

OLD AGGIES

President: Frank Doughty, (02) 9481 8787, fdoughty@tpg.com.au
 Secretary: Graham Linnegar, (02) 9524 3592, helgra@linnegarplumbing.com.au
 Treasurer/Membership: Colin Short, (02) 9876 1018, cbshort@bigpond.com

Alstonville luncheon – Monday 16 September 2019 at Federal Hotel, Alstonville commencing at 11.30 am to eat at 12.30pm – contact Geoff Jacobs 0412 107 727 or gajacobs@bigpond.com

Armidale/Tamworth luncheon – March 2020, 12 noon for 12.30pm start. Bendemeer Hotel – contact Dr Barbara Vanselow 0434 344 992 or bvanselo@gmail.com

Gosford luncheon – Thursday 7 November 2019 – Central Coast Leagues Club – contact Geoff Warr (02) 4342 3226 or 0411 128 936 or warries@optusnet.com.au

Laurieton luncheon – 17 February 2020, Laurieton United Services' Club, 11.30 am, contact Ray Buxton (02) 6559 7001 or rbu87351@bigpond.com

Orange luncheon – Wednesday 9 October 2019, Best Western Ambassador Motel, 11.30 am for 12.30 pm – contact Len Banks (02) 6369 0011 or lmbanks@bigpond.com

Sydney luncheon – Tuesday 10 December 2019, City of Sydney RSL Club, 11.30 am – contact Col Short (02) 9876 1018 or cbshort@bigpond.com

Wagga Wagga luncheon – Thursday May 2020 – contact James Hamilton 0447 225 875 or jnch1950_1@bigpond.com

A message from our Treasurer, Col Short

On 18 April 2019 \$25 was deposited into the Old Aggies Account through the Bendigo Bank but no identification. Would the member please kindly phone the Treasurer, Col Short, on (02) 9876 1018 so that the money can be credited to the member. **It is important when members are making a direct deposit to include their name as it is impossible to trace unknown deposits because of privacy rules.**

From the President's Desk

In March 2019, with the assistance of DPI Communications, our webpage has been updated. It contains the last newsletter (November 2018 and archived July 2015 to May 2018 newsletters. The link is www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are/old-aggies

Name change (again) for the Department. The following is an extract from the Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet's email announcing the changes. Please note that the DPI is now in the Department of Planning Industry and Environment (Environment added after the announcement). The Secretary of DPIE is Jim Betts. Scott Hansen, Director General DPI will report to Gary Barnes, Coordinator-General for Regions, Industry, Agriculture & Resources, who reports to Jim Betts.

Planning and Industry

The Planning and Industry Cluster brings together the functions from the former Planning & Environment and Industry Clusters. The new Cluster will drive the greater levels of integration and efficiency across key areas such as long term planning, precincts, infrastructure priorities, open space, the environment, our natural resources – land, water, mining – energy, and growing our industries. In particular, there will be a redoubling of emphasis on regional NSW. To more effectively deliver services and advice to Government, both the Offices of Environment & Heritage and Local Government will cease to be independent entities and these functions will transition back into the broader Department. The Secretary, Planning & Industry will be Jim Betts, who is currently the Chief Executive Infrastructure NSW.

At the 2019 AGM the following were elected: Frank Doughty (President), Graham Linnegar (Secretary), Col Short (Treasurer/Membership), Lawrie Lucas-Smith (Auditor), John Bowler (Newsletter Editor) and Barry Jensen (Assistant Editor).

The Committee at the March AGM decided to raise the costs of printing and posting the Newsletter to make the 1st increase in subs since Old Aggies was established 33 years ago. The subs are now \$10 as from 1 January 2019 but anyone who has paid in advance of 1st January 2019 will not incur the increase until they are due to pay subs again.

Once again I acknowledge the efforts of our regional group coordinators in organising the various luncheons/gatherings.

My thanks to the Executive for their support and encouragement; it has been my pleasure to be your President and I look forward to your continued support in 2019 and beyond. Our luncheons continue to provide great camaraderie among our former work colleagues, many of whom are considered life-long friends – *Frank Doughty, President*

Editor's note-

We have received very interesting information covering both the history of the department and some very detailed obituary notices for our departed colleagues. Full details will be posted on the NSW DPI website at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are/old-aggies

Archived copies of Old Aggies Newsletters back to 2015 are also available on this site.

