



A CELEBRATION OF FARMERS

Meander Valley Festival of Creative Ageing 2017



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Foreword

We often take for granted the very things that deserve our gratitude the most. It's always done with the assumption that whenever we need something, or more importantly someone, they, or it, will always be there.

Never has a truer word been said when applied to our Tasmanian farming heritage. In an era of innovation and rapid transformation we must not lose sight of the importance of where we came from, and the people and methods that shaped our farming practices and farming communities.

That is why publications like *A Celebration of Farmers* are so important. In many cases, when the generation of farmers featured in this book leave us for the final time, generations to come will have no real understanding of what has truly gone into making our community what it is today.

This generation has witnessed, and adapted to, far more changes and progress than any other group that came before them – from horse and cart through to petrol engines, from the introduction of the telephone through to the evolution of the internet. And, while we might find cause to moan about our lot in life, in truth our generation has never really known hard times like those that lived through the Depression and World Wars.

These people are the building blocks on which our current community has been shaped, so read, enjoy and pay it forward.

Wayne Johnston
President, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association

Allan and Maureen Cameron

Allan was born in 1932 in the rich fertile flats at the base of the Great Western Tiers, in Chudleigh. His father had taken over Ladybank Farm a few years before Allan was born; the Cameron family have been living on Ladybank Farm for almost a century. His dad fattened sheep and about 200 head of cattle, which provided a good living for the family.

At his school in Chudleigh, a single teacher and a monitor were responsible for sixty children. Allan emphasises that he was given a great grounding there, and then he attended the Mole Creek Area School after grade 6, where he fondly remembers the notable W. J. Thorton as one of Tasmania's great educators.

'Yes,' he says, 'children born in the Chudleigh, Caveside, Mole Creek area were afforded a good education, whether in a private or public school.'

He and his brother were sent to boarding school at the ages of 12 and 14 with another notable educator, W. W. Briggs. In fact, in 1939, a group of five young men along with Allan enrolled in the Chudleigh school, and all six of them are still alive today.

Allan developed a great love of learning and still has a great passion for books and learning, especially history and travel. Allan recalls 'it was just natural to become a farmer'. Allan served on the local council for ten years, accomplishing many good things, and his wife Maureen is well known for her community service, having held a number of positions in Chudleigh and surrounding areas for more than fifty years.

'Springtime was always the best time on the farm,' he says, 'especially when the weather was good and the calves and lambs were born.'





Springtime was always the best time on the farm ...

Allan explains that the highlight of his life to date, however, was 59 years ago when he married Maureen. 'There was a cottage on the property and we lived there at first.'

Allan recalls that he and his wife really took on a huge responsibility when they bought out his father's farm. 'Even when they were little, our children helped out', he said, 'and we all worked very, very hard together'.

Waking up at 6 am, he and Maureen would often work late into the night. 'We broke for lunch, but when harvesting the hay or a bit of grain, one of us would continue working while the others ate. We worked very long hours, sometimes until after midnight as we feared the rain would come and the crop get spoiled.'

Allan also speaks fondly of their many long-standing affiliations with sheep shearers, stock agents, great neighbours, and all the many people involved in their farming life.

When industrialisation came to Tasmania, farmers' lives were undoubtedly made much easier. Instead of the arduous work of manually bundling together small bales of hay, the new machines made large bales, and when the old gravel roads were paved it became so much easier to get around. Ladybank has milked Jersey cows for 40 years, with a successful Jersey stud, and the new machines made milking almost effortless.

Allan's dad's old tractor with steel wheels, which operated for some forty years, has been renovated now and can be seen at Pearn's Steam World in Westbury.

'Nowadays there are very few of the original farm families still left in the area', says Allan, but he and Maureen are grateful that their family have remained.

Nell Carr – the story of her father at Dunorlan Farm

Written by Nell Carr

After serving on Gallipoli and in France, where in 1917 he was blown up in the trenches, my father Clifford Sharman was repatriated from England in a hospital ship. He was considered to have recovered from his extensive injuries, not the least of which was the loss of his right eye, to serve as an orderly looking after tuberculosis patients on board.

He applied to lease this farm which had been part of Henry Reed's Dunorlan estate. This had been divided up into lots of between 100 and 180 acres, and only available for servicemen who had served overseas. He was allotted to Farm No. 12, which had a spring rising at the western end, and flowing right through the farm. That, and the fact that most of the land was on a north facing slope made it a very desirable property. It had no house on it, and he was allowed to use a shepherd's hut on Stephens Bros farm just over the Western boundary, until he could have a dwelling built.

Some clearing was necessary, and logs were piled up using Stephens Bros bullock team with their drover Emmanuel Broomhall.



Electricity was connected to farms in 1940, and I remember telling my friends at Launceston High School about this wonderful improvement to our lives ...

Until the North Western Dairy Co-op established a butter factory by the railway line on what is now Moriarty Street, only three or four cows were hand milked, and my mother made butter, packed it in labels printed CAS, and sold it to the local shop. The herd was increased to twelve when the butter factory opened. Other enterprises were sheep, potatoes, and pigs which were fed skim milk – and boiled barley and potatoes.

My mother was the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, and I am the third of six children.

When I came back to the farm in 1953 with a husband and two children, we gradually took over the work and my parents were able to retire on the farm. My second son now manages the farm, a portion of which is leased to a neighbour for the running of dairy heifers.

Milestones

No more hand milking

The first milking machine was installed in 1937, so the dairy herd was increased to between 20 and 30 cows.

Electricity

Electricity was connected to farms in 1940, and I remember telling my friends at Launceston High School about this wonderful improvement to our lives, and they were quite mystified, not having experienced anything but electric lighting.

First tractor

After working with a team of Clydesdales for more than 20 years, my father bought the first tractor.

Whole milk

The farm converted to whole milk supply in 1974 and the herd eventually was increased to more than 80 Friesians.

Land Care

The Federal Government began funding farm conservation projects to fence off the creeks and install drinking troughs, as the stock drinking from the creek caused erosion of the banks and contamination of the water.

