

OLD AGGIES

President: Frank Doughty, (02) 9481 8787, fdoughty@tpg.com.au
 Secretary: Graham Linnegar, (02) 9527 1830, helgra@linnegarplumbing.com.au
 Treasurer/Membership: Colin Short, (02) 9876 1018, cbshort@bigpond.com

Alstonville luncheon – Thursday
 15 September 2022, venue to be
 decided. Contact Geoff Jacobs
 0412 107 727 or
gajacobs@bigpond.com

Armidale/Tamworth luncheon
 – To be advised – contact Dr
 Barbara Vanselow 0434 344 992
 or bvanselo@gmail.com

Gosford luncheon – Thursday 3
 November 2022 – Venue to be
 decided, contact Geoff Warr (02)
 4342 3226 or 0411 128 936 or
warries@optusnet.com.au

Laurieton luncheon (cancelled)
 – Laurieton United Services'
 Club, contact Geoff Jacobs
 0412 107 727 or gajacobs@bigpond.com

Orange luncheon – Wednesday
 26 October 2022, Best Western
 Ambassador Motel. Contact Len
 Banks (02) 6361 7677 or banks@lmbanks.com.au

Sydney luncheon – Tuesday 9
 August, City of Sydney RSL Club,
 11.30am. Cost \$35 pp. Contact
 Col Short (02) 9876 1018 or
cbshort@bigpond.com

Wagga Wagga luncheon –
 May 2023 – 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.

Invitation from the President

To all members of Old Aggies, please accept this special invitation to attend the next luncheon/get together of an Old Aggies group in your local or near area. Information regarding location and date, available from Secretary, Graham Linnegar 0428 235 222 or 02 9527 1830 or in the next column to the left.

While membership numbers are still good your attendance at a luncheon will be appreciated by your Old Aggies committee and our group organisers, together with the opportunity to renew friendship with colleagues you may not have seen for some time.

We realise it is not always possible or convenient for members to attend our function due to health, distance and other commitments on the respective days, but if you can make it, please do.

Please note the Sydney luncheon has been brought forward to 9 August 2022 – Frank Doughty – President

Note from the Secretary

At the Annual General Meeting of Old Aggies on 5 May 2022, all office bearers in attendance agreed to the re-appointment for a further 12 months. Frank Doughty (president), Col Short (treasurer), Lawrie Lucas-Smith (Auditor), Graham Linnegar (Secretary).

A Note from the Treasurer – change of address

Could all members please advise the Treasurer, Colin Short of any changes of address or email as this enables the Old Aggies newsletter to arrive at your new place of living. Notifications to Colin on (02) 9876 1018, or cbshort@bigpond.com

Demise of rice breeding

George Stevens (Former Manager of Yanco AI) was not able to attend the luncheon, but he sent the following report "A little bit of news which will be of interest I heard today, and not really the sort of news we would like to hear. After two reviews (surprised it was only two!!), it seems that the Rice section at Yanco will be closed down, possibly as soon as the end of June. This includes the Rice Breeding, Chemistry and Agronomy will be lost, and at least two permanent staff, Rachelle Ward and Peter Snell will be redundant. Most of the technical staff are on contracts which would have come up for renewal at the end of June, so they won't be renewed. I gather that the breeding work will be taken up by a private company, (name or location not yet known) which had been quoted by the Department for the use of the facilities at the Institute, but of course, this quote was far higher than they anticipated, and they said no. I do have a recollection of reading something about rice research to be undertaken by a local company in the local paper recently but just thought this would be something additional to what is done at Yanco, but not be leading to the likely demise of the rice work at Yanco.

Our Department's contribution to the sheep industry – Dave Harris

Our Department has made significant contributions to our sheep industry for over a century – an industry that has, and continues to earn many billions of dollars in wool, lamb, mutton and sheep skins for the Australian economy – especially export income. NSW has always had the largest share (over 40%) of this income.

NSW Agriculture has led Australia in advisory, research and veterinary services for the industry.

Since World War 2 Departmental sheep and wool advisory services have been led by a succession of outstanding Principals – Ted Elliott, Aub Cantrill, Jack Hawkins, Bob Eastoe, Arthur Godlee, Mick Tucker, Arthur Clarke, and more recently Program Managers John Butt and Ian Roth. As part of its role in closer land settlement the Department for many years gave hands-on advisory help for thousands of new NSW sheep owners especially in ram and ewe selection and all other aspects of sheep management including nutrition, reproduction and management, including sheep handling facilities.

