

OLD AGGIES

President: Frank Doughty, (02) 9481 8787, fdoughty@tpg.com.au

Secretary: Graham Linnegar, (02) 9524 3592, uuuu@0000

Treasurer/Membership: Colin Short, (02) 9876 1018, chshort@bigpond.com

Diary Dates

Alstonville luncheon –

Monday 18 September 2017
at Alstonville Bowling Club
commencing at 11.30 am to
eat at 12.30 pm – contact Geoff
Jacobs 0412 2017 727 or
gajacobs@bigpond.com

Armidale/Tamworth luncheon

– Wednesday 7 March 2018,
Bendemeer Hotel – contact
Dr Barbara Vanselow
0434 344 992 or
bvanselo@gmail.com

Gosford luncheon – Thursday

2 November 2017 – Central
Coast Leagues Club – contact
Geoff Warr (02) 4342 3226
or 0411 128 936 or
warries@optusnet.com.au

Laurieton luncheon – Monday

19 February 2018, Laurieton
United Services' Club,
11.30 am, contact Ray Buxton
(02) 6559 7001 or
rbu87351@bigpond.com

Orange luncheon – Wednesday

11 October 2017, Eighteen70
Restaurant, 11.30 am for
12.30 pm – contact Peter
Witschi (02) 6369 0011 or
jfpwitschi@bigpond.com

Sydney luncheon – Tuesday

12 December 2017, City of
Sydney RSL Club, 11.30 am
– contact Col Short
(02) 9876 1018 or
cbshort@bigpond.com

Wagga Wagga luncheon

– Thursday 10 May 2018
– contact James Hamilton
0447 225 875 or
jnch1950@bigpond.com

From the President's desk



Frank Doughty and Alan Lee.

At the 2017 AGM the following were elected Frank Doughty (President), Graham Linnegar (Secretary), Col Short (Treasurer/Membership), Lawrie Lucas-Smith (Auditor) and John Bowler (Newsletter Editor). Special thanks to Col Begg who has retired following great service as newsletter editor.

Many will be sad to read the passing of Ken Hutton in March, Ken was a great mentor, and enjoyed attending Old Aggies. He was a loyal member having been past President and our

most recent Patron, I will miss his support and friendship.

Once again I acknowledge the efforts of our regional group coordinators in organising the various luncheons/gatherings. Gosford group is now organised by Geoff Warr who has taken over from John Stone. A big thank you to John for his untiring efforts for our Gosford members. John formed this group some years ago and it continues to flourish. Many thanks to recently retired Barry Jensen for his expertise and assistance with this issue of the Newsletter.

My thanks to the Executive for their support and encouragement, it has again been my pleasure to be your President and I look forward to your continued support in 2017 and beyond. Our luncheons continue to provide great camaraderie among our former work colleagues, many of whom are considered life-long friends.

Frank Doughty – President

Developments at Yanco Agricultural Institute

We often wonder about what is happening in the Department these days. As many staff in the old Department 'did time' at Yanco, we asked George Stevens, the Manager there until his retirement in 2017, to provide the following update:

Research still continues at Yanco in its renowned programs, but some recent developments are of interest.

Around 2010, Yanco was selected as a site for some intense cereal research, particularly drought tolerance in wheat by the Grains Research and Development Commission (GRDC). About 20 ha, to the north and north east of the research labs became known as the 'Managed Environment Facility', one of three sites across Australia. Recent GRDC comments are that it is the best managed and most productive of the three sites, others being at Narrabri and in Western Australia. This project employs three technicians on an ongoing basis. A similar (and slightly larger) MEF will be established very soon for canola, on the old Farm Fair site.

