Despite going their own ways eventually, Pip and Greg maintained a great, supportive and enduring friendship.

They say gentlemen prefer blondes and Trott was a gentleman. So when another golden girl came into his orbit, energetic entertaining and independent, he couldn't resist and married Alexandra Tolley in 1993. This was a whirlwind period of dynastic dreams and the possibilities of two venerable wineries joining forces. Ang gave Trott the confidence and desire to return to his own territory and design and build his dream house. However the dreams were frustrated and faded away and they parted after five years.

This was another low point in Trotty's life and could have sapped his resolve, except for another bright, vivacious, buxom blond who had been hiding right under his nose at the Salopian Inn. Leanne Steimanis had to fight to convince this charming, but occasionally grumpy and stubborn, man that it was alright to fall in love again. She brought great gifts into his life at this critical time, youth, exuberance skittishness, intimacy, organization and comfort. She helped Greg finish the house and make it his, and their, home. She brought with her two sons, Jordan and Alexander, who gave Greg the delights of



having rollicking young boys in the house -an experience and relationship he greatly valued. She has weathered the difficulties of these last years and cared for Greg in his illness with devotion and love. Greg knew how lucky he was finding Lea and I'm sure this helped him cope, kept him in such good spirits, right until the end.

But here we are, the dear boys funeral. This tale has been a bit of a saga and there are shed-fulls of funny stories and many true friends that haven't been mentioned. They will have to wait for another time.

After this service we will take his remains and plant them in the soil under a few big Wirras in the cemetery down Strout road. At least now when anyone rings looking for Trott, we will be able to answer with confidence for the first time in 35 years- "He's down the end of Strout Road!"

But if you want to send a few thoughts to the man on this next great journey try addressing them to:

Trotty, C/O the Members Pavillion, Vineyard Oval,
Cloud 9 - just above the Willunga Hills

I will just leave you with Trotty's own reverie he wrote to end that lovely letter to Parky

"In the meantime", he wrote, "I shall stroll back into my beloved vineyard where on a clear autumnal evening you can hear Kickerbuck Whitehead arguing with Coffee Pot Hobbs over on Sand Road as to whether she did or she didn't.

....Down in the paddock below, George Baxendale calls his cows...Come on Molly, Come on Maisie, COME ON MOLL
bugger ya, get in there.

....In winter tying rods the cold is more than compensated for by a pair of Robin Redbreasts playing four rows away or by a thrush giving all that hath ears to hear, the purest of song.

...Then on a warm summers day orange, yellow and black butterflies play hide and seek among the dandelions. A crow flies over giving a long sorrowfull faaaaark. Cameron up-ends his hoe and sharpens its blade with a whetstone from his pocket. A willy wagtail annoys a magpie. A dog barks. The haze flickers. The world stands still."