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Full transcript of an interview with

WYTT MORRO

on 12 April 2001

by Rob Linn

Recording available on CD

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Well, Wytt, this is the second in our series of interviews for the National Wine Centre Oral History. I’m wondering if we could go on, Wytt, and start talking about some of the bigger companies that you dealt with, both from the commercial point of view and from the social point of view. So let’s start with—how about Mildara and the Haselgroves.

WM: Excellent. Because they were probably one of my biggest clients, with Gramps and people like that, but they were a very big client. Now, Ron Haselgrove, of course, was the Managing Director, and my first association with Ron was when he walked into the studio one week-day and asked me to design five sherry labels. I said to Ron, ‘Five?’ he said, ‘Yes. I’d like you to give them every aspect that you can think of related to sherry’. So I did this, and he came back and he took them away, and came back with the one that they liked, and that was the sherry label that he used for many, many years. My second relationship to Ron was that he rang one day and he said, ‘Wytt, I wish to produce a calendar. I’d like a water-colour painting of the winery. Would you fly up tomorrow?’ Which I did. He met me at the plane, took me out to the winery, and said, ‘Wytt, I’d like you to roam around this morning and decide where you wish to paint it from, and at lunchtime we can discuss it’. So this I did, and at lunch he said, ‘Well, Wytt, where do you want to paint it from?’ I said, ‘The middle of the river, Ron’. He said, ‘What?’ I said, ‘Yes, that’s the aspect that’s so good. You’re looking up at the winery, you’ve got the cliffs of the river etc. That’s it’. ‘Okay’, he said, ‘See you in the morning’.
So in the morning, after breakfast, we went to the river’s edge and there were two rowing boats. Ron rowed me out to the centre of the river to where I wanted to paint it from, anchored me down with a couple of anchors and things like that, and said, ‘Right, you’re on your way, Wytt. I’ll pick you up at lunchtime’.

Lunchtime, Ron rows out, tows me back to the river, and we had lunch together. Took me back after lunch and I continued to do the painting. That took me two days.

Ron was delighted with the painting and -

(Tape restarted)

So this is that beautiful painting that shows the winery with the river in the foreground, Wytt.

WM: That’s right. And one little rowing boat at the—Ron’s.

Now that painting, if my memory serves me right, has got a lot of the beautiful green character that you get of the riverside there. There’s that sense of really being right at the river.

WM: Absolutely. When Ron saw the painting, I had some smoke coming out of the stook(?). You know, their boiler room. He said, ‘Hell, that boiler’s not working properly. Shouldn’t be smoking’. (Laughs) Is that being recorded?

Yeah.

WM: Anyhow, that was the beginning. From thereon, I used that watercolour illustration, drawing it in line, on his famous barrel shaped sherry labels for all the sizes. The squat bottle, the 750 etc etc.

And Ron was very clever. He started a series of bird labels. And the first bird label was Chestnut Teal. We put a drawing in colour of the Chestnut Teal duck superimposed on the barrel drawing of the winery of a sherry label. So the only reference that I could get for the Chestnut Teal was the Gould’s(?) Book of Birds, which of course is housed at the State Library. So Valmai got the book for me, and got this book with the Chestnut Teal in it. Took me into a little ante-room where I had to paint it from, and
chained me to the table. She said, ‘Because you could tear the page out and disappear’. And that is very true. She often laughs about that. But that actually did happen.

Anyhow, I drew the bird from the Gould’s(?) book, which were very good of course. They’re renowned. And I couldn’t quite capture the teal green colour under the wings, and Mr Haselgrove wasn’t satisfied with it. So one Friday afternoon when he used to come in, he came in and threw two ducks on my desk—two teal ducks—and he said, ‘There you are, Wytt. You can get the green now’. Which I did, and he was very happy about that. So that was the story of Chestnut Teal.

**So was that pretty typical of Ron Haselgrove’s behaviour?**

**WM:** Entirely. And I think that’s why I liked him. Because he was so unusual.

Anyhow, Ron was quite clever. He also started a series of gems. Sparkling—oh, I forget them all. But I used to borrow these gems from Peter Wendt, who was a friend of Ron’s. Never signed for them or anything. I had an amethyst there for one of them, which was worth about $4,000. This big thing! Took it home, drew it etc. And that series was very popular, too.

Anyhow, I did a lot of work for Ron under the name of Rio Vista. Such as that. Things like that.

Now, at one Royal Show there was an aeroplane displayed, for people to purchase. And May and I thought, ‘Right. Ron drives down from Mildura. Tom Angove drives down from Renmark. A long drive’. So we got all the pamphlets, for two, and sent them to both people, suggesting that they buy a plane. Ron didn’t, because Ron said to me, ‘Thanks for that, Wytt, but I like to think as I’m driving down’.

