

OLD AGGIES

Membership subs # Laurieton # Wagga # Tamworth-Armidale # Sydney

Diary Dates

Alstonville luncheon - Monday
19 September 2016,
Alstonville Bowling Club -
contact Geoff Jacobs 0412 107
727 or
gajacobs@bigpond.com

Orange luncheon -
Wednesday 12 October 2016,
Eighteen70 Restaurant 11:30
for 12:30 - contact Peter
Witschi (02) 6369 0011 or
jfpwitschi@bigpond.com

Gosford luncheon - Thursday
3 November 2016, Central
Coast Leagues Club 11:30 for
12:30 - contact John Stone
(02) 4362 1834 or
jgandjastone8@gmail.com

Sydney luncheon - Tuesday 13
December 2016, City of
Sydney RSL Club 11:30 -
contact Col Short (02) 9876
1018 or
cbshort@bigpond.com

Wagga Wagga luncheon -
contact James Hamilton 0447
225 875 or
jnch1950_1@bigpond.com

Laurieton luncheon - Monday
27 February 2017 Laurieton
United Services' Club 11:30 -
contact Ray Buxton (02) 6559
7001 or
rhu87351@bigpond.net.au

Armidale/Tamworth luncheon
- contact Dr Barbara
Vanselow
bvanselo@gmail.com

From the President's desk ...

At the AGM held on Tuesday 8 March 2016 the following were elected as Office Bearers for 2016/2017:

Patron: Ken Hutton President: Frank Doughty Secretary: Graham Linnegar Treasurer and Membership: Col Short Auditor: Lawrie Lucas-Smith Newsletter Editor: Col Begg Old Aggies was 34 years old on 3 March 2016. Laurieton branch, first met in 1996 and held its 21st luncheon on 22 February 2016. Alan Lee, the original organiser of this group, advised that he would be unavailable to organise future luncheons and Ray Buxton has volunteered as future organiser. I wish to place on record the great work Alan and his wife Val did for the Laurieton group over the last 25 years, and their support offered to Ray and Von Buxton. Special thanks to Tony Heffernan, DPI Orange for assistance with our newsletter over the last couple of years and I wish him a happy and healthy retirement and hope to see him at Old Aggies luncheons in Orange. My thanks also to the committee members for their support and encouragement during the year. Once again it has been my pleasure to have been your President and I encourage your continued support for our Association.

Frank Doughty



1996: Geoff Crawford, Ted McLaren, Sir Patrick Hanley



1996: Ray Buxton, Tom Bullock, Doug Mumford, Ernie

TAMWORTH/ARMIDALE TROOPS MEET HALF WAY

Early March saw the gathering of the Old Aggies from Tamworth, Armidale and surrounding districts at the Bendemeer Pub - about half way between the two northern cities.

Organised efficiently by Dr Barbara Vanselow, the gathering saw a healthy number of founding fathers of the Department in the north including Russ Godden, Alan Jackson, John Ayres and Bob Gulliford attending, along with the *real* power brokers such as Lois Ryan, John Black and John Crosby from TARC and a significant number of supporting and interested spouses. Barbara has sent some delightful pictures of the event.



Alan Jackson and Russ Godden



Rick Young and John Ayres



John Crosby and Bob Gahan



John Black and Pat Gulliford



Lois Ryan and Helen Bell



Bob Gulliford and Lynne Black



LAURIETON LUNCHEON RISES LIKE THE PHOENIX

A total of 24 Old Aggies and family sat down to a very enjoyable luncheon on 24 February. The group consisted of eight locals, six from the Far North Coast, one from Newcastle, John Stone and his wife from Gosford, two from Orange, four from the former head office and one from Tea Gardens who, incidentally, left the Department in the early 1980s. Max and Greta Gowland came just before lunch but Max had to have medical treatment on the day. Good luck with the rest of the treatment Max.

President Frank Doughty paid tribute to Alan Lee for his many years of sterling service, organising the Laurieton luncheon. In a very emotional statement Alan expressed his wish to take it a bit easy after nearly 20 years of constant slog. At this stage of the proceedings, it was announced that Ray Buxton had volunteered to organise next year's get together at Laurieton. A huge thank you to Alan for all his hard work and to Ray for picking up the baton.