By the mid 1980's the Department had 27 District Sheep & Wool Advisory Officers servicing sheep producers from Glen Innes and Moree in the north – to Wagga Wagga, Cooma, Hay and Deniliquin in the south, Broken Hill, Cobar and Warren in the west and Mudgee, Bathurst, and Goulburn in the east. Each of these Officers serviced over 1200 producers running over two million sheep in each district. Many of these District Officers such as 'Ben Hall', Ernie May, Brian Clinton, Snow Douglass, Frank Donnelly, Noel Bennett, Neville Manglesdorf, and John Cahill became household names in their

areas through farm visits, field days, public meetings, radio broadcasts and regular press articles. These District Officers were supported by four specialist advisors (Program Leaders) with statewide responsibilities for Fine Wool, Prime Lamb, Sheep Management and Sheep Nutrition respectively. Interestingly, Alan Luff, District sheep officer at Gunnedah and later a key part of the NSW and Australian LambPlan program, was the Department's first Trainee for

Sheep and Wool, winning his traineeship in 1952.

NSW Agriculture's role in sheep research is world renowned, commencing with Genetists/Veterinarians Fred Morley and then Bob Dunn who, between them, established special single trait selection Merino flocks at the Trangie Research Station in the late 1950's. Morley and Dunn's quantitative genetics were highly controversial especially in the conservative Merino stud industry that was based on phenotypic selection including the show ring. A great example was at the Field Day at our Trangie Research Station in 1961 that drew a crowd of over 1200 merino breeders from all parts of Australia, some of whom landed their light planes on the Station's air strip. This work led to the adoption of objective measurement in all aspects of sheep breeding throughout Australia including the sale of Merino rams.

Following Morley's transfer to CSIRO, Bob Dunn inspired a huge expansion in our Department's sheep research effort. This subsequent team included Bill Pattie, Brian McGuirk, and Kevin Atkins in Genetics, Peter McInnes, Geoff Robards, Don Saville and Charlie Davis in Sheep Nutrition and Drought and Supplementary Feeding, plus Tony Gleeson, Doug Fowler, Barry Restall, Geoff File and Jack Giles in Sheep Fertility. Doug Fowler established the commercial use of ultrasound diagnosis of multiple foetuses in pregnant ewes as a practical tool for stud and commercial sheep flocks. Wool biologist Tony Williams used the Trangie Merino selection flocks to study the role sulphur amino acids on the efficiency of wool growth.

Many of these Trangie research officers went into the role of Director, Animal Research initially



Trangie Experimental Farm Merino Field Day, May 1961. L to R: Bob Eastoe, Dr R. Dunn, Mr C. McCarthy, Mr Ballard. From a large display at Trangie Research Station, NSW DPI.

Bob Dunn, Peter McInness, Tony Gleeson, Brian McGuirk and Geoff Robards.

The Department also played a major role in the Prime Lamb Industry with Scientists such as Doug Killeen and Stan Dawe at Leeton plus Neil Fogarty and Brian McGuirk at Cowra playing major roles in establishing the Border Leicester/Merino x Dorset as the premier breed combination for the Australian Lamb Industry. The Department was a huge contributor to the creation of new and improved sheep breeds such as the Poll Dorset and the BLI (improved Border Leicester). The Department was Australia's official Poll Dorset Stud No 3 based at the Temora Research Station in the late 1950's using crosses between the Dorset Horn, Ryeland and the Corriedale. Other innovations have included the sheep milk, sheep cheese and suckling lamb industries through work such as Stan Dawe's at Leeton, plus sheep carpet wool breeds such as the Tukiedale with help from our people such as Barry Trimmer at Orange and Andy Kajons at Bathurst.

Our Department also provided other specialised services for the sheep industry such as the Fleece Measurement Service based at Trangie with the help of people such as John Bowler, Phil Stevenson and Tony Williams and the Sheep Fertility Service (Ron Connors and John Wilkins) that provided diagnostic help to assist sheep breeders throughout the State. In the 1970's and 80's the Department's Neil Fogarty, Alan Luff and John Butt created the Sheep Meat Testing Service that with inputs from Kevin Atkins, David Hopkins and Biometrician Arthur Gilmore led to Australia's National Genetic Improvement Program for the Lamb Industry, now known as 'LambPlan'. Atkins and Gilmore's work established the universal use of 'EBVs' (estimated breeding values) to enable genetic comparisons between flocks in traits such as fleece weight, growth rate and body composition.