But Tom Angove, who was a pilot in the War, bought one. And that was the beginning of Tom’s flying down. He used to ring me at eight o’clock in the morning. He said, ‘Wytt, I’ll be there at quarter past nine’. Quite different from when he used to drive down.
Oh, yeah.

WM: So that’s, you know, quite—see, I did other things apart from just designing wine labels. I used to consider all these wineries as though they were my very own. And if they failed, I would’ve failed. So I really put my heart into all of this. Such as—who would think about buying an aeroplane? *(Laughs)*

Personal. This is personal about Ron. We lived very close to Ron in St George’s. He was just around the corner. I knew every member of the family. I think he had five children. I knew his wife very well. And his son, who became Managing Director after Ron died, was Richard. And he used to come around with messages from his father, and what have you, in his school clothes. He was still at Princes. So we did really know each other.

I did their Christmas card every year. I used to stay with Ron at the Grand Hotel in Mildura. And I told you the story about him waking me up one morning at three am? Because he wanted to go out and see how the brandy bobbins(?) were working. So in dressing gown, and what have you, we skipped out to Merbein. Had a look at them and got back by four o’clock.

I used to go to barbecues at Renmark.
I think one of the things that impressed me with Ron—he did a lot of things. He made all the furniture in the winery up there—in the Board Room at least—out of River Red Gums. This enormous table! And things like that. And the Board Room had a very big fireplace that you could stand up in. And he used to get trees, and they’d push the tree into the fire and keep it going all day. They’re quite experiences.

*That’s a little bit about Ron Haselgrove. What about Angoves? That’s a very well known name.*

WM: Indeed. A man unto himself. Tom didn’t socialise very much. He was just Tom Angove, and that was it.
But Tom (this is professionally) was pernickety in regard to things that I used to do for them. I would send a sketch up to Tom, and he would ring me and say, ‘Wytt, that crest is one micrometer out of centre’. On a sketch!

But Tom used to come, mainly, to the studio and brief me. And I remember one day I upset him because he was showing me what he wanted on a piece of paper, and a dilettante doesn’t draw a straight line like that. He goes—hesitantly, he goes across. And I said, ‘Tom, if you want to draw a straight line, draw it. Don’t fool around, going like that’. He’s never forgotten that. And Tom wasn’t quite so (couldn’t decipher word). (Laughter) It really upset him.

Anyhow, the last job I did, before I closed the studio, was Tom Angove’s VSOP Brandy. Bottle, label, carton, the whole works. And the brief that Tom sent me down was a mathematical one. He had an oblong shape, divided it into the triangles of the label, if you look at one, and he put it where all the triangles met at the top. A (sounds like, tear) on one. And then at the bottom of that triangle, four. And that was how he wanted it gradated. And the triangle that came from the top would be ten at the top of the triangle, and at the point where it met the other one, it would be five. So we got that splay of gradated tones. And that was mathematically done.

And the green—that green that he wanted on the label—was to be the black-green of the copper roofs that occur in Ireland.

I know it.

WM: (laughs) I said to Tom, ‘Hell, I don’t know what they look like. You’d better send me over to have a look’.

You would’ve loved that.

WM: Yeah. (laughs) So that was Tom Angove professionally.

Socially, his first visit to our home, he said to us, ‘Call me Tom’. Now we were very stiff stuffed-shirts in those days. We used to call people with
whom I associated Mr so and so, Mr Angove. So he said to May, ‘Look, I won’t come out and wash up those dishes unless you call me Tom’. And May said to him, ‘Righto, Mr Angove’. (Laughter) But every time we went to Renmark we would always go there for dinner, and Tom would always go to the fridge and bring out two ducks that he’d shot, and cook them for us. Tom was a great duck shooter as well. And of course, Tom is the one that bought the aeroplane—the suggestion that I sent down to him.

I think that’s about it, but I worked for Angoves for thirty or forty years. Did all their work.

Now, without being too choosey of your work, Wytt, one of the best known labels you would’ve done—and I’m talking about the general public—would have to have been St Agnes Brandy.

WM: Valmai Hankel says, of course, it’s Barossa Pearl.

Yes, I’m not disputing that but—I’m not selecting because we can get to Barossa Pearl. But we discussed that a little on the last tape. But in terms of Brandy, for Angoves, that was, at least in the 60’s and early 70’s, that was the product for them.

WM: True.

And that Brandy label became synonymous with Australian Brandy for many people. What led you to design a label such as that?

WM: I think Tom Angove would’ve sent me down a rough sketch of what he wanted. Because at that time Angove’s winery was being built. And Tom flew and took aerial photographs of the place. And the architectural ground plan. Because I remember he rang me one day and he said, ‘Wytt, you’ve got the bottling shed two feet to the left of another building. I’d like you to move that across’. (Laughs) This is what Tom was like.