A member of the Upper Rubicon Landcare Group applied for funding for four of the members to grow locally provenanced native trees and shrubs – 400 trees each – for shelter belts. The seeds were to be collected by the members and friends. As this farm was the only property with native bush from which to collect seeds, we enlisted the aid of the local Native Understorey Network to advise us on the method of collection. The seeds were then sent off to a native plant nursery, and the seedlings distributed when ready for planting.

Interview with Peter Chugg

As told to, and written by Stephen

Peter and Dora have been married over sixty years.

Peter moved from White Hills, and bought a dairy farm at Moltema. Shearing paid for the mortgage! He started off with a few cows, but ended up with a good herd. Later on he ran beef cattle. Peter ran the farm, and Dora worked as a nurse. Together they raised four children.

Peter only left the farm six months ago. It worried him to have to leave his dog there, but the new owners were happy to keep her on.

Things were different years ago. Bank managers knew their clients personally, and Peter never had any problems getting finance.

Peter worked with tractors and chainsaws and milking machines and other noisy equipment all his life. But in the early days there was no protection, so now his hearing isn't so good.

Peter was on a hill farm, so he never really had any problems with floods.

Peter says he has had a good life. In the past, the districts were closer together, and people were close.

He remembers how badminton used to be played in the local hall, at Moltema, and all the other villages, like Parkham and Kimberley and Elizabeth Town, had their own teams as well.

During the war, there were tennis courts at Dunorlan, Moltema and Elizabeth Town.

Many of the halls have gone now, and village churches as well. Peter thinks that television may have caused some of that.

Peter says it was the same with country football. There used to be teams in many more country towns, like Elizabeth Town and Red Hills. Peter used to play football for Evandale, but didn't continue because of work.

There have been cold seasons and hot and dry seasons, but Peter and Dora just put up with them. Peter thinks that the climate has got warmer, particularly winters.

Peter has always been a keen gardener. He shows a picture of a stunning bed of flowers that he has grown.

Peter says that people were happier then, and they helped one another a lot more. He used to shear for others, in fact he's sheared in every farm in the district. And others would do things for him. When Peter went to other farms shearing, many of the women on the farms would cook for the shearers. There were some really good cooks. On the larger properties, the wool classer would get to eat with the owners – but the shearers never got to eat with the owners!



*... people were happier then,
and they helped one another
a lot more.*

Graham Dent – big business

*Told by Graham Dent,
written by Kaaren Sutton*

Losing his parents at a fairly young age probably contributed to Graham Dent's fierce independence, strong work ethic and organisational skills. Graham has seen a huge shift from the manual labour of farming in his younger life, to the labour-saving machines of today – the tractors, the spreaders, the harvesters, but most important of all, with now inconsistent rainfall, the irrigators are of paramount importance.

Sowing the seed as a kid, he remembers 'an old drill with steel wheels, went along at about three miles per hour, someone on the back lifting it in and out at each end – far better than when they used to chuck it out by hand! But now there are air seeders, and it's one pass, all computerised.

Old harvesters with no cab did about an acre an hour – bloody painful. Header we have today does about 6 to 7 acres an hour in a fully air conditioned machine. In those days when the grain or seed was harvested, someone had to be on hand-sewing the bags, bags were loaded, taken to the cleaner, undone – now it's all bulk and one man does it all.

When irrigating started in the mid 60s, it was pipes and little sprinklers and shifting them every couple of hours – then there were the laterals, plastic pipes that came off the aluminium and these were shifted less, but you had to drag them through the crops, gut-busting work.

When the first soft hose travelling irrigator was bought they were the bees knees – set them going and they would go from one end of the paddock to the other, they pulled themselves on a little winch with a tractor at the other end as an anchor.



From those we went to hard hose irrigators. These were quite accurate and half a dozen are still in use. Now, we have six pivots and linears and they are the be-all and end-all, so hypothetically you could be fishing at the shack, realise the peas need watering, press a button and get back to reeling the fish in!

Water is supplied from the farm's own catchment dams, the Liffey River, Cressy/ Longford Irrigation Scheme and 350 megalitres out of the Whitemore Irrigation Scheme, delivered throughout three points on the farm.

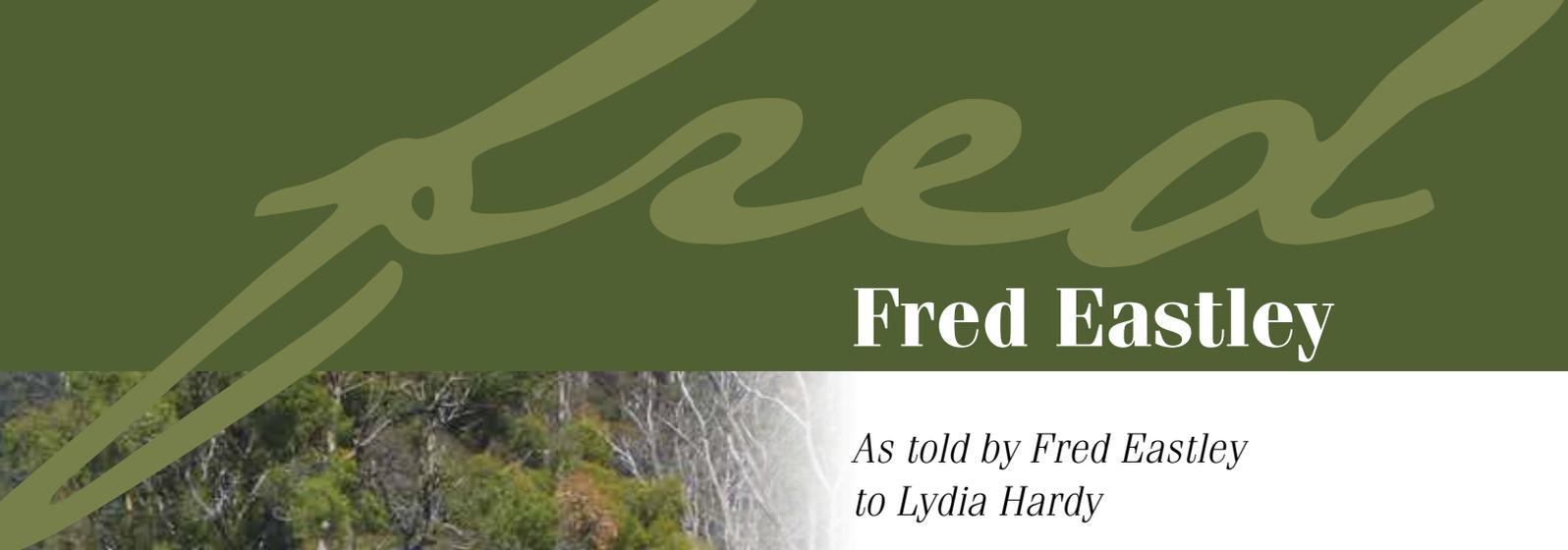
Besides sheep, bred for meat and wool, the farm has crops of peas, beans, poppies, seed potatoes and onions, but their biggest enterprise now is grass seed (about 400 acres). The processing plant that cleans the seed is a big business on its own, done on the farm.