Frank Doughty, Graham Linnegar



Above left: Joan Stone, Peg Bowler, Alan and Val Lee, Frank Doughty. Above right: Greta and Max Gowland, John and Joan Stone, Peg Bowler, Alan Lee. Below: Helen and Graham Linnegar, Peter Mooney, Geoff and Faith Buggie and David Hartley.



GLENFIELD TO CAMDEN “MEGA MOVE”

By John Stone

During the 1970s the Veterinary Research Station lost a considerable area of its agricultural land when the expressway traversed the property and flood mitigation work severed its irrigation pumping site from the main stream. In order to finalise compensation to the Department of Agriculture the then Chief of the Division of Research Services, Ken Hutton arranged a meeting between Mr Kaceric, Chairman of the Macarthur Development Board and me.

The first hour of the meeting was spent negotiating compensation for the relocation of our pumping site. The Chairman agreed to pay the Department an amount in the order of \$4,000 to carry out this work. He then suggested a number of small parcels of land in nearby locations as suitable for compensation for the land lost to the Expressway. None of these areas was suitable. Mr Kaceric then suggested that we may be interested in relocating the Research Station to the historic Macarthur Camden Park Property. He presented a large map which demonstrated the development plans encompassing most of the agricultural land of the Department of Agriculture and the Education Department at Glenfield. These plans were for the new roads to be constructed, urban development and improvements of the rail system.

He further stated that the Camden Park property comprising about 3,000 acres plus houses and dairies, could be transferred to the control of the Department of Agriculture. He considered that some of the funds raised from the development of our Glenfield property could be used to meet the cost of building the new facilities on the Camden site. Mr Kaceric said he had previously made a similar offer to the Department but they would not accept the initiative to relocate.

It was evident to me from the plans presented that the Research Station days at Glenfield were numbered. If this offer wasn't accepted I believed that the Research Station activities may well be transferred to various regions of the State. Mr Kaceric was advised that I would present his offer to our recently appointed Director General, Mr George Knowles.

The offer to relocate the Veterinary Station to Camden was eventually agreed to but for reasons not known to me *not* the offer by Mr Kaceric to meet the cost with funding arrangements from the development of the Glenfield property. When the announcement was made to the staff at Glenfield some officers were rather upset. Some even made my visits to Glenfield uncomfortable and I stated I was only “the messenger”. I often wonder what would have happened to Glenfield if it hadn't been relocated to Camden.

Our Architect inspected the Glenfield laboratories and estimated the cost of relocation to be in the order of \$12.5 m. His estimation was a little conservative and if it had been about \$15.5 m a lot of difficulties with financial arrangements towards the end of construction may have been avoided. The work was given to Public Works to draw the plans and call tenders. Much of this work was let out to private companies.

It took a number of years to complete the transfer and funding was always a problem. During this time building costs rose sharply with the final cost being in the order of \$36.5 m. The foundations had to be altered to cope with possible subsidence as there were coal seams under the site. The laboratories were all upgraded, taking advantage of changed technology. Disposal of the waste water was a major exercise and presented many problems to be resolved. The final cost could always be related to \$15.5 m due to increases in building price indices over the construction period but there was always a shortfall of about \$1.5 m.

Glenfield to Camden ctd.

Kevin Cooper was given the task to locate and purchase all the new equipment required and to ensure it arrived on time as needed by the building contractor. This was a massive task and his efforts were so important to the success of the relocation.

During the construction period it was necessary to attend monthly meetings on site with Public Works and the Contractors. On one occasion as the first lot of laboratories were nearing completion an inspection was made of the large stainless steel benches with a large sink in the centre. I asked the contractor did the benches drain into the sink as they appeared to be level. He replied that the specification didn't make that request. You can image the problem and the cost to place a stainless steel lip around the edge of these big benches to stop water falling onto the floor. The design of benches for the remaining laboratories was modified accordingly. Safety showers were to be installed at the end of these completed labs. The showers were on the wall but not connected to the water supply or drainage as this was not written into the specifications. Common sense simply didn't prevail. All these changes added to the cost. Many similar faults came to light and had to be rectified.