But the other Brandy label that I thought was recognisable was the Brandy I did for Mildara. Ron Haselgrove brought in Hennessy’s Brandy and he said, ‘Wytt, this is the Brandy tradition of the world. I want you to design a label like Hennessy’s’. Which I did, and they’re still using that as well. But
Tom’s was quite unusual for brandy really. And probably that’s why it’s got this memorable market situation.

**Well, one of the things that has surprised me is its durability, Wytt. I would think it’s basically unchanged. Would that be correct?**

**WM:** In a way. And yet when I went to the dinner that Angoves put on for their seventy-fifth year of the brandy, Tom said to me, ‘Wytt, I’m not seeing the things that are going on label-wise. They’ve taken that fine wood-grained effect from the centre of the label, saying that it’s got more dramatic distinction’. So they’re mutilating it now. They’re stripping it back to a simplistic—but there was a lot of work on that. Background drawings, overlays etc, to capture that wood grain. And it’s not printed in trichromatic—four colour. It’s printed in about seven different colours. Greys and browns and blacks and pale greens. No, I would possibly agree with what you’ve said, but I’ve never thought of it like that.

**This is personal, Wytt, so being the interview that it is, when you talked about Barossa Pearl the last time, I mean that was a label of its era that really—in the end it wasn’t just the label. It was the bottle, too, that stuck in people’s minds. St Agnes Brandy, there was nothing else like it. It was so distinctive. And with the capsule you had, that peculiar—what would it be? It’s a green colour but it’s almost an apple-y—Granny Smith green almost. But that became synonymous with that one product that just sold case after case. And I’m sure Barossa Pearl did the same. But in their own way, different.**

**WM:** Different, yeah. I think with Barossa Pearl it was probably the wine that was so appealing to the public.

Exactly.

**WM:** Not the packaging necessarily.

**Well, the packaging and the product were -**

**WM:** Distinctive.

**Distinctive, yeah. Whereas with St Agnes, this was a product that’s been sold for millennia.**
WM: That’s right.

And yet there was something quite unique about it that became peculiarly Angove’s.

WM: And actually when you go into a bottle shop now and look at them—category of brandies—Angove’s is the one. There’s no doubt about it. No, I think you’re right. Thank you.

Well, Wytt, we’ve been talking about the Angoves, and prior to that Ron Haselgrove at Mildara. Now, what about Ron’s brother, Colin, at Chateau Reynella? You would’ve had quite a bit to do with him as well.

WM: Indeed. Indeed. I did a bible full of labels for Reynella. In fact, all their labels, too. But I had no social side to Colin. Purely professional. I used to go down there, we would go to lunch at the Reynella Hotel, and I’d be briefed in the afternoon, and then after work we’d all go down into the cellar underneath Reynella and drink. And really drink. (Laughs) Colin could really drink. He was a good drinker. He was a sailor. He was a great yachtsman.

I remember once I was on Kangaroo Island and Colin pulls up in his yacht at the wharf. And his 2-IC at Reynella—I can’t remember his name but he was a drinker too. And the whole boat was full of wine. (Laughs) They were going to go on a cruise.

And I remember the 2-IC. They were loading something onto the boat and he fell into the bloody sea. (Laughter) But Colin was a rough diamond and very straightforward fellow. Straight shooter. There was no tomfoolery with Colin—pussy footing around. Boom! Straight on the chin.

How would Colin ask you to design a label, Wytt? What was he after?

WM: Colin didn’t really have any input. Very brief. Left most of it to me. And if you look at Reynella’s labels they’re all over the place. There was no pattern to them, like his brother, Ron, used to do at Mildara. I would just
bob up with a design, unrelated really to any series, and Colin would accept it. Very easy to please.
I used to go to barbecues down at Reynella. They used to hold those weekends, and what have you, on the lawns down there. And that was about it with Colin. Did a lot of work for them—a lot of work—but never really got close to Colin. I don’t think he wanted it either. So that’s all I could say about Reynella really.
But it was a nice old place. I think they had cellar one down there, which was dug into the earth. Is that true?

**From memory, that’s right, yes. I’d have to go back and look at that but I think that is right.**

**WM:** And that’s where we used to have a lot of the barbecues—cooked in there. So that’s all for Reynella that I really can remember. Thank you.

*(Tape restarted)*

**Wytt,** we’ve been talking about some very well known names, and there’s another name that comes up again and again in the industry in this era, and that’s Tony Nelson at Woodleys. Now, from our previous interview I know that you and Tony did an enormous amount together. Let’s hear a bit more about him.