Rotation of crops is hugely important – ‘sometimes a nightmare getting it right’ – but computers again have made this easier, documenting each paddock with what and when, soil testing, recommendations varying from paddock to paddock. ‘Prescription farming’ is how Graham describes it.

Graham thinks he could have worked smarter, not harder, when younger, but he started with 300 acres, ended up with 1300, has a huge amount of infrastructure, is happy and healthy and still able to work about the farm. He says ‘forty years ago farming was a way of life, now it's big business and a constant seven-day week job’.



... 40 years ago, farming was a way of life, now it's big business ...



Fred Eastley

*As told by Fred Eastley
to Lydia Hardy*

‘Wherever there was work, you did it,’ says Fred who had a variety of jobs over the years before settling on becoming a farmer in Moltema. Fred and his family lived on a property which changed ownership. He was able to experience a variety of jobs and learn new skills. At first, the property was set up for beef cattle so there was plenty of fencing, hay baling and tractor work for Fred to do. ‘If you wanted money, you had to do it.’

When the farm changed ownership, it changed to a dairy farm and Fred increased his skills to milking Friesian and Jersey cows twice a day after rounding them up and walking them back to the milking sheds.

The farm bottled its own milk so Fred also had to wash numerous glass bottles which were collected and returned to the farm. He was able to learn about cheese-making and organic farming as well. Fred loved his time on this farm and it was a highlight of his working life.

Fred helped maintain the property's outbuildings and fixed up his own home – all in a day's work for farmers. He and his wife raised five children and some of them took an interest in Fred's farm work and followed in his footsteps and are now established in the farming industry. Fred is very proud of his children, grandchildren and now great-grandchildren.

Fred was never shy about hard work. He enjoyed reminiscing about his farm life – so long ago he says. He admits it would have been easier being a doctor or a lawyer or working in a shop, but in the end he preferred farm work.

Wherever there was work, you did it.



Roy Evans

*As told by Roy Evans
to Anne-Marie Loader*

As a young boy growing up in Caveside, Roy wanted to become an engineer. He went to Mole Creek Area School where he learnt trades like carpentry, tinsmithing and blacksmithing. There was a model farm at the school and students learnt about growing crops and raising animals.

At age 11, Roy left school to work full time on the family farm. He worked hard. He remembers a day when the farm ran out of fuel. Both his brothers had left home and it was up to him to go and buy some. This involved a walk of two miles to the Caveside Post Office and Store.

His mum had given him a list of groceries and he was to come back with those as well as four gallons of petrol. It was a long slow walk back to the farm. He'd go fifty yards with the fuel in one hand, then he'd have to swap. He says he was walking in low gear but he made it back home to milk their 30 cows.

Roy says that life in his early years was laid back, there wasn't much worrying going on. If it didn't happen today, it'd happen tomorrow. Wet weather wasn't a worry when there were sacks to use as rain protection: one slung around the shoulders, one around the waist both secured with a nail.



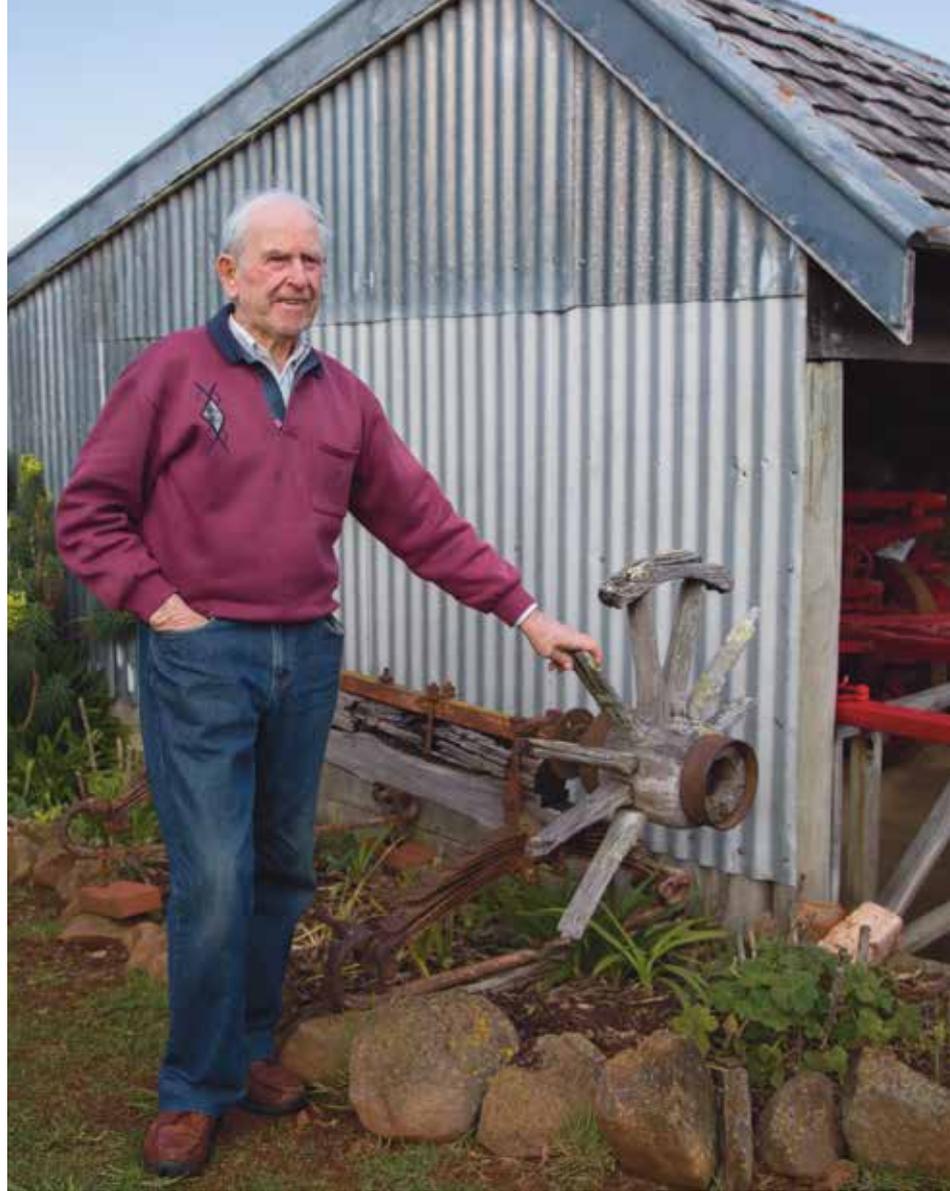
*... things on the land move quickly and
there are always changes happening.*