Our Department played a major role in improved nutrition and pasture utilisation for sheep such as the early field trials at Glen Innes and Shannon Vale by Jim Cottrell and Terry Crofts followed by numerous grazing trials by people such as Don Saville, Geoff Robards, Stan Grimmett and Peter Khon.

Principal Wool and Sheep Officers included Jack Hawkins, Bob Eastoe, Arthur Godlee. Mick Tucker, David Harris and John Butt.

Over the years our Department has also provided major help to the sheep industry in Animal Health through Veterinary Officers, such as Doug Christie, John Plant and numerous DVO's and Veterinary Inspectors. This area also included work to combat

the scourge of sheep blowfly strike in partnership with people such as Greg Shanahan from CSIRO and Jim Watts from our own Department in combination with field trials by our District Sheep Advisors. The Departments state-wide network of Veterinary Laboratories have for many years provided a valuable disease diagnosis service for our sheep industry.

Our Department has also played a major role in improved marketing for our Prime Lamb Industry, with work by Bill O'Halloran, Ross Jelbart and others to give more objectivity to our traditional selling methods. Our Sheep & Wool Officers have also provided practical hands help in Lamb Marketing through special sheep handling and assessment courses for livestock selling agents.

Our Department's role in helping the Sheep Industry has been a team effort covering animal genetics, pasture improvement and utilisation, sheep reproduction, sheep nutrition, drought feeding, animal health and sheep management. This role has been greatly assisted by partnerships with CSIRO, Universities and Industry funding provided by organisations such as the Australian Wool Board and the Meat & Livestock Corporation.

Our overall contribution to the Sheep Industry is one that we can all be justifiably proud of.

Footnote – A more eloquent and up-to-date summary of the Department's latest role in the Lamb Industry is Bill O'Halloran's paper for the *Wool & Sheepmeat Services Annual Conference* at Armidale, November 1999.

Jeff Armstrong, Leeton/Wagga Wagga died November 2021

I don't know how many people have heard the news that Jeff Armstrong, former sheep and wool lecturer at Yanco, died a few weeks ago.

A graveside funeral was held for Jeff in Leeton on 22nd November.

Jeff began working with the Department of Agriculture as sheep and wool officer at Brewarrina and came to Yanco in the early 1960s to lecture when Yanco Agricultural College began. He lectured there for 40 years instructing hundreds of future farmers and was highly respected by his colleagues and students.

Jeff and his wife Gwen, who also worked at Yanco for some years, moved to Wagga Wagga five years ago.

He is survived by Gwen, two of their three sons, their wives and several grandchildren.

A learned, meticulous and gentle man. A sad loss for agriculture in NSW – *Mary-Anne Lattimore*

B K (Barry) Smart 12 July, 1931 – 16 Nov, 2021

Barry graduated from Wagga Agricultural College in 1949 in the first group of 20 graduates from the college (including F S [Fred] Benecke). He Duxed the year. 'Dicky' Doman was College Principal.

His first appointment was as District Agronomist Berrigan in 1954 with the 'mission' to develop irrigated mixed farming on soldier settlement blocks in the Murray Valley. As there was little experience of irrigated production systems, a wide range of crops and pastures species were 'experimented' with by producers under Barry's guidance. It was at this time his eye was damaged.

He transferred as DA Orange in June 1961 taking over from R A (Dick) Gilbert. When Barry came to Orange Dick Laffan was District Dairy Officer, John Johnson was District Horticulturist, Harry Harrison was Livestock Officer (Beef Cattle and Horses), John Furner was Livestock Officer (Sheep and Wool) and Doug Christie was the Veterinarian. A far cry from the small Finley office.

During the early 1960's Barry was responsible for advising producers at Millthorpe in potatoes and peas, cereal seed and crop judging at Manildra and certified lucerne seed at Eugowra. With comparatively good seasons there was high demand for independent advice.

During the 1960's the Department undertook intensive recruitment for DAs. Recruits as Agronomists-in-Training undertook around three years training mostly on research stations before appointment to a district. The final part of training was at a Regional Headquarters 'under the wing' of a respected District Agronomist.

Barry 'had the privilege' of training the late Brett Butler who was appointed to Dareton, Robin Claxton to Condobolin, the late Andrew Von Mengersen to Narrabri, Paul Parker to Young, Brian Scarsbrick to Glen Innes, Peter Simpson to Bathurst and there were others.

