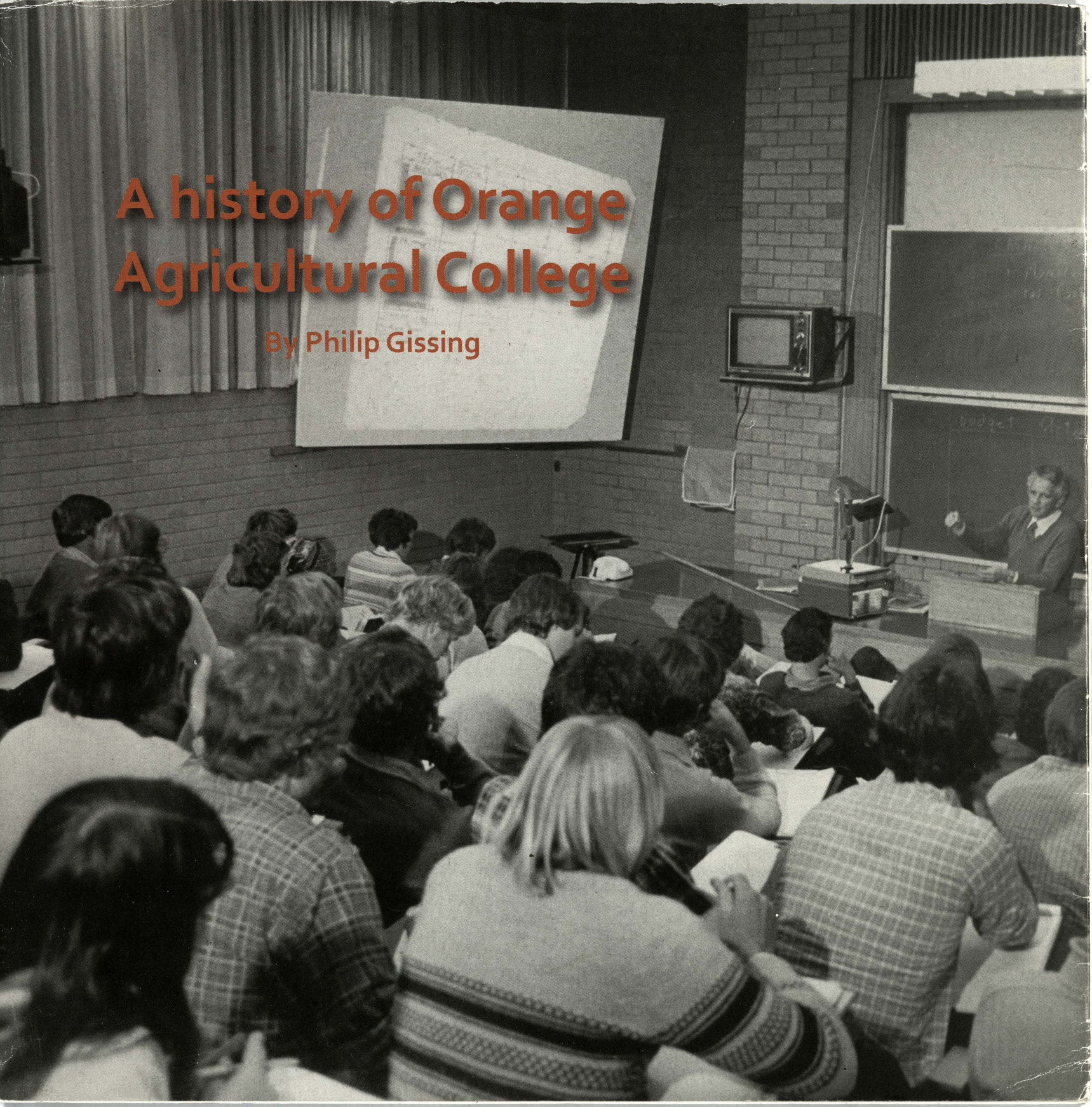
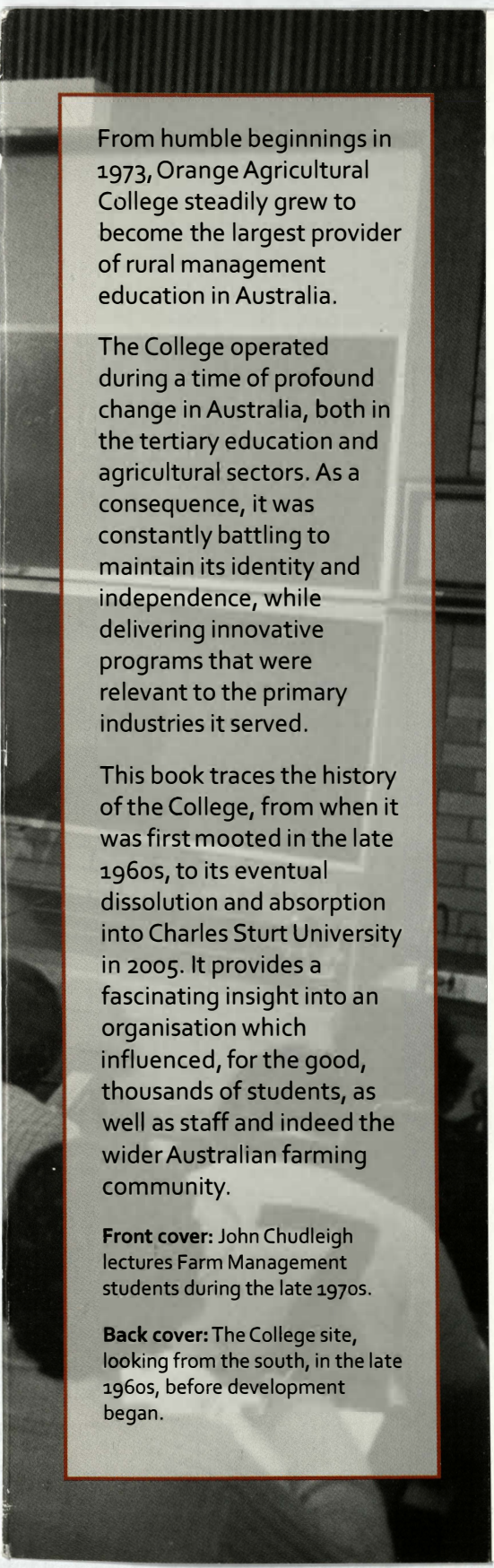


A history of Orange Agricultural College

By Philip Gissing



From humble beginnings in 1973, Orange Agricultural College steadily grew to become the largest provider of rural management education in Australia.

The College operated during a time of profound change in Australia, both in the tertiary education and agricultural sectors. As a consequence, it was constantly battling to maintain its identity and independence, while delivering innovative programs that were relevant to the primary industries it served.

This book traces the history of the College, from when it was first mooted in the late 1960s, to its eventual dissolution and absorption into Charles Sturt University in 2005. It provides a fascinating insight into an organisation which influenced, for the good, thousands of students, as well as staff and indeed the wider Australian farming community.

Front cover: John Chudleigh lectures Farm Management students during the late 1970s.

Back cover: The College site, looking from the south, in the late 1960s, before development began.

A history of Orange Agricultural College

A history of Orange Agricultural College

By Philip Gissing

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PO Box 883, Orange NSW 2800, Australia

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Contents

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Philip Gissing has been diligent and persistent in collecting and archiving historical reference material relating to Orange Agricultural College. He has laboured hard to produce what is a very thorough and readable account of the history of the College.

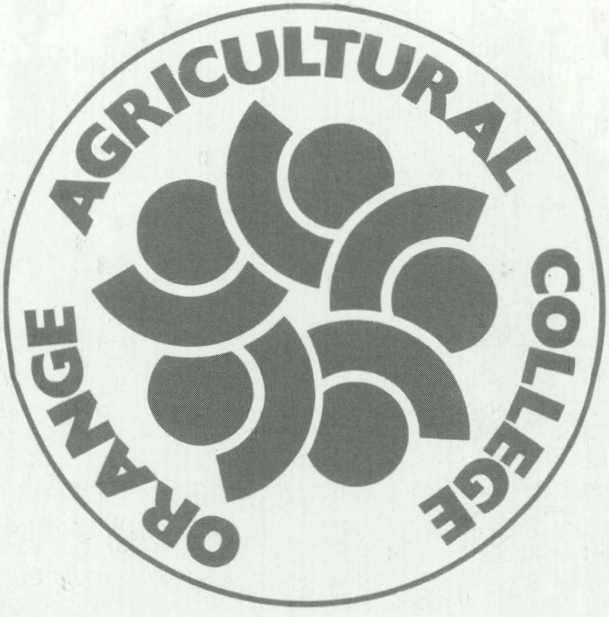
Former OAC lecturer, Una Wettenhall, indirectly contributed to part of this publication. Her thesis on the political and administrative initiatives that led to the foundation of the College helped inform some of Gissing's writings on early developments relating to the College.

Staff of the CSU Regional Archives at Wagga Wagga kindly organised access to archival photographs. Several former staff members of OAC have provided valuable assistance with identifying and captioning photographs. In particular, thanks must go Una Wettenhall, Ed Henry, Robyn Moore (nee Schwartz), Barry Smart, Justin Powell, Robert Napier, John Chudleigh and Stephen Doyle.

My personal assistant, Kerry Madden, helped with various stages of the production of this book, as did my research assistant, Mark Filmer.

The Rural Australia Foundation and the Orange Campus Foundation Committee provided funds to support the writing and production of this book.

—Professor Kevin Parton,
Head of Campus
Charles Sturt University, Orange
December 2009



The College motto and emblem

The College motto *(per rationem judicium – through rational judgment)* and associated emblem were based on the five sequential steps considered fundamental to effective decision making in farm management. These steps were:

Recognition – the need to recognise and appreciate existing, developing or potential situations requiring decision.

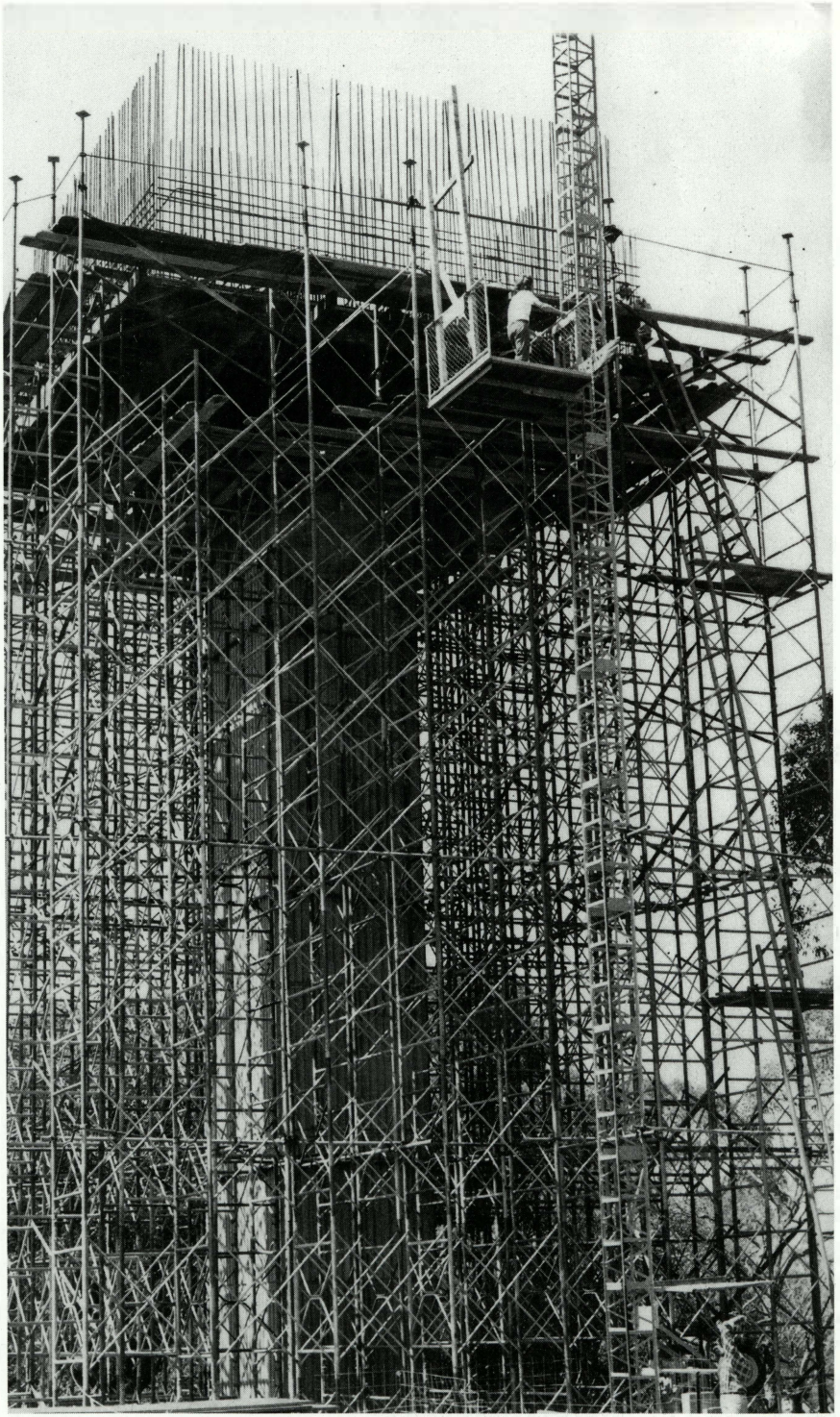
Investigation – having become aware of the situation, the causal effects have to be identified, investigated and further information and advice sought.

Evaluation – the data obtained have to be collated and examined for relevance and applicability to the specific situation of the farm, farmer and finance.

Decision – various priorities, strategies and alternative options will now have emerged and a decision has to be made.

Implementation – the decision has to be implemented efficiently and promptly as time is usually a limiting factor.

The interlocking crescents of the emblem symbolise the integrative nature of decision making. They also give the impression of movement, denoting a dynamic process.



► *Construction work on the College's iconic water tower, about mid-1972.*

Preface

During the mid-1960s, there were four agricultural colleges in NSW—Hawkesbury, Wagga Wagga, Yanco and the CB Alexander Presbyterian Agricultural College (the forerunner to Tocal College). All four offered excellent programs in applied agriculture.

Yet a gap was emerging between the focus of these educational institutions and the needs of key agricultural industries throughout the state.

In particular, there was a growing need for a much greater focus on farm business management. Strong demand for rural consultants, the increasing reliance of farmers on science and technology and the growing complexity of managing a farm business all pointed to such a need.

The late Len Pockley, a very determined, passionate and visionary farmer from the Goulburn district of NSW, recognised the importance of young farmers being trained in farm business management, as well as practical farming techniques. Pockley, who had studied veterinary science at the University of Sydney, urged the State Government to establish a new agricultural college—one focused predominantly on farm management.

As it happened, the government of the day was quite open to the idea. In September 1967, it established a Committee of Advice on Rural Studies, under the auspices of the NSW Department of Agriculture, to investigate the proposal. Dr Fred Butler, the department's Senior Deputy Director, chaired the committee, which included Pockley as a member.

The committee prepared a detailed report on Pockley's proposal and recommended the government establish

a new, niche college, focusing on the teaching of farm business management. State Cabinet approved the proposal in January 1968 and in September that year it was announced that 'Rosedale Park', a 500-hectare farm on the Ophir Road just north of Orange, was being acquired for the site of the new College.

Following a lengthy planning and construction period, Orange Agricultural College opened in July 1973, with the mission to provide a new standard of education for the farm managers of tomorrow. There were just 22 students, all males, in the initial intake. Finishing touches were still being carried out to the buildings and facilities during the first weeks of lectures. This meant, for example, that the students did not have access to the College dining room. The College had to pay for the students to eat at a local hotel for several weeks.

In this book, historian Philip Gissing traces the development of Orange Agricultural College from these early days to its rise more than two decades later to become Australia's largest provider of rural management education. This growth and development occurred during a period of great change—both in tertiary education and agriculture.

Gissing outlines the College's almost constant fight to maintain its identity and independence in the face of many changes and reforms that were taking place in the tertiary education sector. He also explains how significant changes in agriculture, such as scientific advances, new technologies, the expansion of world trade, and growing environmental concerns, affected the College and its courses.

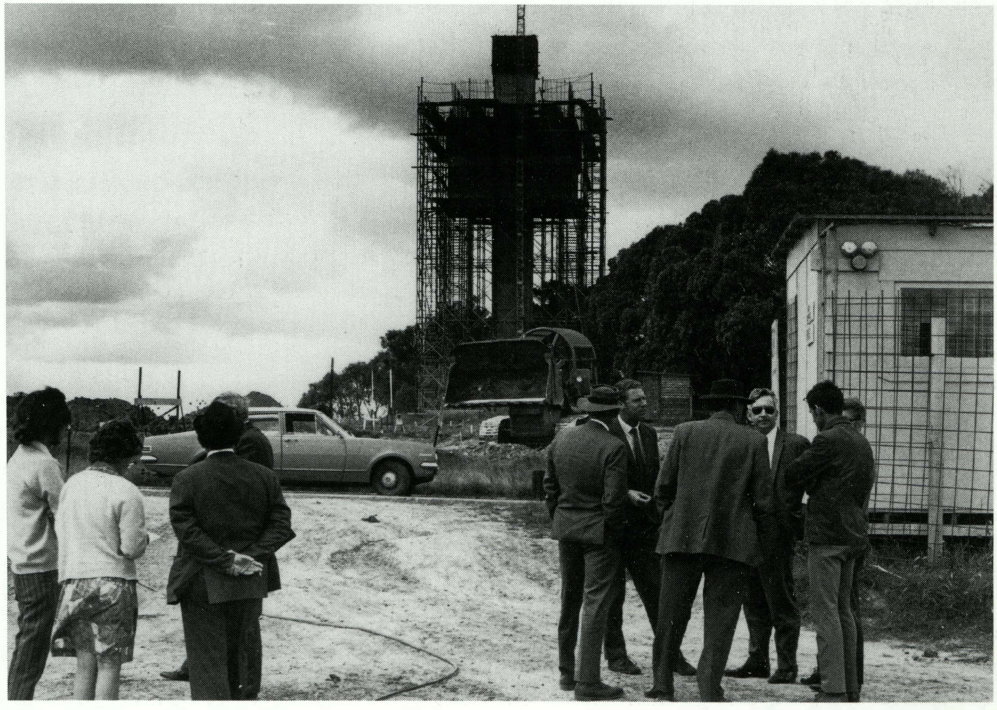
Although Orange Agricultural College no longer exists as an entity, the College has had a profound positive impact on the lives of thousands of people over the years—students and staff, and indeed, the wider Australian farm community. And its legacy lives on, both through course offerings that have been absorbed into current Charles Sturt University programs, and, more significantly, through the lives of its alumni, many of whom are at the forefront of agricultural industries and agribusinesses in Australia and, indeed, throughout the world.

I hope this book gives you a better understanding of the key historical, political and social factors that influenced the development, growth and ultimately, the dissolution of the College.

—Professor Kevin Parton
Head of Campus, CSU Orange
December 2009

Introduction

◄ *Orange Agricultural College Development Committee during a visit to the college site in August 1972. From left: Ernest Bragg (Accountant, Department of Agriculture), James Jessup (Executive Officer, Education Secretariat, Department of Agriculture, Sydney), Harold Harrison (Regional Supervisor, Department of Agriculture, Orange), Len Pockley, Dr Fred Butler (Senior Deputy Director General, Department of Agriculture), A.J. (Sandy) MacKenzie (OAC Principal), Hugh Ross ('Garangula', Harden), J. Crawford (Chief of the Division of Research, Department of Agriculture, Sydney).*



► *This photo, taken during the Development Committee's site inspection in August 1972, shows the progress on the construction of the water tower.*

My involvement with Orange Agricultural College (or, to give it its official title at the time, the Faculty of Rural Management of the University of Sydney), began in 2003, as the university commenced teaching a number of humanities subjects at Orange as part of the first year of the Liberal Studies program. From my point of view, as the recently appointed tutor in history, this was an exciting initiative, and an opportunity to get in on the ground floor of something with (I thought at the time) rosy prospects.

Early on in the piece, it was brought to my attention that in November the College would celebrate the 30th anniversary of its official opening, an obvious occasion for a serious history to be written. Events since then have, in their own way, recapitulated a familiar scenario in the College's history, to the extent that as I write these lines, the College has just completed its first year as a school of Charles Sturt University, located 50 km south east at Bathurst. After two years, then, the history teaching came to an end (as did several other programmes begun by Sydney University in 2003), and with many misgivings, the Rural Management staff contemplated their absorption into CSU.

The battle for Orange Agricultural College has always been, in a sense, to justify its existence as a stand-alone institution for the teaching of farm management to students intending to return to the land. The recent events alluded to above may suggest that this battle has been lost, but such a view would be short-sighted. In terms of institutional goals, is it better to be a reed or an oak tree, buffeted by the changing winds of bureaucratic and political imperatives? The diversification into areas like pharmacy, nursing and liberal studies was partially inspired by a need to boost student numbers, given declining support for undergraduate teaching in rural management, and its relatively low position in the pecking order. Since the amalgamation with Sydney University, the College had also actively promoted its postgraduate research programmes, a sage move given the importance of research in the profile of the university.

The reversal of 2004 had to do with horse trading in federally-funded undergraduate places initiated by the Commonwealth Government. In order to achieve other objectives, the University of Sydney relinquished its role in undergraduate nursing education, and agreed to the transfer of its Orange campus to CSU. It would be presumptuous of me to pass judgment on these developments. Rather, my purpose in mentioning them is to set the scene for the detailed history to follow, and to suggest that it is still very much being made as I write. I think it is important to

avoid any suggestion that these recent developments by their very nature constitute a betrayal of the philosophical foundations of the College. That of course is a judgment which participants in the events are free to make, but I take the task of the historian to be not that of judgment, but of understanding, while acknowledging that the leaders of the College stoutly resisted amalgamations whenever they were mooted, and fought hard for OAC's independence, under whichever administrative umbrella it happened to find itself.

Being by specialisation an historian of science, I am tempted to set the story in an evolutionary framework, since metaphors of adaptation and struggle for survival in an environment of scarce resources seem ready-made for the situation of the College. Indeed, the College owed its existence to perceptions of an unfilled niche in the post-secondary education environment. In this regard, my task has been made easier by earlier efforts, particularly Una Wettenhall's dissertation on the political and administrative initiatives which led to the foundation of the College. I will not therefore deal exhaustively with these matters, but begin my detailed account with the arrival of the first students in the middle of 1973.