Roy still dreamt of a career in engineering, his Mum had other ideas and soon he was running the farm. She told him: 'Make a success of it, don't fail'.

It was going to be hard to make a success of it without a bit of capital. A pig on the farm had seven piglets, Roy raised them and sold them for £5/3/6 each. This was good money!

This gave him his start in farming. Beginnings were slow, taking twenty years to develop real farm production.

Roy tells the story of buying his first tractor. It was 1948. He thought this purchase would give him more time because he'd get work done faster. Trouble was there were only two tractors in the district. He was regularly asked to drive his tractor over to neighbouring farms to work for them. At the time there were 32 farms in the Caveside district, so he was kept busy with tractor work.



Another story Roy tells is about the Caveside Brass Band. Back when his brothers were still at home they both played in the band. At the end of weekly practice someone would always blow the trumpet in such a way that would get all the bulls in earshot roaring. He chuckles at this memory. In those days the band had about thirty members.

From reluctantly becoming a farmer until now Roy has built a successful family farming enterprise. Three generations now work the land. Roy has many stories of his childhood and youth as well as from farming for a lifetime. He has stories told to him by his parents of their early days in the Meander Valley. Roy says that anyone entering farming needs the best education they can get. With his wealth of knowledge and experience as a farmer he says that things on the land move quickly and there are always changes happening.

Ross and Val

Mill Farm



Told by Ross and Val Gibson, written by Kaaren Sutton

Ross and Val Gibson have been connected to farms all their lives, both their fathers were farmers. Ross' dad worked at West's Sawmill for a time and had a small farmlet of about six acres at Leith near Westbury, and leased a farm nearby of about 150 acres. They had milking cows, mostly churning for butter.

In 1945 the family moved to Selbourne buying a farm of approximately 135 acres – a small dairy farm – the children helping to milk the cows before going to school at Hagley on the school bus.

Leaving school, Ross worked for the French family at 'Cliston', in Hagley. 'I owe a lot of my knowledge to being with them.' As soon as he had enough money, he bought a tractor (tractor first, then a Chevy ute) and did harvest contract work around the district and share cropping. Interestingly the first share crop he ever grew were blue peas on the farm he owns now – Mill Farm. Blue peas were harvested dry and most were shipped to England, where they were used for the famous 'mushy peas'.

*Ross and Val Gibson
have been connected
to farms all their
lives ...*



Contract work was mostly canning peas, barley, wheat and broad beans – broad beans being quite a large industry in the Meander Valley at that time; also ploughing and cultivation. Ross met Val at the local church, married and they moved to a house in Hagley township. They bought Mill Farm in 1968 and moved to the farm in 1970, now about 1200 acres.

Their initial tractor was 20 horsepower, now the tractors are 200 horsepower. Ross says he doesn't remember how many he has had! (Quite a few it would appear.) Harvesters also, Ross remembers, were initially 5 foot fronts, now they are 25 foot. Irrigation in the 1960s was with hand-shifted aluminium pipes. The

children all helped to move these. This was followed by 40 foot poly pipes with sprinklers attached. Both of these had to be moved every three hours, day and night. Nowadays they have self-propelled pivot irrigators that can water a circle of 120 acres or so. Very labour-saving compared to the past.

Mill Farm now grows poppies, oats, wheat, barley, green peas, chard, carrots, seed potatoes and onions. Lambs are bought to fatten for the meat market too. Their son now works the farm leaving Ross and Val to spend special times with their family at Mill Farm, one of those being the marriage of their youngest daughter under the old oak tree in the farm yard.

Kevin

Kevin Hingston

*As told by Kevin Hingston
to Lydia Hardy*

Kevin has devoted his working life to farming. He worked at Valmont on a 750 acre farm with a lake in the middle of it. He was an all-round farmer and jack of all trades.