**WM:** Right. Tony Nelson was the Austrian Consul here. A very personal being. He would walk into a room, he’d dominate it. He was a big man and he had that personality of authority.
So, at this particular time of my career, I was soliciting work. And I called on Woodleys. And I was fairly well known at the time. And Mr Nelson said to the secretary, ‘Oh, get Morro to come in’. He used to refer to me as Morro, such as Eric Hamilton did—and there was another wine man. Morro. No Wytt, or anything like that. So I came in and he said, ‘Look, I’d like you to appraise my labels’. I said, ‘Certainly’. He said, ‘I’ll get my secretary to lay them out on my desk and we’ll go to lunch’. 
So we went to lunch at—oh, that restaurant on Glen Osmond Road. It was a very nice restaurant. Anyhow, we went to lunch, came back and all these bottles were displayed on the table.
The Colonial.

WM: Colonial. Yeah, that’s where we went to lunch. We used to go there a lot in the old days when it was a real restaurant.

We returned, and all of these bottles were displayed on Tony’s desk. And they all had this contemporary square type of label, and the colour of—and one of the squares was in colour. And that colour changed with the respective wine that was in it. A sherry, port, and what have you.

And I looked at them, and at this particular time Mandrake was a very popular newspaper man. I looked at them and I said, ‘Oh, Mr Nelson, if you could sell wine under those labels, you’d be better than Mandrake’. Well! Within three minutes he buzzed his secretary and said, ‘Mr Morro’s going’. And I was virtually ushered out of the room. And when I got to the door, I turned around and I said, ‘Mr Nelson, if you ever want an Est label, I’ve got one’. And I tapped my head. And then I’m shown to the car, and they opened the door for me to get in. And off I went.

About eight months later, Mr Nelson rang one morning about eight o’clock, and he said, ‘Morro, have you still got that Est label in your head?’ I said, ‘Yes, Mr Nelson’. ‘Good’, he said, ‘put it on paper’.

And, of course, Est is a very wonderful story about a German baron who sent his manservant to all the monasteries of Europe to determine which monastery had the best wine. And when he came to the monastery with the best wine, he wrote on the monastery wall, Est. I understand in Latin meaning, ‘this is it’. And the baron followed and settled in that particular monastery for the rest of his life. And when he died, they pour a barrel of wine over his grave. And that has a certain amount of authenticity, I understood, because I looked it up in the State Library. So any designer could’ve designed a fantastic label. So this I did.

And Est had been on the market for seven years under Mr Nelson’s label. When this came on the market—I designed a special bottle for the label. I did a back label with the story of this baron, what he did etc. It actually hit the top market. They sold them—the first year, they sold a million bottles
of Est. And the second year, they did a capsule—a special capsule—which said ‘First year Est has sold one million bottles’. That’s capsule’s in the State Library.

Anyhow, that was really successful. So that Mr Nelson thought that I was fairly good.

**So he thought he was getting a bargain for the lunch that he lost in the beginning, Wytt?**

**WM:** More so. I think I was paid about £80 for that.

Anyhow, one day I went up to Woodleys and Mr Nelson said to me, ‘I want to show you something, Morro’. So we went outside—and he parked his car behind his office in a little tin shed. And there was a Bentley. He said, ‘Est bought that for me’. So Est did very well.

Anyhow, from thereon, of course, I had entrée into Woodleys. And Woodleys used to market their wine by going around from house to house, knocking on the door. And selling it from door to door.

**I didn’t know that.**

**WM:** Yeah. He had travellers that did that. And he had one—a sherry. Woodley’s sherry. And I said to him one day, ‘Mr Nelson, women are buying this sherry. Not men. Why don’t we do a label that will please the women?’ So I created Woodley’s Three Roses. And the next time they went around to deliver the wine they left a small bottle of this Three Rose Sherry, and they said, ‘We’d like your opinion as to what it’s like’.

So when they came back the next time they asked the people what they thought of the Three Rose Sherry, and they said, ‘Oh, it’s magnificent. The bouquet! It’s a beautiful wine. Yes, we’ll have bottles of that’. Of course, it was the same sherry that they’d been buying always. No change whatsoever. *(Laughs)* So the power of packaging.

**Now that is a very, very notable label, Wytt. What rose did you base that on? Do you recall?**

**WM:** It’s a pink rose.
Is it Queen Elizabeth?

WM: Look, I don’t know. I wouldn’t know one rose from another.

I don’t expect you to. (Laughs)

WM: Actually I drew it from a photograph of roses, and I don’t remember if the photograph was in colour. Could’ve been. But, no, just very appealing, on a nice background etc. And became very popular.

Well, can you tell me a little bit about that marvellous series you did for Tony Nelson’s Coonawarra reds? The historical series, Wytt.

WM: Called the Treasure Chest.

The Treasure Chest.

WM: Yes.
One morning, Mr Nelson rang my home again. And the relationship with Nelson from hereon was that I used to do a lot of talking and designing in Tony Nelson’s sitting room, Sunday morning. We did a lot of innovative labels. We did a series of playing cards. We did an Aboriginal label.

You did a Three Roses playing card series. I’ve got them.

WM: Have you? (Laughter)

You did, didn’t you, Wytt?