Death Notices

Ernest Tindale ex Regional Director of Extension – Ballina died on 8 June 2019.

Alan Jackson ex RVL Armidale died on 21 May 2019.

Stuart Bray ex Water Project Officer Tamworth/ Gunnedah died on 26 April 2019.

Bob Gulliford ex Apiary Officer died on 3 April 2019.

Ross Macindoe ex Poultry Branch and Extension died on 19 March 2019.

Neil Fettell ex Research Agronomist, Condobolin, died on 17 March 2019.

John Windsor ex Clerical Branch died on 8 February 2019.

Tony Moody ex Economics Branch, Orange on 4 January 2019.

Frank Tome ex Wagga Institute died on 1 Nov 2017.

Noel Baker ex Economist died on 13 September 2017.

Frank Tome

Frank Tome had a long and interesting career with the Department, starting as a Border Crossing Inspector at Boggabilla in the mid 1950s. He transferred to Tamworth in 1964 as a Stock Inspector then to Wagga where he was responsible for Noxious Weeds and Insects and was integral to the Plague Locust control efforts particularly in the Riverina. After surviving a very severe helicopter crash in 1969 which limited his mobility and ability to travel Frank was offered a position at Wagga Institute where his photographic skills were utilised. In the demolition of some old stables a box of old glass photographic slides was found which led to Frank developing an interest in the history of the Institute and publishing a book *The Pictorial History of agricultural Research at Wagga 1893–1985* in 1988 after his retirement.

Tony Moody memories

Tony died unexpectedly on 4 January 2019. He had documented his time at NSW DPI for 29 and a half years from 1987. Tony has mentioned some of the interesting issues about the interaction with farmers and our legislative requirements. The full article is on the NSW DPI website at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are/old-aggies



Tony Moody a photo taken in 2015.

Commonwealth Agricultural Extension Grant – Project 208, 1954–1962

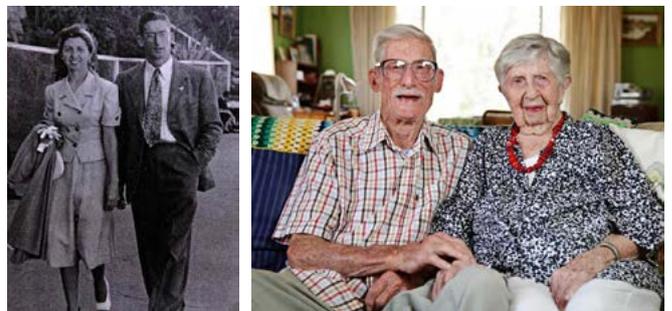
Ray Buxton has written an article on his early career in the department where he was responsible for the CESG on improving mechanisation in the cropping industries. The full article is available on the NSW DPI website at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are/old-aggies

Collaroy Plateau couple celebrate 70 years of marriage

The NSW Department of Agriculture Retired Officers Association (Old Aggies) congratulate Cliff Parker and wife Joan on their 70th wedding anniversary, a great achievement after a fulfilling and enjoyable life. Cliff was drafted into the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) in 1940 and saw active service in New Guinea and Borneo. After discharge in 1946 he rejoined the Department and married Joan in 1948.

Cliff served in many roles in the Clerical and Administration Division, including Accounts and Staff branches, Wagga Agricultural College and retiring from his last position at the Biological and Chemical Institute at Rydalmere in 1982.

Since retirement Cliff has involved himself in community services as well as caring for Joan who lost her sight through macular degeneration. They had six children, 12 grandchildren and five great grandchildren who combined to celebrate 70 years of marriage with Cliff 96 and Joan 95 years of age – Photos courtesy the *Manly Daily*



Early days of the department

In the 1880's the government of the day purchased areas of land throughout the various farming areas of the state. This was to establish experiment farms to show local farmers better methods, establish high class breeding herds of livestock, and to conduct breeding experiments to increase the quality of crops.

From these early days trial work was conducted by the local Managers of the experiment farms in their allotted districts. My grandfather, John Wilson conducted trials of Fitzroy maize and potatoes on his property *Illawarra* at Coramba, details of these trials and a photograph of my grandfather and Andrew Morton his neighbour, are in the first edition of the *Farmers Handbook* in 1915.

From these early beginnings the managers of the farms carried out off-farm extension, this was the beginning of the extensions services that grew in the 1930's.