Historians must always grapple with the problem of how to relate the minutiae of everyday activity to the "big picture", which can seem to overwhelm the local and specific. One needs elements of both, of course. Too much focus on the local can leave the reader confused about the wider significance of daily activity, or what may have influenced it, while excessive emphasis on the "macro" picture leads to an unsatisfactory feeling that, while some general points about rural management education may have been grasped, we are left wondering what made the OAC story interesting in the first place. Throughout, I have tried to preserve a distinction between the detailed accounts of the activities and decisions which made up the fabric of life at OAC, and discussion of the wider context of post-secondary education, and the changing political environment in which the College operated. The two types of account should of course inform each other, but I will leave it to readers to determine to what extent my study achieves their satisfactory integration.

In terms of structure, I have adopted a number of key dates as beginning and ending points for the individual chapters of my study, all related to the reconstitution and renaming of the College's governing body. These metamorphoses are outlined in Table 1.

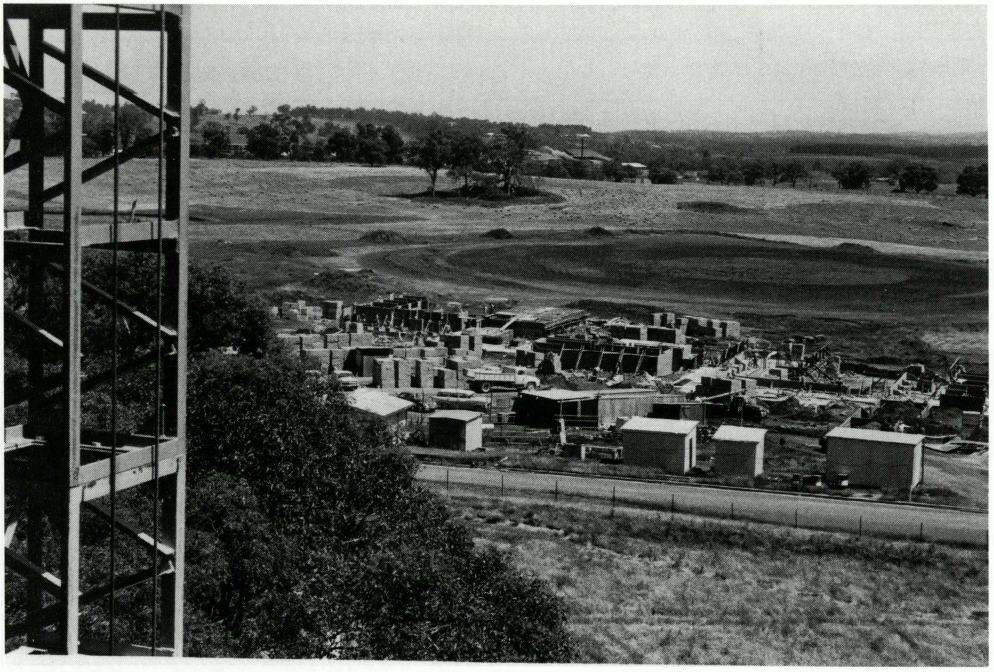
The closer we come to our own time, of course, the more difficult it is to achieve the sort of balance which

Table 1: OAC peak bodies and legislative arrangements

Period	Organisational structure
1973–1977	Established by, and deriving legislative authority from, the NSW Department of Agriculture. Peak body referred to as the "Planning Committee for the Future Development of Orange Agricultural College," set up under the auspices of the NSW Institute of Rural Studies, itself responsible to the Department.
1978–1980	Still the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture, but peak body reconstituted as the Orange Agricultural College Advisory Council.
1981–1983	Still the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture, but peak body reconstituted as the Orange Agricultural College Board of Management.
1984–1989	Autonomous College of Advanced Education, under its own Council. Autonomy was officially granted on 16 September 1983, while the Council had its first meeting on 20 January 1984.
1990–1993	Part of the University of New England Network, under a UNE-OAC Advisory Council.
1994–2004	Part of the University of Sydney. The name Orange Agricultural College was retained until 2000, when the campus became the Faculty of Rural Management.

historians should aim at, if only because it is not possible to gain access to relevant documents. These cannot be found in archives, but will be in files that are still crossing people's desks in their daily work. For the present study, I have chosen 1990 as the cut-off date. To adequately deal with events since then would require a more intimate knowledge of the U.N.E. network than my limited research scope permits. In the end, I can only hope that my work will help to make clear what the essential points in OAC's history may have been, and convey something of the life of the institution to which so many have devoted their time and their skills.

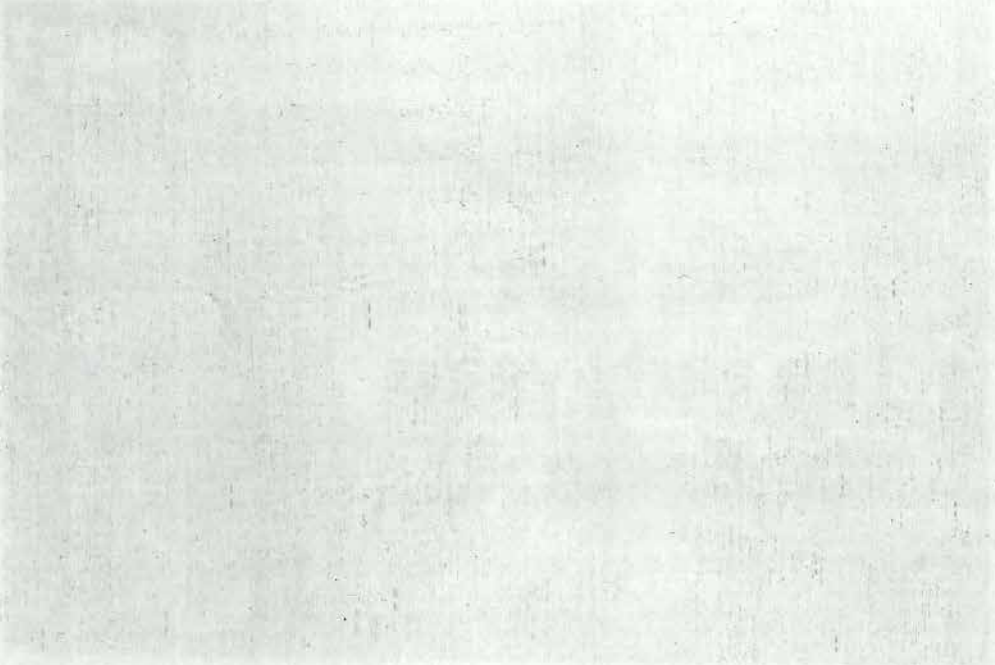
—Philip Gissing

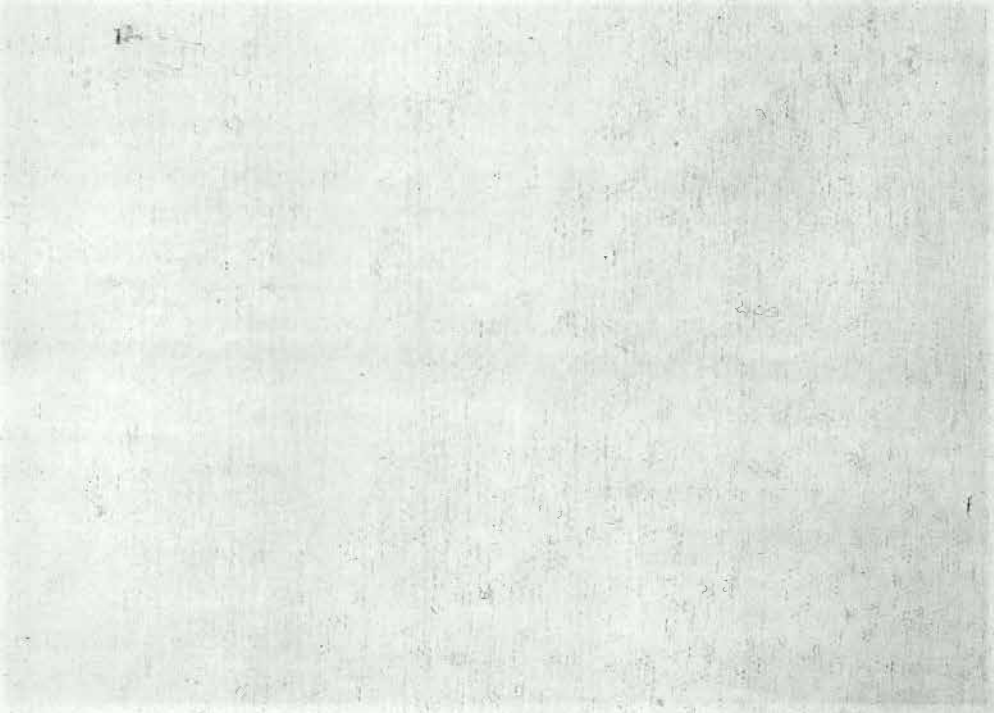


◄ *A view of the construction work on the College site, taken from the water tower in early 1972.*

► *The College site, again from the water tower, in 1972.*

Chapter 1: The early years (1967–1978)





On 12 August 1967, the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and the Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney, held a conference in Orange on the topic: Training for the Rural Industries: A review of agricultural education in NSW. The keynote for this conference was set by Keith Campbell, the acting dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, who asked:

> What will be the intellectual demands made on personnel engaged in the Australian agricultural industries two decades hence and how should we devise training courses to fit them for their tasks?

His attempts to answer this question are worth looking at in some detail, since they neatly encapsulate many of the arguments that were by no means settled by the time, 20 years down the track, the Labor government of the time moved to set up the "Unified National System" for tertiary education. But I anticipate.

For the moment, it is enough to note that Keith Campbell has a "binary system" of tertiary education very much in mind. While faculties of agriculture in universities should be concerned with fostering research into new technological processes, agricultural colleges should be responsible for upgrading the technical competence and standards of management of farm operators. They should not, in his view, attempt to do the same job as universities, with lower levels of funding and less well-trained staff. With an allusion, whether intended or not, to the story of Esau and Jacob, he accuses the agricultural colleges of the day of "selling their birthright":

> But somehow the original purpose of the colleges has become lost. They no longer aspire to provide us with the well-trained and competent farm manager, the type of person who ... will be much in demand in the highly competitive, highly scientific agriculture of tomorrow [but are engaged in an] undignified scramble to upgrade entrance standards and courses to ... attract Commonwealth Government money promised for colleges of advanced education.

But, a critic might point out, was Campbell not at the same time advocating higher standards? Indeed yes, but his point is that this standard of education is being devoted to the wrong ends. (Or, to return to the Darwinian metaphor of my Introduction, the colleges were evolving in the wrong direction.)

We should be encouraging young men to enter the colleges with farming as their vocational objective. We should not be diverting money and physical resources which might otherwise go to university institutions equipped to train people to the more stringent standards required of the future agricultural

◄ *Construction work was hindered by snow during winter, 1972.*

► *Len Pockley speaking at the second OAC graduation ceremony, on 26 November 1976. Mr Pockley, a farmer from the Goulburn district in the NSW Southern Tablelands, was instrumental in the establishment and early development of the College.*

scientist and extension worker by false promises that this type of training can be given more cheaply in non-university institutions. In short, if tertiary education of sub-university standard is to be provided it should be directed to the needs of future farmers and farm managers.

That we have a story to tell at all depends on the fact that ideas like this were shared by activists like Len Pockley, who from his merino stud 'Pylara' (south of Goulburn) kept up a vigorous campaign for adequate resourcing of farm management education. By 1946 he was on the Council of the NSW Sheepbreeders' Association, and in 1962 was elected to the Council of the Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) of NSW *(The Land, Obituary notice, 6/1/2005)*. These connections led to his involvement with the Committee of Advice on Rural Studies, set up in September 1967 under the auspices of the NSW Department of Agriculture.

These few biographical notes will suggest that Len Pockley had first-hand knowledge of the concerns of farmers for the future of their properties, given increasing emphasis on the apparently limitless progress promised by science and technology. Recall that the space race was in full swing, and would culminate in the Apollo 11 mission of 1969. "One small step for man," and all that! But if science represented a future of boundless promise, it was also a source of misgivings, casting doubt as it did on the tried and true ways of the past. Those who could not adapt themselves to the new techniques might be left behind. At least, this ambivalence is present in the following passage from an ABC radio programme on jackeroos, on 27 March 1966:

> Neil Inall: Let's leave NSW now and go to Tasmania. Here's a farmer with his comments.
>
> As regards my own son, naturally I hope that some day he will take over the management of the property. Farming today has become so scientific and so complex that I realized that I lacked a tremendous amount of training and a scientific knowledge and so I decided that I would like him to do a course at some agricultural school or some agricultural college, specialising particularly in farm management. So we looked around where we would send him, I thought of some agricultural colleges on the mainland, their type of farming is a little different from ours, and so we decided to send him to the Marcus Oldham Agricultural College near Geelong where there was inclined to be more of a mixed farming and where special stress was placed upon farm management.

Who, reading this, would not sympathise with the farmer's predicament, as he

regrets his lack of knowledge of science, and wonders how best to help his son prepare for the tasks ahead? But although farming has become "scientific and complex", note that our Tasmanian man on the land is still concerned with the local and specific. There is an incipient awareness here of the contradiction between the generalising imperative of scientific discourse, and the concern with local variation. For farming to be "scientific" would suggest that it is governed by universal principles, just as Newton's laws of motion are said to govern the movements of everything from the smallest molecule to the largest galaxy.

So, although we find our farmer lamenting his lack of scientific knowledge, it does not immediately occur to him that his son needs a science degree. In spite of the immense prestige attached to technological advance, supposedly based on scientific understanding, there remains an element of suspicion of the scientist with his "head in the clouds", or immured in his ivory tower, cut off from day-to-day concerns, and consequently missing important aspects of life as it is actually lived. "Your theories might be all very well, but I have a farm to run." Len Pockley's perspective, too, had elements of the old and the new. Good evidence for his views on these questions can be found in a talk he gave to the new intake of OAC students in 1975, with the title: "The Father-Son Relationship in Farm Management." The very title itself conveys something of the importance of the specific concerns of the family, a theme picked up in the introduction, in which Pockley tells the students:

> You have the advantage over many others that your presence here indicates that your fathers are progressively minded and interested in your career as a farm manager. Compare the sons who have less enlightened fathers.

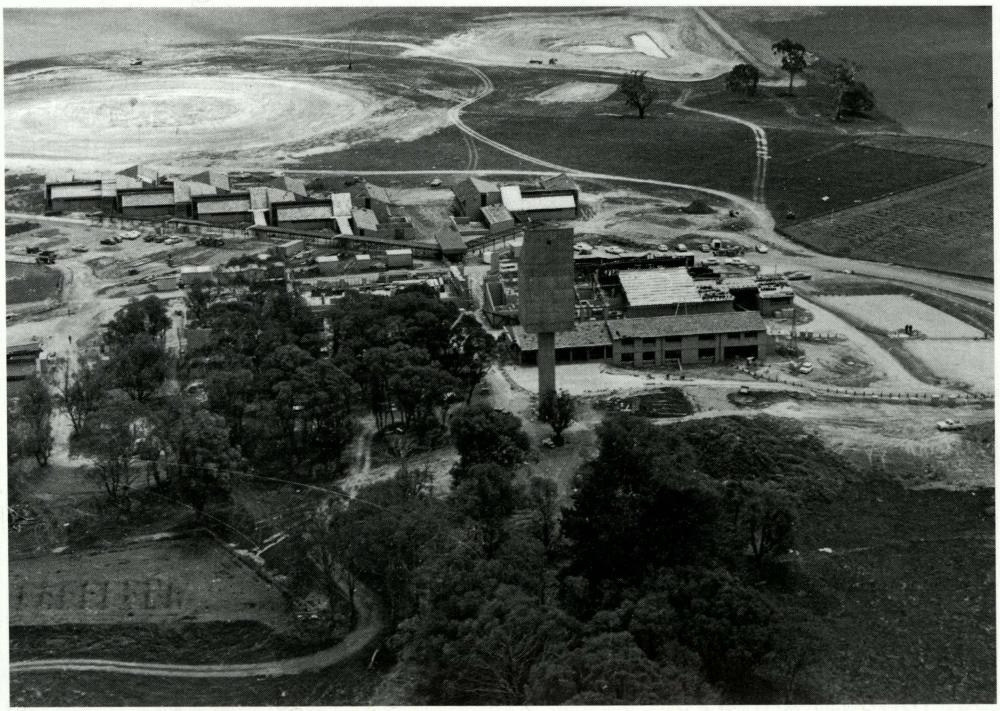
The progressive aspect of his thought is that the new generation of farm managers needs more rigorous and systematic training than heretofore. However, Pockley is far from envisaging a situation where the running of farms is driven by strictly commercial considerations, with managers appointed on behalf of shareholders having no bonds of kinship. Much of his talk is devoted to the problems associated with what he calls "intra-family dealings". How, for example, does one arrange matters for families with sisters? The following is typical of the depth of thought behind Pockley's views:

> It is...usually preferable for the son(s) to have the equity or control of the property even if their sisters' shares have to be valued and bought from them as a first mortgage debt on which

realistic rates of interest must be paid. In this way the sister is assured of an income, and as the debt is liquidated, of a flow of capital for investment at her discretion. The brother has more simple control and long-term ownership provided he meets his mortgage payments. There is still the problem of whether a sister would foreclose a mortgage on an indolent brother, or that if influenced by a grasping husband she might lean heavily on a hard-working brother.

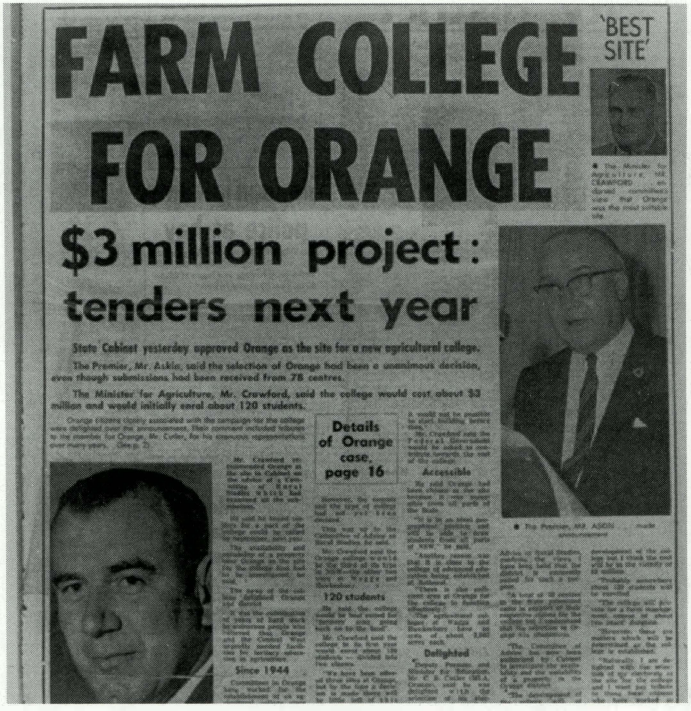
Here, we are concerned with fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, and Pockley's talk is almost exclusively devoted to strategies for dealing with inter-generational conflict, in order to ensure the smoothest possible handover of control. The talk is divided into sections, in which the two points of view, those of the father and the son, are set out in detail, with a view to reconciling their differing perspectives. There is very little here of scientific management, but rather the focus remains squarely on the family farm as the prime model of agricultural enterprise.

In December 1968, we find Len Pockley writing to a potential recruit for the Principal's position at Orange Agricultural College, pointing out that OAC "will follow very closely the pattern



◂ *The College site starts to take shape ... this aerial view was captured during early 1973.*

of Marcus Oldham College, and its aim will be to train lads who have completed secondary education in Farm Management for return to the industry in this capacity" (the NSW Cabinet had formally approved the establishment of OAC on 2 June). In this respect, at least, the vision is very much that of a vocational training institute, the graduates of which will be expected to return to the farm. In the first place, it was under the auspices of the NSW Department of Agriculture, which in 1967, as we have seen, set up a committee of advice on agricultural education. This committee resolved that agricultural education should be kept in the Department of Agriculture, since it was feared that if it were made the responsibility of the Department of Education, then there would "inevitably be diversion of funds...into other fields". *(Report by LA Pockley to a meeting of the Graziers' Association of NSW Agricultural Education Subcommittee, Orange, 13 July 1973.)* Hard on the heels of the Cabinet decision in July came the to-and-fro between Sydney and Canberra over funding, initially for planning and survey work. In August the NSW Government sought approval from the Federal Department of Education and Science to



FARM COLLEGE FOR ORANGE

'BEST SITE'

$3 million project: tenders next year

State Cabinet yesterday approved Orange as the site for a new agricultural college.

The Premier, Mr. Askin, said the selection of Orange had been a unanimous decision, even though submissions had been received from 78 centres.

The Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Crawford, said the college would cost about $3 million and would initially enrol about 120 students.