WM: That’s right, yeah.
As I was saying, he rang one morning and said, ‘Morro, I’ve found some wines in the old tunnels of a silver mine’. Because Woodleys was at the beginning of a silver mine. The chimney’s still there up on the hill. Anyhow, Nelson apparently had wandered up these corridors and found these little caches of this claret. 1800 bottles of one, 1,000 bottles of another etc etc. And he said, ‘I think there are -’

Eight.
WM: He said, ‘I’ve got eight batches. What I’d like you to do is to do an Australian type of design. One label for each batch’.
So I went out to a print collector called Chard. I spent two days out there. Chard used to go to England, and bring from England, old maps, documents and stuff like that. He was well known. And I went through everything that he had out there, and I picked out manuscripts. For instance, this one here—that illustration there—was on the corner of a French map. The others were different things like that. I took about twelve back to Mr Nelson. We looked over them and he related these different documents I brought back to the strength of the wines.
For instance, he chose one for that horse there called Warship, I think. That was the strongest claret. So because of this gutsy stallion, that was the one that we put on that. The Queen Adelaide, of course, was put on the most delicate. And thus it was that we decided that this drawing would go on that label, on that wine.
So that was it. And I actually drew all the colours in these labels by chromolithography.

I was going to say that they have a very nineteenth century feel to them, Wytt.

WM: That’s right. Because I was a lithographer at Vardons. But the point was this, that I didn’t realise that the plates of this era were pre-sensitised. Where, in my day, they used to grain them, I’d work on them and then they would seal them. So all the different colours that I drew on these plates came off the plate after about 500 sheets. So I did some of those colours four times. (Laughs) I used a very heavy paper.

Almost a parchment, Wytt?

WM: Almost a parchment. Instead of 80 gsm, which is the best weight paper for mechanical labelling, this was about 200. Very heavy.

How did it take the weight?

WM: How did it take the glue?
Yeah, how did it take the glue?

WM: Yeah, they used to pre-soak it with the glue. In other words, put a couple of coats of glue on it before they put it on the bottle. But it wasn’t great volume. So, you know, there was only 900 of this one, and so forth. And Tony Nelson did that. Then I did a little folder called The Connoisseur’s Portfolio. And we put one label on a sheet in the little portfolio and he sent those to the Trade Commissioners throughout the world. And every Trade Commissioner bought one or two cases. So he sold a lot before he let the public have it. But they went in no time.

TAPE 1 - SIDE B

More on Tony Nelson please, Wytt.

WM: Right. Tony Nelson used to like entertaining. Probably partly because of his position as a Consul. He used to have lunches in one of the little caves. And he would cook the lunch himself, and have we there as guests etc. It was very, very nice and very enjoyable. It would go on for the whole afternoon. And Tony would really enjoy himself. I’ll never forget those. And of course, from then on, I used to go to his home and do all this creating that went on.

Kaiser Stuhl’s the topic for conversation.

WM: Kaiser Stuhl was one of our biggest wineries in regard to label printing. Kaiser Stuhl used to ring and order Cold(?) Duck, which they produced, by two million.
Two million?

WM: Yes. And this is one of the things that I’m finding fairly difficult to get with today. I never ever received an order—and it was honourable. You know, a handshake or just a phone call, and that was it. And I find that this doesn’t apply today. Unless you’ve got something written etc they renege on it.

Anyhow, Kaiser Stuhl. I think Kolarovich was the manager.

George Kolarovich?

WM: Yeah, he was the manager in these days. I’m not sure of that because it may’ve gone before Kolarovich came.

Would that’ve been Ian Hickinbotham?

WM: That’s correct. That’s who it was. Yeah, Ian Hickinbotham. The first label I did for them was a map of the Barossa Valley, and I nominated on the map all the different wineries, and it was a personal label. And if Kaiser Stuhl bought wine from you, Rob, I would put a little story about you on the label, this being your wine. And that went on for a long time. That was a very uncommercial looking label but it was very boutique.

Because it was still a cooperative at that point. So this would’ve been for their growers, was it?

WM: That’s right. That’s it exactly.

Yeah, that would’ve been Hickinbotham’s touch exactly.

WM: That’s right.

Anyhow, the Board consisted of the grape growers. That’s who it was. That was a real tussle(?). (Laughs) I mean, the expression of what they wanted to have on the label was quite strange. But anyhow, we got going. There was a Harry Palmer. Now, I don’t know if he was part of Kaiser Stuhl or some wine institute here.
No, I can’t recall that name.

WM: Anyhow, we did a label. Harry used to go to America quite a bit, and Harry felt that he was very well known over there. So we did a label called Harry Palmer’s Selection, which is in the bibles. Silhouette of Harry’s face etc. But it didn’t take off. It was just one of those things.

But then Kolarovich came along. What we used to do: he’d ring me, give me a brief, I’d do a sketch, take it up, we’d all go to lunch to the Nuriootpa hotel.