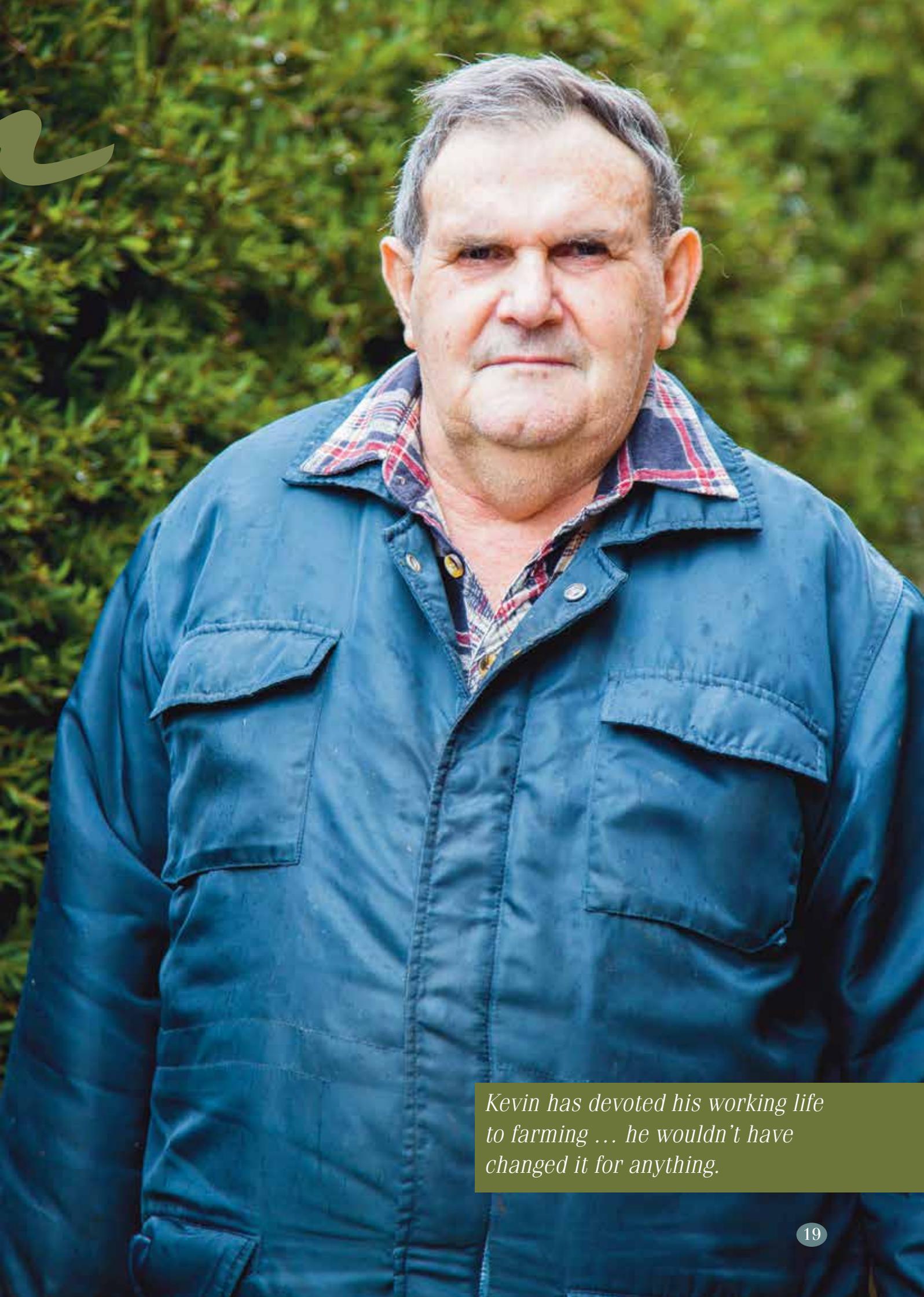
Kevin and his parents lived on the property and he learned, from an early age, all the different jobs associated with farming, which included baling and carting hay to feed the Hereford cattle and Poll Dorset sheep. Some of these sheep and cattle were to be entered into shows all over Tasmania and were prize-winning animals.

The bush paddock was slowly cleared from Whitemore towards Cluan and plenty of fences had to be built and maintained by Kevin and his father.

Occasionally, his other farm duties included collecting 'super' (fertilizer) from Whitemore station, trucking it back to the farm for spreading, helping shearers sort and pack the wool, gardening and even picking up endless amounts of rocks. All these back-breaking jobs Kevin completed without a second thought, as he loves working on the land.

Kevin and his dad travelled to work on the back of a tractor which didn't have a cab to keep them warm or dry. Kevin worked from 8 am to 5 pm and he loved it. He wouldn't have changed it for anything. He still looks after some chooks.

There were always pets on the farm to keep him busy: a Jack Russell, a fox terrier and cats. Whenever Kevin found some spare time, which was rare, maybe a half day on Saturday, he enjoyed cross-stitching tapestries as a hobby. Kevin was able to make a tapestry for all his aunts and some of his prize-winning tapestries now adorn his rooms. Of course, they mainly show scenes of the countryside.



Kevin has devoted his working life to farming ... he wouldn't have changed it for anything.

Kevin and Dianne Huett



As told by Kevin and Dianne Huett to Anne-Marie Loader

Persistent and determined. These are two words that describe Kevin and Dianne's farming career. Both wanted to become farmers but it wasn't until 10 years after their marriage that they quietly bought their first farm in 1971.

This particular farm was run down and the locals thought they were crazy. With many long days and late nights they cleared and prepared the land. Kevin had a bit of farming knowledge but what he didn't know he used his networks to find out. Working at the service station meant that there weren't many people in the district that he didn't know. If he was out delivering fuel to a farm and had a particular issue to sort, he'd ask the farmer for advice.





This husband and wife team did their homework, believed in themselves and little bit by little bit they were able to grow their farming skills and enterprise, taking hold of opportunities as they presented themselves. All the family were involved. Their first farm didn't have a house so the children came too, working and learning with their parents.

Dianne had always been interested in horses and livestock. She went from horses to sheep and now can look back at a successful career that includes breeding stud and commercial sheep. She remembers the days when Kevin was hard at work at the service station and she had the responsibility at lambing time. Hard work, but she recounts this with a smile.

Kevin remembers countless long days. He would work at the service station until late, then head out to the farm to feed stock with only a torch for light. Kevin and Dianne are not only hard workers but have demonstrated a love of a challenge and of learning. Over the years they have diversified their agricultural endeavours to include vegetable and cereal crops, and poppies as well as cattle and sheep.

Back in the early years Kevin remembers that he wasn't able to join the Young Farmers because he wasn't on the land. Here they are today looking back at a long, happy and successful career as farmers with three generations currently working on their farms. What would they say to their younger selves? Work hard, work smart, be persistent and keep loving what you do.