Details of Orange case, page 16

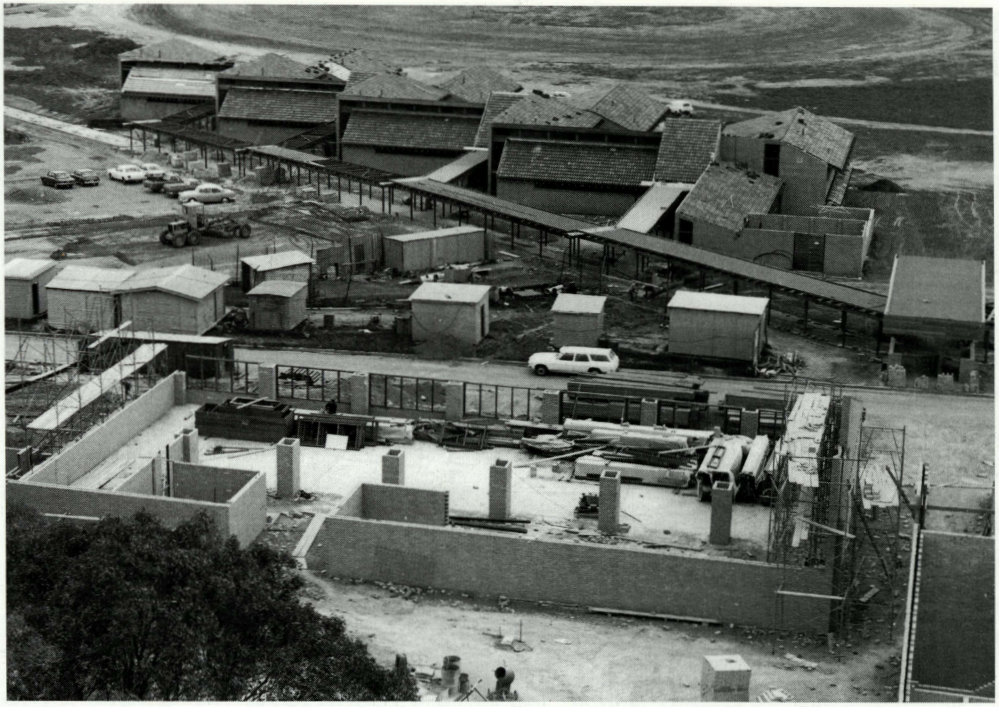
Accessible

120 students

Delighted

Since 1944

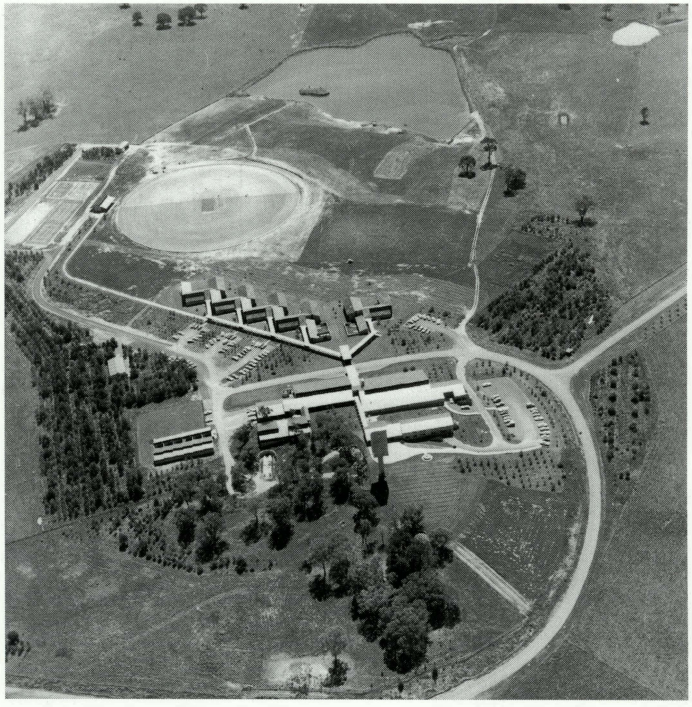
► *The front page of the 3 July 1968 edition of the Central Western Daily reported that the NSW Government had selected Orange as the site for the state's new agricultural college.*



◂ *Early days in the construction of the College library (foreground) and student residences (background).*

use an amount of $20,000, made available under the States Grants (Technical Training) Act, 1968, for this purpose. A possible sticking point here was that the proposed college's main management course would be presented at post-secondary level, placing the college in the CAE category, and as a consequence rendering it ineligible for funding earmarked for the TAFE sector. Funds had been sought as part of the Commonwealth's allocation for advanced education for the 1970–72 triennium, but NSW argued that the college's training programmes would be "sufficiently flexible to provide for short-term courses for farmers and prospective farmers", and that these short courses would involve "a technical training approach". *(Letter from R.M. Watts, Director-General, NSW Department of Agriculture, to Sir Hugh Ennor, Secretary, Department of Education and Science, 30 August 1968.)*

From the very beginning, then, there was ambiguity about the positioning of OAC within the higher education sector. It seemed to fit most readily into the CAE category, but had about it something of the air of a TAFE college. For various reasons, as in the present instance, this ambiguity may have been tactically advantageous, but it had the potential to pose problems for administrators confronted with questions about purpose



◄ *An aerial view of the College, taken in 1976.*

► *Geoff Crawford, the NSW Minister for Agriculture from March 1968 to December 1975, supported the development of Orange Agricultural College. This photo was taken in the early 1970s.*

and relevance. Other things being equal, it is more difficult for hybrid institutions to justify and preserve their institutional integrity. I mention this here, because it seems that even at this early stage, a couple of years before its first intake of students, OAC was being required to refashion definitions of itself in order to even get off the ground. Like St Paul, it was trying to be "all things to all men".

In November 1968, a group from the Agricultural Research Station Development Committee visited Orange to consider the establishment of OAC, and its relationship to local agricultural research stations. Over the course of two days, the committee, headed by Fred Butler, considered progress to date, given an expectation that the College would open in 1972 with an initial intake of between 60 and 80 students. The basic philosophy of the proposed course was described as being "directed to management, involving a considerable degree of extra-mural training".

All through this early planning period, Pockley was maintaining a vigorous and comprehensive correspondence with Ivo Dean, the Principal of Marcus Oldham Farm Agricultural College near Geelong in Victoria. Much of Pockley's thinking regarding the criteria for selection of students, and the nature of the curriculum, was modelled on the Marcus Oldham experience, and this correspondence provides us with interesting insights into the thinking behind OAC. Given the reliance on Ivo Dean's experience at Marcus Oldham, Len Pockley at times confesses to some misgivings about a new initiative which might be seen as a competitor. In the course of a long letter to Sandy MacKenzie in January 1969, he comments that he has "wondered a lot as to whether you would be interested in the Orange project", but "hesitated to contact you direct, as obviously I would not want to interfere in any way between you and Ivo Dean, who has been of so much help to me and the cause". Further on, he admits that:

> In fact I feel embarrassed at times that I have leant so heavily on the Oldham story and Ivo's help in ideas and that it is all leading to an institution in competition to a degree with Oldham.
>
> If I believed that it was not in the best interests of both in the long run I could not go on with it. But I do feel that to have an official departmental Farm Management College functioning with Commonwealth support and recognition, must in the long term help Oldham. In addition it will accelerate the general acceptance by the rural community of this type of training and will I believe generate an increasing demand for this type of course.

Here, I have thought it best to let Len

HANG SING

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Central Western Daily

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THURSDAY, JULY 26, 1973

Inc. Orange Advocate (1861) and Orange Leader (1871)

for HOLDENS and "GOLD STAR" 24/24 USED CARS

AG. COLLEGE SETS NEW STANDARDS

The Deputy Premier and Member for Orange (Sir Charles Cutler) said yesterday that Orange's new Agricultural College would provide a farm management education centre without parallel in Australia.

The college received its first intake of students yesterday.

"The college is unique in the country in that it will provide education in farm management for both full-time students and practising farmers and their families," Sir Charles said.

"The college also differs from others in that its academic year follows the financial rather to a diploma in farm management.

"This course is designed to provide training in the principles of agricultural production and business management for men and women who intend to return to the rural industry as farm owner-operators or career managers.

"Students have been selected on their academic standards, the

Among the buildings are the residential blocks, designed to cater for up to 300 students.

The library is a striking building, and the high water tower is a prominent landmark.

(Continued page 2)

JOHN RANDALL (at right) found a warm welcome waiting for him when he entered the doors of Oran[ge] Agricultural College yesterday morning. John comes from Trundle and is one of the first 22 studen[ts] chosen for the college's first pilot intake. Greeting him are Dr. E. R. Hunt, senior lecturer in anim[al] production, and Mr. R. J. Napier, lecturer in farm management.

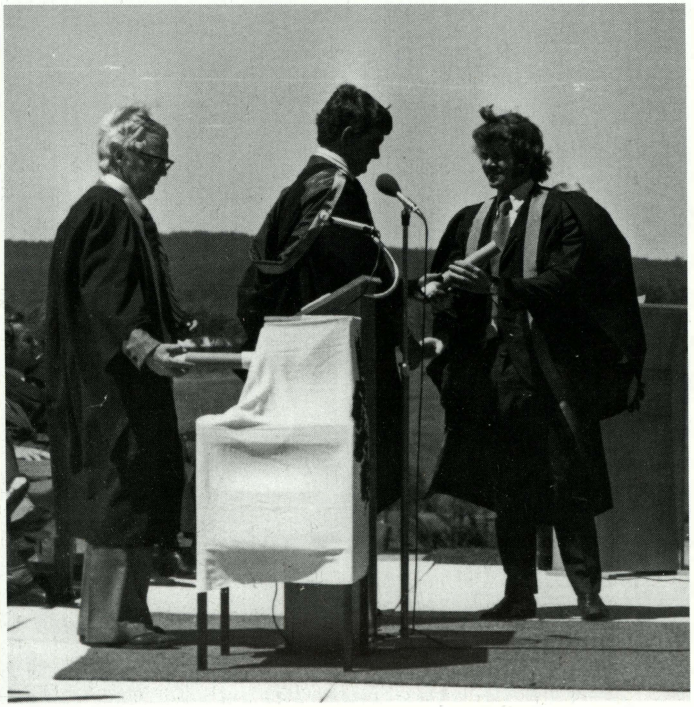
NO EXTRA POWER

FALLING TRE

◄ *The front page of Orange's Central Western Daily newspaper on 26 July 1973 shows John Randall, who was among the initial intake of students at OAC, being welcomed to the College by lecturers Dr Evan Hunt and Robert Napier.*

► *Orange Agricultural College staff, 1974.*

► *The first graduation ceremony at Orange Agricultural College was held on Friday, November 21, 1975. Some of the graduating students are shown here.*



◄ *James McDonald receives his diploma from OAC Principal A.J. (Sandy) MacKenzie, watched by OAC Secretary Ron Emes, during the College's inaugural graduation ceremony.*

Pockley speak for himself, adding only the explanatory remark that Marcus Oldham College was privately funded. It is also important to realise that, on the evidence of this and other statements of Len Pockley, his staunch defence of the institutional integrity of OAC was not driven by parochialism. On the contrary, he had wider views of what he took to be a national cause.

Whatever misgivings he may have had, by the beginning of 1969 Pockley felt he had found the right man for the job of leading the College, and was doing all he could to recruit him. Sandy MacKenzie, the College's foundation Principal, and Len Pockley shared a very close relationship. Indeed, it was Pockley who first sounded out, and then recruited MacKenzie to head the new enterprise. It was an article of faith with Len Pockley that the Principal of the College should be appointed as soon as possible, and be fully involved in the initial planning, site selection and construction phases. By this time Sandy MacKenzie was studying for a Masters degree at the University of New England, in the Department of Livestock Husbandry, after having spent three years as a lecturer at Oldham. (Coincidentally, this period included the first year of study by Len Pockley's son, David.) In a letter to

► *The College's first graduation ceremony in November 1975 ... Robert Heath receives his Diploma from Principal, A.J. (Sandy) MacKenzie. (OAC Secretary Ron Emes is on the left).*

Pockley on 2 January, he suggests that he may take his research interests in the effects of stress on merino ewes towards a PhD, but states that his "main interest is in, let us say, 'effective industry orientated' agricultural education", adding that "Oldham was one of the few (if not the only) institutions fulfilling this ideal in Australia". On this point, as on others, a strong coincidence of views, and in a following letter, there is even more evidence of consonance of interests:

> During the last year I have been making a few discreet enquiries around New England re the likely financial support for a private college a la Oldham. Not much has eventuated though the siting of the new college at Orange (of course most unpopular up here) made a lot of people aware of the need for a vocational training institution up here. *(Letter from Sandy MacKenzie to Len Pockley, 10 January 1969.)*

By now the correspondence had become part of a de facto selection process, as shown by the fact that Sandy MacKenzie included a brief resume in the letter quoted above, and made plans to visit Len Pockley on his property at the end of January. Although he expressed some concern about his youth and lack of experience, in Len Pockley's eyes these were decided advantages. Even from his hotel while visiting South Africa in September, Pockley continued to campaign hard on the Orange appointment, writing to Fred Butler that "the right principal is absolutely critical to the success of Orange and the concept we have for it", and urging that the successful candidate should be a "young man ready for challenges and prepared to be active for 10-15 years". He implores Butler, "don't let us put in some tired old work horse who won't do much wrong – in fact won't do much at all. This is a trail blazing job".

On this issue, at least, Pockley was to get his way, even if his letter to Fred Butler betrays an expectation that advocates of farm management education will encounter spirited opposition at every turn. "It gives me nightmares in technicolor," he writes, to even think about the outcome of the selection process, if Butler is not able to suitably "indoctrinate" the other members of the selection committee! "Above all," he comments, the principal "must be a figure acceptable to farmers and sons as understanding their problems, and in whom they have confidence. This will be manifest in his ability to discuss practical issues rather than theory." There are the seeds here of future tensions, since it is hard to reconcile a crusade to persuade politicians of the need to embrace OAC as a centre for advanced study, with a desire to keep the theoreticians at arms' length. Theory, to be worthy of the name, has to deal in abstractions, and seek general principles,

► *OAC Students Representative Council, 1976, from left: John Sharp, Hamish Anderson (President), Geoff Row, Stuart Martin, Geoff Paddison (Secretary).*

a task which requires going beyond the individual problems of farmers and their sons. If one only takes note of these sorts of comments, it is hard to see why the sort of training advocated by Pockley could not have been incorporated within TAFE. The answer here lies in the nature of Pockley's model, the Marcus Oldham Farm College. This was a small, specific-purpose institution, a feature which appealed very much to Pockley, who felt that farm management training was so important that it should not be forced to compete for attention with other unrelated departments in a large educational enterprise.

The other feature of Marcus Oldham, though, did not loom large in Pockley's thinking, although, as we have seen, Sandy MacKenzie had given it some thought. I refer here to the fact that it was a private college, and therefore did not rely on government budget allocations. From some points of view, this could be seen as a weakness—MacKenzie, indeed, ascribed what he saw as the shortcomings of Marcus Oldham to the fact that it was "small, privately financed and largely experimental". *(Letter to Len Pockley, 1 October 1969.)* On the positive side, though, Marcus Oldham was not required to fit pre-established criteria, by framing its curriculum to comply with the Federal Education Department's views as to what

constituted a CAE. A private institution could much more readily position itself within its local community, almost as though that community "owned" it in some way. At the time of his application for the position of Principal, Sandy MacKenzie compiled a list of characteristics which one should look for in a candidate. Under the heading "Relationship with local city community", he commented:

> Both Principal and wife need to participate in local community and to foster close relations between College and city.
>
> Must encourage an open door policy to some extent with library, sporting facilities and other facilities, e.g. provide a venue for meetings, schools, civic receptions, etc. This is all good publicity.

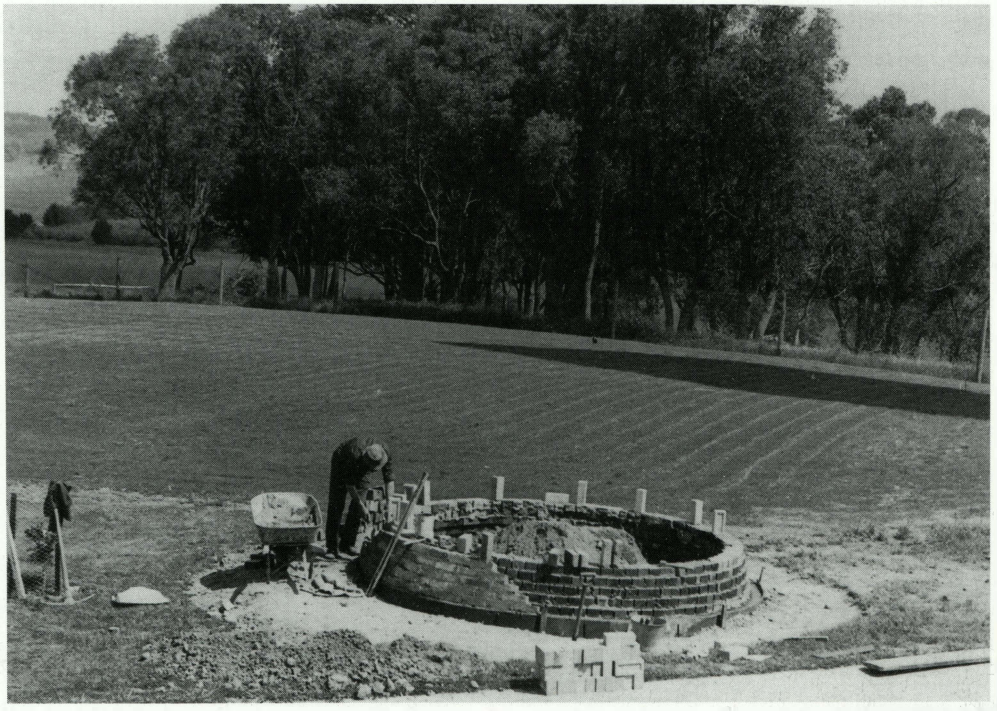
All very good, of course, although as a constituent member of the CAE sector, OAC could not afford to have itself identified exclusively as "Orange's college". It was necessary to take account of national priorities, as set out by federal and state governments, such as the "growth centre" concept we discuss later.

In April 1970, Sandy MacKenzie was appointed the Principal of Orange Agricultural College, and settled in to the

◂ *Mr Alexander J. (Sandy) MacKenzie (the first Principal of OAC), pictured in August 1972.*

arduous task of readying the campus for the first intake of students. After looking at the architectural plans in Sydney, he raised serious concerns with Len Pockley about being forced to adhere, "for the sake of political expediency", to an opening in February 1972. MacKenzie urged that any public announcement should be deferred until after the state elections in 1971, and an opening scheduled for 1973. "I have serious doubts," he concludes, "whether even the buildings can be completed by then." *(Letter from Sandy MacKenzie to Len Pockley, 24 April 1970.)*

MacKenzie's specific concerns included a desire that the proposed college farm be "staffed, stocked and fully operational by the opening date, bearing in mind the fundamentally important role it will have to fulfil as a continuing educational demonstration of commercial farm management". He also stressed the importance of selection of the first students well in advance of the opening date, in order for the College to have some contact with them during their required practical work prior to entry. Len Pockley, too, had stressed the importance of industry experience as a requirement for entry, and from the beginning it was established that the College would not



► *A worker constructs the monument that marked the official opening of the College in November 1973. The bricks being used were salvaged from nearby Templer's Mill, a flour mill that was demolished in the late 1960s. The mill was located on 'Narambla', a property adjacent to the College where Ausrtralia's best known poet, A.B. (Banjo) Paterson, spent the first few months of his life.*

select students simply on the basis of school performance. Much thought went into drawing up point score tables to rank applicants, largely based on the Marcus Oldham experience, with applicants receiving points in four separate categories: Academic standard (a possible 35 points), industry experience (35 points), age (15 points) and assessment at interview (15 points). The academic standard was clear enough, but the proposed weighting of industry experience indicates a tendency to over-prescription. Perhaps the following list will indicate what I mean – as each new criterion is added, the window of opportunity becomes rapidly narrower:

> A basic requirement for admission to the Orange Agricultural College is that of 12 months minimum industry experience prior to entry. This requirement should be:
>
> 1. Obligatory irrespective of the academic standard.
>
> 2. Preferably a full uninterrupted 12 months on a farm.
>
> 3. Preferably on a farm operated by an owner/manager.
>
> 4. Preferably on a farm with more than one enterprise in a medium to high rainfall area.
>
> 5. Preferably not solely at the home property.

A maximum of 30 points is prescribed for a period of four years, with the selection committee being given five discretionary points to play with, to be allocated according to the "type and width of experience, any responsibilities held and the assessed value of the experience". Further, "this assessment will be made during the year prior to entry when the College will be in touch with the applicants through staff visits and correspondence".

The problem here is that classic combination of over-prescription with vagueness. The motive is clear enough, but a rather large administrative machinery would be required to gather and process all the information required to plug into the selection algorithm, and at the end of the day the committee is still left with a significant discretionary power to accept or reject applicants. As the draft selection procedures put it, the committee "would use as a basic guide the points score system but it would also make adjustments as it sees fit in particular or unusual cases". To which a hardened bureaucrat might reply, "No point in making the sieve if you are going to put holes in it."

It is not my intention or role to sit in judgment on the strategies of the people concerned with bringing Orange Agricultural College into existence. Rather, I raise these issues here to

indicate the sources of possible difficulties which may have been encountered down the track, and also to give some flavour of the zeal of Sandy MacKenzie and his early colleagues.

That a projected opening in 1972 was highly optimistic is attested by the fact that the first staff meeting at OAC took place on 23 November of that year, at which time only seven of a total of 49 positions on the projected staff establishment had been filled (see Table 2).

Although the Public Service Board had approved the appointment of the two Supervisors of Applied Studies (one each for Animal and Plant Production), the Senior Lecturer positions in those two areas were still awaiting approval, as was the position of Lecturer in Farm Management. (The PSB had deferred appointment of a lecturer in Agricultural Economics.) There was still no Librarian, although it was anticipated that this position would be filled some time in the new year. By 9 January, no-one in the State Library Service of NSW had expressed any interest in the position, and the staff meeting on that date expressed their fears that "the services of a competent librarian [would] be difficult to obtain". The Monthly Report for December 1972 also noted that "the lecturing and senior lecturing positions have not been advertised", and appointments would therefore be delayed "until a few weeks before the first intake of students on 30 April". It seemed clear that academic staff would "have great difficulty in developing a coherent course before students come onto the campus". By February 1973, at least, the Supervisors of Applied Studies had come on board, with Ed Henry's appointment as SAS (Animal Production), and Barry Smart looking after Plant Production. The team was coming together, with the appointment of Mrs H.C. Nolan as Librarian, James Davis as Senior Lecturer (Plant Production) and Robert Napier as Lecturer in Farm Management. Justin

Table 2: OAC staff, November 1972

Position	Appointee	Started
Principal	A.J. (Sandy) Mackenzie	April 1970
Deputy Principal, and Senior Lecturer in Farm Management	T.J. (John) Croft	July 1972
Secretary	Ronald Emes	October 1972
Stenographer	Joy Culley	June 1972
Clerk Class 'A'	Kenneth Mattock	October 1972
Typist	Julie Bowden	November 1972
Leading Hand	Ronald Lane	November 1971

◂ *A shot of the airstrip on the College campus, looking north. These days the Charles Sturt University School of Dentistry is located on the lower side of the hill behind the airstrip.*

Powell joined the staff in April as a Grade 3/4 Clerk, while Evan Hunt, Senior Lecturer (Animal Production), and Robert Napier, commenced duties in May. On 18 June, Don Craig began his long association with the College as an "Adult Assistant (Practical Demonstrations)". It would be appropriate to note here, as well, the arrival of Chris Morgan as Assistant Lecturer in Agricultural Economics (February 1974), and the resignation of the inaugural librarian, H.C. Nolan (effective April 1974), to be replaced by Robyn Schwartz.

The delay in filling important positions, and several other problems, led to the progressive postponement of the arrival of the first intake of students to 25 July. A mere two weeks before that date, the catering arrangements had still not been organised. The following excerpts from the minutes of the staff meeting on 10 July give us a good feel for the sorts of problems being encountered and dealt with in the rush to get things ready:

> The cold rooms will be operational today – the bare minimum of 14 days before being used. Quite a lot of kitchen utensils have been received but there are some outstanding and [this] will have to be followed up. Nationwide [the catering firm] have offered to lend those essential items not received, in order to operate. Two trusses in the Dining Hall have to be re-installed

Some of the members of the official party for the College's first graduation ceremony in November 1975 were, from left: Ron Emes (OAC Secretary), Len Pockley (Honorary Fellow, OAC), Clive Osborne (MLA, Member for Bathurst), R.B.R. Smith (MLC), Sir Charles Cutler (Deputy Premier and Member for Orange).