The Vine Inn.

WM: Yeah, the Vine Inn. And we’d put it on the shelf. And we’d have lunch and look at it and compare it with the other competition. Wines that were on the shelf in that category. And that was it. So that’s the way we kind of did designs for Kaiser Stuhl.

Then there was a Peter Rosenberg. Have you interviewed him?

No, not yet.

WM: Is he on your list?

Oh, yeah, I know about Peter.

WM: Peter was the export manager. Peter used to be in on the lunches, of course. But that was about it. Except that with these people, I never had to quote, and I solicited work for Colotype(?). We’ll speak about Colotype in a minute. Because I used to sell for Colotype. Colotype, in my analysis, were the best printers in Adelaide. And I used to, therefore, like my work to be printed by Colotype. So I would solicit work for Colotype. And I always said to the clients, ‘Colotype is going to be 15% dearer, but I’d like you to use them because they’re the best printers’. And I got a terrific volume of work. Well, it reached a point that Colotype—all their machinery was printing my work at one stage. It was just unbelievable. But that was the story there with Kaiser Stuhl. Thank you.

Wytt, the Teagle (?) family have become extremely well known, not just in Australian printing but all around the world for their labels,
and yet you were really the one who took them into label printing. Is that correct?

**WM:** Quite correct. Let me start at the beginning.

After I left Vardons and joined my father after the War, as Wytt Morro & Son, I was doing work for the manufacturing grocers, Woodsons, Fowlers etc, and it was very poorly paid. Woodsons, or Fowlers, would ring me and they'd say, 'Wytt, I want a flour bag, but we can only spend a penny'. Because flour was sixpence a pound. So they could only spend a penny on packaging. So by the time I worked my thing out, I got a quarter of a cent out of it.

So I was working weekends and nights and Easters and all of this stuff. We were very busy. And I thought that I’ll try and find a more lucrative source of designing. So I looked around at the cosmetic field. And, of course, there was nothing really cosmetic in South Australia. Fauldings were doing a little, which I did. They did a leg something that gave women a colour tan on their legs. And Bickfords, which was the drug houses of Australia, they made a couple of perfumes, but there was nothing there.

So I then looked at the wine industry. And this may be on the first tape. I can’t recall, Wytt. Yes, it may’ve been, I think.

**WM:** I think you said—because I said, 'I think the bottle of wine then was worth about seven and six a bottle'. So I thought, 'Right. I can probably get twopence for a label'. So I did a rough sketch for Stonyfell. And that was accepted, and accepted by Roseworthy College etc. And that was the beginning.

Right. I took this label in to Vardons to print it, because my old firm. And Ralph Price was the Managing Director. He was known as being a terrible man, right throughout Australia. He came from Queensland, and if you went to Queensland they’d say, 'How’s that 'b' down in Adelaide?’ That’s what he was like.
So he said to me when I took it in, ‘You haven’t got any money. How are you going to pay for it?’ I said, ‘Well, when Stonyfell pay, we’ll pay’. ‘Oh’, he said, ‘that’s not good enough’. He said, ‘Leave it with me’. So I then walked from Vardons around to Colotype, who in those days were in Anster Street, off Waymouth Street, and Mr Gill Teakle was then the Managing Director and the owner of the company etc. And I showed it to Gill, and I said, ‘Could you quote on printing this label?’ He said, ‘Oh, we’ve never printed any labels like that. We’re general printers. You know, pamphlets and leaflets and stuff like that. No colour work’. They probably did some labels in a black and white. He said, ‘But I’ll tell you what -‘

And I was a litho man and I used to soft vignettes and stuff like that. But letterpress, you couldn’t do that because you had a hard edge of the metal block to get rid of. Although they used mechanical underlays to soften it, they still showed an edge. He said, ‘We’ll grain them. No-one will see where it edges—the finish’. And this he did. And this he quoted on. I went around to Mr Price the following day and he said, ‘Yes, we’ll do it. I’ve done a survey on Stonyfell. Henry Martin owns 48 houses in Adelaide’, and this, that and the other. He said, ‘I’m quite happy to do it’. I said, ‘I’m sorry, Mr Price. I’m not giving it to you’. And that was the beginning of my association with Collotype. And from there on -

**What was Mr Price’s response to that, Wytt?**

**WM:** I don’t think he cared greatly. I don’t think he cared. It was just another wine label. Because in those days Vardons did all the wine labels in Adelaide. Yalumba etc etc etc. All of them. And the fact that I had trained under Mr Longstaff, who designed all of these labels, was their downfall because when I was in competition, later on in my career, against Vardons, I knew what Mr Longstaff would do. Because he never used reference. He did it all out of his head. And he only had one style of lettering, which I’ve explained in the previous tape. And we just shot them
to pieces. I don’t think that they ever got a job that I was in competition with.