The Department established high quality breeding herds/flocks on the various farms throughout the State to supply male and female stock to farmers for the improvement of their livestock. Trangie Farm had strong wool merino's, Border Leicester sheep and Aberdeen Angus cattle. Glen Innes Farm had fine wool Merino and Jersey cattle. Wollongbar Farm had Guernsey cattle and several varieties of pigs, namely Tamworth, Berkshire, Large White, Middle White and Large Black. Grafton Farm had AIS cattle, Berkshire, Tamworth, Large White and Middle White pigs. Hawkesbury College had a collection of sheep to demonstrate to students along with a small Romney Marsh breeding flock. Also various pigs namely Tamworth, Berkshire, Large White, Middle White, Poland-China, Wessex-Saddleback, Landrace. Leghorn poultry, Arab, Clydesdale and Percheron horses (stallions). Hawkesbury also had dairy cattle, Jersey's and Friesians. Berry Farm had Ayrshire cattle and Yanco Jersey cattle. Wagga Wagga Farm, had medium wool merino, Dorset Horn sheep and Jersey cattle. Temora Farm had Polwarth and Corriedale sheep. Cowra Farm had Southdown, medium wool merino. I don't know if Condobolin had any livestock.

My father joined the Department of Agriculture in 1921 along with a group of other persons who graduated at Hawkesbury in 1920. The first female who graduated from Sydney University was Lorna Byrne. My dad used to say "she is the girl amongst the boys". Also joining the Department in 1921 was Dick Darragh. In the mid forties, Dick was District Agronomist for the Grafton District. In the 1950's he was appointed Manager of the Grafton Experiment Farm and Jack Flynn took over his role as District Agronomist.

About 1929, those who joined the sheep and wool branch and worked on the experiment farms looking after the Department sheep blocks, were all appointed to a district. Wildman, Northwestern District, Headquarters at Tamworth. Cotsell to the Northern Highlands district, he was stationed at Glen Innes. Beveridge was stationed at Central West, Dubbo. Fitzsimmons was stationed in the Southern Highlands, Goulburn, (He was killed in a railway level crossing accident). Daley was stationed in Southwest District at Wagga Wagga (The only officer appointed non H.D.A. as he gained his experience at the Wagga Wagga farm. Most likely when my father was there in the mid 1920's.) Cantrill was stationed in Central West, Orange. McPhee was stationed in Southern Area, Headquarters Cootamundra.

My father, Howard Wildman met my mother Maud Wilson, in the late 1920's whilst working on the Glen Innes Experimentation Farm looking after the Merino flocks. Maud would regularly help the managers' wife Mrs Sparks with domestic duties on many occasions. Howard Wildman was a Merino man and specialised in quality Merino wool. The Glen Innes flock was fine to very fine class wool.

I can remember during the early 1930's whilst dad was still alive, going with him from Tamworth to Glen Innes and being met at the station by one of the staff in a horse and sulky. We stopped at the experiment farms quarters which were used by the Dreadnought boys. I can remember going down to the shearing shed with dad all rugged up and being put in one of the wool bins when the first fleeces came off to keep warm. Mum must've been in hospital for some reason or another.

The department developed an extension service where I remember in 1949 whilst at college Parry-Brown appeared on the scene to give a lecture on extension, which was subsequently included in our 3rd year exam.

That section of the department called 'The Extension Section' contained Officers namely Jim Slater, Nina Martindale, Jock Potter and later Ben Amendt. I am not sure exactly how the Division of Extension Services occurred as I joined the department while Potter was in control. Potters tenure was short lived as he had a fatal accident when he slipped and fell off a waterfall while taking photographs in North Queensland, then Ben Amendt became the chief of the Division.

Lorna Byrne established 'The Women's Extension Service' about that time.

The Agricultural Bureau prospered under its female President, Beryl Ingold and I was appointed Southern Organiser. I held this position for approximately 4 years until one of my superiors in the Department decided it was too expensive to keep me on the road. Therefore my appointment was terminated. The curious thing was that my father was judging the Agricultural Bureau's North Western Merino Ewe Competition when he caught a chill in December 1935 which developed into Pneumonia and eventually took his life on 3rd December 1935. It was uncanny to say the least, that we were both working for the Agricultural Bureau when our positions were terminated.

I would like to raise a couple of questions;

Q1. "Who inherited the investment of the Agricultural Bureau?"

