

OLD AGGIES

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Alstonville luncheon –

September 2021 at Federal Hotel, Alstonville. Contact Geoff Jacobs 0412 107 727 or gajacobs@bigpond.com

Armidale/Tamworth luncheon –

March 2021, Bendemeer Hotel – contact Dr Barbara Vanselow 0434 344 992 or bvanselo@gmail.com

Gosford luncheon –

November 2021 – Central Coast Leagues Club – contact Geoff Warr (02) 4342 3226 or 0411 128 936 or warries@optusnet.com.au

Laurieton luncheon (cancelled) –

February 2021, Laurieton United Services' Club, contact Geoff Jacobs 0412 107 727 or gajacobs@bigpond.com

Orange luncheon –

October 2021, Best Western Ambassador Motel. Contact Len Banks (02) 6361 7677 or banks@lmbanks.com.au

Sydney luncheon –

December 2021, City of Sydney RSL Club. Contact Col Short (02) 9876 1018 or cbshort@bigpond.com

Wagga Wagga luncheon –

May 2021 – contact James Hamilton 0447 225 875 or jnch1950_1@bigpond.com

Subscriptions \$10 per annum due

Subs can be paid by direct deposit into the Commonwealth Bank BSB 06-2263, Account No 00903542, Account Name Agricultural Retired Officers Association (please add your surname) or by cheque to Colin Short, 27 Chesterfield Road, Epping NSW 2121.

From The President's Desk

This year is the 39th year of Old Aggies as NSW Department of Agriculture (now DPI) celebrated 130 years with the opening in November of the new Headquarters in Orange. The Department first moved to Orange in January 1992.

Unfortunately due to COVID restrictions luncheons were cancelled except for Laurieton and Tamworth. These two regional luncheons were held prior to the lockdown in NSW. Reports from these functions were published in the June 2020 Newsletter. Old Aggies luncheons/gatherings are a great way to renew friendships. Despite the limited opportunity for members to meet at traditional luncheons contact continued between individual members during the pandemic. Hopefully we will be able to hold our luncheons/gatherings in 2021.

May the New Year bring good health and peace to you and your families.

Frank Doughty, President

Editor's note

I apologise for the lateness of this newsletter with COVID, Christmas and ageing process all contributing.

We were all saddened to hear of the death of our President's wife Beatrice Doughty on 29 November 2020. We pass on our condolences to Frank and his family.

Last year was disappointing for our regional functions and the flow of information but fortunately there has been some great contributions from our members.

With the uncertainty of COVID restrictions, details of regional lunches have not been finalised. All members are requested to contact the various co-ordinators directly.

Cost prevent us from printing our newsletter in colour but those that receive the newsletter by email do have the benefit of the colour photographs so I would urge you to provide your email addresses to take advantage of the presentation.

We request all members to send in articles and photographs of the achievements of ex Aggies and any gatherings that would be of interest.

Unfortunately there has been a few more deaths. Details of obituary notices, eulogies and information on departmental service would be appreciated to circulate to our members.

I would also like to express my appreciation to Barry Jensen for his expertise in the production of this newsletter.

John Bowler

Stephen Wedd – 1947–2020



Former NSW Agriculture officer, Stephen Wedd, died in Canberra on 23rd May last year following an 18 months' battle with brain cancer. Stephen worked for the Department from 1972 to 2008 in two different roles, punctuated by 10 years at the Orange Agricultural College and during its transition to a university.

After retirement from Agriculture, Stephen and his wife Ruth moved to the ACT, eventually into an apartment close to the Canberra CBD. He worked part-time for both the National Museum of Australia and Australian Parliament House in an education role. He was enthusiastic about these jobs. Stephen is survived by Ruth and her family, as well as two children from his previous marriage to Kerri.

Stephen Wedd's working career was nothing ordinary. He trained in the UK as an engineer qualified to work on ocean liners. It was when he was with P&O and travelled to Australia (several times we think) that he decided to migrate as part of the assisted passage scheme. We recall him taking out Australian Citizenship at an Australia Day Ceremony in Robertson Park, Orange.