► *Some of the academic staff at the College's first graduation ceremony were, front from left: Don Craig (Supervisor of Applied Studies, Farm Manager), Barry Smart (Supervisor of Applied Studies, Lecturer in Plant Production), John Mullins (part-time tutor), Rob Napier (Lecturer Business Management), Ralphn van Gelder (Lecturer Animal Production), Evan Hunt (Lecturer Animal Production), back row: Chris Morgan (Lecturer Business Management), John Chudleigh (Lecturer Business Management) and Jim Davis (Lecturer Plant Production).*

which will affect the Chef/Manager not being able to operate in the kitchen. Alternative arrangements will have to be made for the students to have meals at a hotel in Orange.

Students' accommodation: "Mattresses and blankets should arrive next week."

Lecture theatres: "As the air-conditioning has not been fitted in lecture theatres, it appears unlikely that the lecture theatres will be available for lectures on 30 July. The seminar rooms should be adequate for the student lectures, and Dr E.R. Hunt and Mr J. Davis were requested to set up the seminar rooms with tables and chairs for the commencement of lectures."

Course development: "There has been a lot of work put into the course submission, and the course is now quite well mapped out."

"The Macquarie Valley Tour proposed for 24–31 August has also been planned, and also farm tours and visits are being organised."

At last, though, 22 students arrived for their orientation programme, and officially began their course on 30 July. According to the minutes of the staff meetings, within a couple of weeks the students had been given some "quite challenging exercises", and the farm visits were proceeding "quite successfully". True, there were some early discipline problems, particularly on the longer farm tours, if the following comment is anything to go by:

> Some constraints... should be made on students when gambling in card games, as while the students are under the College's control, it is responsible for them... A more exhaustive brief before long tours should be expressed by the Tour Leader to the students on the objective of the tour and on self-discipline on gambling during tours.

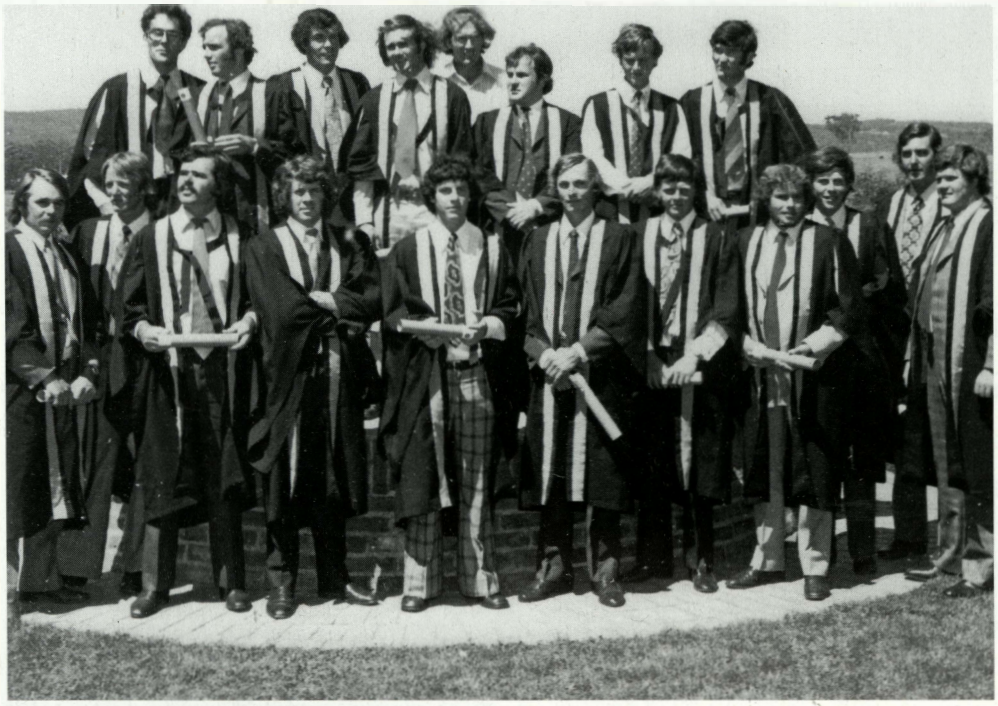
Tours remained an area of concern, as staff sometimes found it difficult to manage an ambitious programme of visits to far-flung locations such as the Northern Territory. The initial planning for the farm management course proposed a four-day week of scheduled teaching hours, with lectures programmed from 8.30am–12.30pm each day, and tutorials and practical demonstrations timetabled for at least two hours after lunch. The fifth day was set aside for tours, seminars, special guest lectures, film screenings, project time, or free time. In mid-June, Barry Smart assumed responsibility for the organisation of tours, with assistance from Ed Henry, and the Academic Board discussed the possibility of a seven-day tour taking in Fowlers Gap, Burra (in the mid-north of South Australia), the irrigation area around Renmark, and returning via Hay and Griffith. All up, nearly 3,000 km in seven days. In the end, students were taken on a tour of the Macquarie Valley from 24–31 August, but

in October the Academic Board decided to restrict all long tours to four days, and cancelled the remaining farm visits in Semester 1. The "general consensus of opinion was that more use should be made of the College's own farm in connection with the course", but this proved to be easier said than done, and for years the operation of the college farm, and eventually the horse unit, remained a bone of contention. The problem seemed to be a lack of information about the farm's activities and plans for its future development, which staff put down to excessive pressure of work. It was hard enough to get the job done, without having to worry about disseminating information about it. As for the early delivery of lectures, students did not take long to start complaining about the work load, and the style of lecturing, not enough use of visual aids, and too much technical terminology. Further, the lectures in communications were failing to interest the students, and it was suggested that greater use of seminar sessions would encourage student participation.

All in all, then, the place was still very much finding its way, which perhaps accounts for the lukewarm response to a report from James Davis to the Academic Board meeting of 10 July, to the effect that in discussions with staff at Mitchell College he had found "a very willing spirit of co-operation in all spheres, including usage of TV/videotape facilities, interchange of staff and even some form of inter-relationship of courses". This was not exactly welcomed with open arms, the minutes recording that "it was generally agreed that the College should get itself established and operational before considering any extension of these facets". Fair enough, since the first lectures had yet to be delivered, but one can still detect in this an air of watchfulness, and reluctance to engage in any meaningful association with Bathurst.

Attempts to tighten up the organisation of course delivery can be seen in the move to add the discipline of "Field Studies" to the Farm Management course, incorporating experimental projects and farm visits. Formation of a Field Studies Committee, responsible for integrating these activities into the four semesters of the course, was clearly intended to remove the ad hoc nature of these activities, by linking them explicitly with the lecture material. The need for greater co-ordination was becoming more and more obvious in the face of student complaints about the frequent changes in the timetable, despite the fact that the staff felt that "a fixed timetable is impossible because of weather conditions in relation to tours". At the Academic Board meeting on 30 October 1974, Barry Smart reported that his task of organising the tours early in Semester 1 was being hampered by the requirement of some

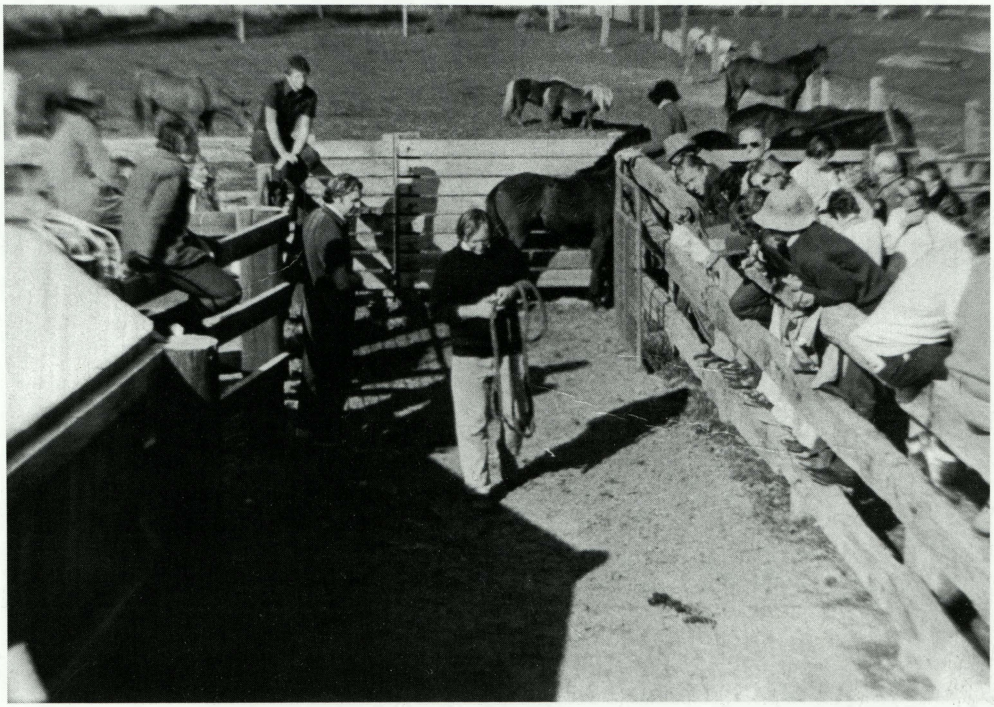
lecturers to schedule them later in the semester. In response to these concerns, James Davis put forward several proposals to the Academic Board (February 1975). He suggested a fixed number of tours (eight in each semester, at a frequency of one each fortnight), with a follow-up discussion day or seminar in the off weeks. There should be a rigid timetable, and proper inspection of tour sites to ensure that the desired educational outcomes would be achieved. Students should be given more direction, with extensive notes distributed prior to the tours. Administration also needed to be tightened up, and James Davis suggested that a member of the Business Management staff should be appointed as Officer in Charge of Tours. The assembled staff could not reach agreement on these measures, so the matter was referred to an "interim committee". Here, the College was wrestling with the perhaps intractable difficulty of incorporating practical studies into an academic programme, a problem also reflected in the ongoing debates about how to gain optimum educational value from the College farm. At the same meeting, Evan Hunt argued that not enough use was being made of the farm for teaching, and the



◂ *The first graduates of Orange Agricultural College, following the graduation ceremony on November 21, 1975. The gradautes are, back: Nicholas Edols (Forbes), Robert Heath (Cumnock), Timothy Wright (Uralla), Terrence Cotton (Manildra), Peter Barbour (Yass), Nigel Smith (Grenfell), Peter Keith (Bathurst), Peter Johnstone (Woodstock), front: John Richardson (Trangie), John Wythes (Cargo), Alexander Stuart (Canberra), James McDonald (Quirindi), Graham Hawke (Orange), Stephen McLeish (Coonamble), Grahame Davidson (Orange), Graham Whitehead (Oberon), John Randall (Trundle), Robert Oates (Narromine) and William Watson (Penrith).*

appointment of a Farm Manager was seen as critical in this area. Until such an appointment, the lack of adequate recording systems and background information on farm activities would prevent its use as a teaching resource, except in a few areas, and the meeting canvassed such ideas as farm meetings, and farm walks. "Whither the farm?" would remain a thorny problem for the college.

Looseness in administration perhaps contributed to a lack of student discipline in this area, and there was a significant problem with absenteeism at practical sessions, guest lectures and field study tours. Early in 1975 the academic staff also addressed the problem of cheating in examinations, where the temptation was made sharper by the lack of appropriate accommodation and supervision. Chris Morgan, the Lecturer in Agricultural Economics, told an Academic Board meeting in May that "dishonest practices were apparently rife in examinations in 1974" and suggested the employment of external supervisors. Students, for their part, were highly critical of some aspects of their course, such as the use of part-time lecturers, and what they saw as the excessive emphasis on theory in semesters III and IV. These criticisms were



► *A mare reproduction and foal management short course was held at OAC on September 30 and October 1, 1976. Evan Hunt and Ed Henry are the instructors in the horse yards.*

given added point by the fact that the College had to attend meetings in Sydney in August as part of the Advanced Education Board review of the Associate Diploma in Farm Management.

In August 1975 the College began production of a newsletter for staff and students, edited by the Secretary Ronald Emes. The first issue contained detailed comment on the Federal Government's budget for 1975/76, arguing that the increase of $236 million in education expenditure had left "little room for encouragement for the Orange Agricultural College". The Labor Government of Gough Whitlam, which had come into office at the end of 1972, and already survived a double dissolution election in 1974, had abolished fees for tertiary education, and also taken on full responsibility for higher education funding (this had been previously shared with the states). Despite the fact that funding for Colleges of Advanced Education in general had increased rapidly over the last five years, the latest allocation represented a mere 1% rise on the 1974/75 figure, leading the secretary to comment that "student numbers are likely to be held at current levels for another year or two and consequently new staff will not be appointed and those that resign may not be replaced". It could not have been forecast then that this comment may apply to the Principal, but when the constitutional crisis of 1975 came to a head on 11 November, with the unprecedented dismissal of the government, and the announcement of a federal election on 13 December, Sandy MacKenzie saw an opportunity to go to Canberra as the Country Party member for Calare.

On 21 November, the College held its first graduation ceremony, as the self-styled "pioneers", those first enrolments in July 1973 had now completed their Associate Diploma of Farm Management. The Secretary, Ronald Emes, noted that the ceremony was an "outstanding success", and the associated function "drew praise from many quarters and... set a standard which is worthy of a College of Advanced Education". Fittingly, the ceremony included the award of an Honorary Fellowship of the College to Len Pockley, while the occasional address was given by Sir Charles Cutler, the Deputy Premier of NSW.

At that time the staff of the College was as follows:

Principal: Sandy MacKenzie

Senior Lecturers: John Croft, James Davis, Evan Hunt

Lecturers: Neville Cargill, John Chudleigh, Christopher Morgan, Robert Napier, Ralph van Gelder

Supervisors, Applied Studies: Don Craig, Ed Henry, Barry Smart

Secretary: Ronald Emes

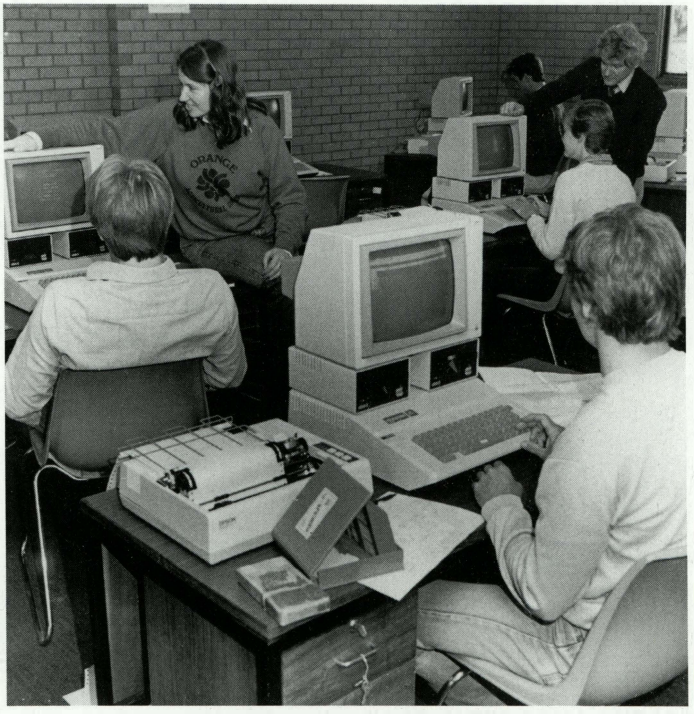
Librarian: Robyn Schwartz

Nineteen of the original 22 made it through to graduation, leading the "Pioneers" to comment:

> We regret that not all of the original 22 enrolments were able to complete the course, but we realise that certain standards must be set and maintained if the College is to be a success in the future. The degree of recognition of graduates will also depend on the standards set.

All the "Pioneers" were men, which should not be ascribed to any overt discrimination. Rather, given the nature of the admissions process we have already discussed, and the gender divide in the farming sector, few women would satisfy the "industrial experience" criterion. Nevertheless, a few women were already enrolled in the first year of the course, and three made it to the graduation ceremony in 1976.

In the following year, the number of graduands had risen to 33 (three of whom were women), and the ceremony on 26 November was addressed by the Federal Minister for Primary Industry, Ian Sinclair, with a vote of thanks from Sandy MacKenzie. The country had survived the



► *Early days of IT ... in 1984 the College purchased 12 Apple II E computers plus Epson 80 printers for $26,052.*

► *John McAuley, an Animal Production Tutor (left) and Len Pockley come to grips with some new technology at the College in the early 1980s.*

aberration of three years under Labor, and the Country Party, with its senior Coalition partner the Liberals, had once again assumed its rightful place on the government benches, after a landslide election victory the previous December.

However, although order may have been restored in Canberra, the basic problems faced by the College would not go away. Throughout the 1970s, the prospect of amalgamation, and efforts to stave it off, provided the main theme of OAC planning. Late in 1975, as we have seen, the Principal, Sandy MacKenzie, resigned to pursue a career in federal politics. In a time of such unrest, ramifications were felt in Orange as the College, following the loss of its foundation principal, sought to regroup in the face of threats from Bathurst. On 2 December Len Pockley wrote an aggrieved letter to Fred Butler about the situation, the first paragraph of which conveys very well his sense of urgency:

> I am concerned to find that in the short time since Sandy MacKenzie lodged his resignation, the principal of Mitchell College has been *most* active in lobbying to the effect that a new principal for Orange should not be appointed and that the time is opportune for Mitchell to take over Orange. *(Emphasis in original.)*

The letter goes on to warn against a

► *OAC Farm Manager Don Craig runs a tutorial with some students from the second intake of the Associate Diploma of Farm Secretarial Studies course in the late 1970s. The students are, from left: Anne Milson, Sue McCredie, Rowena Wardlaw and Pam Ringwood. The introduction of Farm Secretarial Studies in 1977 allowed the College to broaden its appeal to rural women.*

repetition of the experience in Wagga Wagga, where the old Agricultural College had been incorporated within Riverina CAE. Pockley predicted that "within 10 years [the College] will be so academic as to have virtually no communication with farmers". He suggests that Butler pass something of these views on to Gerry Gleeson, the head of the Public Service Board, and notes that he is "tied up here [his property 'Pylara'] with haymaking, wether shearing, etc" and finds it "hard to get to Sydney, but would certainly be happy to talk to Gerry on the matter at the first mutually convenient time". After this evocation of life on the farm, Pockley concludes with a typically colourful image, advising Butler not to worry about acknowledging his letter, but just to "guard our collective backs from buckshot".

As it happened, this particular moment of crisis was negotiated successfully, with the appointment of Robert Napier as the Principal, in line once again with Len Pockley's firmly held view that any new appointment should come from within the College. Nevertheless, the attention of senior staff remained focused on the need to justify the College's independent existence. On 10 March 1977, for example, the day before a visit to Orange by the Higher Education Board, the OAC Planning

Committee decided that the main message to be conveyed by the Principal, Robert Napier, was "the undesirability of a merger between Orange College and Mitchell College of Advanced Education". His submission stressed the uniqueness of the College, and the importance of education in rural management, but also emphasised the College's links with the NSW Department of Agriculture, concluding that "a merger with Mitchell College would give rise to a situation in which the formal links between [OAC] and the Department would be severed". *(Minutes of Planning Committee.)*

In the eyes of rural industry, the removal of this explicit link, and source of support, would represent a downgrading of the importance of agricultural education. The Graziers' Association, for example, wrote to the Minister for Primary Industry, Don Day, arguing that any amalgamation would result in the loss of OAC's "independence and identity for fulfilling the agricultural education needs of Primary Industry throughout NSW under the control of the Department of Agriculture". *(Letter to Don Day, 23 March 1977.)*

Further down the track, we will see the College itself move towards severing this link, and establishing OAC as a stand-alone CAE with its own governing council. For the moment, though, the politics of the situation demanded this stress on OAC's explicit links with the Department of Agriculture, rather than its role as an institution of higher education, with pretensions to independence. It had to be seen as directly serving the interests of farmers and graziers, rather than standing apart from them. Much of this works at the level of symbolism, of course, and it remains an empirical question whether such changes will inevitably lead to the dire consequences predicted by interested parties. Nevertheless, there could be no doubting the import of the threat contained in Robert Napier's discussion paper: force OAC into amalgamation with Bathurst, and we will lose the support of the Department of Agriculture, and send a message to the industry that the government does not fully support primary industry.

By the end of March, the issue had reached the floor of the NSW Legislative Assembly, where the party political dimension of the issue was neatly captured in the following exchange during question time:

> **Mr Punch:** Is the Minister for Primary Industries aware of...proposals that the Orange Agricultural College be incorporated into the Mitchell College of Advanced Education? Does the Minister know that the Graziers' Association of NSW and the United Farmers and Woolgrowers' Association have expressed opposition to any such plan? Further, has the NSW Institute of

Rural Studies, a statutory body established to advise the Minister, also recommended against any incorporation? Will the Minister ensure that no decision is made to change the role and administration of this college without consulting his own department and the staff and students of the Orange Agricultural College?

Mr Day: It is strange that the Leader of the Country Party should express such concern about these rumours when during his term of office the Wagga Wagga Agricultural College was incorporated within the Riverina College of Advanced Education [and] there was not a murmur from supporters of the former Government.

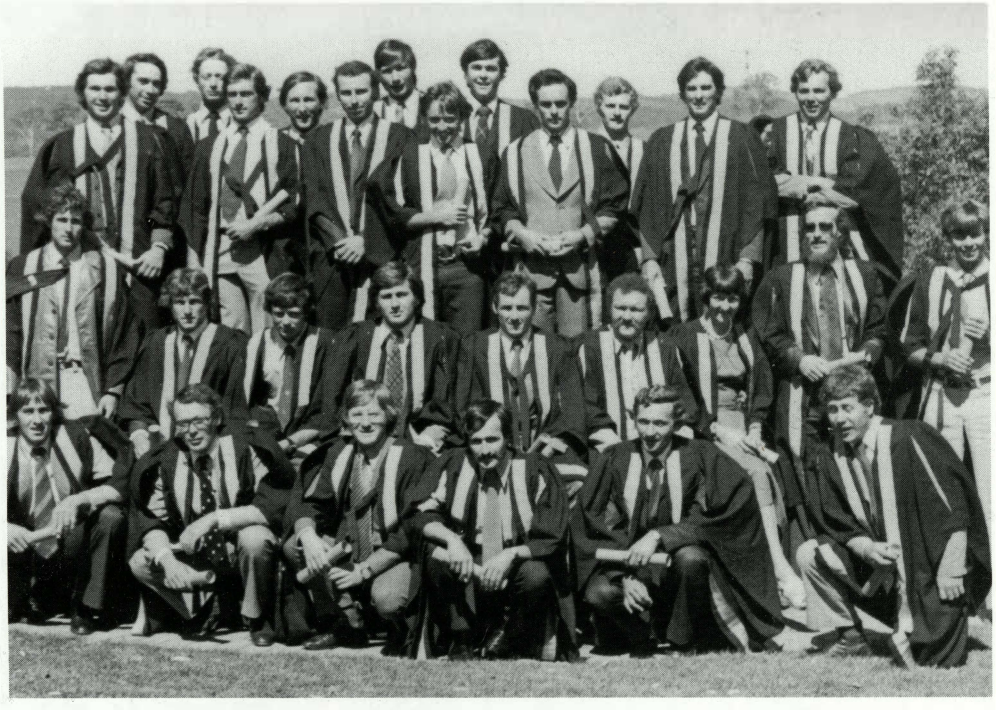
(Interruption)

Mr Speaker: Order! I call the honourable member for Orange to order for the first time.