Q2. "Who reportedly received the reputed \$250,000 of the Junior Farmer Rural News funds?"

I was not closely associated with either organisation when closure took place in the 1970's-1980's.

– John H Wildman

Neil Fettell

Neil Fettell, for many is synonymous with farming the red brown soils of Central West NSW. Even though his knowledge seemed unlimited he continued researching new angles on crop/variety choice, soil water retention or nitrogen availability – that was part of his fabric for his entire working life. He was a giant of a man in his field.

Neil died on the 17th of March 2019 after medical options were exhausted.

Fortunately Neil had an opportunity to gather with his family and friends in late February for a night of affirmation, recollection and good humour. He was inspiring recalling his life as a research scientist, a wonderful tribute for all and more especially his family. Like many in that era he attended Hurlstone Agricultural High School (dux of Hurlstone 1965, a fierce debater and representative tennis player) and Sydney University (first class honours). We learnt he virtually wrote his own job description



Tim, Neil, Shirley and Monica Fettell at the farewell and thank you dinner for Dr Fettell held at the SRA Pavillion on Wednesday, 27 February. Image Credit: Kathy Parnaby, The Condobolin Argus.



Graham McDonald, Peter Stuckey, Bruce Watt, Dr Neil Fettell, Paul Adam, David Watt and Rodger Todd at Dr Fettell's farewell and thank you event. Image Credit: Kathy Parnaby, The Condobolin Argus.

for Condobolin as he first gained employment. He mentored many scientists working co-operatively in the low rainfall zone. He was a community man with a small farm. He certainly knew what he wanted as a researcher and stuck to his guns. In his life, science and communication went hand in hand. He had a wonderful ability to communicate with farmers and at the same time was encouraging, helpful and challenging to his colleagues. His background is very well captured on the GRDC website <https://grdc.com.au/news-and-media/news-and-media-releases/misc/2014/02/neil-fettell>

For many Neil was a great source of advice or assistance in crop physiology, statistics or other agronomic science during his career with NSW DPI (and later with Central West Farming Systems).

He was a man with a real presence in every way – a great bloke large in stature, with a huge knowledge of low rainfall agricultural practices, and a way of devising and managing research trials that was a model for others to aspire to.

Neil was delighted and humbled when the CWFS research site at Condobolin was named the Fettell Centre. RIP Neil.

– John Sykes, Don McCaffery, Ali Bowman, Kevin Moore, John Oliver

Frederick Stanley Benecke 1931–2018

Fred was in the first class (1949–1951) to graduate with the new Wagga Diploma in Agriculture. He joined the NSW Department of Agriculture in 1953 as a Livestock Officer (Apiculture) and 1955 was appointed District Apiary Officer for northern NSW, based at Tamworth. There he was responsible for disease control and apicultural extension over about one-third of NSW.

He was a regular contributor to radio, and later, to television; and a prolific author of Departmental bulletins and articles for the Agricultural Gazette, beekeeping journals and newspapers. While in Tamworth he owned an apiary of about 100 hives. In 1970 Fred was in the first intake to the new Hawkesbury Diploma in Rural Extension course at HAC.

Fred left the Apiary Branch in 1971 when he was appointed Regional Director of Extension for the North West Agricultural Region, based in Gunnedah. He moved to Head Office in 1974 as Deputy-Chief of the Division of Extension Services and became Chief of the Division in 1978. The Division had a total staff of 350 and was responsible for the Department's publications, its regional extension services, the Agricultural Bureau, the Rural Youth Organisation and the Department's remaining three agricultural colleges. After changes to the Department's divisional structure Fred became Executive Assistant first to the Deputy Director-General then to Director-General.

Following retirement from the Department in 1990, Fred became Secretary of the NSW Commercial Apiarists' Association. He retired from the Association in 1996, but continued to be involved in industry affairs, helping with submissions to Government and writing the *Code of Practice* which was adopted by the Association and accepted by Government. An invitation by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation to update and combine a number of previous reports on beekeeping practice led to the publication in 2003 of *Commercial Beekeeping in Australia*.