In October 1968 the Department acquired Ron Gordon's property to establish the Orange Agricultural College on Leeds Parade. Barry transferred to 'pioneer' the position of Supervisor of Applied Studies (Plant Production) along with Ed Henry (former Livestock Officer [Beef Cattle and Horses] Orange) as Supervisor of Applied Studies (Animal Production) in February, 1973. The Farm Management course commenced in July, 1973 with 22 students and Sandy MacKenzie as College Principal. W J (Warren) McDonald took over as DA. Barry organised many student tours, the first to the Macquarie Valley in August 1973. He experienced numerous episodes of 'take-over-bids', financial

crisis, and 'movement of the deck chairs' during his tenure, however the College became Australia's leading provider of rural management education in the 1990s and between 1973 and 2000 the College educated and influenced thousands of students and Barry was at the forefront of this success.

Retirement came for Barry in the early 1990's to further his community volunteering and caravanning to northern NSW.

Vale John Francis Kneipp

This tribute was written by Martin May, former Program Manager, Farming Systems, Orange.

John was one of the best agronomists I have ever met. He came into the agronomy ranks the hard way having started his career in NSW Dept Agriculture as a Seed Production officer. He saw agronomy as a better calling but needed to upskill. He completed an external degree in Biological Sciences through UNE while working and raising a family at the same time. He finally achieved his goal when he was appointed as District Agronomist Coonamble. His tenacity and determination to succeed in this challenging period of his life is to be commended.

His technical competence, people skills and practical experience saw him progress within the organisation. He became the Technical Specialist for summer and winter cereals in the north before being promoted to Program Leader Farming Systems, Tamworth.

Some time ago when cropping in the north was beginning to diversify, new rotations were being sought and researched by NSW Agriculture. John decided we needed to get ahead of the game. The best way to do that was to go on a fact finding tour to South Australia where crops like field peas, Languedoc vetch, lentils, chick peas, faba beans, and fenugreek were being incorporated into sustainable cropping programs. So John, Col Mullen and myself organised a visit. Apart from getting some very valuable information from our SA counterparts we learned a couple of things about JK. (1) We got fined for speeding and (2) he was quite partial to a good red!

He was a mentor to many of the newly appointed District Agronomists in the north of the state. He invested a lot of time helping them to understand and appreciate the importance of their role in providing independent, proven, practical and profitable advice to producers. At the same time he didn't leave them wondering how they were progressing in the job. As their overseer, he didn't tell them the things they wanted to hear; instead

he told them what they needed to hear. I am sure many of them are now grateful for his guidance and encouragement during their formative years in the Department of Agriculture.

John loved his rugby and one of his best stories was about a rugby player who went to the team physio and said "When I touch my nose, my ribs or my knee it hurts like hell". The physio replied "You have got a broken finger".

He had a great sense of humour and often saw a funny side to things we thought were serious.

Like many, John's passing came as a shock. We had no idea he was so ill. It only seems like

yesterday that he and Anne called into our place at Braidwood. He probably wanted to check to make sure I was implementing "Best management practice" and running the property appropriately. I was thrilled to see them and I thought he looked well at the time.

His courage and lack of self-pity typified his character. He was ready to meet his maker but whether his maker was ready to meet with a crafty, battle-scarred public servant is another story.

John was not only an exceptional work colleague but also a trusted and valued friend. It was an honour and privilege to work with him.



This photo was taken at the Extension Officers (Rural Youth) conference in 1978 or 1979. I will name those that I can remember, or mark dk for those I don't know. Standing, left to right: John Pitt, Ken Fishpool, Barry O'Neil, David West, Richard Walker, John Britten, Harry Harrison, Bevan Sommerlad, dk (an RDA), Gordon Yabsley, Ian Blackwood, dk, Brian Walsh, Lou Revelant, Nelson Wallace, Peter Simpson. Seated, back row, L to R: Col Woodward, David Hartley, Noel Vane, John Robson, Peter Stace, Jack Elliott. Seated, front row, L to R: dk, Don Phillips, Fred Benecke, George Bennett, Ian Coffey, Dianne Griffiths. Submitted by Brian Walsh, PO Box 3, Paterson NSW 2421.



Riverina/Murray Old Aggies Luncheon held on the 12 May, See next issue for reports.