He joined the Department as a Farm Mechanisation Officer at Glenfield. His first country appointment was to the Lismore district. It was in 1983 that Stephen transferred to the Orange Regional Office in Kite Street where he continued his extension role in Farm Mechanisation. He established links with the Orange Agricultural Research and Veterinary Centre and helped the horticultural industry by evaluating orchard spraying equipment. He was also available throughout the Central Western Region to assist other local agricultural sectors with engineering issues.

In a period of some uncertainty within the Department which saw the Farm Mechanisation Unit disbanded, Stephen took up a post at Orange Agricultural College. He lectured in farm mechanisation and development. Somewhere in this period, he completed an external tertiary qualification in website development through UTS. He also assisted Department of Agriculture staff present courses on changes to pesticide laws to farmers and others from Lithgow to Enngonia. Changes within the university sector prompted his return to the Department of Agriculture, this time within its fleet management section at Head Office, by then located at Orange.

Stephen Wedd had an active and alert mind, especially with calculations, a skill useful in the field for all manner of engineering related tasks. He was a keen cyclist and travelled the many cycle paths in and around Canberra. Stephen enjoyed singing in choirs and choruses and took part in musicals staged at Orange and other places where he lived. He became a member of male choirs at Orange and Canberra. Stephen remained a member of the Australian Rugby Choir until shortly before his death. We miss him as a friend and former work colleague.

*By Angus McDonald and Graham Thwaite –
Photo courtesy Australian Rugby Choir*

Recent deaths

Cliff Parker passed away, 15 November 2020. Cliff joined the NSW Dept. Of Agriculture as a clerk in 1946 after military service in New Guinea and Borneo and retired in 1982 after having many roles in the clerical division including the Staff Branch, Accounts Branch and his last role was Executive Officer at the Biological and Chemical Research Institute, Rydalmere from which he retired. In the years of his retirement, Cliff was required to undertake the duty of carer for his wife Margaret who was legally blind. Cliff was 98 years of age.

Mike Stannard died on 18 December 2020.

Bob Sproule died on 24 December, 2020

Ray Buxton died in his sleep on Wednesday 2 September 2020. Ray was a long time member of the Laurieton branch of Old Aggies. Ray took over the role of Laurieton coordinator from the late Alan Lee a few years ago. Earlier this year he contacted me regarding the handing over of the organiser's role due to health reasons.

John Betts, District Agronomist, Grafton, died 21 November 2020

Further information on the contribution of these officers have made to the Department would be appreciated for the next issue.



Eric Darley and Col Short after his son Ian took us on an outing to the Kokoda Memorial Track Walkway at Rhodes. Eric is now in a Nursing Home in Wahroonga.

Lemons in the cold country

By Daniel Pedersen,

Courtesy *The Land*, 20 Sept 2020

The ubiquitous lemon tree is largely uncelebrated compared with other citrus varieties in Australia, yet at the moment trees across the country are dripping with fruit.

Thought to have originated in southern China, northern Burma or Pakistan, a genomic study has established it as a natural cross between a bitter orange and a citron, one of three species from which all citrus trees have developed.

Now anyone who lives in frost-prone areas will be aware the lemon tree can be nipped by the cold.

But growing lemons in country almost guaranteed at least one dump of snow a year presents real challenges.

Enter Bill Trimmer, of Forest Reefs, who has mastered the practice.

Sure he had an advantage to most, he spent 41 years with the NSW Department of Agriculture, mostly involved in fruit production.

Standing at the northern side of a corrugated iron shed Bill shows me his two oldest trees, a Meyer lemon and a Eureka.

"The Meyer is three parts lemon, one part orange," says Bill.

The Meyer is about 10 years old and flanked by the eight-year-old Eureka, which has outgrown the Meyer.

"Eureka is the main crop grown commercially in NSW.

"They'll sometimes crop twice a year elsewhere in the state, but not here," he said, chuckling.

A 60-kilogram haul

However, the two trees produced 60 kilograms of fruit for him last year and there's a good load on them now.