Mr Day: The matter to which the leader of the Country Party referred is simply a rumour; I know of no such plan. I give the House an undertaking that if such a plan is put forward it will have critical examination before receiving my approval.

At the risk of lowering the tone of our history by devoting too much attention to what has become known as the "bear pit" of the NSW Parliament, I think it is worth analysing the above rhetoric. Note first that, without any preliminary explanation, the "proposals" of Leon Punch's question become the "rumours" of Don Day's answer [subtext: you are wasting our time by getting all hot under the collar about mere hearsay], and this is followed by a questioning of the motives of the defenders of OAC [subtext: it's all very well bringing the Graziers' Association and others into this, but where were they when your mob took away the independence of Wagga Wagga Agricultural College? Not a peep out of them then, so we can only conclude that their representations now have more to do with political point scoring than with any informed concern for agricultural education]. Rest assured that I do not intend a lengthy digression here on the idiosyncrasies of parliamentary democracy, but I think it is important to realise that arguments are advanced and decisions made on a number of different levels in any system of government, and the symbolic significance of actions and arguments is as real as what we may suppose lies behind the symbols.

Leaving politics aside, though, OAC entered 1976 having seen its first cohort of students graduate, and entering a new phase of its existence under a new Principal. The College now had a publicity officer, Charmain Sharpe (entered on duty September 1975), who was planning a display for the Royal Easter Show. It was also planning the introduction of new courses, in the following order:

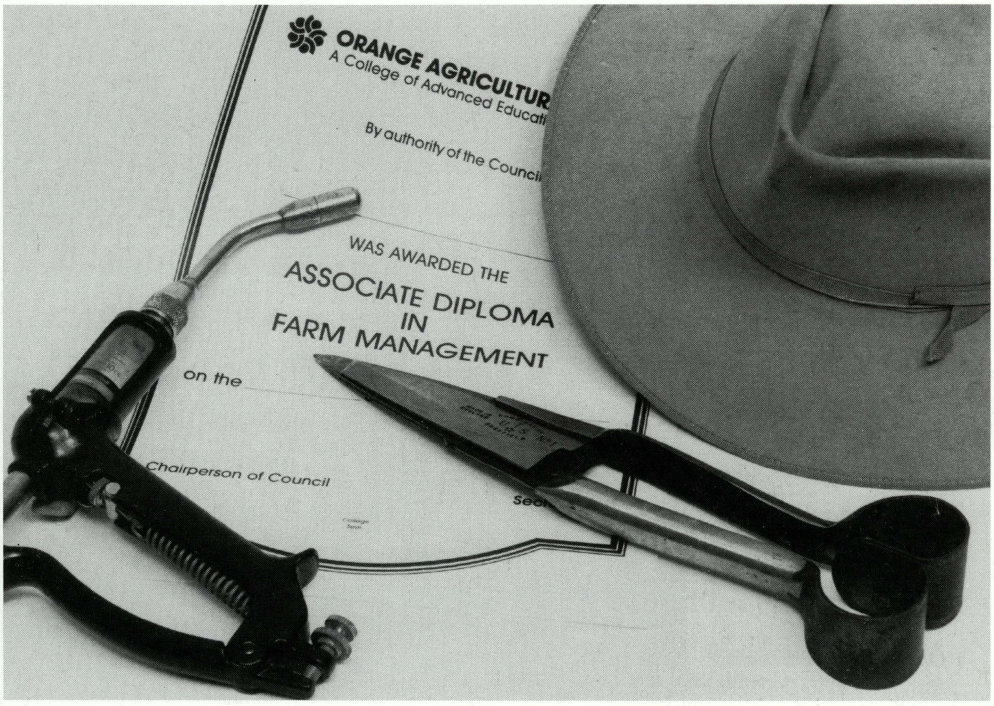


► *OAC's second graduating class, November 26, 1976.*

- Associate Diploma of Farm Secretarial Studies
- Graduate Diploma of Farm Business Management
- Associate Diploma of Land Use Management
- Diploma of Business

Towards the OAC Advisory Council

Although the College did not achieve corporate status until 1984, the movement towards it began virtually with the College's inception. The Federal Labor Government was actively seeking a much larger role in post-secondary education, assuming responsibility for the funding of CAEs from 1 January 1974. It was natural that some would be apprehensive about the future, given that the Labor Party had last held office in 1949, and one can understand the comment at an Extraordinary Staff Meeing convened on 23 August, that "the relationship between the Commonwealth and State Governments regarding finance for the College is obscure at present, and no information is available on this subject at Head Office [of the NSW Department of Agriculture]". Events in Canberra, therefore, only served to add impetus to the College's transformation into an independent corporate entity, with its



► *Early course marketing material ... in this case for the Associate Diploma in Farm Management.*

own governing council. That process began with a recommendation to establish a College Advisory Council, with a wider community representation, in anticipation of eventual independence from the oversight of the Department of Agriculture.

In September 1974 the NSW Minister for Agriculture, Geoff Crawford, established a planning committee under the auspices of the NSW Institute of Rural Studies, charged with the task of advising "on the future role and development of the Orange Agricultural College". This committee included Len Pockley and Fred Butler, the OAC Principal Sandy MacKenzie, and a representative of the NSW Advanced Education Board, Mr A. Nelson Johnston.

The committee's terms of reference covered such things as appropriate course offerings, funding needs, how OAC may fit into the bigger picture of higher education in the Bathurst-Orange growth centre, and the timing and "modus operandi" of development towards corporate status. The "growth centre" concept was but the latest manifestation of the urge towards decentralisation in Australian planning. Politicians and editorialists had long been suggesting that some form of government intervention was necessary to prevent an apparently inexorable trend towards

growth of the state capitals on the seaboard, and a drift of population away from the country. The growth of the "big smoke", Sydney, had to be contained, if only for its own good, and the election of a Federal Labor Government in 1972 had given further impetus to this push with the establishment of a new department concerned with Urban and Regional Development. DURD, as it became known, was a front-runner in this area, with generous staffing and budgets, and an activist minister, Tom Uren. In practical terms, these efforts led to the selection of a number of rural "growth centres", and local councils and chambers of commerce were quick to point out the relative advantages of "their" cities, as opposed to others.

In NSW, obvious candidates included the "twin cities" of Bathurst/Orange, roughly equivalent in size and separated by a 40-minute drive down (or up!) the Mitchell Highway. Regardless of the ideals behind the concept of "growth centres", though, the debates about the allocation of resources and siting of facilities often degenerated into an unseemly tussle between rival councils and chambers of commerce determined not to concede any advantages to their rivals. From the point of view of the citizens of Orange, for example, it was all very well to talk of decentralisation, but if any additional building or infrastructure were to come to the Central West, then it behoved them to ensure that Orange was given a fair opportunity to put its case, so that Bathurst would not have everything go its way (and, of course, these views, but in the opposite direction, were reciprocated by the citizens of Bathurst).

In terms of higher education, Bathurst already had its College of Advanced Education, but the opening of OAC had at last given Orange a presence in this field. The point now was to consolidate this, by positioning the College as an integral part of an overall strategy, and moving it away from direct control by the NSW Department of Agriculture. To talk of OAC's contribution to the "overall provision of higher education opportunities in the Bathurst-Orange growth centre" was to position it as an indispensable participant in the field, a position which would only be enhanced by achievement of corporate status. Thus, we find the planning committee canvassing ambitious schemes for a multi-campus Institute of Higher Education in the Central West, a loose confederation of largely self-governing colleges at Bathurst, Orange and a new city to be erected nearby. (Indeed, these were heady times. The planning committee's preliminary report of December 1974 comments that "the projected population for the area is some 250,000 in the next 25-30 years, made up of Bathurst, 50,000; Orange, 60,000;

Blayney, 8,000 – 10,000 with the balance of some 130,000 contained in a new city to be located within the area bounded by these three centres". *(Preliminary Report, NSW Institute of Rural Studies, Planning Committee, OAC, December 1974, p. 16.)* Such was the enthusiasm for decentralisation, that a committee dominated by career public servants could blithely project a new city larger than Bathurst and Orange put together, and perhaps no more than 25 km from either of them. If I may be allowed a tangential remark on this score, cases like this surely give the lie to the popular image of the unimaginative bureaucrat, concerned only with the pedantic application of rules, and governed by well-attested precedent. Visionaries can be found anywhere, it seems to me).

In order to preserve OAC's identity in the proposed multi-campus, multivocational institution, the committee argued that each constituent college should "be able to develop an individual identity and recognition in certain disciplinary areas or levels of operation". According to this scenario:

> The Mitchell College might emphasise teacher education, legal, business and general studies and the Orange College emphasise rural and environmental studies. A college in the new town could well develop in the applied science areas in close collaboration with the two technical colleges. *(Ibid p. 17.)*

To round out this picture of the future as it looked at the end of 1974, the committee commented that OAC "is programmed to develop to 400 EFTS by mid 1980", having achieved corporate status "early within the 1979–81 triennium", following "the establishment of an interim council during the 1976–78 triennium". *(ibid p. 20.)* This reflected wider trends in the agricultural education sector. By the beginning of 1975, Hawkesbury Agricultural College had an Interim Council, and was expected to achieve autonomy by New Year's Day, 1976, while a select committee of the NSW Government was investigating a proposal for incorporation of Wagga Wagga Agricultural College into Riverina CAE. There were thus two possible developmental paths for Orange, and one suspects that the rush to autonomy was precipitated by a desire to forestall the Wagga Wagga option. As it happened, the above timetable for OAC proved to be rather ambitious, and the newly constituted Advisory Council did not meet until the very end of the triennium, in 1978. In the next chapter, we examine this phase of the college's life.

Chapter 2: Towards corporate status (1978–1984)

► *College Librarian Des Stewart (left) and College Secretary Don Foster enjoy a round of golf on campus in the early 1980s.*

Growth was clearly an important factor in any move towards corporate status of the College, and it was being frustrated in its attempts to reach a "critical mass". The Higher Education Board rejected early attempts to introduce an Associate Diploma in Farm Secretarial Studies, and this course did not enrol students until 1977. At last the College could appeal to rural women, with a course which could be characterised as the female equivalent of the Associate Diploma in Farm Management. (A similar thing happened on the sporting field too, with the men playing rugby union, while the women took up hockey.) In a gesture acknowledging the importance of this, the vote of thanks to the guest speaker at the graduation ceremony on 30 March 1979 was moved by Miss Maryan MacKinnon, one of the 22 "Women Pioneers" who took out the ADFSS at the ceremony. (Incidentally, the occasional address was delivered by Senator John Carrick, the Federal Minister for Education, yet again confirming the significance of both federal and state politics in the College's perception of things. Before 1982, when the graduation ceremony was addressed by F.M. Davidson, the President of the National Farmers' Federation, the occasional addresses at all the graduation ceremonies, with one exception, 1977, when the speaker was Ron Parry, the head of the NSW Higher Education Board, were delivered by members of Federal or State Cabinet.)

The first meeting of the OAC Advisory Council, which took place on 14 April 1978, dealt with several aspects of the College's sometimes fraught relationship with other players in the field of higher education. In response to pressure from the NSW Higher Education Board, the Council moved to play its part in the Joint Planning Committee set up between Mitchell and Orange, and chose two members of council, and two staff representatives, to sit on this committee. The delegates were as follows:

Council members: Len Pockley, B.W. Maundrell

Staff members: Robert Napier, Rodney Tonkin

The composition of this Planning Committee was designed to ensure parity between the two institutions, with two council members and staff members from each institution, and an independent chairman.

Planning for the future was very much on the agenda here, as the council also considered the draft of a five-year plan for course development to be submitted to the HEB, and the Chairman Len Pockley reaffirmed the notion "that this College is traditionally business management orientated rather than technology orientated". At stake was the

original concept of the College, which it was felt may not survive the push towards rationalisation, based on a view that an agricultural college should combine all aspects of the field under its roof. The HEB's insistence on co-operation with Bathurst thus represented a threat, rather than an opportunity, and it was clear that Orange would only be dragged reluctantly to any altar.

As an arm of the Department of Agriculture, of course, OAC did not control its own destiny. Its Council could truly be said to be "advisory", because it had no real authority. In this respect, at least, the experience at Orange mirrored that of the CAE sector as a whole, which never satisfactorily found a happy middle course between the TAFE model (separate colleges coming under the central authority of a state Department of Education), and the traditional university (autonomous institutions subject only to the broad parameters set out in enabling legislation of the relevant state parliament). Many of the CAEs were based on long-standing Teachers' Colleges or Agricultural Colleges, and even when reconstituted as Colleges of Advanced Education, still had to have all their courses approved by the Higher Education Board. During the period we

► *Students in the College dining room in the late 1970s. When the College opened in mid-1973, the kitchen and dining room were not finished. Students had to dine at a local hotel for a couple of weeks while work was completed.*

are now discussing, OAC was looking towards the achievement of corporate status, and hence we find the Council asking the Principal to draft a working paper "which sets out how best the Advisory Council can achieve its objectives of serving the College". By the middle of 1978, the HEB had approved the terms of reference of the proposed Joint Planning Committee with Bathurst, and confirmed its composition. One bullet, at least, had been dodged, but there were still difficulties related to the need for external vetting of the College's planning. At its meeting in August, the Advisory Board established a committee to oversee the development of the College towards corporate status, with the following membership:

> Len Pockley, Robert Napier, Dr R.B. Dun, Dr F.C. Butler, Prof J.L. Dillon and Associate Professor F.C. Crofts.

As far as courses were concerned, the HEB knocked back a proposal for a Certificate in Horse Management to be introduced in 1979, and the Council pondered the possibility of running something in collaboration with TAFE, or modifying the existing Associate Diploma in Farm Management to include a horse strand. Here was yet one more example of the difficulty of finding a suitable compromise between competing priorities. As the Council itself noted (9 June 1978), during a discussion of the draft five-year plan, "...sight of the original concept of award levels in CAEs being mainly UG2 has tended to become lost over the past several years. This College needs to decide whether the original concept should be followed or whether College courses follow the drift to UG1 level".

Some explanation may be in order here. The UG2 level meant qualifications at the Diploma level, typically awarded after three years full-time study (for example, the old Diploma of Teaching, or Dip. Teach., at that time the main qualification for the NSW school teaching service). UG1 meant study towards a degree (taking three or more years, depending on the award), while UG3 denoted an Associate Diploma (typically involving two years of full-time study). In a competitive job market, driven by ideas of status, there were pressures to convert associate diplomas into diplomas, and diplomas into degrees. To attract students, institutions felt the need to restructure their courses, so that they could offer at least the possibility of obtaining a degree. In teaching, for example, Diplomas of Teaching finally gave way to Bachelors of Education, and former diplomates were offered conversion courses to allow them to upgrade their old qualifications. This was just one example of the "drift to UG1 level" referred to above, and it is hardly surprising that the OAC Advisory Council

put on its agenda at this time a proposal for a Bachelor of Agricultural Commerce degree. Even given a clear preference on Council for maintenance of the "original concept", there was at least a recognition that this may not be politic or expedient.

To round out the picture here, the Council was looking at a number of other possible courses, including a proposal from Mitchell CAE to offer a course in nurse education on the OAC campus; an Associate Diploma in Environmental Control, and a postgraduate qualification in accounting. The latter two would be operated jointly with Bathurst, and provide test cases for joint ventures with Mitchell. At the very least, they would head off any suggestion that Orange was dragging the chain in this area. Looking in the other direction, the Council discussed making the Associate Diploma in Farm Secretarial Studies available by external study, and allowing students to complete the typing component through TAFE colleges.

There was definite pressure to grow, since target enrolments for 1979 amounted to 85 in the Farm Management course, and 55 in Secretarial Studies. New Certificate courses in Farm Office Practice and Horse Management were expected to attract 40 and 33 students respectively. Not all these were full-time, of course, and in terms of EFTS (or Equivalent Full Time Students), the Advisory Council was told that a figure of 200 for 1980 was at least "possible". Since funding was driven by EFTS, the number had to be as large as possible, to stave off questions as to the viability of courses and institutions, and resist pressure to amalgamate. The other problem was that certificate courses were bucking the trend we have already noted in the CAE sector towards higher levels of award. After all, certificates were the bread and butter of Technical and Further Education, and it would not do for a CAE to rely too much on certificate courses to boost its student load.

In 1979, the proposal for a joint course with Bathurst on Environmental Control firmed up, with the OAC Advisory Council adopting a resolution that "contractual arrangements between the two institutions are desirable for joint courses...with an independent arbiter to resolve problems which cannot be resolved by the two institutions". *(Meeting 25 May 1979.)* At that time, the College was also exploring "areas of mutual interest" with Hawkesbury Agricultural College, an initiative which led to the joint offering of a horse course, and discussing the establishment of a horticultural unit. Spring semester that year saw the initial enrolment of 46 external mode students in the Associate Diploma of Farm Secretarial Studies, and the HEB granted a sum of $30,000 towards upgrading laboratory and library facilities at Bathurst to enable enrolments in the Associate

◂ *A Farm Secretarial Studies class during the late 1970s, before personal computers became generally available.*

Diploma in Environmental Control in 1980.

By November 1979, the committee charged with steering the college towards autonomy was advocating a four-year time-frame, a decision reflected in the recommendation to dissolve OAC's Advisory Council, and reconstitute it (with the same membership) as an Interim Council of the projected new institution. In May 1979, the NSW Ministers of Agriculture and Education had agreed in principle to a transfer of responsibility for the College from Agriculture to Education, under the guidance of a Consultative Committee. When this Committee recommended that the transfer take effect on 1 July 1980, the new Education Minister, Paul Landa, wrote to his colleague Jack Hallam to propose that the transfer be deferred, on the grounds that a recent decision to establish an Education Commission "could well make it inappropriate for the Ministry to accept administrative responsibility for the College at this stage". This was a setback for the College, because the move to Education had been intended to get over federal objections to a CAE being attached to a Department of Agriculture. (And, after all, Canberra was the main source of funds.)

Tactically, Orange needed to move quickly, since it was unlikely to survive

long in limbo. Ministerial briefing notes prepared by the Director-General of Agriculture, G.H. Knowles, in September, argue that even if the Tertiary Education Commission "does not like CAEs being attached to Departments other than Education", it would "probably wear [this situation] in the short term". Hence the need for speed. These briefing notes also make a case for increased funding for Orange, even at the expense of other institutions:

> To obtain more funds from the NSW share of the Commission Grant, other Colleges of Advanced Education may suffer a reduction in their allocations.
>
> Some CAEs, particularly those offering teacher training such as Mitchell College at Bathurst and Goulburn College, are not attracting their full quotas of students.
>
> Orange may be small, but "projections of student numbers show sound potential for growth. There appears to be no shortage of students. Demand for admission is high". Lest this be not clear enough, the notes include the explicit statement that "amalgamating Orange with Mitchell or some other CAE is not an acceptable alternative".

Agriculture's view was clear, but it still had to negotiate its way around a number of obstacles. While Len Pockley and Robert Napier were doing the rounds of Canberra (for example, meeting the Federal Education Minister, Wal Fife, on 18 September, to argue for increased funding for OAC), senior officers of the department were dealing with the HEB. On 1 October, Jack Hallam, Fred Butler and F.S. Benecke (Chief of the Division of Extension Services, NSW Department of Agriculture) met the Education Minister, Paul Landa, and Ron Parry (Chairman, Higher Education Board), for a ministerial level discussion on the future of OAC. In his notes of this meeting, Benecke summarises the wins and losses, albeit in anodyne officialese. Following the representations from the Agriculture people, the Minister for Education expressed himself as:

- being impressed by what he had seen of OAC and its staff, particularly the Principal, Mr Robert Napier;
- being supportive of the attainment of Orange College of autonomy;
- being disinclined to endorse amalgamation with an 'unsympathetic' partner such as Mitchell CAE;
- seeing greater merit in a form of affiliation with a College (like Hawkesbury Agricultural College) having more compatible and closer kindred interests and an empathy of educational philosophy;
- seeing a need to further reduce the relatively high cost per effective [sic] full-time student;

- being inclined to accept that size per se should not be the sole determinant of autonomy;
- being agreeable to the costs of operation and funding considerations being discussed jointly by Dr Butler and me and Mr Parry..."

The discussion mooted in this last point took place on 13 October 1979, and in his notes on this subsequent meeting, Benecke points out that although the HEB "will not support complete autonomy for OAC" (as this "would be inconsistent with the main thrust of rationalising and consolidating higher education institutions"), it would "not press for amalgamation of Orange with another College, nor [for] any formal union between Orange College and Mitchell CAE". The most likely future for Orange seemed to be "some form of association with Hawkesbury Agricultural College". An association with a larger College would make it possible to "broaden Orange's academic capacity so that it may better fulfil the role of a College of Advanced Education". The officers proposed a target date of 1 January 1982 "for completion of the tasks associated with bringing Orange into some kind of union with a larger College of Advanced Education", and proposed the following sequence of events:

► *The first class of graduates for the Associate Diploma in Farm Secretarial Studies, following the College graduation ceremony on Friday 30 March, 1979.*

- Establish a Board of Management at Orange;
- Give the Board of Management time to discuss the College's future;
- Establish contact with a council of Hawkesbury Agricultural College if that is the Board of Management's wish.

Agriculture clearly had some work to do, but had gained some vital concessions. The situation had broader political ramifications, with a Labor government needing to establish its credentials in the bush. The Livestock and Grain Producers' Association of NSW had weighed into the argument on 4 September, with a letter to the Premier, Neville Wran, in which it claimed that "undue delays in the College's programme to achieve autonomy...could discourage prospective students and thus undermine the ability of the College to remain ahead of, or even meet, the requirements of its development schedule". Although autonomy was still over three years away, the government calculated that speedy replacement of the Advisory Council by a new Board of Management would placate the LGPA and other rural advocates.

The new Board of Management had its first meeting on 26 March, 1981, and

► *Farm Management lecturer Mal Lukins (right) addresses a group of external students from the Farm Management course. This photo was taken outside the College Machinery Shed in the early 1980s.*

on the following day Jack Hallam delivered the Occasional Address at the College's graduation ceremony.