Front row – Dr Barbara Read, Andrew Read, Dr Gordon Murray. 2nd row – Prof Ted Wolfe, back of head are Tony Dunn, Frances Croft and David Croft' 3rd Row – Greg Fenton, Norma Brown, Marsha Reilly. Standing – Dr Ian Links and James Hamilton

Reflections on Glen Innes Agricultural Research Station and Bob Johnson

Bob Johnson was renowned for being very direct and wasn't backward in 'sticking it into' Head Office.

Bob as manager was castigated by Head Office for ordering too many cartons of toilet paper. His reply to HO was that he did not know the practice in HO but up here we only use one side of the paper.

Following that story early in my career as an "Agronomist in Training" (AIT) at Condo in 1965 I remember that we were supposedly only to use three pieces of toilet paper per time, that is, one wipe up, one wipe down and a polisher! The Government issue in contract paper back then must have been truly bottom of the barrel (no pun intended) as it was strangely shiny and a bit scratchy, unlike the luxurious stuff today.

Whilst I was at Glen Innes Agricultural Research Station (GIARS) as AIT in 1966/7 in the time of Bob Johnson as Manager, I believe he hated horses and played around with an old car, I think it was an Austin or something. In his workshop he removed all the bodywork leaving just the chassis, engine, drivers seat and brakes on one rear wheel. This became his nifty personal run-about on the station.

One day when rounding a blind bend at speed, past a big store shed he almost collided head on with a tractor being driven by Shorty the Agronomy Field hand. They were both "cutting the corner". There was embarrassment, shock, swearing by both drivers, plus some bureaucratic recriminations, but no permanent physical injuries. They might have taken Bob a bit of explaining to HO.

Later that week a large round rock had been partly buried on that particular corner, in the middle of the road, painted brilliant white by persons unknown, and labelled "BOB'S KNOB". It might still be there? Must go and look !

There were several officers in residence on the Station in those days all paying a modest weekly rental, including, as I remember, Peter Kinlock, Rex Bowen, Bill Noad, John the clerk, and myself. We had our own rooms, shared the kitchen and amenities /meeting room and supposedly took turns to cook dinner at night. As you'd expect, with five young bachelors, the general standard of cuisine and cleanliness was ho hum.

One Saturday night we decided to have a big party, inviting quite a few townies along to help us down a couple of stainless steel kegs, and a flagon or two of plonk. Rex was keen on the odd flagon of red, he said "to dull the pain".

I don't remember much of the night but next morning, bright and early, well before the clean up, Bob made an inspection, of the kitchen, meeting "party" room, and five bedrooms.

He was cruelly unimpressed, especially with the typical post-party debris, and I remember being told we were "individually and collectively untidy". And that was not all, someone leaving late in the night had smashed to bits the neat white picket fence at the entrance, Bob's pride and joy.

Being a good Manager, Bob had to write a rather scathing report to Head Office, no doubt listing our multitude of collective misdemeanour's and individual failings, and we were given marching orders out of GIARS. I had a transfer to Goulburn about that time but the others departed for Glen Innes flats, boarding houses and pubs which then became home. We took away some great memories time at GIARS – *Ian Collett, Ex DA Tamworth*

John Howard Wildman, 9/12/1930 to 24/02/2021

John was born at Tamworth on the 9 December, 1930 to Howard Norman and Eleanor Maud Wildman. John's father graduated Hawkesbury in 1920 and was Sheep & Wool Instructor for North West NSW. On the death of his father on 3 December 1935 he went to live with his mother's people at Grafton. He was exposed to farming from an early age as his grandfather still farmed at Coramba.

John completed his education at Grafton Primary School which was broken by a short time at the Masonic School at Baulkham Hills. Students were sent home after the school was requisitioned by the army in 1941 for a hospital. He completed 4th year in 1946 at Grafton High School and was granted a Department of Agriculture bursary to Hawkesbury in 1947.

On graduation in 1949 his wish to join the Department of Agriculture as a trainee Sheep & Wool Officer to follow in his fathers footsteps was denied by Ex Service Preference. After a few months on the farm at Coramba, a sawmill then and ice and butter delivery run at Grafton, he took a position to gain experience at Wee Waa on Vin Phelps' (Hawkesbury Certificate 1909) place at Merah North. Vin and John parted company after a broken gentleman's agreement and he joined the Department of Education on the 6 October 1950 as a Junior Farmer Supervisor based at Grafton.