Cotton growing has expanded considerably over the last five years in the MIA, and in recognition of this, a Cotton Research Agronomist, Steve Buster has been appointed to Yanco. *Editor's comment – many of us will remember that a cotton project was running in the MIA in the 60's and 70's.*

In 2010, a paddock was rented with a confidentiality agreement to a private company for the purpose of trialling hazel nuts. (I never saw any of the rental funds!). We agreed to prepare it to the point where the nuts could be planted, but as a result of the confidentiality agreement, the paddock was quickly dubbed the 'secret paddock' by farm staff when they were asked to do tractor work in it. But as a result of this work, the same company has acquired some substantial areas of country around Sandigo for commercial production of hazel nuts. In June 2012, the area of trial nut was extended to Leeton Farm where two paddocks have been planted with further areas to go in soon. Other nuts crops, particularly walnuts and almonds, are now grown on some large areas in the MIA, and because of these developments, it was seen fit to appoint Jacqui Simpson as a Nut Research Officer.

Rice work continues apace, with Ben Ovenden replacing Russel Reinke in Rice Breeding, and Mark Talbot taking on Cereal Chemistry/Scientific Imaging.

Citrus work continues, but there has been some decline in the level of work in vegetables.

In 2012, the former student Soils Lab and half of the former Irrigation Lab was taken over by the Office of Environment and Heritage and redeveloped into a soils testing lab and continues in this role.

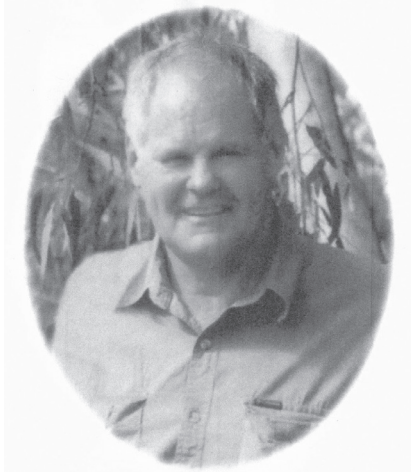
What remains of the 'College' continues to operate as the 'Yanco Campus of Tocal College' despite the Government accepting the proposal in the Pratley Report to reinstate the name 'Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture'.

A significant development is the proposal to use the site by NSW Police for armed response training, believed to be an outcome from the reports on the Lindt Café siege. This training will start in the next couple of months and will continue for the next 2–3 years or more. This means that Amaroo will be full for 40 weeks a year and will represent a significant boost to the local Leeton/Yanco economy. They will also be using a large part of the student accommodation blocks and the Main Store. While there have been many proposals to put to use the student facilities on Yanco, this is the first time since 2004 that they will be used.

Joe Valenzisi, formerly Orchard Foreman, then Farm Foreman after Greg Caffery's retirement, was appointed as Manager in April 2015, after three years of Acting in the position (was I that hard to replace????). John Field, long time Stock Attendant, retired in July 2015 after around 40 years' service on Leeton farm and Yanco. Joe also has responsibility for Griffith, but has 21 staff now reporting to him on Yanco.

Yanco has 1300 Merino ewes, a large proportion of which are Centre Plus bloodlines from Condobolin. I tried to get some ewes of this bloodline but could not for love nor money! At Leeton Farm, the first cross ewe flock has been dispersed to meet research requirements, and for the nut project. A small wether flock remains as a clean-up mob.

Vale Bob Freer – 8/8/1941–5/5/2017



A significant chapter of the modern Australian beef cattle industry ended with the death of Bob Freer in Armidale after a 12 month illness with a brain tumour.

Bob graduated from Hawkesbury Agricultural College in 1961 and after the traditional, and mandatory training at Trangie and Anthony's Lagoon in the Northern Territory was appointed District Beef Cattle Officer at Maitland in 1966. He moved to Armidale in 1977 and was one of the key players in the development of Armidale as a centre for the beef industry research and development, as well as a service facility for many of the breed societies.

Bob progressed through the Department and was acting Principal Beef Cattle Officer, but was reluctant to move back to Sydney. He left the Department in 1985 to join the Hereford Society as Technical Development Director, being the first of a number of ex-Departmental staff to move to the breed societies to bring a very professional and objective focus to the seed stock industry.