Short courses

By 1981 the situation of so-called Short Courses had become worthy of attention, and in May a committee was appointed to prepare a discussion paper on short courses for submission to the next faculty meeting. As a glance at the Short Course programme for 1981 demonstrates, there was certainly a need to sort out the thinking behind these courses, given the lack of obvious rationale behind the variety of offerings. The Residential Horse Stud Breeding and Management School (July 6–9) certainly seems to fit into the management focus of the College, as does the Bankers Short Course on Rural Finance and Farm Management (July 19–24). The same cannot be said of the Residential Horse Shoeing Seminar (July 4–5), and it is not surprising that the committee should note in its recommendations that OAC "has a primary 'management' focus to its education activities rather than a strongly technical focus....Short course programmes...should at least reflect this emphasis despite the increased staff preparation commitments that are often needed to present integrative management concepts". The question is, do we simply leave the field open to anyone, either on staff or from outside, to mount a short course, or do we attempt to frame an integrated programme of courses in accord with a more or less explicit philosophy. As the committee recognised, the first approach can lead to "insufficient attention to detail", since no-one is taking overall responsibility for the programme. A number of specific problems were cited, including recurrent heating failure in the lecture rooms during the Australian Stockhorse Conference in July 1980, leaks in the portable classrooms used for the 1980 Central West Beef Seminar, and the fact that participants in the Hobby Farm Short Course in May 1981 found it difficult to find their way between the different college venues. In the view of the committee, the situation required appointment of a co-ordinator, responsible for the organisation and monitoring of the courses, as was the case at Mitchell CAE, "where a specialist Short Course organiser is involved and 'value for money' appears evident". The rationale for short courses was clear enough. They fostered links with the industry, and kept the College in the public eye by bringing potential students and supporters onto the campus. However, they also added to the burdens of a relatively small institution, struggling to make its mark. It was clear that a College which purported to teach management skills could not be found wanting in this area.

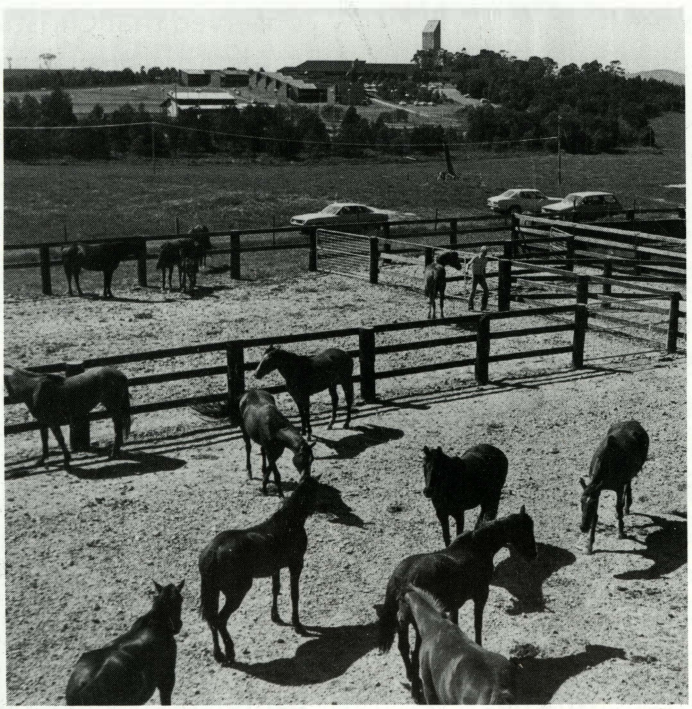
The crisis of 1982

The events of 1982 bring into sharp focus the interactions between state and federal governments, political parties, rural advocates and educational bureaucracy which had a profound impact on so much that happened at Orange. On the 19 August, *The Land* newspaper published a report of an imminent merger between Orange Agricultural College and Mitchell College of Advanced Education. This new threat to Orange's independence had emerged from the innocuously named "Review of Commonwealth Functions" in 1981 (popularly referred to in the press as Malcolm Fraser's "Razor Gang"). According to the government, fiscal responsibility demanded that no sector of Commonwealth expenditure should escape scrutiny, but to the defenders of Orange, this seemed tantamount to an act of betrayal – after all, was not Malcolm Fraser (the Prime Minister) himself a grazier, even if he was a Liberal, and was not the Country Party well represented in the Cabinet? What would the class of 1975, the "Pioneers" who had cheered the sacking of the Whitlam Government, and warmly congratulated Sandy MacKenzie on his election to the House of Representatives as the member for Calare, have made of this?

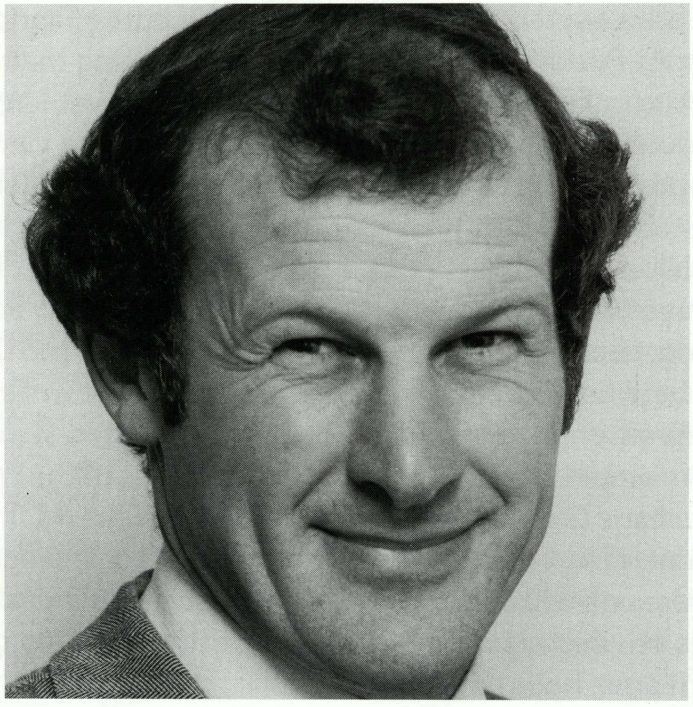
In the case of Orange, the Commonwealth's Tertiary Education Commission was the body charged with formulation of recommendations. In its Report for the 1982–84 triennium, it recommended that Orange's recurrent funding should be continued in 1982, but that any decision to extend funding beyond that should await the outcome of a review by the Advanced Education Council. In its turn, the AEC proposed an amalgamation between Orange and Mitchell, "in a way which would maintain the educational philosophy of the agricultural courses and preserve the close links which the existing College enjoys with the rural community". A grudging extension of funding for 1983, in order to allow time for the NSW Government to pass enabling legislation, would hardly have appeased the Board of Management of OAC, given that this extension depended on "urgent" pursuit of consolidation arrangements, culminating in implementation "no later than 1 January 1984". Thus it seemed that the College may not survive much beyond its 10th anniversary.

Not that it would go down without a fight. In terms of strategy, it was necessary to have a fall-back position, in case complete independence proved impossible to maintain. A discussion paper prepared by Len Pockley in August considered the merits and demerits of some form of "semi-autonomy" involving the two most likely candidates, Mitchell CAE and Hawkesbury Agricultural

College. Did Mitchell have anything in its favour? Well, perhaps. As Pockley commented, "whilst Mitchell at present has no agricultural industry involvement or philosophy, that is probably not a disadvantage in that it would be receptive to the present OAC philosophy, with no conflict of ideas". And yet, following a brief review of the progress of co-operative endeavour between the two colleges, there is a definite change of tack: "A major problem would appear to be that the Mitchell College Council and staff have no knowledge of agriculture and the industry and are unlikely to be perceptive of changes in industry and in requirements of agricultural education." It is not surprising that if Mitchell's lack of previous involvement in agricultural education can be viewed as either a plus or a minus, then when it comes to Hawkesbury it is as though we have simply flipped the coin. After referring to the joint course in Horse Management offered by HAC and OAC, Pockley comments that while both colleges share a common interest in agriculture, "the philosophies of the two are significantly different, with HAC more involved in the training of technologists in agriculture and associated industries, whereas OAC is primarily motivated to training farm



◂ *The College offered a range of short courses from the late 1970s, including various horse courses. An equine management program was introduced during the 1980s. This early photograph of the horse unit clearly shows the College in the background.*



► *Robert Napier was OAC's founding Lecturer in Farm Management. He was appointed Principal in 1976, following the resignation of Sandy MacKenzie to pursue a career in federal politics, and held this position until 1991.*

decision makers and administrators".

The pluses and minuses, though, are never made to confront each other, and hence do not cancel out, but remain ready for use, to be invoked according to need. They form part of a stock of arguments which can be drawn on as occasion demands. Bathurst knows nothing about agriculture (bad), but if we are forced to parley with them then we would not expect any preconceived resistance to our ideas (good). Hawkesbury, on the other hand, shares our interest in agriculture (good), but has a different educational philosophy which lacks a farm management focus (bad). This fluidity should not surprise anyone who has observed that Christians, for example, sometimes display a more benign attitude towards atheists than towards fellow religionists of a different denomination. It all depends on circumstances. In the event, as we shall see, Orange looked further afield, to the association between Lincoln College and the University of Canterbury in New Zealand as its preferred model, and sought information from that source as part of its intense lobbying effort.

This emphasis on Lincoln stemmed from a visit to New Zealand by the Principal, Robert Napier, in May 1978. In his report on that visit, Napier commented that Lincoln's operation of a

"multi-level programme is of particular interest to Orange Agricultural College as plans for the future include one-year certificate courses as well as three-year diplomas, post-graduate diplomas and possibly degrees". The immediate occasion of the visit was Lincoln's centennial celebrations, and its experience loomed large in Robert Napier's vision of OAC's future. Its links with the University of Canterbury suggested one possible model of association with a larger institution. Lincoln's governing council had some representation from the parent university, but the College was funded separately, and it had its own professorial board.

The article in *The Land* to which I have already referred relied on a statement by Des Fooks, the Secretary of the Advanced Education Council, who had visited the Orange Campus in December 1981 as member of an official AEC party led by its chairman Dr. Houston. In this article, Des Fooks was quoted as the source of news that "a decision to amalgamate the Orange Agricultural College with the Mitchell College of Advanced Education at Bathurst may be made in the next three weeks". The stated rationale for such a move was "to streamline operations to get a greater education output from Orange and Mitchell for similar expenditure". Fooks was quoted as saying that Mitchell CAE "has a large business management school with computers, and there is the potential to expand the Orange courses by tapping into Mitchell". Orange, for its part, had the capacity to "take more students and... offer Mitchell courses through the Orange campus".

Such candour was not welcomed by the interested parties. For its part, Hawkesbury felt that its claims had been ignored. On 25 August 1982, Sir William Vines, the Chairman of Hawkesbury's Council, wrote to the NSW Ministers of Agriculture and Education, and the Federal Minister of Education, to argue that if Orange were to be forced into a merger, then "all possible options...should be thoroughly investigated". This was treading a fine line, and when Vines wrote to Len Pockley on 25 October to seek discussions with Orange, enclosing a copy of his August letter, he included a 'With Compliments' slip with the handwritten note: "As you will see – we have sought in no way to embarrass Orange." Vines' letter of 25 August included the following disclaimer:

> Understandably, Orange Agricultural College has not brought forward proposals for amalgamation with Hawkesbury or any other College because it continues to argue exclusively for free-standing status. We fully understand and respect Orange Agricultural College's position in the matter.

In other words, we are not pursuing a takeover, but simply want to have a seat at the table in case your hand is forced. He would have found it hard to convince Pockley, who noted on 27 August that:

> Both Mitchell College and Hawkesbury have been lobbying for what amounts to take overs, and it appears to be well recognised by Canberra that these bids are more motivated for the welfare of the maker of the bid than for any desire to do the right thing for OAC.

Mitchell, for its part, had put forward a proposal for a "Western NSW Institute of Higher Education". *(Document prepared by E.A.B. Phillips, Principal, Mitchell CAE, dated 21 July 1982.)* According to this plan, Mitchell and Orange would form the two constituent bodies of the Institute, under the governance of a single council. "This implies," continues the document, "that the current Mitchell Council and Orange Board of Management would be wound up – though the new Council and its Committees might be expected to retain a number of the present members of the two bodies." Thus, Orange would lose its governing body, and any specific direction and advocacy on its behalf be reduced to the level of a committee reporting to the Council of the new Institute. For Pockley, this amounted to heresy, and in a marginal note he asked, "Why not each retain a Board of Management under the Council, even if a smaller Board?" The proposed staffing arrangements also chipped away at OAC's independence. There was to be an Institute Director, responsible to the Council, and two campus principals, one each for Bathurst and Orange. The Principal of Mitchell College, though, would also assume the title of Deputy Director, clearly establishing the seniority of the Bathurst campus. Pockley argued that if a Deputy Director were required, then he or she could be appointed by the Council – it should not be set in concrete that the Principal of Mitchell would automatically assume the role.

Finally, Orange was not likely to be happy with central control of academic process and admissions. It simply would not do to have only one Academic Board, and one Admissions Committee. We have already seen how admissions policy at Orange stressed the uniqueness of education in farm management, and insisted that special admissions procedures were required in order to obtain the most appropriate students. Acceptance of the Mitchell proposal would inevitably put pressure on Orange to bring its admissions process into line with the CAE sector generally, where students for most courses were selected on the basis of performance in the HSC.

On the whole, then, Len Pockley's judgment of the motives of Mitchell was justified, although there is no basis for

◄ *A tree planting ceremony was held in the grounds of the College in November 1983, to mark OAC's tenth anniversary. Taking part were Jane Pockley (partly obscured by the tree), Dee Napier, the wife of the Principal, Robert Napier (doing the planting), and Betty Wrigley, the wife of the Deputy Chairman of the Board, Peter Wrigley.*

► *Orange Agricultural College's last Board of Management, pictured in November 1983. They are, standing from left: G Randall, Dougall Grist, Don Foster, Owen Carter, Robert Napier, Peter Lawson, Max Walters, Ken Bridge and Rodney Tonkin; sitting: Jock Fletcher, Len Pockley, Beryl Ingold, Fred Butler, Peter Wrigley and Bill Coghlan. (Absent were D Hughes, Don McDonald and Dudley Roth.)*

any accusation of dealing in bad faith. One could hardly expect the Principal of Mitchell CAE to have anything other than the interests of his own institution uppermost in his mind, and if he could sell the idea that there may be some advantages for Orange in his proposals as well, then so much the better. Hence the arguments based on economies of scale, and the alleged benefits of rationalisation, down to the level of detail in *The Land* article (in which it was suggested that Orange could use Mitchell's computers, and tap into its business management expertise). Len Pockley, and others, were not buying this happy, win-win scenario, but one cannot really blame Bathurst for trying!

The situation with Hawkesbury was somewhat different, even if Pockley's first impulse was to tar it with the same brush. It should be noted that, at least in the opinion of Fred Butler, "it would be most unfair to conclude that [Hawkesbury] has pursued a take-over at all costs approach". *(Letter to Len Pockley, 6 September 1982.)* Butler goes on to suggest that Hawkesbury's position is pretty much as stated by Bill Vines in the letter quoted above, concluding that "Hawkesbury understands and respects the position that Orange itself has seen fit

► *Attending the College's tenth anniversary celebrations on 20 November 1983 were, from left: Fred Butler, Austin Johnson, Hugh Ross, NSW Minister for Agricutlure Jack Hallam and Len Pockley.*

to adopt, namely one of continuing...to argue exclusively for independence and autonomy". In his own quiet way, Butler hints at the pitfalls of this approach. If the ultimate decision does not go its way, then Orange may be left confused and disorganised unless it has already given some thought to a preferred fall-back position. Also complicating relations with Hawkesbury was the fact that its Assistant Principal, Owen Carter, was on OAC's Board of Management. On 2 September 1982, he wrote to Len Pockley, quite reasonably pointing out that "as a senior staff member of one of the Colleges you referred to as lobbying for amalgamation, and a member of the Orange Board of Management", it seemed important for him to document his own position. Although he continued to support the stand-alone policy of the College, he outlined a number of reasons for becoming "increasingly uneasy about how realistic this policy is". The rest of the letter considers a number of points said to be in favour of amalgamation with Hawkesbury, and attempts to counter objections to Hawkesbury based on its different educational philosophy with the following comment: "Diversity in education can be a very healthy and positive thing which contributes to educational effectiveness" (attempting to turn what counts as a "bad" for Pockley into a "good"). Like Butler, he suggests that OAC "must carefully examine all possible options for association/ amalgamation with other institutions/ organisations in case they need to make a decision at relatively short notice".

To round out this aspect of the story, at its meeting on 12 November 1982, the OAC Board of Management formally considered Bill Vines' letter, and concluded that "the time was inopportune for the re-opening" of discussions with Hawkesbury, on the grounds that "the issue of whether the College is to retain an entirely independent status is still undetermined", and agreement about the criteria to be satisfied in any association with another institution had to be reached before any thought was given as to which institution may be involved. *(Letter to Bill Vines, 14 November 1982.)* Hawkesbury, then, had been rebuffed, and the main game was still to avoid amalgamation.

Another consideration as far as Hawkesbury was concerned was that its relationship with Orange had soured following problems with the jointly offered horse course. In February 1982, Len Pockley formally stated his concern that "sound logical planning of the development of the Horse Unit was not evident" and insisted that similar proposals in the future should only proceed on the basis of "full documentation". Student dissatisfaction with the course came to a head in March,

and in Owen Carter's view, this stemmed at least partly from a habit of "point-scoring" by the staff of both colleges, and a lack of communication with students, who complained loudly about the "heaps of work they had to get through". The June meeting of the Board had to deal with the unpalatable fact that of the 12 students in the course, only two had passed so far with a clear record. It may very well have been the case, as Rodney Tonkin argued, that the Higher Education Board had encouraged the two colleges involved to begin the course prematurely, but subsequent experiences with joint course offerings involving Mitchell CAE suggest that there was never much enthusiasm on the ground for them.

But if the overtures from Hawkesbury were rejected, it made it even more important to maintain the lobbying effort at government level (both state and federal). On 26 August, Len Pockley and OAC's Principal, Robert Napier, visited Canberra to discuss the issue with the Education Minister, Senator Peter Baume. In his notes on this meeting, Pockley comments that "although the Minister gave some lip service to the special nature of such an agricultural college [as OAC], he has no empathy for agriculture and no real understanding, at this stage, of many of the issues involved". For Pockley, the whole thing was a battle against ignorance and apathy, making it necessary to forge alliances with like-minded people, and keep hammering the message in whatever arena presented itself. If Peter Baume lacked the necessary understanding of the situation, then by hook or by crook it must be drummed into him. Some of the frustration attendant on this process can be felt in the following excerpt from Len Pockley's notes:

> [Senator Baume] had obviously not seriously considered an association with another institution that was not an amalgamation...After discussion of another form of association (such as Lincoln College – University of Canterbury)...he asked that the College should start to prepare a proposal for such a scheme...It was pointed out that the College has never been asked formally to consider such proposals, although there had been some personal inputs. [Senator Baume] stated quite clearly that he wanted the College to prepare its own proposals. The procedural question as to how they were to be submitted was not clarified.

And so the wheels turn, in circles perhaps, but nevertheless they turn. Not quite the Circumlocution Office of Dickens' Little Dorrit, but getting close. In any case, Len Pockley was not discouraged, and the following day fired off a short letter to the Minister, in which he urged him to "give due consideration to some of the information in the papers we left with you...which time did not permit us to

discuss". I cannot help wondering, though, how the Senator would have taken Len Pockley's concluding announcement that he would "start at once to formulate a proposal for a form of association with another institution that would be most acceptable to the College should it be unable to retain its full independence". I suspect he may not have been totally overjoyed at the prospect of further communication from that quarter.

In a press release on 9 September 1982, Sandy MacKenzie laid the blame for the threats to Orange squarely at the feet of the "higher education bureaucrats" in Canberra. As the Country Party member for Calare he was in a difficult position, open to attacks from the Labor opposition that his own party had sold Orange out. The following week he announced that he would cross the floor to vote against any legislation which enforced amalgamation of OAC and Mitchell. Labor was soon on the scene, as its candidate for Calare, David Simmons, saw an opportunity to gain political capital. At the beginning of October, he accompanied John Dawkins, Labor's Shadow Minister for Education, on a visit to the campus, and put out a press release opening with the ringing declaration that "Country Party interests were prepared to

◂ *Orange Agricutural College staff in 1982.*

see the Orange Agricultural College 'stabbed in the back' for no apparent educational or financial reasons". Of course in hindsight all this can be seen as mere political posturing, a volley in the sham warfare of party politics indulged in by both sides. And yet it would be incorrect to dismiss it as of no consequence to the supposed "real" history of the events. The state of play in Canberra (and in Sydney), in the face of impending elections, will obviously materially affect the terms in which debate is couched, and for all that we may regard such matters as an unwarranted intrusion, they simply will not go away. We need to note that John Dawkins, and the local Labor man, David Simmons, had become players in this drama, backing up shots in a paper war with personal visits. Dawkins, in a telex message to Simmons, promised that in the event of a Labor victory at the next federal election, the incoming government "would call a halt" to any amalgamation, and argued that "when amalgamations are forced on unwilling partners the damage can be immense and can often outweigh any imagined benefits".

The following year, as we know, Labor did win the federal election, and John Dawkins became the Minister for Education in the first Hawke Government. He therefore continued to play a prominent role, both in the fate of Orange Agricultural College, and in that of the higher education sector generally, as his reforms of the late 1980s dismantled the "binary system" of universities and CAEs, and led to a reintroduction of tuition fees (the Higher Education Contribution Scheme). This will, of course, provide the theme of a later chapter of our history, but it is interesting to see the earlier manifestations of this activist spirit.

For now, we find Len Pockley having to deal with this new development. On 23 September 1982 he wrote to Dawkins, warmly welcoming his interest in the College, but gently chiding him at the same time ("from your telex I realise that you are not fully informed about several aspects") and offering to come to Canberra for a meeting. It may be necessary to deal with an old foe, at the same time as warning old allies of the danger. As Pockley put it in a letter to Country Party MP Ralph Hunt on 15 November:

> I believe [the amalgamation issue] has become significant electorally both in a number of marginal government electorates and more importantly for the Senate vote. Like it or not the opposition have got hold of it and are starting to use it.