The relocation of Glenfield was the largest Capital Works project undertaken by the Department up to that time. On completion it was a wonderful asset located on one of the most historic agricultural properties in Australia. The buildings have recently been renovated and increased to meet the future needs of the Department. It's understood the cost of these was close to the original cost of the initial buildings.

The facility was named the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute in recognition of her work and commitment to the development of the merino wool industry in NSW.

Originally it was to be named after John Macarthur. John Bowler telephoned me one Friday to say the signs were made and ready to erect the next week. On my arrival to work on the Monday morning I was greeted by the ladies from the Minister's Office. Over the weekend they had been reading the Macarthur history and said the name of the new facility must be changed to Elizabeth Macarthur. What a dilemma!

Since its original construction the Institute has been added to by other sectors of the Department of Agriculture and it continues to play a vitally important role in the agricultural industries of NSW.

OLD AGGIE "SNIPPETS"

DAVID HARTLEY RETURNS

Nice to report that David Hartley has returned to the east coast after an extended career in Western Australia where he held a number of senior executive positions and was responsible for an area of land into which would fit several European countries. David and Judy have taken up residence in the Newcastle area - welcome back to you both!

BETTY AND DON CELEBRATE

Well known and loved Orange couple Betty and Don McDonald have been celebrating - in February 50 members of the family gathered to help Betty celebrate her 80th birthday. Congratulations to you Betty!

WELCOME BACK JOHN BLACK

Welcome back John Black - formerly the fittest lunchtime jogger at Tamworth Agricultural Research Centre - lovely to see your name pop up in the membership of the Old Aggies.

- * **The easiest way to find something lost around the house is to buy a replacement.**
- * **Eventually everyone stops lying about their age and start boasting about it!**

REFLECTIONS ON FLEET MANAGEMENT

My knowledge of the Department's transport history dates back to 1958 when the supply of transport was made up of vehicles attached to Research Stations; a few Field Assistants in the old Extension Regions had the use of vehicles but officers' private vehicles were largely used on official business. Some vehicles were supplied under the Commonwealth Extension Services Grant.

On re-joining the Department in 1973 I was appointed to Head Office in Sydney to manage the vehicle fleet of 340. At the time of my retirement in 1988 the fleet had increased to 1,650 vehicles. The increase was due to private vehicles being replaced by official vehicles.

In 1974 the policy was changed requiring passenger vehicles to be replaced at 40,000 kms or two years and heavy duty vehicles at 65,000 kms. Prior to this vehicles were replaced when funds were available or when they were beyond economical repair. Only a small number of vehicles were replaced each year.

The new policy and the ever increasing number of vehicles coming into the fleet placed greater demands on the Fleet Manager and presented new problems never imagined. A depot was established at the Royal Botanic Gardens in order to receive old vehicles being delivered from country areas and the arrival of new vehicles received from the suppliers.

The congestion of vehicles outstripped the space at the Botanic Gardens and the functions were moved to the Veterinary Research Station at Glenfield. The work continued to grow and for convenience of operations a Motor Vehicle Depot was established at the Poultry Research Station, Seven Hills. My staff then included a Clerk, Typist and Depot Operator.

By 1988 about 540 old vehicles had to be received at the depot as well as 540 replacement vehicles. The old vehicles had to be checked and prepared for auction.

The auction room would not receive a vehicle unless it would pass for registration. Often a vehicle would be recently passed for registration in a country location but not meet the standard required by the auctions. This often caused friction with county officers. Small cracks in the windscreen, dented hubcaps, minor body dents and scratches were not tolerated and had to be repaired. Hence the Department of Agriculture's vehicles were well received by the auction company and realised good financial returns. We often received more for our vehicles at the auctions than their initial cost. Maintaining high returns for our vehicles improved our purchasing power to maintain the fleet.

Initially officers from the country had to return old vehicles to the depot and drive the new vehicles home. This was fraught with difficulties and sometimes vehicles were damaged in transit.

In the late 1970s the Premier decreed that 75% of our passenger motor vehicle fleet had to have a motor no greater than 1,600cc in capacity. This was not readily accepted by many district users. Much time was spent dealing with complaints about the unsuitability of these vehicles.

I would try to reason with them and explain that this was now our policy. In exasperation I frequently suggested (tongue in cheek) contact with the Premier as it was *his* policy.