So when you went and solicited work for Collotype, were you then given a commission for that, Wytt?

WM: Partly, at times, if they could afford it. It was depending on the cost of the label. I didn’t care whether I did or didn’t. But in the end I used to get something from Colotype, particularly when Roy and Bob came into it.

This is Gill’s sons? Or brothers?

WM: Roy and Bob are brothers of Gill. Roy actually compounded a document for me that whereby I would get this, and sealed it, and we never ever opened it over the years. It was, you know, a handshake job. So when they could, they did this. Because this used to help me. ‘Cos I put, sometimes, more work into a job than I could charge. And virtually, at the end of every month when I did the costing, I used to look at the cost and think, ‘God, forty hours! We couldn’t have done that’. And I’d charge twenty hours. So that Collotype would pick up the leeway for me. So it was a very happy situation.

Anyhow, Warren(?) Teakle had two children—Heather and Peter. And we used to nurse Peter while they went out to the movies or something. Very much like that. (Laughs) And Heather, the same. And I became very friendly with Roy and Bob, and we used to go fishing together. We’d go down to Cape Jervis, fishing. I’d go shooting with them. Was a very friendly situation.

And I liked Bob very much because Bob was prepared to experiment. He’d experiment on anything. Actually we developed the method of embossing. They made their own embossing compound. The way that embossing was done previously, you would have a die made—a female die—then on the machine plate they would put blotting paper—wet blotting paper—and press that into the female die. And that was the way that people used to emboss.
Really?

WM: Yeah. But Collotype made a compound out of plaster of Paris, we’ll say, and varnish. And we’d put that on the machine, press it into the female die, let it set, then we had two hard embossing plates. And furthermore, we were fishing one day in the Port River and a bottle of TST Brandy floated by—empty one. And Roy whipped it out of the water and said, ‘Look, there’s no embossing on it’. The reason is this, that we used to emboss the sheets cold. So that when you put it into water, or when you put the glue on the back of the glue machinery, the embossing would flatten. So putting the embossed label on a bottle with the glue method of putting them on in those days—wet gum, it used to be called—you’d lose about 10% of the embossing to start with. So this poor old bottle that was in the Port River with all that water—just disappeared. So they made a plate that went behind the female plate with heating elements in it. So that when we embossed the sheet, it embossed the fibres under a hot pressure.

That’s pretty much how it’s still done, isn’t it, Wytt?

WM: Oh, indeed. Yes. But that was a pioneering project. Developed by Bob Teakle. They were good like that. They’d spend any amount of money on experimenting, printing labels better than they were being printed by another printer.

For instance, I was friendly with Don McWilliam. I used to meet him at the aeroplane, when he ever came over on his wine committees. And McWilliam had a label with an old fashioned wagon on it, with grapes in colour, and we thought we could print it better than they were doing. So Bob made a set of plates, printed it etc, and I submitted it to Don. But Don had his associates around him in Sydney. So we didn’t get past Sydney. But that must’ve cost Collotype £1,000. And they were prepared to do that. But they got a lot of work because of it.

Yeah.
WM: Indeed. I mean, we experimented with varnishes—scuff-proof varnishes. Scuffing was a problem with labels. And what we used to do is we’d—Bob would develop a varnish out of floor polish and all this kind of stuff, and we’d put a dozen bottles in a shipper(?)—wine shipper—and send them by road transport to Darwin and back, and see how they scuffed.

Fantastic!

WM: I mean that was really something. They were really pioneers. Then Peter came into the business, and Bob had his son there as well. And Peter-

(Tape restarted)

So, Wytt, you were saying that unlike all the time you spent with Roy and Bob Teagle, when Peter came on board it was really at the end of your career.

WM: That’s quite correct. So I really had nothing much to say about Peter. Only back in the past when he was a young boy. Growing up, he went to some particular college, and this kind of thing. But we were, socially, very close to the Teakles. With their children, and what have you. Bob Teakle and Roy. And actually, professionally, I had really no association with Peter with Collotype.

Wytt, as you know, I spoke to your friend David Crosby just over a week ago. I wonder if you could just amplify some of the things that David was talking to me about with the labels for that company.