John's appointment as District Supervisor was delayed a couple of months because at aged 19 years 10 months he was the youngest person at that

time to be appointed to the district. It was through the personal approach by the local member Gordon Wingfield, who knew his family, who prevailed upon Wallace Wurth, the then Chairman of the Public Service Board, who knew his father, that the PSB agreed to his appointment.

John served at Grafton for four years building the district from six active clubs to over 22 with over 700 members and a Regional Council. He married Veronica Hobbs, a primary school teacher in Grafton in 1953 at South Grafton, her father being the local Sergeant. John was approached by Norm Kjar from Tasmanian Department of Agriculture at the 1954 Junior Farmers RAS Sydney show camp to go to Tasmania as their first full time supervisor based at Devonport.

Tasmania did not appeal and they returned to NSW and John got an appointment to a new District at Temora in February 1955. The District had five clubs and 120 members to commence with growing to 15 clubs and 300 members in 1956. On the death of his Area Supervisor (Fred Wilmot HDA?) at Wagga Wagga Show 1956, John was appointed acting until February 1957 when he became Area Supervisor for the Riverina Area.

Unfortunately the Rural Youth Branch came to an end in 1973 when the Labor Government of the day decided all non educational sections of the Education Department had to find a home in other departments. The then Rural Youth, formally Junior Farmers, had the choice of Child Welfare or Dept of Agriculture. It chose Agriculture and the existing organisation was disbanded slowly and the staff were absorbed into other sections of the department or resigned.

John blazed a new path in his career as a General Advisory Officer and for 3 years was seconded as Southern NSW Organiser for the Agricultural Bureau. He designed and organised the Annual State Conference for three years and edited their State magazine. During that time he increased the number of branches significantly. With the change of Director Generals the axe fell on the Bureau and John was sent back to general duties at the Wagga Wagga District office.

John's activities as secretary of the Agricultural officers Branch of the PSA brought him into conflict with the new Director General, George Knowles. The last seven years of John's 37 years service was a mixed bag being 'persona non grata' with Knowles. He acted as General Advisor, Home Gardens and quarantine advice to the Forest Hill air base and Kapooka army base transferee's interstate. He was the OIC of the Agriculture

Department District Office at Wagga Wagga for the last four years of his service.

He was an active member of the Public Service Association of NSW for 37 years and was secretary of the Agriculture Officers Branch for some 10 years. He was active in the Riverina Branch for 30 years and was awarded the associations Gold Medal in 1986.

Ronne and John left Wagga Wagga in November 1989 and came to Maleny, Queensland where they lived for the past 32 years. Whilst in Maleny he was active in ratepayers and environmental groups acting as secretary.

John is survived by Ronne his wife of 68 years, daughter Anne and grandchildren Nicholas and Julia of Brisbane, son Neil of Lower Wonga via Gympie – *John Wildman, 8 January 2006*

Graham Denning

Graham Linnegar has advised of the death of Graham Denning. There is very little information available and all that can be said is that he commenced duty with the department (date unknown) as a clerk at export and import branch, he later transferred to the Royal Botanic Garden, which used to be under control of Agriculture Dept. From there he was transferred to the Tropical Fruit Research Station at Alstonville. Graham retired early, I think on medical advice. He had no children, but lived with a partner, to whom I have acknowledged his passing and offered condolences of the Old Aggies committee. He was an active member of the Old Aggies and was an attendee of Alstonville and Laurieton luncheon.

Dr Albert (Bert) Kildare Sheridan

Died suddenly and unexpectedly on 5 July 2021.

Formerly of Frenchs Forest and St Ives. A retired poultry, pig and fish genetics research scientist, who touch all those he met. He will never be forgotten.

Loving, devoted partner and carer of Judy. Beloved and treasured father of Helen and Jennifer and caring grandfather to Nicholas, Katherine, Natasha, Matthew and Patrick. Loved father-in-law of Noel and Shane. Cherished former husband of Gwenda. Very much-loved brother of John and brother-in-law of Rae and their children Dougal, Robert and Sarah. Much valued by Nick and Sonia. Eldest son of Albert (dec) and Jesse (dec).

Forever in our hearts, you will be very sadly missed. Aged 81

Please raise a glass of red in Bert's honour, for he would surely want you to.