"I only watered them a couple of times last year, citrus trees will let you know when they need a drink."

Moving right along there's a poor man's orange, bought as something else but not true to type, as apparently happens with citrus varieties sometimes.

"They're bitter and seedy, though you might make a marmalade from it."

On that point, Bill laments the current dearth of jam makers locally.

In another sheltered spot he has a Seville orange, a Washington navel, a pink grapefruit and a seedless Valencia.

Of the Valencia, he says it's a fine juice tree, but reckons most of the citrus varieties deserve a place in people's backyards.

"They're not a big tree, and of course are very valuable," he said. So what's his secret?

"You have to keep them protected, here it's the southerlies you have to watch, they fairly rip through here."

Bill says a northerly aspect is best and admits the proximity to corrugated iron that warms in the sun is another benefit.

But the real key is keeping the trunks protected.

"The bark on young citrus trees is very susceptible to cold," he said.

And the answer is Sisalation, the silver-coloured insulative membrane designed for use as sarking under residential and commercial metal roofs.

Bill wraps the trunks in the stuff for the first few years of the trees' life.

The Meyer and Eureka trunks are now bared however, proving that once established, the trees can tough out a long, cold winter.

On the wall of his dining room is a framed print of places at which he was stationed throughout his career with the Department of Agriculture, at Wagga Wagga, Bathurst, Glen Innes, Dareton, Yanco, Orange, Gosford and Spring Terrace.

Bill spent 36 years of his 41 with the department at research stations, concentrated on fruit production.



Bill Trimmer and the citrus bounty at Forest Reefs, about 830 metres elevation. He says careful placement and insulating young trees is key to cold country lemons.



Bill wraps the trunks of young trees in Sisalation, a roofing insulator, for the first few years of their lives.

New hub honours former Nats leader and NSW Minister for Agriculture, Ian Armstrong

Courtesy *The Land*, 10 September 2020



Cootamundra MP Steph Cooke, Water Minister Melinda Pavey and Jenny Armstrong at the opening.

Thirty years ago former Nationals leader Ian Armstrong pioneered a move to bring public servants closer to the farmers they serve.

And that historic move to Orange was recognised yesterday in the unveiling of the Ian Armstrong building.

The new office in Orange will be home to staff from the Department of Primary Industries, Planning Industry and Environment, Regional NSW, Premier and Cabinet as well as Education.

“Ian Armstrong led the charge to relocate 500 departmental employees in 1988 – the biggest and most successful single departmental relocation in Australian history, bringing public servants closer to the people they serve,” Mrs Pavey said.

“At the time, the state was facing significant economic headwinds. Following the move the city’s unemployment rate stabilised to 4 per cent below the national average during those recession years and \$20 million was pumped into the local economy.

“This building is a fitting tribute to the father of decentralisation, today accommodating 800 public sector employees, providing a long-term boost for the regional economy.”

National Party Duty MLC for Orange, Sam Faraway, said the new headquarters signalled a major investment in the growth and development of the region.

Staff are expected to move into the building in October.

Farewell note from Carmel Romano – an integral member of NSW DPI, particularly the Sydney Office over the last 30 years

I have seen many people come and go over the years and now it is my time to say farewell. It is with much sadness that I would like to let you know I am retiring from the Department effective today. This has been a very hard decision for me as I would have liked to continue working a few more years back at DPI, but I think the time is right and especially due to family circumstances.

I was very fortunate and always enjoyed working at Agriculture and DPI with so many wonderful, hard-working and dedicated people. I was so proud of being part of Agriculture/DPI, which I consider one of the most essential and best Public Sector organisations as it covers such a diverse range of issues across NSW.

The Department was like a second family for me and I have made many long-time friendships from my early years in Agriculture until now. I wish I could phone you all individually and I know if I start mentioning names I will miss someone. So to all the Directors-General, Deputy Directors-General, Directors, Chiefs, Managers, Executive Assistants (we definitely had a few laughs over the years!), administrative, staff, finance and information technology staff I worked for and with, thank you all so much for your support, assistance, patience and friendship. I will miss you all and the Department very much. I apologise to those I may have missed in this email so please pass on my thanks and best wishes to anyone you think I may know.