Fred joined the Retired Officers' Association at the behest of Pat Hanley and in turn became Secretary/Treasurer; Co-Patron first with Fred Butler then with Ken Hutton; and, more latterly, Editor of this newsletter – *Notes prepared by Fred Benecke and Frank Doughty*

Wollongbar Reunion Dinner

There will also be a reunion dinner for ex staff on Friday 23rd August at the Summerland House with No Steps cost will be approximately \$50. Anyone interested can contact Leanne Munro on 6626 1200 or email leanne.munro@dpi.nsw.gov.au and to arrange for the purchase of tickets.

Open Day

Wollongbar Primary Industries Institute

Saturday 24th August 2019

10am – 3pm



- ◆ Guided tours
- ◆ Historical displays
- ◆ Latest research
- ◆ Kids activities
- ◆ Food

Where are we?

1243 Bruxner Highway Wollongbar NSW 2477
Ph: (02) 66261200



James Pratley OAM

Emeritus Professor Jim Pratley at CSU Wagga has been recognised as a member of the Order of Australia for his contribution to agricultural science. He believes that the award has been part of a great contribution by family, colleagues, students and the farming community in the long hours under the rough conditions of the Australian environment.

Professor Pratley said that people often dismiss agriculture, but it provides the foundation of Australia and a good quality of life. He believes that agriculture does not get the recognition that it deserves for the role it plays in the lives of Australians so it was nice to receive the award on behalf of agriculture.

A Senior's version of Facebook

For those of my generation who do not, and cannot, comprehend why Facebook exists: I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook while applying the same principles. Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, what I will do later and with whom. I give them pictures of my family, my dog and of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch, and doing what anybody and everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations, give them 'thumbs up' and tell them I 'like' them. And it works just like Facebook. I already have four people following me: two police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist.

Sydney Christmas lunch, December 2018



President Frank Doughty, George Bennett and Treasurer Col Short.

Royal Easter Show Award for Peter Olsen

Retired Senior Technical Officer from Wagga Peter Olsen was presented with the Royal Agricultural Society's Champion Award at the 2019 Easter Show in recognition of his contribution to the olive industry and the show competition.

In 2003 Peter received professional training under the International Olive Council guidelines to evaluate and grade the quality of olive oil. He has been involved in the Fine Food Section of the RAS As a steward, Judge and now Chairman of Judges.

Soils and Archaeology at Parramatta – the site of Australia’s first successful wheat crop

Roy Lawrie, Soil Scientist (semi-retired), February 2019

The soils where the first successful wheat crops in Australia were grown have recently been uncovered by archaeologists working in Parramatta. The early cropping soils have been preserved by being buried under other soil material brought in as fill.

Historical background

After the failure of the first wheat crop at Farm Cove in Sydney, the agricultural settlement at Rose Hill (later Parramatta) was established at the Government Farm on river flats about 1 km upstream of the tidal influence. The crop was sown late, in June and July 1789, after waiting for a fresh supply of seed grain from Cape Town.

The harvest, in December 1789, produced over 200 bushels (7280 litres) of wheat, a low yield equivalent to only about 600kg/ha. The fields were cultivated with hoes and no manure or other fertiliser was used, apart from the ashes of the native vegetation. All the wheat was set aside as seed for the next crop. More land was cleared for the 1790 crop on the flats south of the river. Yields up to 13–14 bushels/acre (870–943 kg/ha) were achieved.

In July 1790 the township of Parramatta was laid out on the south side of the river. Cultivation continued around the early town and in adjoining areas, including the land at James Ruse’s farm.

Archaeological sites

There have been many sites investigated in urban Parramatta since the 1980’s, as part of the consent conditions for high-rise development (see photo 1). This accumulated experience, together with associated soil and pollen studies, has helped archaeologists gain a good understanding of the kind of soils and vegetation present at the time of settlement.

Soils from two sites associated with the earliest period of cropping were found during the last 3 years. One soil is on the northern edge of the 1789 Government Farm, a rather sandy profile exposed during construction of Western Sydney Stadium. The other is south of the river, on more silty soil near the former post office on Macquarie Street. Just a few metres away intact furrows were discovered underneath a concrete roadway (see photo 2).

The Government farm was located on a series of eroded river terraces north of the river. The higher ground is 2–3 m above the 1 in 100 year flood level. Although the soil appears to be undisturbed some of its chemical properties (including the pH) have been affected by materials moving downwards from the surface, either from the modern fill on top of it, or

from a surface soil that was made alkaline long ago by additions of ash.