*Work hard,
work smart,
be persistent
and keep
loving what
you do.*





Interview with Owen Rogers

As told to, and written by Stephen

Owen says that one of his clearest memories from growing up on a farm was that his father was a man of punctuality. Every morning he would leave home at precisely 4 am, and start the milking machine at 4:30 am.

Owen's father built the farm up from out of the bush, at Western Creek. He had forty cows.

Owen is quick to make it clear that after his farm upbringing, he didn't end up living a farming life himself. He worked clearing water mains around the state, and later on worked for the council looking after the lawns in Mole Creek, Chudleigh and Meander, and the water supply for Mole Creek.

Turning back to his memories from growing up on the farm, Owen says that no snake was safe with his father around. 'One time Dad saw a snake just as he was going to come inside. He poked some fencing wire through the snake, and tied him up, and said "I've got no time now, I'll come back after dinner!".'

Owen enjoyed farm life, though it was hard work sometimes. One day, after a hard day's work clearing weeds, an agent from a rural supplies firm turned up and said, 'Slavery's been abolished!'

Owen remembers his sheer joy when the first 'Fergie' tractor came! The Massey Ferguson tractors made things a lot easier. It was also a big help when the Allis-Chalmers roto-baler came in.

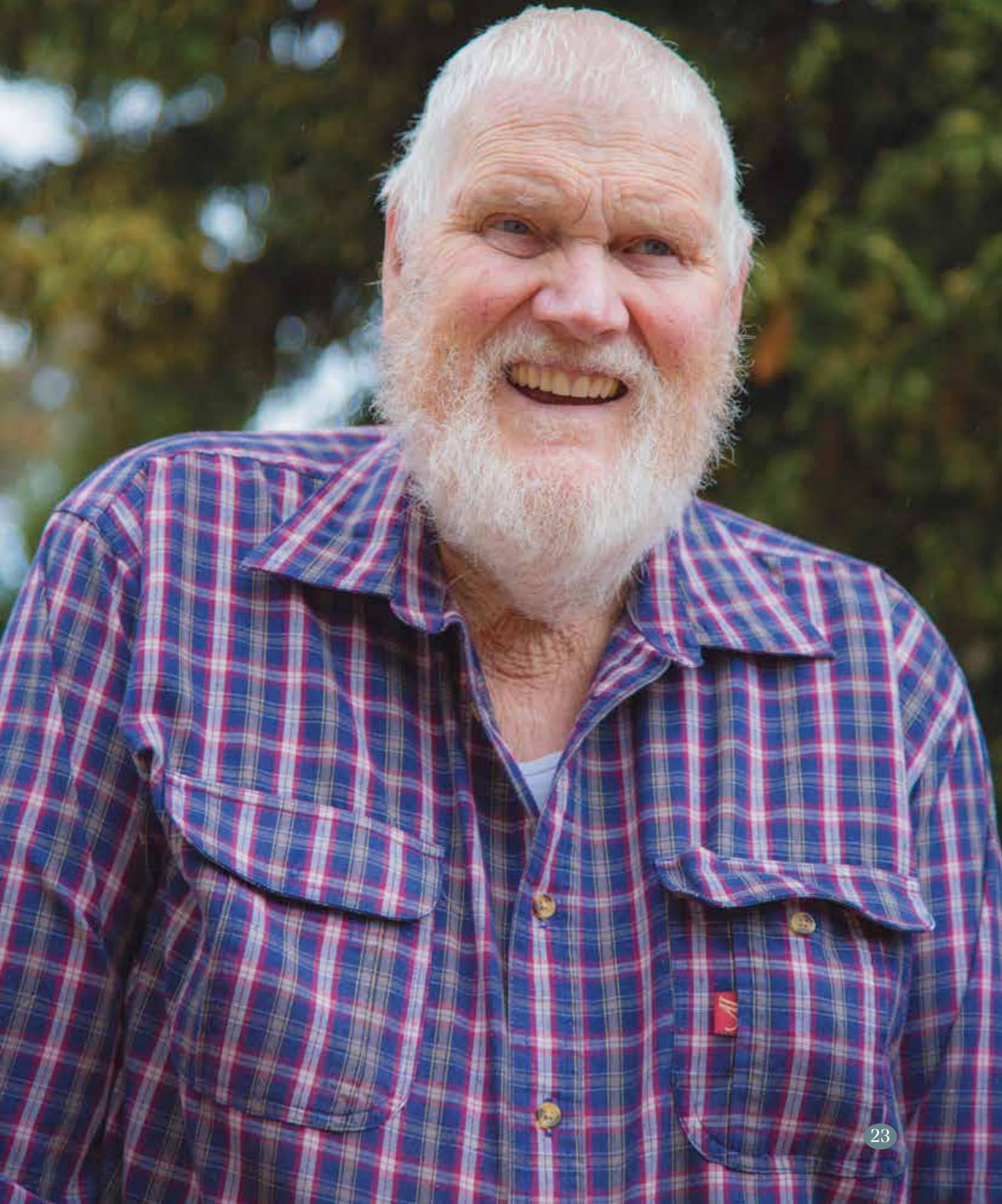
In those times life was very different. The main means of transport was the pushbike. After the war, the tubes in car tyres always used to split, and you had to pump them up.

Owen had a cattle dog called Toby, and it would always be fighting with a friend's dog.

Some winters there would be heavy snow.

Owen says that in the old days there was better community spirit. He remembers one time there was a fire at a local resident's house. The operator at the telephone exchange just plugged in, shouted 'Fire at ____'s house!', and everyone turned up there in their cars.

*Owen remembers his sheer joy when
the first 'Fergie' tractor came!*



elaine

Happy in her own skin



*My life has been alright,
so I wouldn't change anything.
Take what happens when it
happens and just go for it.*

*Told by Elaine Scott,
written by Kaaren Sutton*

Elaine was born in a cottage in King Street, Westbury, which served as a local hospital; she was the eldest of three sisters. The family farm was located at the end of Marriott Street.

Her earliest memories of life on the farm is one of a happy childhood, riding bikes for fun and to school and helping out with the animals for their dad, Reg King. Mostly they were a healthy family, eating whatever the farm produced – lamb, beef, pigs, vegies and the celebratory chook at birthdays and Christmas. Their mum picked produce and baked everything herself, including the bread.