Lupins

Contributed by Dick Gammie



The recognition of Dr (Professor) John Gladstones of West Australia (WA) in the recent Australia Day Awards when he was made an Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AO) is well deserved. It is honour to know the man. His citation

– ‘For distinguished service to primary industry, particularly agriculture and viticulture, and as an author’. John was awarded the William Farrer Memorial Medal, 1975 by NSW Agriculture and made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1986 for his plant breeding work along with many other awards.

Recognised internationally as the ‘father’ of lupins, he saw a future for a crop to complement wheat in the WA rolling sand plains, suited to a short growing season and acidic, low fertility soils. At the time there were no suitable legume crops. Ideally it would be a legume to restore soil nitrogen and a grain suitable for human and livestock consumption when there was no locally sourced vegetable protein in southern Australia.

Whilst lecturing at the University of WA, he introduced lupins from overseas and applied scientific practices to his improvement program in about 1954. The introduced narrow-leaved grain contained a bitterness, making it unsuitable for human and livestock consumption, so his first challenges were to find a non-shattering lupin with soft, ‘sweet’ grain. The softness is important as a crop plant to ensure even germination and establishment and it had to flower early to provide reasonable yields. White flowers and sweet grain in narrow-leaved varieties is genetically related.

There are six *Lupinus* species in Australia, with two of agricultural significance – *Lupinus albus* and *Lupinus angustifolius*.

Lupins has overcome many hurdles and John has assisted in overcoming these production problems. He identified natural mutations in the field, and they are the basis for the first crop varieties – Uniwhite in 1967, Uniharvest in 1970 and Unicrop in 1973. There are currently improved varieties. From 1971 to 1991 he was a Principal Plant Breeder with the WA Department of Agriculture and spent 40 years in the industry.

Additional to his lupin breeding accomplishments, John was successful in collecting, breeding and

selecting subterranean clover and yellow serradella varieties.

NSW

In 1968 and 69 the Australian wheat industry was in crisis with over production, very limited markets and depressed on-farm prices. This led to the introduction of ‘wheat production quotas’ per farm and the scramble to find ‘alternative crops’. By this time producers were growing small areas of Uniwhite to determine its attributes.

The Department was at the fore of testing and extending alternative crops to wheat.

The late E J (Eric) Corbin was ‘pooled’ into moving from Condobolin Agricultural Research & Advisory Station to Wagga Agricultural Institute in 1970 to use his applied research and practical crop production skills in testing the suitability of many winter crops with potential in central and southern NSW.

He was one of many Research Agronomists to research ‘alternative’ crops to wheat. The mobile equipment including a low loader semitrailer, tractor, specially adapted sowing combine, plot harvester and other speciality equipment came from Condobolin to Wagga.

Early on in his research Corbin foresaw the future of chickpeas, rapeseed (later to become Canola) and John Gladstones’ lupins. Many Departmental officers with their eyes ‘out on sticks’ marvelled at the potential of these new crops when they saw them in Eric’s plots.

For these ‘alternative crops’ to reach commercial production it was vital the Department appoint Research Agronomists specialising in a crop. This led to the appointment of the likes of Neil Wratten who was appointed at Wagga to breed higher oil content rapeseed varieties leading to the name change to Canola and this resulted in now major production on the central and southern slopes.

Ted Knights was appointed to breed chickpeas, starting his career at Wagga and recognised the crop better fitted the northern wheat belt and moved to Tamworth Agricultural Research Centre to foster a very viable industry.

Later Dr David Luckett at Wagga working in conjunction with John Gladstones used his plant breeding knowledge to successfully select suitable lupin varieties for central and southern NSW. Later Kate Landers followed on with this work.

Dr Eric Armstrong applied his agronomic skills at Wagga into developing the NSW field pea industry in central and southern NSW

In collaboration with the Departmental research many District Agronomists, were cajoled – pressured by producers to have a go in the 1970's at almost any crop that might make a financial return. DA's including Bob Freebairn, Coonabarabran; Col Mullen, Dubbo; Barry Smart and Warren MacDonald, Orange; Brett Butler, Cowra; Bob Colton, Cootamundra, and many others spent significant time and resources in assisting producers with successful production of especially canola, chickpeas and lupins.

The Department implemented a certified seed scheme for lupins, which was supervised by Seed Production Officers. Handling seed grain to ensure germination is important.



Broadleaved lupins – Lupinus albus



Narrow-leaved lupins – Lupinus angustifolius is the main crop grown in NSW and Australia.

John Gladstones made trips east to better understand where lupins fitted the eastern states farming systems and varietal requirements.