Dealing with Labor federally may have been anathema, but in a pattern characteristic of Australian politics, Pockley, and through him the Board of Management, had a much closer

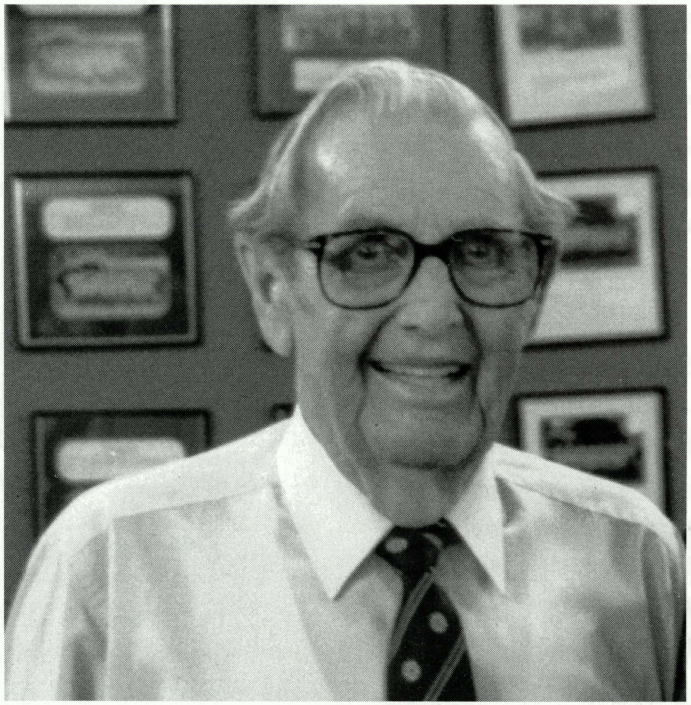
relationship with State Labor Party ministers in Sydney, particularly the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Jack Hallam. As part of the lobbying effort, Len Pockley had sent a number of documents about OAC to Hallam, and at the end of October received a reply which stated:

> I should like to reaffirm my view that either the College will become fully autonomous or will develop acceptable affiliation arrangements with another body or bodies which will ensure its continued viability, a high degree of independence, and the integrity of its educational programmes. I am not prepared to accept an amalgamation with another institution which compromises in any way the College's standing with the rural community. *(Letter to Len Pockley, 28 October 1982.)*

For Pockley, this was more like it. On 15 November he wrote to Hallam, telling him that among other things he had shown his recent letter to the Board of Management, and that in addition "some 200 parents of students who visited the College last weekend are now aware of your support". Even more telling of the close relationship between OAC and the Department, was Len Pockley's effort to involve Jack Hallam in the 1983 graduation ceremony (this took place on 18 March). As early as 21 September, he wrote to Hallam to explain that although there would be "likely benefits" from arranging for Peter Baume to give the occasional address, he hoped that "political protocol, of which I am ignorant", would allow Hallam to attend. The protocol problem referred to here, of course, was that of using the same ceremony to officially recognise the contribution of a state Labor minister, when the guest speaker was a federal Liberal. Pockley felt that Hallam's contribution amounted to more than just paying lip service, and wrote:

> This may be the last graduation day under your ministry and I would very much like to have the opportunity to publicly recognise the great support that you have given the College and what this has meant to rural industry.

Behind the niceties of ceremonial protocol lie substantial issues. Although the Federal Government had assumed primary responsibility for funding higher education, universities and CAEs were established by state government legislation. This division of responsibility may have its good points, although this is not the place to rehearse the ins and outs of the Australian Constitution, but in the present case it provided ample opportunity for evasion and stonewalling. As an example, consider the following from a letter from Peter Baume to Len Pockley (in his capacity as Chairman of the Board of Management), dated 11 November 1982:



► *The late Don Craig had a long involvement in Orange Agricultural College, having started as one of the founding staff members in 1973. After retiring from the teaching staff on the College farm in 1986, Mr Craig took up the position of part-time Co-ordinator for the College's newly reconstituted Student Union. He died in early 2004.*

> In considering the proposals put forward by the Board of Management I cannot lose sight of the fact that the provision of advanced education is primarily a state responsibility; decisions on future arrangements for the College are therefore matters for the State Government.

Yes, legalistically and strictly the case, in the sense that advanced education is "provided for" in terms set out by state government legislation, and courses are approved by the NSW Higher Education Board. Not true, if one takes into account the significance of federal funding, and the tendency to make funding conditional on achieving federally imposed benchmarks (such as amalgamation). There was also little joy coming from the direction of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission.

One can perhaps sympathise with Len Pockley's frustration, which he vented in the following way in the course of a long letter to Ralph Hunt, whom Pockley elsewhere described as "the man likely to recognise the problem and with enough guts to have a go to get something done":

> I have had discussions with Senator Baume on the matter and there is a crazy stalemate. He says he will be guided by the advice of the Tertiary Education Commission and AEC. The Chairman of AEC [Stuart Houston]

> states he will make no recommendation to the Minister that is not entirely within the overall blanket government policy. How do we ever get a re-evaluation?

Crazy indeed, since not even the lobbying efforts of the Livestock and Grain Producers' Association (LGPA) and the National Farmers' Federation could convince the Federal Government to see Orange as a special case. Rural industry wanted "its" college, while the logic of its establishment as a College of Advanced Education entailed that it conform to benchmarks determined for the whole sector. In the present case, we can see the clash of two fundamentally different perspectives, a funding model based on an assumption of uniformity, at loggerheads with a model that stresses the particularity of an association with a given industry. In some situations this problem has been solved by resort to private funding (as in the case of Marcus Oldham College in Victoria), and we noted earlier that Sandy MacKenzie had been thinking along these lines while still pursuing higher degree research at the University of New England.

Orange, though, grew out of initiatives by senior administrators in the NSW Department of Agriculture, such as Fred Butler, who saw this as an appropriate situation for government leadership. For good or ill, then, Orange Agricultural College was always seen as part of a public strategy for assisting rural industry.

This theme of conflict between what I would label as generalist and particularist conceptions of advanced education in rural management, provides a leitmotif of our story. I have included the following extended quotation from Len Pockley's letter to Ralph Hunt of 15 November 1982, since it is a classic particularist argument:

> There were good reasons for excluding Orange from the original "razor gang" list for amalgamation. It appears that since then they have been tacked on the list more for conformity to an overall policy than for logic. The same policy may have been desirable for teacher training and polytechnic type colleges but not it would seem the world over for specialist ag. colleges.
>
> Whilst I have said all this to Senator Baume, I don't think he understands rural industry and people. I have a few names in mind of your Cabinet colleagues who I believe would be supportive...I have spoken briefly with Doug Anthony [Country Party Leader and Deputy Prime Minister] some time ago, when he floated the idea of making Orange like the Maritime College – direct[ly] Commonwealth funded in view of 24% of students coming from interstate.

Throughout we see the appeal to special circumstances, and the desire to latch on

to anything which might justify removing Orange from the dictates of general higher education policy. For its part, the Board of Management retained its confidence in the judgment of Len Pockley, and in May 1983 endorsed his conduct of negotiations with relevant politicians and senior officials at both state and federal level (including the Minister for Education in the new Hawke Labor Government, Senator Susan Ryan). Members of the Board, though, did adopt a resolution noting that they shared the concern of the staff about where the College was heading, and asking that "all appropriate steps be taken to resolve the uncertainty".

This uncertainty was reflected in a variety of ways, with disquiet about a number of worrying trends. A particular sore point was the state of external study, which although it had never been intended as a major College activity, had become a significant contributor to its student load figures. By 30 April 1983, the College enrolment stood at 340 EFTS, and given possible rates of attrition, it was anticipated that this figure may drop to 310. At its meeting in May, the Executive noted that "to average 340 for the year, a Spring Semester intake of 30 EFTS is required, or 60 external students", clearly

► *Professor John Chudleigh joined OAC as a lecturer in the mid-1970s. He went on to serve as Acting Principal of OAC-UNE from 1991–1992, Principal of OAC-UNE from 1992–1994, Acting Principal of OAC-University of Sydney from 1994–1996, and Principal of OAC-University of Sydney from 1996–2000.*

► *Horticulture Lecturer Neil Jones (kneeling, right) with some external students, during a residential school tutorial at the College.*

indicating that external students had become very much part of the College's growth strategy. By the end of the year, though, there were obvious signs that this growth might have come at a cost, given student dissatisfaction with the quality of the course materials and the administrative service. On 20 December, a memo from John Chudleigh, chair of the Academic Executive, noted that feedback from students suggested that external studies had reached a "critical stage":

> Our material has been classed as mediocre, with some badly written material, assignment return time is very bad as highlighted by retention rates in Spring Semester 1983 and lateness of material has created a most unfavourable impression with many external students.

To solve these problems, the academics proposed that the College create a full-time lecturing position in Instructional Design, and although the executive rejected this proposal, largely on the grounds of cost, it did take steps to shore up this beleaguered area. The ideas floated at this time included a secondment for six months from one of the tertiary institutions experienced in distance education, or giving part-time employment to a local person with an agricultural background, a Diploma of Education and a "flair for writing". In June

1984 the College formally established a Division of External Studies headed by Chris Morgan, and appointed Jane Mahony as an Instructional Designer. The problem had been addressed, even though the proportion of resources allocated to external students remained a vexed question. In a report to the College Council in August 1984, Robert Napier noted that "it is extremely difficult to quantify the resources used for our external studies programs. Such an exercise would involve a number of notional allocations which would be very subjective". Fair enough, although some form of accounting was clearly desirable, if only to head off criticism that the College was trying to run its distance education on the cheap.

Students on the campus were also causing headaches for the administration, with a number of incidents reflecting a growing lack of discipline. As Robert Napier told the Board in June 1983, "many incidents have occurred on campus and for almost the first time, we have received several complaints of student misbehaviour in Orange". (In February, for example, eight students had been involved in what was described as a "disturbance", and each fined $100. At the Board meeting on 18 March, one member "expressed concern about the practice of students drinking in the bar all night, despite the bar being closed".) It would not be fair to apply this characterisation to the student body as a whole, because in Orange, as elsewhere, it is always the departures from the normally operating codes of conduct which receive the most attention. Nevertheless, the College was forced to pay greater attention to the workings of its Student Affairs Committee and its relationship to the Students' Representative Council, and Robert Napier hoped that this would lead to a general improvement in behaviour.

For its part, the student body was not happy with a perceived trend towards courses becoming "more academic than practical". Formal assessment by examination was also considered unfair to the majority of students who "are unable to cope with examination conditions and cannot perform to the best of their ability under examination pressure". Whatever the rights and wrongs of this assessment, this particular complaint echoed the old theme of tension between the theoretical and practical which so occupied the College founders like Len Pockley. It is a theme to which we shall recur, as we take up the story in the next chapter of the College as a fully-fledged corporate entity.

Chapter 3:
OAC as a corporate entity

► *Hockey has been a popular winter sport at the College over the years, with the students fielding teams in local competitions.*

◄ *The College has fielded a rugby team in the Central West competition since 1974.*

A new phase of OAC's history officially began on 20 January 1984, with the first meeting of its newly-constituted governing council *(see Appendix 1 for the full membership of this Council)*. The previous November, the College had marked its tenth anniversary with a celebratory dinner, and at least partially as a sign of its new status, held the 1984 graduation ceremony at the Civic Centre in Orange. A new era had begun, but the Council affirmed its faith in the College's leadership by electing Len Pockley unopposed as its Chairman, with Peter Wrigley as his deputy.

In his budget submission for the year, the Secretary Don Foster noted that the expected enrolment was of the order of 390 EFTS, as opposed to Commonwealth recurrent funding for 345. This shortfall would be covered by "maintaining a stretched academic staff/student ratio, and carrying a number of vacancies on the non-academic staff establishment". Despite this, the budget was framed to allow the employment of two additional academics (raising the total to 28), and the creation of 2.5 additional non-academic positions. Of these, the 0.5 was accounted for by making the Publicity Officer's job a full-time one, while two positions, a Staff Officer and an Administrative Assistant (Ledgers), were required to absorb tasks currently undertaken on behalf of the College by the Department of Agriculture. The budget also included a figure of $35,000 under the allocation for Minor Works and Buildings, which the old Board of Management had already committed to the construction of a specialist teaching room and communications laboratory, to be called the L.A. Pockley Communications Centre. Putting up the building was one thing, but the question then became, what mix of computing equipment would best equip the College as it entered the personal computer age. Discussion on this issue revolved around the relative merits of uniformity of equipment, as opposed to providing students with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with different types of machine. In the end, the Resource Committee went for 12 configurations of Apple II E computers plus Epson 80 printers for a quoted price of $26,052.

In March, the Council also approved the construction of a "Teaching Resource Machinery Demonstration Shed", and resolved to seek the loan of an additional tractor, of around 100 hp, from a machinery company. The establishment of the Horse Unit and the Horticulture Unit meant additional requirements for land, and the Council felt it necessary to develop a five-year development plan for the total College land resource. So although the newly self-governing College might have embarked on its new phase in an atmosphere of financial

stringency, the vision remained decidedly upbeat, and a wide-ranging corporate plan was presented to the Council at its September meeting. The plan, prepared jointly by Len Pockley and the College Principal, Robert Napier, talked boldly of a national market perspective, "with a target of 500 EFTS by 1987 and 1,000 EFTS by 1995". In April 1983, the College had 337 EFTS, making it one of the smallest CAEs in the state. By comparison, Hawkesbury had 850, while Sydney College of the Arts had 706. To take a strictly utilitarian view of these figures would suggest that it was more important to train artists than farm managers, but as the corporate plan recognised, there were a number of factors telling against large-scale adoption of the higher education model in this area.

As Pockley and Napier recognised, most institutions in the advanced education sector were "multi-disciplinary and much larger than OAC", making it all the more difficult for the College to maintain its single-purpose focus. Having worked for and achieved the status of a College of Advanced Education, OAC now found itself resisting pressure to "develop structures and processes similar to other colleges but which may not be appropriate". Always, there was the need to hold apparently contradictory ideas in a creative tension. On the one hand, it was important for farm management education to be accorded no less a status than training for professions like teaching, but on the other hand, it was important not to lose sight of "the peculiar educational needs of agriculture". Throughout the plan, a number of features of the tertiary education sector are described as working against achievement of the College's objectives. The authors cite the "pressure for higher level courses associated with so called status ('academic drift')", which tends to the courses becoming "unrelated to the needs of industry and the community (the ivory tower syndrome)". From the side of the industry, though, the College has to counter "a tendency to emphasise the value of acquired skills often to the detriment of understanding the principles involved", deriving from a "long-standing view...that formal post-secondary education for agriculture is not important".

It was only in the 19th century that such time-honoured professions as medicine and engineering became the preserve of accrediting institutions, which allowed practitioners into the field only on the basis of satisfactory completion of prescribed university courses and subsequent admission into professional associations. It was unlikely, though, that farm management would go down a similar path, at least in the foreseeable future, so the very need for post-secondary qualifications had to be argued

for over and over again. The draft plan even admits that "institutions are not necessarily good environments for demonstrating commercial management and practical skills since they do not reflect conditions in industry". One can admire the candour of such a declaration, at the same time as wondering whether it is wise to put arguments into the mouths of opponents. These tensions were reflected in pressure from the Farm Management Department for the introduction of one-year Certificate courses in the area, pressure which, according to Farm Management staff, was encountering "lack of support" from the Academic Executive. Rob Napier, in his role as Chair of the Academic Board, felt it necessary to point out that although the College "strongly supported the introduction of one-year courses...advice from outside authorities was that now is not the time to push again for their introduction". At least on this occasion it was politic to float with the tide of "academic drift" to higher level courses.

In any case, by September the Principal, Rob Napier, was able to inform Council that the NSW Higher Education Board was recommending a 24.6% increase in student numbers for 1985, to a figure of 430 EFTS. Although this was

◂ *John Chudleigh, then the College's Head, School of Rural Management, shows the NSW Governor, Sir James Rowland, and his wife, Lady Rowland, around the College's new Communications Centre, during the Governor's visit to the College on 10 May 1985.*

► *Farm Management Lecturer Mal Lukins, College Principal Robert Napier and Farm Manager Don Craig look at plans for the College's Machinery Centre. Mal Lukins was instrumental in securing the industry funds to build the centre.*

presented as "a strong vote of confidence in the College", there remained problems of funding, with the HEB recommending only a 15.4% increase in recurrent funding (at December 1983 levels). At that time, it was not clear whether capital funding for the 1985–1987 triennium would reflect the anticipated increase in student numbers, but the College was actively pursuing new areas of student recruitment, and trying to ensure that its publicity efforts would help it to achieve the targets set. The task of convincing rural families to send their young people to Orange remained a pressing one, since as we have already seen, the virtues of rural management education at tertiary level were not self-evident to as many as the College would have liked.

At a practical level, the College was exploring ways to raise its national profile, by offering courses through intermediaries, such as Roseworthy College in South Australia. In May 1984, a team from Orange visited Roseworthy to promote the idea of offering the Associate Diploma in Farm Secretarial Studies externally. OAC's strong commitment to this idea can be gauged from the size and strength of the team it sent: John Chudleigh, Head of the School of Rural Management, Una Wettenhall, Lecturer in Animal Production, and Dennis Hodgkins, Lecturer in Plant

Production. The team returned to Orange with 71 applications in the bag, and confident expectations that it would be possible to make "between 80 and 100 offers of enrolment". By the time the matter came to Council on 22 June 1984, the structure of the course had already been planned to a high level of detail, including timetables and itineraries for a residential school at Roseworthy in October. This residential school would be followed by a five-day tour the following February, intended to give the students similar experiences to those which internal students enjoyed. All in all a big investment of time and energy, but the Council endorsed the recommendation to sign a contract with Roseworthy, to be reviewed after one year (that is, after the course had been running for two semesters). *(See Apendix 2.)*

In February 1985, the College launched a staff newsletter, *The Ploughshare*, which in many ways reflected the early efforts to establish a corporate camaraderie. The lecturer Geoff Watson commented that, with regard to the Draft Corporate Plan, there was now a need to "translate the DCP into a 'layered set' of OAC objectives which should attempt to inter-relate what most of us aim to do, at our various levels, with the overall College mission at the top level". With a final document due by October, it was time for all staff "to start thinking what our real role here at OAC is all about!" Thus, whatever staff might have made of the philosophies underlying the corporate plan, it served its purpose as a focus for discussion and planning. For example, a number of staff participated in the "OAC Extra-Curricular Activities Sub-Committee of the Corporate Plan", under the chairmanship of John Chudleigh, the Head of School, Rural Management.

At the 1985 graduation ceremony, the Principal, Robert Napier, looked back on the opening of the L.A. Pockley Communications Centre as a highlight of 1984, paying special tribute to staff, particularly Robbie Scott, who all "put a great effort into making the Centre fully operational". (I may note here parenthetically that the occasional address at this ceremony was delivered by Trevor Flugge, the President of the Australian Wheatgrowers' Federation. Who at that time would have foreseen more recent events related to wheat sales to Iraq?)

Len Pockley was formally farewelled from the College at a dinner on 5 December 1985, and an afternoon tea the following day. His standing within the community is reflected in comments by Gerry Gleeson, the head of the NSW Premier's Department:

> When the history of the Orange Agricultural College is written and particularly if the historian can have access to the papers where the

> proposal was first discussed then it will become obvious that Len Pockley was the moving force and the catalyst for the establishment of the College. Agricultural education will therefore be indebted to him.
>
> Len Pockley has been one of the outstanding personalities in the field of agriculture and agricultural education and many of us within the Government sector have profited immensely by our association with him. His ability to see through the problem and reduce it down to its simple parts made it a refreshing experience to be associated with him on committees. His quick turn of phrase and his agricultural metaphors made discussions not only productive but entertaining.
>
> I am personally indebted to Len. I regard him as a great Australian.[1]

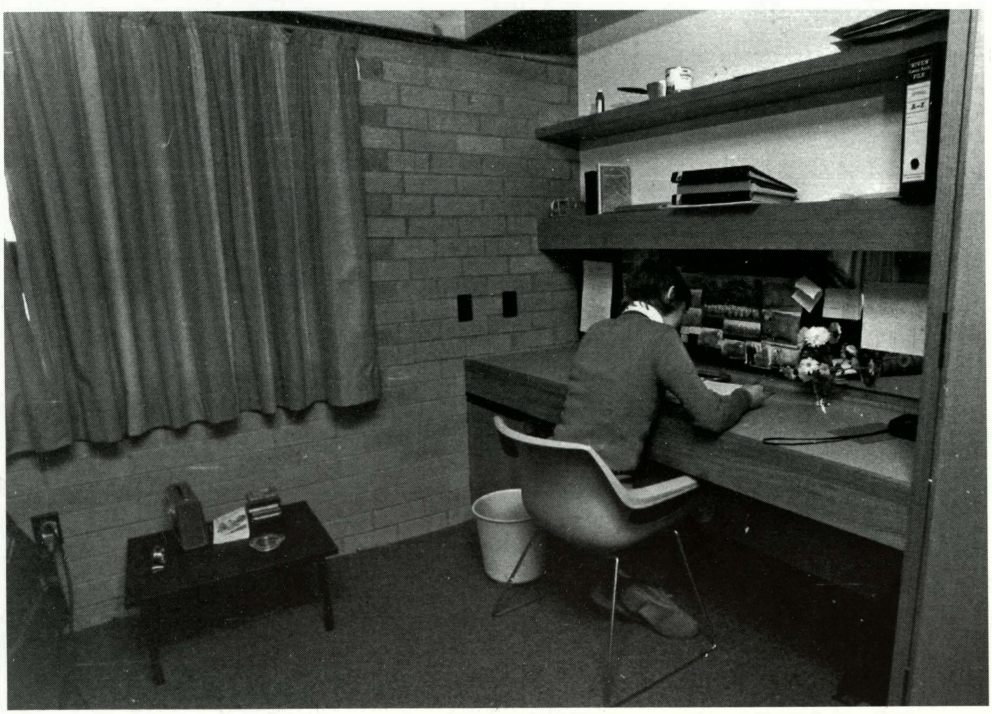
The year also saw the resignation of the long-serving College Secretary, Don Foster, who attended his final Council meeting in July. He was succeeded by his assistant, Justin Powell. In February 1986, the Council elected Beryl Ingold as its new Chairman, a position which she held right through the difficult period of negotiations with the University of New England, the subsequent dissolution of the U.N.E. network and the first tentative approaches to the University of Sydney.

By the beginning of 1986 implementation of the Corporate Plan was focused on working parties for, respectively, student affairs (convenor Leo Macpherson), staff issues (Tony Smith), extra-curricular activities such as short courses and consulting work (John Chudleigh), and organisation and communication systems (Jock Fletcher). In January, the College moved to appoint a part-time Co-ordinator for its newly reconstituted Student Union, which itself was the result of an amalgamation of the old Union and the Students' Representative Council. In June, Don Craig (referred to in *The Ploughshare* as "a hard core original 1973er"), following his retirement from the teaching staff on the College farm, took up the position.

In April, the College organised a "rural crisis workshop" at West Wyalong, with sessions on the role of women in agriculture (led by Beryl Ingold), the economic situation (led by John Chudleigh), and stresses on relationships in rural families (led by Robert Napier and Ms. Bronwen Grey). These "extra-curricular" activities were an attempt to put into practice the notion of outreach to the target community, thereby enhancing the profile of the College. As always, the vision was forward thinking. It may have been a continuous struggle, but the staff of the College were not sitting on their hands. For example, the Horticulture

[1] Letter on file 0604019: Committees – OAC College Council – Agendas and Minutes – Vol. 4 (Aug–Dec 1985).

◄ *Lecturer Neville Cargill with a group of students from the Farm Secretarial Studies course.*



► *A residential student busy studying ... this photograph was taken in the early 1980s.*

course for internal students may not have got off the ground as hoped, and it had not been possible to appoint a lecturer in that field, but horticulture was still being taught to external students, even if there were certain strains involved in expanding the College's teaching in this area.