On one occasion a District Agronomist complained that his small front wheel drive car could not do the job. Grass built up in front of the vehicle and lifted the front wheels off the ground. When asked where he was driving he said he was taking the farmer across a rough cultivation paddock. He was quickly advised these small vehicles were not for use off road. Had he thought of asking the farmer to provide the transport on his property? My reply didn't really satisfy his complaint. We met the Premier's request.

As small car technology improved, four cylinder, front wheel drive vehicles became well accepted into the fleet. After my retirement the fleet increased the number of large six cylinder vehicles because of their popularity at auction. In some situations this return was not well accepted as running costs increased.

When Government Stores became involved in the acquisition of vehicles they determined makes and models. These were frequently changed between manufacturers.

Often vehicles were treated as a personal supply and the term "Pool Vehicles" was a nasty expression. Officers would often make requests for the vehicle being supplied to include extras to suit their personal needs. They would be disappointed when the vehicle arrived as contracted by Government Supply Department.

The introduction of specialised number plates to enable the Department's vehicles to be quickly identified also created many difficulties. My endeavours to explain all the extra work involved was not taken seriously. All our vehicles were registered in June each year. After long negotiations with the DMT all the serial plates were supplied well before June. (RDA and SDA). This meant that for about three months our vehicle plates didn't match the registration label. One officer had a minor accident in outer Sydney. He thought he would have a little fun with the attending Police Officer. He suggested to the Police Officer that he wasn't very observant as he hadn't noticed this situation. The Police were not happy until they telephoned me for an explanation. It backfired as our staff member was delayed for over an hour having been escorted to the Police Station.

A number of amusing incidents arose with the management of the fleet. An irate farmer wrote in claiming compensation for a damaged irrigation pipe that was run over by one of our vehicles on his property. The drivers at the time couldn't agree about moving the pipe and decided that driving over it in a 30cwt Dodge utility wouldn't cause much damage. After considerable correspondence and lengthy negotiations with GIO, compensation was paid to the farmer.

Just after I retired, a telephone call was received by my supervisor advising that a Departmental vehicle was observed parked in a back street of inner Sydney. He said it had been there for a couple of weeks and was in a real mess. The Acting Fleet Manager arranged for the Government Motor Garage to go and collect this vehicle and hold it until further notice. It was ascertained that the officer responsible went overseas for three weeks and parked it there until he returned. What a surprise awaited him upon his return. When he telephoned Head Office to report the unpleasant situation his call was directed to the Director General. It wasn't a very happy return. At the same time his Region was seeking additional vehicles. His action didn't help.

John Stone advised me that just before he retired a large percentage of our cars had to be fitted with new hubcaps as the auctions would not accept a car with a damaged hubcap. This was becoming a considerable cost to limited funds. It was decided to remove the hubcaps off all new vehicles and keep them in store until the vehicles went to auction.

On one occasion a relative new Landcruiser was caught in a flood and written off by our insurance company. When advised that the vehicle had only been in the water for an hour before it was retrieved and was not fully submerged, my suspicions were aroused. The vehicle was found to be in good condition, the oil and filters were changed and the vehicle returned to service. Later I had a call from the head assessor who was not happy with my actions and told me so in a very stern manner. Maybe someone was looking for a cheap four wheel drive vehicle.

I am still enjoying my long retirement at Laurieton and often reflect upon my time in the Department of Agriculture and keep in touch with the many friends I made during this time. The job of Fleet Manager was demanding but most enjoyable.

Ray Buxton

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBS WANTED

Discussion at the AGM highlighted contributions to the Old Aggies Newsletter from members old and new. With a strong common theme of agricultural production in all its forms, from the coast to the Western Division, from the southern

border areas to the Golden Triangle, there must be thousands of stories that would be of interest to our readership.

Please feel free to contribute your stories to the Old Aggies Newsletter - 2 Sunrise Way, Orange NSW 2800 or email them to colbegg@tpg.com.au

All contributions gratefully received.



Above left: Brian Dear, Norma Brown, Vince Baker, George Skeers. Above right: Cliff West, Steve Sweet, Rosemary Sweet, Geoff Mort.