Wishing you all the very best and good health in 2021 and the future, and please stay safe and take care of yourselves and each other.

Kind regards, Carmel Romano

Keeping in touch

Catch up lunch at Caves Beach with old Aggie mates from our Gunnedah days back early 1980’s!



Photo shows Ben Andrews, Paul Hassab, Dave Gilbert, Alan Bell and Ian Blackwood.

Opening of NSW DPI in Orange – 3 November 2020, 130 year celebration



Director General Scott Hanson



Minister for Agriculture & Western NSW, Adam Marshall



Bruce McKay, John Read, Bob Colton



Plaque unveiled



130 years of DPI

Courtesy NSW DPI stories

November 3rd, 2020 saw the NSW Department of Primary Industries celebrate its 130th anniversary.

To mark the occasion, the new DPI headquarters at 105 Prince Street, Orange were officially opened and unveiled as the Ian Armstrong Building. The premises were named in recognition of the former Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs. Minister Armstrong led the charge of relocating the department from Sydney to the former headquarters in Kite Street, Orange in 1992.

The new Prince Street facility will house more than three hundred DPI employees and reaffirms the department's commitment to the economic and social prosperity of regional NSW.

Take a look at some of the highlights of the celebration –

After 130 years of creating stronger primary industries, DPI's Director General, Scott Hansen, reflected on and celebrated the journey of the former NSW Department of Mines and Agriculture into the Department of Primary Industries, as it is known today.

When the NSW Department of Mines and Agriculture was established in 1890, it was stated:

"The welfare of this country [is] intimately bound up with the prosperity of agriculture ... Steps will be taken to lay the best procurable advice before the farming community – advice dictated by scientific investigation combined with practical experiments."

While much has changed since 1890, I'm struck by how much DPI's core purpose has remained the same.

Many of the Department's earliest programs are still running, having been adapted for the current market. For example:

Experimental farms focusing on education, research and development were established across NSW in 1892 and 1914. DPI now maintains 21 research stations and a \$100 million portfolio in R&D each year.

In 1893, 200 wheat research trials began in Wagga Wagga. This research led to the release of the Federation wheat variety and a rapid expansion of

wheat growing in Australia. Now a global force in wheat production, DPI has expanded its focus to other crops including the new DPI-bred chickpea variety, CBA Captain.

Rainbow Trout were first stocked in the Southern Highlands in 1894. DPI now releases more than six million fish each year, including three million native fish.

The NSW Rural Assistance Authority (RAA) was formed in 1932. The RAA continues to help farm businesses and rural communities become more resilient, self-reliant and sustainable. In the past two years, it has distributed more than \$358 million in drought relief and more than \$136 million in bushfire relief.

In 1976, the Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit (AGBU) was established in partnership with UNE. AGBU is now regarded as a world leader in genetic evaluation systems for cattle and sheep.

Biosecurity issues such as the equine influenza outbreak highlighted the importance of DPI's biosecurity work. DPI now runs multiple programs to control, mitigate and eradicate pests and diseases, saving significant losses to the state's economy, environment and community.

The NSW Food Authority was established in 2004 and remains Australia's only paddock-to-plate food regulatory agency.

These achievements tell the story of how DPI has always worked hand-in-hand with producers – through droughts, floods, fires and biosecurity challenges – to drive stronger primary industries.

We have been able to do this because we understand our farmers, we understand their businesses and we understand the environment they are operating in.

As we celebrate this major milestone in DPI's history, I'm proud to say our purpose is as clear and as relevant now as it was 130 years ago.

We continue to lay the best procurable advice before our farming communities, we continue to ensure our Governments are well informed and advised, and we continue to look for opportunities to transform as an industry and achieve big bold goals that drive productivity and profitability for our farmers.

NSW DPI website has been upgraded and is worth the time to explore and catch up with the current programs – Editor

NSW Beefos brought industry changes

Bob Gaden, former Beefo 1970–2008

It's important to understand the breadth of change that has occurred across the beef industry since the 1960s, to appreciate how the NSW Department of Agriculture's Beef Extension team – the Beefos helped it all happen. These are some of my recollections and reflections...