Eggs and cream were in an abundance; The Butter Factory at Deloraine took their excess dairy. They would come to the farm to pick up. The cans of cream had to be carried to the end of the lane for the trucks. The heavy work on the farm was done by draught horses. All other animals on the farm were regarded as produce – no pets allowed!

The four roomed cottage they lived in was basic with two bedrooms, the girls sharing beds, one of which was a stretcher, until later when more rooms were added.

After leaving Westbury Primary School, Elaine and her sisters attended the Hagley Area School (now Hagley Farm School), learning sewing, cooking and gardening. The school canteen provided items made from the farm's produce.

The most outstanding thing that Elaine says is different now is they felt safe and would often go for hours at a time on some adventure, with their parents having not a worry.

Elaine and her family attended church regularly, and that is where she met Bob.

Bob lived on a farm at Quamby Bend with his Mum and Dad. Before marrying Elaine he and his brother built a 'fresh' three bedroom house on their parents' property. One day Elaine left her family farm, married Bob at their local church and went home to a brand new house on her in-law's farm, where she lived, worked, brought up two sons and enjoyed a peaceful farming existence for decades.

The farm was just over 205 acres and they farmed dairy, sheep, cattle and vegetable crops. Elaine remembers no floods or fires, but was quite close to the Meander River which she recalls as often flowing over. Temperatures were hot in some summers and always cold in winter, but overall fairly settled.

There were early morning starts and the worst job that Elaine remembers is washing the separator – horrible. They were hard work days but you 'just got on and did it – it was our way of life – in particular it was hard on the men, lifting heavy sacks'.

Elaine remembers the tractor as being the most significant piece of machinery that was introduced. She would drive the tractor when needed, but was uncomfortable as there was no adjustments for reaching the pedals, and she found her legs had trouble getting there!



Elaine stayed working on the farm with Bob till their late 70s with help from their son, but when Bob passed Elaine left the farm to retire to a house in Westbury, still attending church and still devoted to her sisters.

'My life has been alright, so I wouldn't change anything. Take what happens when it happens and just go for it'.





Margaret Terry

As told by Margaret Terry to Lydia Hardy

Margaret and Ned Terry moved to their 900 acre farm in the Dairy Plains district and were met by the wettest October (13 inches of rain) and a plague of rabbits (about 200 were caught in one go).

Margaret remembers how hard farm work could be. While some locals pushbiked to local dances, Margaret stayed close to home looking after her three sons. She says she was never idle, pitching in around the farm, but admits moving the irrigation pipes was a hard job.

The property was very rough at the start and if Margaret wanted to go into town, her car had to be towed by tractor about two miles each way to the roadway. Over the years, the property had cows and sheep and crops. Margaret remembers getting up at 4.30 am to cook breakfast for thirty seasonal harvest workers, or for the shearers. Margaret says you just had to do it, but she would never want to go through those days again.

Margaret remembers a couple of events that were especially interesting, although there have been many. In winter, the family would organise native hen drives where everyone in the district would start off in a big circle around the district slowing moving inwards, banging on tins and finally reaching the middle having rounded up 600 native hens which were considered big pests. Another was when an attempt to smoke some ham inside a tank went wrong. The string holding the ham burned, the ham fell causing a fire and resulting in charred pork.

Ned Terry went on to win many awards: BHP Farming Excellence, Nuffield Scholarship and an Order of Australia Medal. He was also the instigator of the YARNS project and a well-known author, especially on Tasmanian Tigers. All this couldn't have happened without the support of Margaret – wife, mother, farmhand and book-keeper.

In 1987, the farm was divided up amongst her three sons who have each continued with their own specialized farms.



Margaret says you just had to do it, but she would never want to go through those days again.

Chris and John Watters



Heat so hot that the tomatoes cook on the vine? That was Chris and John's experience in South Australia. Not your typical farmers, but people with a love of the land and of growing and raising their own produce. Both have a rich history and tradition of farming from family ties and from life's experience.

Chris was born in England and fondly relates her horticultural skills to growing up with her grandfather who was a market gardener. She recalls birthday gifts that were things like watering cans and a packet of seeds. John says that Chris has green thumbs. They both can't imagine a life which doesn't include working the land and producing their own food.

The South Australian heat was getting to them. It was time for a cool change. After a tour of Tasmania in 2007, this couple knew that they wanted to move south and make the island state their home. Farming on the mainland was becoming increasingly more difficult. Water restrictions meant that their beautiful garden that featured 900 rose bushes was becoming tougher to keep alive.

John had been involved in various forms of farming since his thirties. Vineyards, cropping and pigs as well as gaining qualifications in wool classing and other agricultural endeavours are all part of his experience.

The Watters fell in love with the green of Tasmania and the mountains. Chris did the research and found the slice of paradise they were looking for in the Meander Valley. They bought sight unseen, packed up, closed the gate and drove onto the *Spirit of Tasmania*.



Farming is not only their way of life, but a true passion which they live every day.



They both love a challenge and have worked hard to get their new home to a point where they raise enough produce to live on year round while also selling wool from their fifty Suffolk breeding ewes. They milk Anglo Nubian goats from which they make cheese and yogurt. They have a large garden as well as an orchard of thirty fruit trees and chickens. Chris is a keen spinner and knitter, dyeing her own yarn. As for the climate in the Meander Valley: the summers are beautiful and in winter when it gets colder? 'Put more wood on the fire!' says John.

Both Chris and John don't think of themselves as being older. They are active and work hard on their land. Their philosophy is to make the most out of life and while life for them has often had its twists and turns, some happy some not, they are grateful to be at this time in their lives where they can fully devote themselves to farming and to making the most out of life.

Farming is not only their way of life but a true passion which they live every day.

Retired? Yeah, right!