RIVERINA/MURRAY REGION 2016 OLD AGGIES LUNCHEON

The Riverina/Murray annual luncheon was held at the function room of the Thomas Blamey Tavern, Lake Albert on 12 May. The luncheon was attended by 31 retirees (one former RDA, one OIC, three Station Managers, and one Director) and spouses and there were 39 apologies. We welcomed all people especially travellers George Stevens and Cliff West from Yanco/Leeton, John Lacy from Finley, Greg Fenton from Bairnsdale, Victoria, and Steve and Rosemary Sweet from Canberra. We acknowledged the passing of Col Carlin. Col was the mechanisation officer at Wagga Wagga from 1964 to 1982. After leaving the Department, Col took on the role of curator at the Wagga Wagga Historical Museum where he revitalised many machinery exhibits. A written message from former RDA Steve Sutherland was tabled; Steve and Sue are now living near Adelaide. We also welcomed new retiree Helen Taylor who was a Technical Officer (mainly in the barley section) and then cereal chemist at the WWAI from October 1983 to July 2015. Helen is involved in the olive oil industry in relation to tasting of various olive oils. Helen has a small property on the eastern side of Tumbarumba which keeps her busy. And we welcomed new retiree Cliff West who was Clerical/Administrative Officer at Yanco AI for most of his working life from September 1981 until he retired in December 2014. Cliff worked at the WWAI from May 1981 to September 1981 prior to transferring to Yanco AI. He commenced work in the Public Service mid 1970s. Cliff has fulfilled various

roles in the Department including auditing and special projects.

New retiree Tom Nordblom was welcomed. Tom worked as an Economist at the WWAI from April 2002 to March 2016. Tom is initially from USA and married Clara - a Syrian - whom he met when he was working in Syria.

Geoff Mort who worked at WWAI in the Biometrical Section from 1997 to July 2005 was another new retiree attending the luncheon. Geoff moved onto Essential Energy where he worked until he retired recently. Geoff has musical talent and he was one of the original members of the WWAI band who played to wee hours at WWAI Christmas parties. The original members of the band were Peter Olson, Jeff Evans, Jim Virgona, Geoff Mort, Ross Smithard, and import Paul on the drums. Lloyd Kingham joined the band as vocalist at a later date. The band extended their talents into the local community where they played at various public venues and they called themselves "Seeing Eye Dogs".

We welcome new retiree John Lacy who worked mainly at Yanco AI and who is currently living at Finley. John was involved with research and consultancy associated with the rice industry but with the downturn in the rice industry due to reduction in the availability of water in the MIA area, he has been providing consultancy for other agricultural industries.

Keith Favell, who commenced work at WWAI in 1971 for one day as he was

transferred to service Wagga Agricultural College and then Wagga Regional Veterinary Laboratory then Yanco AI then Wagga Advisory Office then WWAI as Administrative Officer from July 1986 to August 1988 then to Public Works based in Wagga Wagga then to SES Wagga Wagga where he worked for 12 years until retirement was yet another new retiree at the luncheon. Keith has fulfilled various roles in the Department including auditing and special projects.

Greg Fenton provided guests with an update on his activities since leaving Wagga Wagga some years ago.

The President's annual report was taken as read by people. Main points noted were a congratulatory letter was forwarded to Barry Buffier on his appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia. Thanks to the Executive for giving \$100 to each regional coordinator to be used in relation to Old Aggies' luncheons.

Local Land Services were formed on the 1 January 2014. There are 11 regions within NSW. LLS focus areas are Biosecurity, Agricultural Production, Emergency Management, and Natural Resource Management. Presently the LLS main focus area is Farm Innovation Fund which assists primary producers in identifying and addressing risks to their farm enterprise, improving permanent farm infrastructure and ensuring long term productivity and sustainable land use, aiding in meeting changes to seasonal conditions.

EH Graham Centre update on focus areas are Bridging Distance and Building Relationships between women farmers in Australia and India to sustain and develop rural communities, irrigation water productivity modelling of crops, strengthening links with China, the flora of Wagga Wagga: a guide to revegetation and restoration, and PhD students on various projects.