Back in the 60s...

We used to breed and fatten cattle, and sell nearly all of them in the saleyards. Stud breeders taught us how to select bulls and they in turn were guided by the show ring. The coast bred dairy cross vealers, and the state's north coast produced little yellow Hereford weaners which went west to the slopes for fattening. The tablelands produced better weaners which stayed locally on grass or went to the slopes for fattening. In dry seasons the system failed and cattle got very cheap. In major droughts up to the 60s cattle were sometimes left to fend for themselves and many perished. Australia produced young grassfed cattle for home consumption and exported loads of manufacturing beef, mainly for USA.

Fast forward to the present...

The feedlot industry sprang from nowhere and changed the balance of power. Feedlots consistently supply a range of markets with tight specifications, through all types of seasons. They measure and evaluate growth and meat quality, even down to lots from individual breeders for some high value markets. Commercial breeders sell most of their cattle to feedlots, so they need to know how to produce cattle with the right potential. Leading stud breeders (now called seedstock producers) don't show cattle any more, they must measure growth and meat quality so they in turn can provide the right commercial bulls to stay in business. Many thinking commercial breeders don't bother with registered bulls, they just blend from suitable breeds or measure and breed their own. We have sophisticated ways to describe carcasses and meat quality for our varied markets and can describe the corresponding live cattle and production systems. Feedback of carcass and meat quality information to breeders is readily available. We care for the welfare of our cattle much better in droughts, during sale, transport and at abattoirs, not least because we are scrutinised by the media, consumers and animal pressure groups. We still export manufacturing beef to USA but the big-ticket export items are now high quality table beef products sent all over the globe.

Laying the groundwork for change

The working life of Beefos in the 1960s and 70s was a crucial factor which gave them the skills and experience for impacting the industry later. Beginning with a season of basic experience on a cattle property in Northern Australia, Beefos were then given a great deal of freedom to cultivate relationships with their local industry while imparting their knowledge and promoting good management practices. For gregarious partygoers like Harry Harrison and Phil Doyle, this was the perfect job and their availability at field days, sales and other gatherings ensured growing recognition of their expertise and the Department's services. As the Beef Section grew, Beefos crossed district boundaries to mentor and support each other delivering their messages, develop teamwork and learn from the experience of their peers. Meanwhile individual Beefos had the freedom to follow up ideas and opportunities from leading producers, reformers and change agents pushing the industry forward. Some Beefos earned recognition for their high level specialised technical skills from their peers and the industry. By the 1990s the model was formalised and extension teams for breeding, marketing, Beef-n-omics etc. operated beside local district work. The hands-off management of our troops in those early years paid handsome rewards hastening industry change ... it had more in common with the recent methods of Google or Microsoft than the government's apparent current belief that extension is about designing and delivering educational programs.

Genetic improvement

Bull selection based on growth, conformation and physical soundness soon became technical and measured ... including fertility, calving ease and temperament, then market suitability, fatness and marbling for specific markets. Breedplan, Australia's world-leading genetic evaluation system was developed by the Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit (AGBU), a research partnership between the NSW Department of Agriculture and University of New England. It is now widely used by stud and commercial breeders to guide herd improvement in all these areas. Its predecessor, the National Beef Recording Scheme, slowly gathered steam from the late 1960s as Beefos Phil Doyle, Lloyd Beeby, Wayne Mason, Bob Freer, Lindsay Beer and Ed Henry collected regular weights from demonstration herds to feed into Keith Hammond's computer in Armidale. By the 1980s 'performance testing' was robust enough to challenge the traditional eyeball methods of selection but the

powerful breed societies held their ground and it struggled for acceptance. Extension officers were also sceptical of objective selection without physical evaluation.