*Told by Denis Webb,
written by Kaaren Sutton*

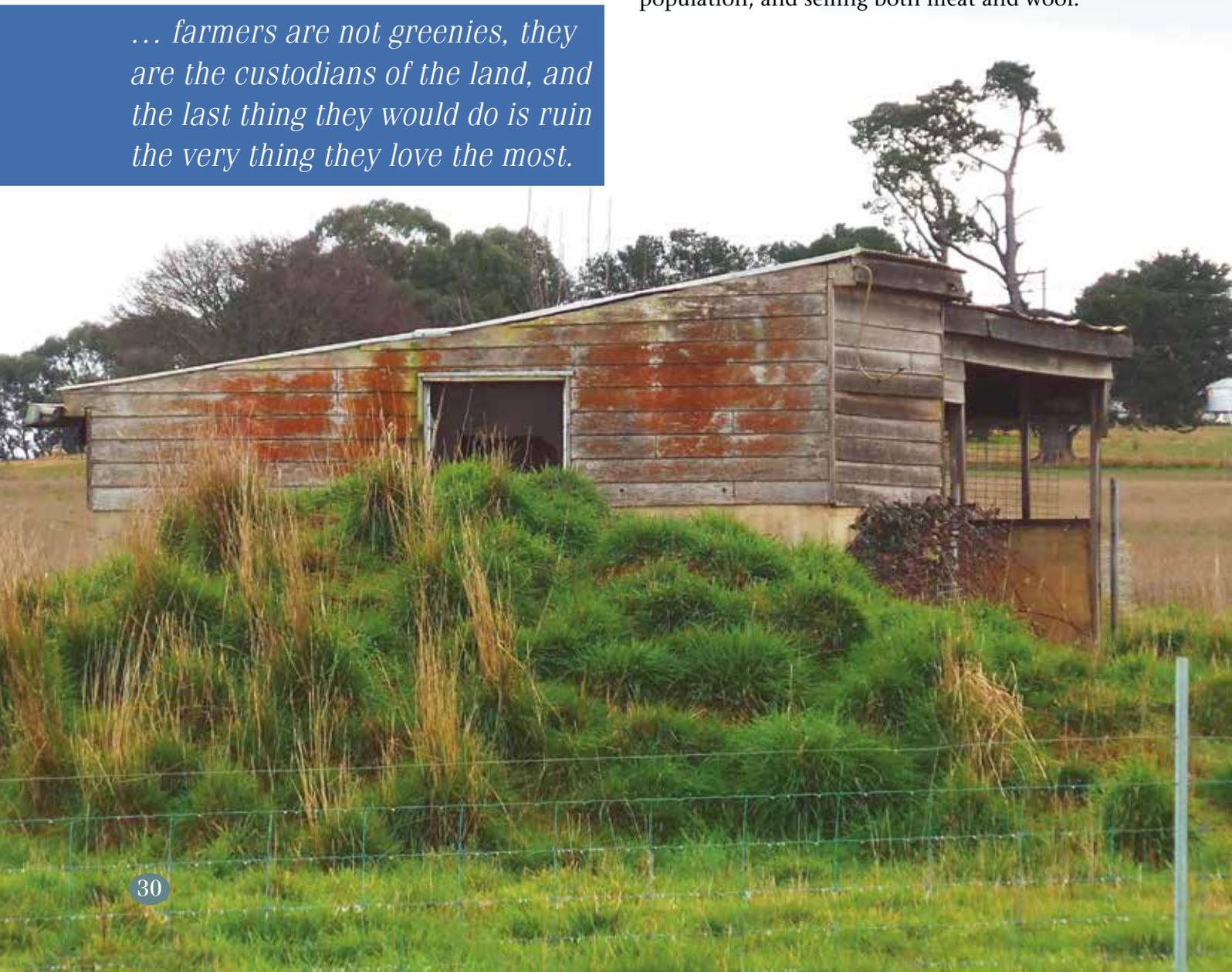
Denis Webb, retired farmer, had worked his Illawarra Park farm for thirty years. His dad was a dairy farmer, milking and selling the milk around the Relbia and Newstead area, and Denis continued this. His dad had stopped farming as times were tight, but he kept his own milk run even when moving again, this time to Riverside, where he built a dairy on a large block.

... farmers are not greenies, they are the custodians of the land, and the last thing they would do is ruin the very thing they love the most.

Denis has always liked metalwork, going to work after schooling as an ironmonger, then moving into machinery repair – motor rewinding, diesel injection, pumps, tractors, cars, trucks – the lot.

Back from his country's service he again took over the milk runs, whilst also going back into machinery.

Denis then bought Illawarra Park, as his daughters were interested in horses and he needed room for his machinery to keep on with the engineering. On this forty acre farm he raised sheep first, buying rams to increase the population, and selling both meat and wool.





Gradually though, he phased out the sheep, replacing them with cattle. The cattle were raised purely from the farm, strip grazing them for a while, fencing off some of the paddock, resting certain areas, hot-wiring the fences but this needed changing every 3 days, so was labour-intensive.

The farm was not expanded but 25 acres adjacent to it was leased to run more cattle. With constant improvements on the farm – redoing fences, resewing grass, cattle needs – there was not much left over so Denis continued his machinery business, contracting for big earthworks companies.

Denis says farming now is dictated to you by the purchasers of the product. Years ago, if you were a casual farmer you would survive, but now it's cut-throat, you have to be on the ball, you have to work very hard to survive. Very technical. 'The farmers are not greenies, they are the custodians of the land, and the last thing they would do is ruin the very thing they love the most.'

Being retired is what allows Denis to leave this area and go farm his daughter's cattle property in the North East. He hasn't worn himself out yet!

Acknowledgements

The organisers of the Meander Valley Festival of Creative Ageing would like to thank the following LINC Tasmania volunteers and other contributors for their assistance in creating this book:

- Kaaren Sutton, Stephen, Lydia Hardy, Suzie Capp and Anne-Marie Loader, for gathering and writing down the stories
- Joanne Gower for the photographs of the farmers on pages 4–29
- Kaaren Sutton for the photographs on pages 30 and 31
- Mike Moores and the Meander Valley Gazette for permission to use some of their photographs of Meander Valley landscapes and scenes from farming life throughout the pages
- Elizabeth Douglass, design and typesetting
- Alexandra Morse, Director Meander Valley Festival of Creative Ageing.

Thanks are also extended to the following individuals and organisations for their support and assistance:

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