It was advised that eight long term staff (Colin Fritsch, Sarah Ellis, Joel Gray, Eric Armstrong, Rajinder Singh, Tom Nordblom, Helen Taylor, and Jonathan Holland) have left the WW Agricultural Institute. It was advised that one long term staff David Davis left the Yanco Institute. New staff members appointed at WWAI include Felicity Harris (Crop Physiologist), Rebecca Darbyshire (Project

Climate Impacts), Adrian Englefield (Development Officer Viticulture), Simon Flinn (Technical Assistant Livestock), Nannan Yang (Plant Pathology), and Aaron Preston (Research Agronomist). Baray Mehrshad (Post Doctoral Fellow), Mahsa Majzoubi (Cereal Chemist), and Fleur Muller (Project Officer Crop Nutrition).

Reference was made to four Daily Advertiser articles. First article titled "Wagga will host RIRDC" where RIRDC will be relocated to Wagga Wagga as part of the major shakeup of major agricultural entities. Second article titled "Databases are an investment in the future" referring to rural research and development corporations to establish databases of levy payers. Third article titled "Wagga work recognised in GRDC Award" where an Emerging Leader Award was given to Luke Gaynor based at WWAI for his commitment and contribution to agriculture. The fourth article titled "Biggest injection of funds" where Amanda Tilyard (nee Lewington) participated in "Takes 2" fund raising where the 12 local participants raised nearly \$500,000. Amanda worked at WWAI in the 1980s in the clerical section and is now a real estate agent.

Announcements were monthly coffee mornings to happen on the first Thursday of each month at 10 am, now at the Commercial Club Wagga Wagga. Questions were asked about whether the annual function should be held in the evening in lieu of lunchtime – response from people was status quo. People enjoyed a two course meal with refreshments in the function room on the day. There were a number of yarns, fellowship, reminiscing, relationship building, exchange of contact details, and smiling faces.

**James Hamilton Riverina/Murray
Coordinator**

SADLY MISSED

It's always sad to read of the passing of Old Aggies and former work colleagues and friends. Shirley Calder reported that Brian had passed away in late December and in early January Eric Keith Leggett passed away aged 85. Sadly missed by all.

WAGGA WAGGA AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE GOING GANGBUSTERS

Over the past 12 months the Agriculture NSW component of the greater NSW DPI has remained very stable in both budget and staffing. The Department of Trade and Investment has had a reshuffle and is now the Department of Industry with TAFE joining the cluster. NSW DPI remains with Agriculture, Biosecurity, Fisheries, Water, Crown Lands and Economic Services.

In cropping GRDC has continued to fund excellent research projects going through for a five year period which is an improvement for both the research outcomes and the technical staff as far as security of employment goes.

The number of officers at WWAI now sits at 165 and I have appointed two new researchers Aaron Preston to Cropping Weeds and Mahsa Majzoobi to Cereal Chemist (Helen Taylor's old position). Graeme Sandral has moved to cropping in the Soil Nutrition Researcher and Eric Koetz to Cropping Weeds Research. In 2010 we had 142 officers at WWAI so the last few years have seen an increase in capacity.

The numbers of jointly funded projects with GRDC, MLA and RIRDC continue to increase and this enables more technical support positions to be created. Growth in the pathology area has been significant and Dr Andre Milgate and Dr Kurt Lindbeck have increased staff numbers and projects over the past 12 months.

Minister Nial Blair continues to show great interest in the Wagga Wagga and Yanco Institutes and that, together with the interest of the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet continues to keep agriculture and the Institutes at the forefront of Treasury and other Ministers.

The season has had a slower start than last year but good rain of late has made the trials secure. Early sowing trials were watered by irrigation systems to establish and to achieve the early April dates.

We are just completing the next Southern Research Results booklet - an initiative of the Southern Cropping Unit but now extended to include all areas across NSW Agriculture - water and irrigation, climate, soils and pastures. This booklet with 73 reports brings together the outputs from WWAI and will be distributed via Twitter, internet and hard copy. *(Thank goodness for hard copy for us poor old retired geriatrics!!! Ed.)*

The olive oil lab has been hosting many Chinese visitors as it is a world renowned lab. NSW DPI alliance with Charles Sturt University continues to strengthen with a new mentoring program with undergraduates starting this year. Also the Functional Grains Centre (FGC) which provides opportunity for grains companies to invest into post doctoral, PhD and honours students as a succession plan for their businesses, has been an excellent program. SunRice and MSM Milling are partners in this program with CSU and DPI. This will become more essential into the future to have both university education but also the skills to ensure the graduates are job ready to slot into agriculture positions.