When Bob Freer was appointed for two years as the first National Breeding Coordinator, a new concept in specialised extension was born. He supported the nation's extension staff with new knowledge on bull selection and at the same time opened the door to serious discussion between research and the breed societies. When his term finished, Bob was drawn into the Department's middle management team while others continued this work, but Bob quickly realised his commitment was really to the beef industry rather than the Public Service, and he boldly resigned to join the Hereford Society, Australia's biggest, most powerful and conservative breed group, as Technical Director. Bob toured the nation with his very popular workshops and provided members with information full of practical advice on bull soundness and herd management. Selling Breedplan to his board members was a much bigger challenge as they saw their entire business model being threatened by objective measurement and its computer-generated figures.

The pendulum began to swing, and Bob separated from the Herefords to create his own independent business, enabling him to work with the other major breeds. He had convinced them that change based on science, technology and education was essential to the survival of all the breeds. Over following years other breed organisations poached our valuable and well-trained staff to help guide them into the modern era. Graeme Mitchell went to the Shorthorns with Bob Gahan as field officer, Peter Speers to the Simmentals, Bryan Johnston to the Murray Greys and Bob Dent and Peter Parnell (ex research) to the Angus

Society while Alex McDonald (ex Victorian Beefo) went to the Limousins. Most of these breeds were Armidale-based and regular formal and informal technical meetings ensured Beef Section's science-based thinking, including the development and implementation of Breedplan, would be firmly embedded in the seedstock sector, at least in Southern Australia. Bob Freer remained the undisputed guru and continued to exert his practical influence on bridging the gap between the scientists and the breeds to ensure their products met the industry's needs.

With the arrival of the Beef CRC in mid 1990s there was a massive injection of research into the genetics of production and meat quality, and this added a lot more strength to Breedplan's evaluations. Brian Sundstrom, after his pioneering work in sale-by-description and live assessment (see below), changed roles to become another vital link between science and breeders, and Wayne Upton joined AGBU to service leading bull breeders as Breedplan's measured traits increased in number and complexity. The Beefos were instrumental in bringing together the breeding sector and taking on the new technology for the common good, enabling the Australian industry to target its production effectively at modern markets.

Crossbreeding

Concurrently in the 70s, Grafton spearheaded research to find the best crossbreeding options to boost the poorly-performing local north coast Hereford population. Phil Doyle transferred in from Goulburn believing he could bring quality Hereford genetics from the Monaro to solve the problem, but they too yellowed and withered while the early research identified Brahman crosses to be far superior. Swallowing his pride, Phil tossed away his love of Herefords, befriended the

Updated Mailing List

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Brahman aristocracy in Queensland and took his local producers there to source quality bulls. His Departmental managers found that very challenging but with Helen Hearnshaw's passion driving the research, Brian Sundstrom, Tony Gaudron and Bill Hoffman in support and Phil's enthusiasm infecting the coastal industry, the Brahman revolution swept through.

Adapting to changing markets

The cattle depression of the mid 1970s was provoked by the international oil crisis and collapse of export markets. Five years of wide-scale herd liquidation followed. As recovery started, bad press about fat and cholesterol questioned the merits of meat consumption and the role of fat ... people wanted leaner meat, but buyers still paid more for fatter cattle. That was the conundrum that captivated your writer, Bob Gaden, and prompted him to learn how price signals carried from consumers through the retail and processing sectors. Objective carcass measurement was a research tool at the time but had not reached the processing sector, so carcass competitions, and the ABCAS system of objective carcass evaluation, gave the early leg-in. ABCAS evolved into ABCAM and Bob updated it regularly over the next 30 years and at hundreds of events it taught Beefos and producers the language of carcass specifications for various markets and how to identify the corresponding live cattle. As the processing sector gradually adopted objective measurements and quality grading, Rob Hart took on specialist meat quality training to strengthen our processor link. ABCAM adopted the same measurements to ensure Beefos had the live assessment skills and producers could read the clear messages. Our job was done when MSA grading and carcass feedback became the standard language linking cattle to market requirements.