WM: Very well. Actually David was General Manager of Dalgety Wine Estates, which means that Dalgety Wines was *couldn’t decipher word* initially. Now, I’ve covered Stonyfell with Mick Auld and Henry Martin etc, but Seagrams bought—I think it was Seagrams—bought Stonyfell, Saltram etc etc, and David was appointed General Manager. So the story of Dalgetys from thereon with David was that we used to have a meeting every Friday afternoon in David’s office at Stonyfell, and Peter Lehmann, who was a winemaker for Stonyfell at the time, would come
down. Bryan Dolan would be in attendance, and Jim Irvine. And we would plan a new product. And I would be briefed on the label. Peter Lehmann’s contribution to these meetings was that he would never put a word on the label that was any form of what it really was. For instance, sometimes we wanted to say that this was a certain style sherry. In actual fact it wasn’t really sherry, it was a style of sherry. And Peter Lehmann would never allow that to be. But as far as Crosby was concerned, he was a very professional forthright man. He’d had many positions throughout his life—career—with other companies and he dealt with the meeting very forthrightly. One day he rang me and he said that the Managing Director of Dalgety Wines in Sydney—and I forget his name at the moment—was retiring, and would I do a special label to put on a bottle for him to present to him at the farewell dinner, which I did. And I investigated, like I did with everybody, and found out that this man was a very keen student of Dickens. So I designed a label with all the episodes of Dickens’ stories around it, and Mr Pickwick himself standing on the table when he presented his Port to his group. I did this as a line drawing, about twelve by fifteen. David had it beautifully framed in velvet and what have you, and took it up. They took a bromide of it and put it on the bottle. But he took the original drawing up, which he presented to this man. And this man was a very hard nut. Renowned for his hardness in business. And he cried. At the meeting. He was just overcome. So that was really something. And about six months later David rang one day and he said, ’Wytt, I think we ought to market that Port under that label’. So they had a very special Port—it was a very special one because it had a limited supply. And we marketed that. And it was sold before it was ever marketed. It was a beautiful Port. And every Friday when I used to go up there, David would have a bottle of this Pickwick Port under his desk and I would have one glass. (Laughs) That was the story of Mr Pickwick.
Anyhow, I did a lot of work for David. And David was very good in regard to briefing. He would never brief me. He’d just possibly make one small suggestion and he’d leave it to me. As a consequence, we won so many awards with Stonyfell’s labelling. In fact, it used to become embarrassing at the national packaging awards presentations because they’d all—Wytt Morro, Wytt Morro, this, that and the other. It became a bit embarrassing. But on one occasion, we won three awards out of the five. *(Laughs)* For all the categories. So with David it was a very happy relationship, and very successful too—marketing-wise. And that’s about it regarding David and Dalgetys.

**David said something to me, Wytt, that many of your clients briefed you on—drew sketches like Tom Angove. Whereas David said, ‘No, Wytt, you design what we need’. Would that be correct?**

**WM:** That’s exactly what I say. And I think that’s why we were fairly successful. Because I would go back and create what I thought, and with no limitations or encumbrances from the client.

**As a creative professional, that must’ve been a marvellous accolade.**

**WM:** Absolutely. Not only an accolade, but freedom. Freedom of design. No, if David said that to you, that is so very true. And I think that was one of the virtues of Stonyfell success, with me.

**And that would be so, I suppose, for some of the Saltram labels that you did, and the Mamre Brook. That series became very famous indeed.**

**WM:** That’s right. Well, you see, Peter was *(couldn’t decipher word)* at Saltrams. I think Peter’s house was -

**Yes, it was.**

**WM:** I did all of Saltram’s work with Stonyfell. Did they have any other wineries?

*(Tape restarted)*
Just after that brief interview, Wytt, you though you’d like to speak a bit more about Rothmans.

WM: Right. We come to the point when Colin Haselgrove was the Managing Director of Reynella. Reynella was eventually bought out by Rothmans. Rothmans, then, had a lot of restaurants and people like that in Sydney and Melbourne that they would supply wine to under their label. So from then on I didn’t work with Colin—I don’t know what happened to Colin—but I was the Rothmans’ consultant in South Australia, because we printed all of these labels in South Australia. And I’m looking at one of them at the moment called the Mexican Kitchen, which was a very famous restaurant in Sydney. And they would send over to me the design and we would reproduce it here, and I would supervise the printing. And I was on a retainer from Rothmans to be their consultant. And the thing was this, that Rothmans said to me at one point of time, ‘Do you have a quality control folder?’ And I said, ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about’. And he said, ‘Oh, we’ll send you one down. We have one for all the cigarettes that we print’.

It was a folder that was threefold. The centrefold was the label that I would’ve approved. The one on the left was 5% lighter, and the one on the right was 5% darker. Now, you only had to give that printer that particular folder for a reprint, and if he didn’t match it, they’d have to do the reprint again. This was accepted throughout Australia. So they sent me this folder over, and a black box. I rang Rothmans and I said, ‘What’s the black box for?’ They said, ‘Oh, you must keep these folders in a black box because ink is light sensitive and it could fade’. So that was the beginning of my quality control situation. And that’s when I used to have a black box at the winery, a black box at Colotype, and a black box in my studio. And when a job was printed, three or five of these folders were compiled and I would distribute them. So that was really a great boost for me, as a design house, from Rothmans, for which I must thank them.
They used to come over occasionally but very seldom. They left it entirely to me. It was a very good set-up. And that was the end of that. Thank you.

Thank you.