Bob's technical knowledge and extension ability has been recognised across the beef Industry, both in Australia and overseas. His early work on bull fertility and soundness, and his appointment as the National Co-ordinator of the National Beef Recording Scheme, the forerunner to the unconditionally recognised Breed Plan, all demonstrated his breadth of knowledge and practical experience and application

to benefit the Industry. The development of Taurus Technology, an R&D initiative of the Hereford and Poll Hereford Society, and later establishing his own genetics and management consultancy kept Bob to the forefront of the technical development of the beef industry. Bob had major involvement with the Animal Genetics and Breeding Unit, Agricultural Business Research Institute, the Beef CRC and MLA, as well as a number of breed societies, all of which benefitted from his abilities and knowledge, but all given with the long term view of the beef industry.

Bob was a great mentor, not only to Departmental officers, but to a wide range of livestock research staff, and also the cattle producers. He was equally recognised in scientific forums, as well as in the cattle yards with groups of producers with his excellent communication skills and rapport.

Bob's wife, Jean, and family of Anthony, Peter, Richard and Chrissy conducted a Thanksgiving Service in Armidale, where a large gathering of family, friends and industry celebrated Bob's life.

Vale Ken Hutton – 7/5/1923–1/3/2017



A large contingent of Aggies attended the funeral of Ken at the Northern Suburbs Crematorium on 7 March. Ken's family spoke of Ken's productive life from the early days on the farm at Glen Innes, his time at university, in the Department at Rydalmere, living in the UK and his work in research administration. Ken was a great communicator and loved the telephone as

many of his colleagues will attest. He had a phenomenal memory and only a few days before he died, he asked his son, Graham, to record his reporting on an exotic disease outbreak in cherries in 1950 which had never been written up.

Ken recorded that Reg Thomas, a fruit inspector, brought in a bundle of cherry trees due to be sold into the industry. He was concerned about the condition of the trees, showing premature defoliation and a white deposit on the underside of the leaves.

He identified the problem as the fungus *cocomyces hiemalis*, the summer stage of one of the very worst cherry diseases in Europe. This disease had never been recorded in Australia. Urgent samples were sent to Kew Gardens which confirmed the disease.

Immediate surveys discovered diseased plants at six nurseries in Sydney which were immediately destroyed and the nurseries quarantined against growing cherry trees.

It was a real credit to Reg Thomas and Ken for their vigilance and dedication to the fruit industry and the quick action of the Department which saved the Australian cherry industry.

Interestingly this outbreak was kept out of the press and the information totally contained within the Department and the few nurseries involved and never written up – not possible today due to the intrusive media and public interest policies.

It is a real tribute to Ken that he was able to remember and spell the details and specify names of this outbreak in his ninety-third year and only a few days before his death.

Ken was widely respected in the horticultural industries and was a frequent visitor to the fruit growing areas of Bilpin, Batlow and Orange. His work enabled growers to understand the aetiology of apple scab, and enabled control programs to be successfully implemented.

His role in research administration coincided with the significant change in research funding and the availability of industry funds

for specific applied research programs as opposed to the more traditional Consolidated Revenue funded activities. This time also was a major expansion of the research facilities and activities of the Department of Agriculture and as we are all aware has been diminished ever since.

Ken was survived by his wife Marie and children Ron, Jan, Graham and Warwick.

Laurieton branch

The Laurieton branch of Old Aggies celebrated 21 years of continued meetings on the 27th of February. Made possible by the work carried out by Alan Lee supported by his wife Val plus the support of loyal Old Aggies who attend.



Owen Simpson, Chris Ballantine and Graham Linnegar.

This year saw the end of Alan being able to continue his good work and in recognition of his service a presentation was made by Frank Doughty who was in attendance. Despite the loss of members and family commitment's arising for some 18 members and their wives sat down to an enjoyable lunch and chat. Rather than see an end to our meetings I volunteered to arrange the 2017 meeting and hopefully with the aid of good health we will be able to keep our meetings on track. The date of our meeting has been changed in consideration of the last Monday of the month affecting some members with business commitments. Therefore please note the 2018 meeting will be held on Monday 19 February 2018.