Testing for nutrients and chemical contamination

Levels of major plant nutrients and organic matter in the cultivation layer were mostly low, in some cases really low. A Colwell test for phosphorus (a test normally used to estimate fertiliser requirements) of the well-preserved Macquarie Street topsoil showed a concentration of only 6.3 mg/kg; the grain in a 1 tonne/ha wheat crop would use up half of this. On the positive side its pH is 5.7, not acidic enough to need lime or lock up any applied fertiliser phosphorus.

The soils and crop growth

The profiles at Macquarie Street are more silty and clayey than those at the Government Farm, especially in the subsoil. This difference might have been important in 1790, described as a drought year by the early colonial officials. With the crop being grown on both sides of the river in 1790 the higher water retention of the silty soils may have produced better growth than the sandy loams like those at the Government Farm.

Another factor behind the higher yield may also have been an improvement in cultivation techniques. James Ruse hints at this in his comments at the time about his first crop:

My land I prepared thus: having burnt the fallen timber off the ground, I dug in the ashes, and then hoed it up, never doing more than 8 or perhaps 9 rods in a day, by which means, it was not like the government farm just scratched over, but properly done; then I clod-moulded it, and dug in the grass and weeds: - this I think almost equal to ploughing. I then let it lie as long as I could, exposed to sun and air: and just before I sowed my seed, I turned it all up afresh.

Perhaps the ground at other nearby crops was prepared in a similar way. Ruse was hoeing 40–45 m of furrow each day (a rod is 5.03 m long – there are 4 rods in a chain of 22 yards). He sowed an acre and a half during May and June 1790 using three bushels of seed from the Government Farm.

Concluding comments

Following a visit to Parramatta in November 1790, marine officer Capt. Watkin Tench inspected the ripening cereal crops, describing them favourably in his 1793 book. He reported however that supervisor Henry Dodd was doubtful about future prospects and did not think that areas could be replanted without “a large supply of cattle” to provide manure. Dodd may have been thinking of the Government Farm field where the second crop was growing. The evidence from soil testing at Parramatta archaeological sites points to phosphorus as the nutrient most likely to limit crop growth for the early colony.

Cereal cropping did not persist on the same field at Parramatta for more than a couple of years due to declining yields. At the time there were no cattle to supply the manure needed to replace the nutrients taken up by the crops. Manure remained scarce and expensive for decades.

Subsistence cropping, with no draught animals or adequate farm tools, meant that repeated food shortages and no abundant surpluses continued until late into the 1790's. This was about the time when farming on the fertile Hawkesbury river flats began to expand and achieve some degree of permanence. In 1793 James Ruse left his farm near Parramatta, becoming one of the first settlers on the Hawkesbury. Two hundred and twenty years later these flats are still being farmed successfully.

Acknowledgements

This work could not have been undertaken without the support from several consultant archaeologists, particularly from Mary Casey, of Casey and Lowe P/L.



Photo 1 A typical archaeological site in Parramatta, the former post office site at Macquarie Street in November 2015, with archaeologist Tori Stening. The dark patches in the centre are the original topsoil, found preserved beneath the remains of colonial houses.



Photo 2 (Casey & Lowe P/L): These furrows were found in early 2016 when the concrete roadway of Civic Place near the former post office was carefully removed. The drab yellowish grey soil in the furrows appears to be from the sub-surface soil, with darker, greyer, topsoil in between (possibly once formed up into raised beds).



Photo 3 Most of the root zone was removed in July 2017 from the elevated river terrace north of the Government Farm. A huge pit 5m deep had been excavated within the terrace to accommodate the whole of the football field, revealing briefly the colourful mottles of the deep subsoil. It was covered up again by a drainage system and thick sandy topdressing.

Updated Mailing List

As you all would appreciate, the cost of postage has increased dramatically. In an effort to keep our costs down we ask that anyone who would prefer to receive the newsletters via email to advise the editor John Bowler at jkpbowler@bigpond.com

Please advise the Secretary/Treasurer of changes to contact details.