Recruiting Agricultural Officers into research positions has proven difficult lately as there are so many options for graduates nowadays. Investing in further programs like the FGC will increase the numbers of graduates available.

Local Land Services has a new Chair of Chairs and meetings have been held to ensure greater cohesion between LLS and DPI. LLS has 13 different entities throughout NSW and this does make it quite a challenge to find the best way to work with each one. Locally the Murray and Riverina LLS have strong relationships at all levels with NSW DPI.

Overall WWAI and NSW DPI are still in a good position and continue to grow and service the growers of Southern NSW.

Deb Slinger, Director of WWAI

WILDMAN FAMILY NOSTALGIA - CAN ANYONE BEAT THIS RECORD?

My Grandfather survived the Port Kembla mine explosion, so he took up a closer settlement lease two miles north of Coramba (north-west of Coffs Harbour) with 502 acres fronting the Orara River.

He used to carry out potato and maize trials for Glen Sparks from the Glen Innes Experimental Farm (see Farmers' Handbook, 1st Ed. p 115).

My father graduated from Hawkesbury Agricultural College in 1920, together with McGibbon, Cantrill, Williamson and Medley. Dad was in the fledgling group to form the Sheep and Wool Branch of the Department. He had many postings all over the State in the early years of service.

At Cowra, he bought an "up-market" sulky; he was a real dandy! Dad was posted to Nyngan from Cowra, then Trangie ... all done with his trusty sulky and pony.

Mum and he were married in December 1927. They were at Trangie and Yanco Farms and in 1930, he opened up the Northern District for the State, based at Tamworth. In 1935, while judging the Agricultural Bureau's Merino Ewe Competition, he caught pneumonia and died (3 December 1935), only six days before my fifth birthday.

I went to live with my mother's family at Grafton, then followed with a Scholarship to HAC, graduating with an HDA in 1949 ... then Rural Youth in October 1950 and retiring in December 1987. OIC Wagga Wagga office ... but that's another story for another time.

- John Wildman

Footnote: John Wildman (85) and his wife Ronne (84) were married in January 1953 at St Mathews Church, South Grafton and held the reception at the Police Station where Ronne's father was the local Sergeant.

1980: REGIONAL H/Q MOVES FROM TAMWORTH TO GUNNEDAH

Leaving aside the "political rationale" behind the decision to move Regional Headquarters for the New England, Hunter and Metropolitan Region from Tamworth to Gunnedah (and keeping the staff outrage to a low grumble) the then Regional Director of Extension Russ Godden and his right hand man Ken Fishpool ably assisted in the relocation of around 18 positions to the north western NSW town early in 1980.

Prior to the construction of a significant government office block, Gunnedah extension staff (including well known names such as Sutherland, Dale, Von Mengersen, Luff, Hassab, Yeates, Blackwood) had enjoyed rabbit warren office space under the local Ex Services Club in Conadilly Street. The new office block certainly added to the corporate image of the Department and its staff who were held in very high regard. And despite some teething problems, the new office block rapidly became home to a great bunch of dedicated, professional officers and support staff.

Technological support at the office in the early days consisted of a couple of manual typewriters, one fax and a new whiz bang machine known as

as a teleprinter. Then Apricot twin floppy drive computers arrived ... and we thought Christmas had come to Gunnedah! Allan (Neil) Smith and Eric Corbin took charge, with able assistance from people including Barry Baillie, David Hartley, David Gilbert, John Wilson, Michael Knox, Dick Bieman and Gary Scovell, many of whom went on to more senior positions within the Department. Many of the former Gunnedah staff look back and realise we were "living the dream", working in a great little town, doing some fantastic extension work and meeting the community's expectations with emergencies such as Parthenium weed, plague locusts, fodder drops, flood relief. The region enjoyed a great reputation, having seen illustrious extension officers including Fred Benecke, Bob Komoll, Charlie Tandy and others serving the farming communities well for many years and it continued this support through great applied research conducted at the surrounding Departmental research facilities and on cooperators' farms, high-quality extension work that provided producers with alternative, sustainable production methods and veterinary advice second to none.

With apologies for misspellings and "senior moment" forgotten names/titles.

- Col Begg