Sale-by-description was born in the 1980s as David Wright's visionary computer-based auction alternative to the saleyards. Brian Sundstrom was instrumental in developing and implementing the live cattle assessment standards and training still used today. Most Beefos participated in the training and some went on to recruit assessors and train local agents around NSW for the experimental NELCM which was later launched as CALM and now AuctionsPlus. Australia now leads the world with the skills to describe live cattle and estimate their carcass specifications (dressing percentage, carcass weight, fat depth etc) for many different world markets.

The NSW Beefos were all highly skilled teachers in live assessment and carcass description. Several of us including Sandy Yeates and Bill McKiernan used bone-out demonstrations to highlight the huge effects of fatness and muscling on carcass value, a great technique to confirm our live assessments, learn more about carcass value and develop more challenging discussion with processors. When AUS-MEAT forced the processing sector to adopt carcass description, they redefined fat scores and altered our description of muscling, creating confusing new goalposts. Their "butt profile" had no connection at all to live assessment of muscling, yield or value, so Bill McKiernan fought vigorously on our behalf to correct this political decision but without success. With his trademark determination, Bill went on with Sandy Yeates to conduct two research trials which firmly validate our Live Muscle Scores which are still used across the livestock sector.

Arrival of Feedlots

As the first farm feedlots began to emerge in the drought in the mid 1960s, Lloyd Beeby seized the opportunity and became the nation's lot feeding expert, sharing local and US experience with the innovators. He was there at the start of the Australian Lot Feeders Association which was packed with forward-thinking businessmen. When Lloyd took the bold step outside to become the first feedlot consultant, his timing was unfortunate, as he went straight into the 70s beef depression and most feedlots closed ... but he adapted to other opportunities and went on to forge a successful career in Meat and Livestock Australia. Jamie Graham produced a milestone Feedlot Manual which connected the Beefos with the fledgling industry and government departments. Meanwhile the big business feedlots were proving more than capable of finding their own technical advice. Bryan Johnston became our feedlot specialist, and along with our forward-thinking Principal Ben Andrews, guided the introduction of the audited National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme to set up for a new age of challenges. It addressed government and community expectations by including strong welfare and environmental components. Bob Gaden and later Jeff House followed Bryan representing NSW government on its accreditation committee.

Animal Welfare

The early 1980s drought brought welfare into focus as the media revealed horrific stories of starving cattle on farm and deaths during transport. Jim Beck saw the need and put welfare on the Beefos'

agenda. Bryan Johnston was our first specialist extension officer in transport & handling. The opportunity came when John Carter, a producer and reformer, at the time Chairman of the NSW Meat Industry Authority, brought world expert Temple Grandin from the US to Australia. Bryan led the Beefos' support of public meetings focusing on yard design and animal behaviour. Carter forced welfare improvements on saleyards and abattoirs across NSW, and Bryan Johnston developed codes of practice and education programs for the industry.

Later, Ian Blackwood did wonderful practical work defining the critical assessments for nutritionally deprived cattle, including fitness to travel and for euthanasia. His publications now include sheep and horses and have become the basis of Australia-wide industry guides published by MLA.

The 'whole farm' approach never really made the headlines in the Beef Section but Peter Speers' development of Beef-n-omics was an outstanding

initiative in the 90s, introducing the feed balance to a whole herd enterprise model. His state-wide workshop program cut deep into producers' planning decisions and brought many Beefos into the computer age. Bill Hoffman's great strength in whole herd management shone through later with his network of groups developing and delivering MLA's More Beef from Pastures program.

Reflection

The Beefos didn't change the industry on their own, but they found and exploited opportunities to take the industry forward. Their colourful characters and people skills, along with their practical scientific grounding, attracted the support of producers and industry organisations to achieve change. As government has now largely walked away from its technical support role to focus on community expectations, the golden era has passed. I feel so lucky to have been part of this team which achieved so much for our beef industry.



Beef Conference, Trangie Agricultural Research Station 1962?

Back row, left to right: Roy Hurst, John Ballard (Manager Trangie), Harry Harrison, Bill Murphy, Lloyd Beeby, Bob Freer, Lloyd Williams. Front row: Lindsay Beer, Peter Duff, John Barrett, Col Brett, Jim Becke, Phil Doyle.