Mr/Mrs/Dr Christian Name Surname

Address

..... Postcode

Phone Number Mobile

Do you wish to receive the Newsletter by email? Please tick

Email address

Old Aggies luncheon at Laurieton

Numbers were down which of course is a factor for the organisation. members getting older, more medical appointments and family commitments etc. Despite this those who attended had a good meet up and there was plenty of conversation in the room. So much so that 3.00 pm came around and we had to clear the room for the staff to clean up. We had Alan Smith and Wendy Morrison attend after a few years of missing out on coming. It was great to see them and enjoy their input to the day. Also first timers Terry and Bev Bright added to the day. As usual we had the support of Geoff Jacobs and Owen Simpson from Ballina and Kingscliff plus Peter and Marie Mooney along with Chris Ballintine from Sydney. Other regulars came from the area and some travelled from further afield. Apologies included our President Frank who could not make it this year so we did not have our usual update on news of the Department in general. With the smaller numbers the lack of news was made up of the funny incidents and experiences members had whilst working in the Department. I can advise the stories are very entertaining. The expansion of Port Macquarie is taking in some of our Old Aggies and only if we could get their interest numbers on our luncheon day would be considerably swelled. Apart from taking a "Paddy Wagon" around and collecting them I am at a loss as to how to attract those Old Aggies who do not attend. Invitation notices and emails do not appear to be successful – *Ray Buxton*

Riverina/Murray Regional Aggies luncheon

The Riverina/Murray regional Aggies annual luncheon was held at Wagga Wagga on Thursday 9 May 2019

The annual luncheon was held at the function room of the Thomas Blamey Tavern Lake Albert. The luncheon was attended by 20 retirees (former 2 Station Managers, and 2 Directors) and spouses and there were 40 apologies (a number of members holidaying or health issues). We welcome all people especially the travellers George Stevens from Yanco and John Bowler from Orange. We acknowledged the passing of and the contribution made to Agriculture of Allan Gow (16/9/18), Herb Stockley 94 yrs (9/11/18), Frank Tome 91yrs (1/11/17), John Fisher 70yrs (3/9/18), John Whitely DA Griffith, Gwen Day 78yrs (15/6/18) & Ritchie Munro (29/1/18).

We welcomed John Bowler former Manager at Yanco AI. John is the current editor for the Aggies newsletter. We welcomed first timers Brian and Ann Reid. Brian worked at the WWAI as a storeman from November 1974 (one month before Kerry Taylor and 2 months prior to my starting at the WWAI) and finishing January 1990.

We welcomed first timer Kayleen Glasson who commenced in the WWAI office team August 1979

replacing Georgie Wells. Kayleen left the WWAI December 1985.

We welcomed Amanda Tilyard (nee Lewington) who commenced in the WWAI office team December 1982. Amanda left in November 1986.

Dr Brendan Scott and Jan have sold their property of 46 acres off Harris Road to developers and relocated to Coast at Broughton NSW in 2018. Brian Dear and Peter Lockley moved to Canberra. Malcolm Glennie Holmes gave an update on his movement in the City. Bruce and Val Hinkley relocated to Gold Coast early in 2018.

Peter Olson was present at the luncheon and appropriate recognition was given to him in relation to his recent award of Royal Agricultural Show Society of NSW Champions. The award recognises peter's long term commitment to agricultural industry (see further details in this newsletter).

CSU emeritus professor James Pratley, formerly with Agricultural, known as Jim, has been recognised as a Member of the Order of Australia for his work in agricultural science (further details on attachment).

It was a successful year for NSW DPI with Dr Felicity Harris winning the Emerging Leader Award with a \$15,000 travel bursary and Deb Slinger was fortunate to win the Recognising and Rewarding Excellence Award with a \$25,000 travel bursary.

Professor Deirdre Lemerle spoke about the accomplishments and recognition by industry of the late John Fisher. Deirdre advised that there were at least 5 former Department DG's at John's memorial service. The group proposed a toast to the life of John.

The main emergency during the past 12 months has been the drought adversely affecting farming communities and associated agricultural type service industries. A number of farmers have run out or are running out of stock feed and stock water. Mental health of the farming families is a major concern due to the affects of the drought situation. A number of funding raising appeals have been carried out and both State (Rural Assistance Authority & Local Land Services) & Federal Governments have made contributions, grants, interest low loans available to the farming fraternity. The farming community needs our support in many ways.

Announcements were monthly coffee mornings happen on the 1st Thursday at 10am of each month now at the Commercial Club Wagga Wagga.

People enjoyed a two course meal with refreshments in the function room. There were a number of yarns, good fellowship, and a lot of reminiscing, relationship building, exchange of contact details, and smiling faces. It was one big happy family.

– *James Hamilton Riverina/Murray Coordinator*