Our Boys from the north and Sydney continue to support our luncheon and their effort is much appreciated.



John Stone, Alan Lee, Val Lee and Beatrice Doughty.

Riverina/Murray Regional Aggies Annual Luncheon held at Wagga Wagga on Thursday 11 May 2017

The annual luncheon was held at the function room of the Thomas Blamey Tavern, Lake Albert. The luncheon was attended by 26 retirees and spouses and there were 37 apologies (a number of members holidaying or health issues). We welcomed all people especially travellers George Stevens, Beryl Garner, Ron and Robyn Hutton from Yanco/Leeton, Keith and Gillian Helyar from Canberra. We acknowledged the passing and the contribution made to agriculture of Rus Locke, Peter Quilty, Michael Stefanowicz, Mick Willison, Ken Hutton (father of Ron Hutton) and Jack Keogh. Written message



Robyn and Ron Hutton

from Steve Sutherland to the gathering was tabled as he is living near Adelaide.

Deb Slinger, Director of the Wagga Wagga Agricultural Institute sent a report. *(This message will be held over until next newsletter)* Ed.

Monthly coffee mornings happen on the 1st Thursday at 10 am of each month, now at the Commercial Club, Wagga Wagga.

People enjoyed a two course meal with refreshments in the function room. There were a number of yarns, good fellowship and a lot of reminiscing, relationship building, exchange of contact details and smiling faces. – James Hamilton, Riverina/Murray Coordinator

Dr Greg Constable AO

Dr Greg Constable from Narrabeen was awarded the Order of Australia in the New



David Lockett, James Hamilton, Ros Prangnell.



At the Riverina/Murray gathering: John Glastonbury, Gordon Murray, Richard Spurway.

Years Honours List for his contribution to the cotton Industry.

Greg's work in the early 70's was involved with the development and agronomic aspects of the fledging cotton industry in the Namoi valley with particular interest in insect control. He has been a key researcher in the industry which developed rapidly with the partnership with CSRIO at Narrabri. With his interests in sustainability and water use efficiency, his contribution was recognised by his appointed Director of the Cotton CRC's from 1992–1999. As well as Australian awards, Greg was appointed International Cotton Researcher of the Year in 2015.

A mistake I admit to

Early in my service and with the rapid expansion of the fleet, the time required for communication was always limited. I was not able to get out and observe the every day use of vehicles. Acting on a conversation of a FAI learnt of a mistake I made in my endeavour to make sure vehicle use was within the MT rules. I learned cattle weighing scales used by the Livestock Officer, Beef Cattle were very heavy to tow, I also learned they were fitted with only an override braking system. The MT rules for trailers with a gross weight exceeding one tonne must have the braking system activated from the driving position. My enthusiasm at the time saw me make a special case to the PSB and Treasury to order and use cars used by the LO's to have V8 engines to provide safe towing power and to be fitted with the appropriate braking controls. Through my bush telegraph I learned that a LO had received a speeding ticket so I set about further investigation. I learned that by supplying the V8 powered vehicles to a limited few created criticism of my well intended action. My action to the disgruntled was difficult to explain. I further learned Field Assistants were on occasions instructed to tow the scales to trial sights with a standard vehicle used by them and the V8 vehicle intended for the task just driven to the sight for the weighing trial. A very great step towards my learning curve. – Ray Buxton

(At this time Marlboro Men was often used in referring to the beef cattle officers after the cigarette commercial at the time. Ed)

Around the traps

Big Martin Bellert recently celebrated his 80th birthday, continues to be in fine voice but unfortunately has had to hand in his Drivers License due to failing eyesight. John and Joan Stone and John and Ann Crosby had lunch with Martin last month and caught up with all the news. Martin is still living on the water at Toogoom just to the north of Hervey Bay and rides his three wheeler bike around the village. Really enjoys catching up with all the southerners as they head north for the winter.