Producers know the benefits of soil nitrogen restoration and feeding livestock a high protein grain as reasons to grow lupins. Due to their 'drought' tolerance lupins are grown in rotations in over a wide area of western NSW.

Lupins is the most widely grown legume crop in Australia (principally in WA) and in NSW is second to chickpeas. A major lupin industry is yet to develop in NSW however, there are many producers using the crop regularly in rotation with winter cereals and canola and appreciate its benefits.

Obituary – Robin Arnold Claxton

Robin Claxton died peacefully in Launceston, Tasmania with his wife Pam and stepson Jamie by his side on 8th February 2022. He was supported by all his family, Julian and Shirley, Rachel, Aidan and Holly and his sister and brother in law Felicity and Trevor during a long and courageous struggle with pancreatic cancer diagnosed in April 2021.

Robin was born in England on 12th August 1941, educated at Plymouth College and in 1963 was awarded an Agricultural Degree by Reading University.

After working on farms in England and Denmark and a brief emigration to the USA Robin came to Australia as a 10 Pound Pom in Oct 1964 and by January 1965 had joined the NSW Dept of Agriculture as a Trainee Agronomist at Trangie. John Ballard was the Manager and due to dry conditions Robin often worked with sheep research staff and planted cotton trials at Brewarrina. He married his English fiancé, Maureen, in 1965.

In 1966 he was working on irrigation crops including sesame and sunflower at Leeton Research Station when Peter Witschi was acting manager. The next posting was for almost a year at Orange Regional Centre before being appointed as the first District Agronomist at Condobolin.

From there it was to Sydney as Asst Principal Agronomist Miscellaneous Crops under Frank Cutting before he moved to Research Services when Ray Jessup was Research Coordinator and Robin was largely responsible for managing CESC funds.

After the untimely death of Jock Potter, Fred Benecke was appointed Chief DES with Robin as his Deputy. With endless structural re-organisations, Robin moved back to Plant Industry

and then Plant Industries as Chief, tirelessly supported by Kevin Long. By now he had 2 children, Julian and Rachel, and Maureen was still with the Education Department. At the same time, he was on Plant Production Committee and surprisingly, the Poultry Farmers Licencing Committee which was then engaged in the egg war with Paul Galea and membership of the Yellow Maize Marketing Board. There was also a Trade Mission to Yugoslavia managed by the infamous Ian McDonald.

Robin then moved to the new position of Deputy Director, Water Resource Management, initially at North Sydney but later at Parramatta. A policy swing aiming to improve the balance between irrigation rights and environmental flows encouraged Robin to apply for the position of Director of Fisheries which was by then within NSW Agriculture.

Things were progressing with the integration (thanks to Barbara Richardson and Bob Kearney) when it was decided to move Agriculture, including Fisheries, to Orange. Literally within a week of the lease at McKell expiring, Cabinet decided Fisheries would become an independent organisation staying in Sydney and Robin remaining as Director.

In May 1993 Robin and his new partner Pam were looking for a calmer life and each resigned their respective jobs in Sydney and moved to Tasmania to establish a restaurant and Boutique Bed and Breakfast in a National Trust listed house in Deloraine. After nearly 10 years running what was by then a National award-winning business it was sold.

In 2003, Robin and Pam started another adventure together, building a new house on 18 acres in Hillwood Tasmania with about 5 acres of productive garden overlooking the Tamar River. In 2015 they moved to a smaller property with

manageable gardens in Dilston.

During his time in Tasmania, Robin was never too far removed from government. He spent 10 years on a Board of Advice to the Tasmanian Minister for Fisheries with responsibility for allocating salmon leases, he was also on the panel for the Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal and Chair of the South East Trawl Management Advisory Committee for AFMA.

Robin was immensely proud of the achievements of his children and stepchildren all now established in their own businesses.

Throughout their 30 years together Robin and Pam also found time for overseas travel, an interest in film, and more recently, a love of croquet. Pam continued nursing part time in Child Health and later in Aged Care while Robin managed the garden and home.

Robin's last few months were made so much more bearable with the support he received from Launceston's Community Palliative Care Team, his GP, the Oncology team and Calvary, St Lukes, Mellwood Palliative Unit, RIP.

**Passing of Eric Clyde Darley
6 May 1927–11 May 2022**



This was advised by his daughter Jillian Links. More information will be provided in the next issue.

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.

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