John Crosby, Joan Stone, John Stone, Ann Crosby Martin Bellert.

Tocal Agricultural College

Tocal meant 'much duck' to the indigenous people who occupied this site for thousands of years. Early European settlers changed all of that, changing the landscape in the Paterson Valley in the Hunter Region of NSW. From this time heritage structures such as the Homestead the farm buildings remain.

The early 1960's saw the establishment of Tocal Agricultural College on the historic property under the Presbyterian Church and eventually under the stewardship of the Department of Agriculture. The third stage has seen the development of the name and culture statewide by the Department of Agriculture and its subsequent name changes.

Old Aggie Bryan Robinson, who was Registrar at the College, has written this

history in three segments; the lands, the formative years of the college, and the present day. Unfortunately it is too big for the for the Newsletter but Bryan has kindly offered for interested members to access it by email direct from him. He has requested that your email be one word only in the subject – Total to minimise loss in the avalanche of spam. His email is bryanrobbo@bigpond.com

Max Gowland 1928–2017

It is with regret that we have to report the death of Max on the 30 June 2017 following a number of years suffering from melanoma and the side affects of its treatment. The last two years were very difficult for Max as he couldn't do those things that gave him so much pleasure.

Max had a long history with the Department. Following his apprenticeship with Randwick Council he accepted an appointment with the Royal Botanic Gardens in 1953 which was then controlled by the Department of Agriculture. Part of his duties was supervising the control of pests and diseases in those extensive plantings.

In the late 1950's Max was transferred to the position of Fruit Inspector in the Department of Agriculture located at its Export and Import Branch, Day Street, Sydney where his

activities involved the inspection of fruit and vegetables at the Sydney Markets.

In 1961 he was transferred to Batlow as District Fruit Inspector where he was responsible for ensuring the requirements of the *Plant Diseases Act 1924* were implemented. In this position he gained the respect of the commercial fruit growers for advice he provided relating to the production of their fruit crops.

Max played an important role in Batlow ensuring that all fruit exported overseas met the required standard. At that time the Willigobung Soldier Settlers were experiencing financial difficulties due to the lack of production in their orchards. Max spent many long hours advising these men helping them to change their production methods. He was highly regarded by these growers for the assistance he provided.

In 1966 Max was transferred to Bathurst where he continued to provide a service to fruit growers in that district. He worked in the Bathurst district until his retirement in 1988. His services continued to be highly regarded by all the commercial growers.

Max retired to a small property near Laurieton on the Pacific Highway. He enjoyed the early part of his retirement

John Bowler, Editor is requesting articles for publication along with photos of interest to Old Aggies. Please keep short and photos with captions appreciated.
jkbowler@bigpond.com, (02) 6365 6182.

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. Please fill in the attached form and mail or email back to the Editor/Secretary. Please also advise of any change to contact details.

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working on this farm but in recent years he purchased a home in Bonny Hills.

Max was always an active sportsman and in his younger days played A grade tennis. He was a noted tennis player in the Batlow area. He regularly attended the Old Aggies luncheons at Laurieton and Gosford where he will be sadly missed.

His wife Greta always supported him in all of his activities especially at Batlow and Bathurst. We extend our deepest sympathy to Greta and his sons Grahame, Brent and their respective families. – John Stone

Old Aggies Luncheon, Bendemeer Pub, 8 March 2017



Bruce Terrill, Warwick Felton, John Black, Graham Crocker



Left to right: Mick Duncan, John Hosking, Roy Everett, Bruce Terrill, Warren McDonald, John Black, Graham Crocker, Unknown, Dick Bird, John Ayres, Russ Godden, Lola McDonald, Alan Jackson, Barbara Vanselow, Rod Browne (kneeling), John Crosby, Gus Shaw (kneeling), David Godden, Warwick Felton.



Alan Jackson and Dick Bird.



Rod Browne, David Godden, John Ayres, Russ Godden.