In this connection, a letter from the Council member George Brownbill to Robert Napier (1 December 1986) provides a poignant commentary on College student culture, and its receptivity to different ways of viewing the world. For some time, external students had been disgruntled by their obligation to pay student activities fees, even though they did not have the same opportunities to enjoy the benefits of them. (These issues did not only concern OAC, of course.) This is the nub of the comment in the letter that "the $250 fee will provide just enough disincentive to drive the College back to the internal student group as its main clients". And what did an external student, who studied Horticulture, and served on the College Council as an elected representative of externals, think of his internal peers?:

> Historically, OAC has been a College for the reasonably well-off sons of the rural middle-class. Many will be rugby-playing, GPS-educated and came to the College with the off-centre political and social opinions of the very small minority which is rural Australia....These are, of course, gross generalisations. But they hold well enough as a foil against which to contrast the external students...who represent a much more diverse range of people.
>
> All these problems are...more pointed for the horticultural students. We are regarded as quaint and not "really" concerned with farming at all...I have spoken at earlier Council meetings of my concern to establish priorities which recognise external students' priorities and also horticultural students' needs. Any Corporate Plan which doesn't go to such questions will not be of much meaning to me.

The letter derives added interest from Brownbill's second set of comments, in his role as the Assistant Secretary of the Federal Department of Aboriginal Affairs:

> The education administration establishment in Canberra has a scornful view of OAC. They have never forgiven the College for winning the argument with them over amalgamation. Also, they see the student body (internals) in much the same terms as I do. Finally, they rather doubt whether agricultural education is really a serious academic pursuit. To the extent that it is, they rank Sydney University and Hawkesbury as the places to support, with OAC a poor third....There is much prejudice in all of the above but it is of some significance if OAC is to pursue funds...successfully.

The point here, of course, is not to re-

open old wounds, but rather to shed light on the difficulty of the juggling act required to keep OAC moving forward. In its new role as a stand-alone C.A.E., the College had to accommodate itself to expectations that it would be broadly representative of the community. A large university has no such problems, and can actively pursue recruitment policies aimed at specific minority groups (such as special admission schemes for Aborigines and the establishment of Koori Centres, to take just one example). A small, special-purpose College, though, with an internal candidature of fewer than 110 in its largest course (the Associate Diploma in Farm Management), drawn predominantly from what George Brownbill describes as a "rural middle class" (however we may regard the underlying assumptions of such sociological categorisation), is bound to have difficulties with demands for inclusivity. (One can readily imagine newcomers taking a quick look at the ranks of bull-barred utes in the College car park and jumping to conclusions, however unfair these may prove to be, about the student body.) At the same time, the external enrolment in the ADFM course numbered 190, and although the College had never been conceived as a leader in

◂ *Utes were a common site at the College for many years, particularly in the College's early days when most of the students were from family farming backgrounds. The demographics of the Campus gradually changed as course offerings broadened.*

distance education, it was rapidly being forced to acknowledge the importance of external studies as a source of vital EFTSU. Hence the previous moves (see Chapter 2) to formalise the administrative arrangements for externals, and appoint a Co-ordinator in this area (Chris Morgan).

In any case, some of Brownbill's concerns may have been addressed in moves to develop an Associate Diploma in Land Management. By November 1987, the Education Committee of Council was able to note that 61 offers had been made for this course, and that "potential exists for articulation with the South Australian College of Advanced Education for reciprocal strand exchanges between this course and the Associate Diploma in Aboriginal Studies". (The first students in the course arrived on campus, to considerable fanfare, on 10 February 1988.) In August, Rodney Tonkin, the Director of Academic Programmes, noted in *The Ploughshare* that the College's Ethnic Affairs Policy Statement was on its way to Council, together with comments on it by staff. He went on to comment that "the survey of students and staff showed this institution to be excessively dominated by people of Anglo Saxon background. We may well be the richer when we have a more balanced representation of people from a wider range of backgrounds on campus".

In November 1987, Bronwen Grey, the Ethnic Affairs Co-ordinator, responded in *The Ploughshare* to criticism of the College's decision to take out advertising in a Greek language newspaper. After noting that we live in a multicultural society, and the College could no longer get by as "a little Anglo-Saxon enclave", she comments that the "Greek community is the largest ethnic group", and "the Greek newspapers have the largest circulation". The clincher comes at the end, though: "Last, but by no means least, there are a number of Greek families involved in the horse industry." Nothing like combining principle with pragmatism! That same month, *The Ploughshare* announced the formation of a Sustainable Agriculture Discussion Group on campus, yet another sign of moving with the times.

Those times were about to become even more turbulent in the higher education sector, which soon had to confront the Dawkins Green Paper, a matter which we will take up in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Towards UNE

◄ *A view of the College's oval from the water tower in the mid-1980s. The picket fence was removed within a few years.*

► *Farm Management students on tour ... tours were a regular part of the course curriculum right from the College's first year of operation.*

All those who were working in the higher education sector in the 1980s were affected in some way by the reform proposals of the Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training, John Dawkins, first mooted in the Green Paper released in December 1987. In the space of 12 months, the numerous Colleges of Advanced Education dotting the landscape were all either amalgamated to form new multi-campus universities (University of Western Sydney, Charles Sturt University) or absorbed into existing universities (the NSW Conservatorium of Music, for example, becoming a faculty of the University of Sydney).

The centralising tendencies of Dawkins' proposals posed special problems for an institution like OAC, which had always fought against any perceived diversion of resources from its fixed purpose of farm management education. Dawkins' new Unified National System called for scrapping of the divide between universities and CAEs (referred to as the old "binary system"), and a significant increase in the number of graduates. In a press release on 9 December 1987, Dawkins commented that for Australia to be more competitive internationally, it would need to reach "a figure of around 125,000 graduates a year by 2001 compared with the current level of 88,000". In order to deliver numbers like this, though, the new system would be made up of "fewer larger institutions which can offer students wider study choices". Not a prescription for a small, specialist training institution, such as OAC was and still aspired to be. The argument from Orange, as ever, was that blurring of the single-minded focus on farm management education would lead to a loss of support from the agricultural industry, which valued having "its" college dedicated to "its" needs.

Willy-nilly, though, change would come, and much time and energy were devoted to the whys and wherefores of the options presenting themselves. The Green Paper looked forward to a situation where universities were defined by "educational profiles" which identified priorities in teaching and research and future objectives. These profiles would be negotiated on a triennial basis between the government and the universities, and constitute the main basis for allocations of funding. That much, the three-yearly cycle of funding, would remain the same, but now all institutions would be competing for research funds, since there would no longer be any teaching-only CAEs. On the one hand, then, the government was holding out the promise of an expanded sector, and a less restrictive funding regime, but demanding in return a more onerous commitment to national goals and planning.

How well was OAC placed to meet these challenges? At the Council meeting on 4 December 1987, a total of eight councillors sent apologies (representing around one-third of the membership), one example of a trend which had been worrying the members of the Executive. The Principal, Robert Napier, advised that more attention would be paid to "looking after" Council members during their visits to the campus, and providing more background material with agenda papers. It was also suggested that Council members would feel a greater sense of involvement if they were given specific tasks. Following what the minutes refer to as "some discussion regarding the role of the Council", Dr D.J. McDonald suggested that it had two roles, firstly that of being a "watchdog" over the operations of the College, ensuring that agreed policy was implemented, and secondly that of promoting the College in the wider community. Clearly, OAC was at this point at some sort of crossroads, feeling loss of a sense of purpose, and consciously working towards retrieving it. The Dawkins Green Paper provided the main focus for this, and quickly became the major preoccupation of senior management.

Discussion of these issues at the

◂ *An Equine Management student in action on one of the College's horse-riding courses.*

◄ *The College staff photograph for 1985.*

Council meeting of 5 February 1988 centred on the possible options for OAC given implementation of the Dawkins reforms. The Council noted five options:

- Merge with another college;
- Form some alliance with a university;
- Seek to develop a federation of agricultural colleges;
- Become part of the TAFE system;
- Maintain its commitment to its stated mission and maximise its autonomy.

At this stage, there was no serious consideration of any but option five, the Council noting that "any restriction on autonomy may limit the College's capacity to develop and to pursue the management philosophies inherent in its courses", and that "the rural industries have for a number of years supported the special role played by this College in responding to industry needs". Ultimately, though, dollars would decide this issue, as they decide most others. It was all very well for the industry (as represented by organisations such as the Livestock and Grain Producers Association) to foster the idea that it could withdraw its support if OAC was no longer so closely identified with it, but the industry was not footing the bill for the College. The message from Dawkins was clear: get on board the Unified National

System or find your own source of funds.

In his report to the Council meeting of 8 April 1988, the Principal Robert Napier advised that he had convened a working party which had met more or less weekly over the last two months "to review the situation and plan strategies". (Apart from the Principal, the other members were Jock Fletcher and Chris Morgan.) "Our main concerns," he wrote, "have been to prepare a case for continued involvement in distance education and to pursue some possible affiliations (but not amalgamations) with other institutions. We are especially interested to develop links with a top metropolitan business school." The stated aim was still to preserve autonomy, an aim made more realisable by the fact that after an initial flurry of consideration of various schemes among the CAE sector for amalgamations and consolidations, "activity in this area has subsided and developments are now likely to occur at a slower pace". In the principal's view, then, time was not such a critical factor as perhaps at first thought.

By August, following the release of the Federal Government's White Paper on reform of the higher education sector, the pace had definitely quickened. In his report to the Council meeting on 8 August

► *College Library Administrative Assistant Pat Kesby serves two students. This photo was taken about 1986.*

1988, John Chudleigh, the Head of School, noted that the benchmark figure of 2,000 EFTSU (Equivalent Full-Time Student Units) for a viable institution was not negotiable. In Dawkins' Unified National System size would count, for all that the Council may have wanted to question the assumption that large institutions were inherently more cost-effective than small ones. OAC therefore faced a choice of either joining a new multi-campus institution, or being absorbed into an existing university. The NSW Office of Higher Education was due to submit a report to Canberra on its plans for the sector in NSW, and the College also needed to consider the implications of a White Paper recommendation to rationalise the provision of external studies, with the formation of six Distance Education Centres (DECs). At this point, the Council framed its response in the following terms:

> The College will join the Unified National System and...participate in the growth in higher education expected in 1989;
>
> In negotiating membership of the UNS, the College must ensure its role as the national provider of rural management education is preserved and enhanced;
>
> The role of the College as the distance education centre for rural management courses in Australia must be ensured and that role expanded as a result of joining the UNS.

The sense of urgency was reflected in the decision to delegate authority to the Council Chair, Beryl Ingold, to act on behalf of Council if necessary. The focus on distance education (or external studies) here is a reflection of the fact that off-campus students, in numerical terms, constituted nearly half the student load. This is borne out by the Autumn Semester enrolment figures (see Table 3).

The total EFTSU figure of 484.5 was less than a quarter of the benchmark figure for stand-alone status in the UNS, so that was never going to be an option. Of that figure, external students accounted for 228, or 45 per cent. Although distance education had not been uppermost in the minds of those who founded the College (indeed, as we have seen, the assumption was that students would live on campus and be actively involved in practical exercises and regular farm visits), it had become a significant contributor to the College's profile. At its meeting on 3 June 1988, the Council had already suggested that, in any submissions to the Federal Government, the College stress its expertise in the field of external studies.

As noted before, though, decisions regarding the future of higher education did not just rest with the Federal Government. In the state sphere, a Coalition Government had won office,

and just like its federal counterpart, had an activist Minister for Education, in this case Dr Terry Metherell. Metherell's vision was of a vastly expanded University of NSW, analogous to the University of California with campuses strategically located throughout the state. The University of NSW had its own views on this, and mobilised its staff and students in a concerted campaign against Terry Metherell's grand vision of an expanded UNSW which would unite under its umbrella all the rural campuses. UNSW feared loss of control over its own destiny, with a governing council swamped by delegates from Bathurst and Wagga Wagga, a situation which would inevitably lead to a diversion of resources away from Kensington. Questions of prestige were tied up in this as well, any association with former CAEs being portrayed as a lowering of standards and a retreat from the pursuit of excellence. The fact that UNSW had itself grown out of Sydney Technical College, (it came into existence in 1949, with the name "NSW University of Technology"), and had long sought to establish itself as a "real" university in the face of gibes from advocates for the pre-eminence of the University of Sydney, should perhaps have alerted Metherell to the problems inherent in his approach, for

Table 3: Enrolments autumn 1988 at 29 February

Course	Bodies	EFTS	EFTSU
Associate Diploma in Farm Management I	67	67	67
Farm Management III	38	38	38
Farm Management External	191	95.5	76
Farm Secretarial Studies I	58	58	58
Farm Secretarial Studies III	39	39	39
Farm Secretarial Studies External	156	78	63
Horticulture I	1	1	1
Horticulture External	128	64	51
Horse Management I	16	16	16
Horse Management III	22	22	22
Land Management External	74	37	30
Environmental Control III	31	15.5	15.5
Environmental Control External	40	10	8
Total	**861**	**541**	**484.5**

all that it had a certain logic going for it.

So plan A was scrapped, which left the former rural CAEs still to be accounted for. Once again, the vagaries of federalism played a role, since although the impetus for all this reorganisation came from Canberra, the enacting of legislation to create, merge or abolish institutions of higher education remained the responsibility of the respective state governments. Hence the notion of a Rural University, with campuses at Bathurst, Wagga Wagga, Albury and Orange. In the end, at its meeting on 13/14 April 1989, the OAC Council resolved to advise the Minister that it did not wish to be included in the impending legislation to establish a NSW Rural University, so it could continue negotiations with the University of NSW "regarding the possibility of the establishment of a University College at Orange". As Robert Napier put it in a letter to Council members on 8 March 1989, the proposed network university would have "one governing body on which there is no current guarantee of OAC membership. Member institutions may have advisory bodies. The model is a strict interpretation of the Dawkins White Paper requirements of 'one governing body, one chief executive, one education profile, one cheque'". Although Orange was to be involved with the working party to draw up the heads of agreement for the new network, Napier felt that Mitchell CAE (Bathurst) and Riverina CAE (Wagga Wagga) "would not be keen to see a relatively small member such as OAC achieve a similar outcome" with regard to autonomy and representation on the central governing body.

But if the network idea was inherently unsatisfactory, a link with UNSW had problems with it too, since it was doubtful whether Kensington would agree to the sort of autonomy which Orange desired. A particular sticking point was the procedure for selecting a future Principal, should the position become vacant. At UNSW, deans of faculties were appointed by the Vice-Chancellor, and the OAC Council was worried that if it surrendered its right to appoint its own boss, there was no guarantee that the College would get a person with the appropriate "empathy ... and understanding" of its objectives.

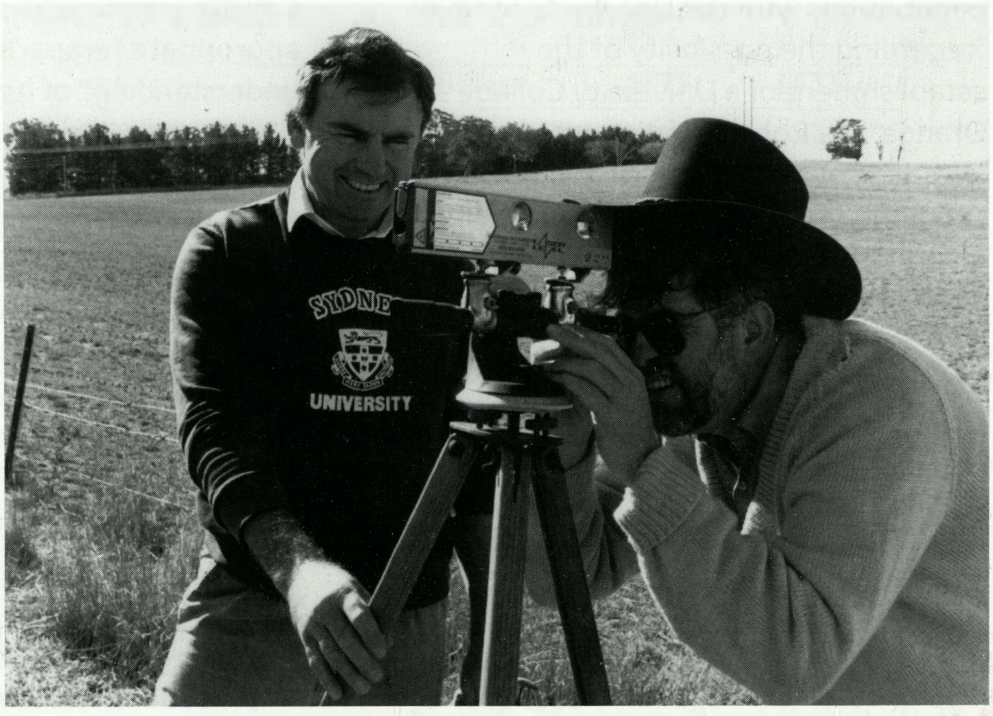
Events moved rapidly in that heady year of 1989. Within a fortnight UNSW had pulled out of negotiations, and Metherell had introduced into parliament the Charles Sturt University Bill, which included Orange Agricultural College as a part of the new network university. As the Principal Robert Napier put it in a report on 25 April:

> There is considerable pressure for OAC to join the new university. The Minister for Education has however, indicated that he is willing to consider a relationship between OAC and another

university if this can be achieved. The major problem is the speed with which the legislation is being put through Parliament. The Charles Sturt University Bill will be debated on Thursday, May 4, 1989.

The Heads of Agreement are quite unacceptable to OAC since they make the College a very junior partner with little guarantee of keeping our mission and role. OAC has no representation on the Postgraduate Studies Committee and the Distance Education Standing Committee. Representation on most committees, including the Interim Board of Governors, is in proportion to current student numbers of the member institutions. There is little evidence that the new institution has a cohesive single purpose or wishes to do anything other than preserve the current positions of its members.

Robert Napier made one last attempt to change the heads of agreement, asking Bill Neville of the NSW Ministry of Education to convene a meeting on 1 May with the chief executive officers of the institutions involved. This meeting subsequently took place on 30 April, but in his report to Council on 2 May, Napier advised that he had been unable to negotiate the majority of the changes desired by OAC, and concluded that his



► *Horticulture Lecturer Peter Hedberg and Librarian Stephen Doyle, who together ran numerous wine-related short courses at the College over many years, mark out the College's Chardonnay vineyard in 1994.*

potential future colleagues had no commitment to maintaining the "specialist role" of the College. By now, though, a new card was being played – a possible link with the University of New England. A strong lobbying effort was well underway, involving OAC graduates, rural industry groups, and the local State Member for Orange, Garry West. By 2 May, then, the College had been in touch with Armidale, and received grudging permission from Metherell to negotiate with other institutions, including the University of New England.

The basic idea was to go anywhere rather than Bathurst. Indeed, in its resolution on this matter on 2 May, the Council went so far as to indicate that its opposition to joining CSU would stand, even in the unlikely event that CSU accepted OAC's amendments to the Heads of Agreement. Resolution 89/40 reads:

> That Orange Agricultural College Council supports the amendments suggested by the College, to the Heads of Agreement document dated 21.4.89, but if such amendments were to be accepted in negotiations with the Charles Sturt University, the Council would find it necessary to examine further whether such a document would, of itself, guarantee an environment in which the mission of Orange Agricultural College would be supported and developed. The Council would need to be satisfied that such a supportive environment existed, before it would agree to any relationship with another university.

It was at the third reading stage of state legislation, then, that Orange was included as part of the UNE Network, and as pointed out in the CSU submission of July 1992, on the eventual dissolution of that network, until that time "a link [between Orange and] UNE...had not been seriously canvassed, nor evaluated". Thus, the critical period here was the last week of April and the first week of May, 1989, as the OAC Council rejected the basis of amalgamation with CSU, and "resolved to pursue, with all due diligence, negotiations with the University of New England to establish university college status with this University". Any suitor would do, provided it was not Bathurst.

It was with a palpable sense of relief, then, that the College embraced this change of direction. Auguries were favourable, as even the Feds seemed willing to smooth the way. The *Central Western Daily* of 10 May 1989, under the headline: "College may still get grant", quoted a spokesman for Federal Education Minister John Dawkins, to the effect that OAC's refusal to join Charles Sturt would not affect a $1.3 million grant for academic staff residences and student accommodation. A fortnight later, Terry

Metherell formally advised Beryl Ingold, the Chair of the OAC Council, of his decision to leave Orange out of CSU, and postpone any legislative action until the end of July. The way was thus cleared for negotiations with the University of New England, Armidale CAE and Northern Rivers CAE (based at Lismore). On 20 June, J.R. Rank, the Registrar of Northern Rivers, advised Robert Napier that his institution would "raise no objection to the inclusion of Orange Agricultural College in the new University, provided there was no further dilution of the University of New England, Northern Rivers representation on the Board of Governors or the Academic Senate of the new institution". Hindsight of course is a wonderful thing, but the tenor of this resolution surely implies the sort of desire to protect one's own turf which Robert Napier had objected to in the attitude of CSU.

From Orange's point of view, it had dodged a bullet, and was therefore obliged to do what it could to make the partnership with UNE work. OAC was bound to be a junior partner in any network, and according to the provisions of the draft agreement prepared in June, there was no room on the Board of Governors for the Principal of Orange Agricultural College. The draft merely gives an undertaking that the Board of Governors "will, at an appropriate time, seek an amendment to the University of New England Act 1989 to provide for the Principal to become a member of the Board of Governors ex officio". In defining the status of Orange as a "College" of the new UNE, the agreement states that a "College of the University" does not have "a student enrolment sufficiently large or an educational profile of sufficient range to qualify for the status of 'network member' within the meaning of the University of New England Act 1989". (Not the same status as Armidale CAE or Northern Rivers CAE.) On the other hand, number four of the "aims of incorporation" seemed to give Orange, at least on paper, what it wanted: "To assure the continued existence, as part of the Unified National System, of the College as a country-based, rural management institution which offers sub-degree, degree and post-graduate level courses, and which maintains strong empathy with and high credibility within the rural community".

The draft agreement also alludes to the old problem of funding, with a suggestion that OAC was simply not viable as a stand-alone institution:

> The Board of Governors acknowledges that the recurrent costs of the College will exceed its operating grant at the date of commencement. It expects that growth in student numbers at the College, and the realisation of economies of scale made possible by the incorporation of the College into

> the University, will enable recurrent costs and the operating grant to be brought into balance over a period of time. In the meantime the Board of Governors accepts its obligation to provide funds to maintain the range and level of activities conducted by the College at the date of commencement.

Projections of growth are shown in Table 4, and could perhaps best be described as "cautiously optimistic".

There were encouraging signs at the level of staff interaction, too. In August, academic staff from Orange travelled to Armidale for talks with Deans and other Armidale academics on future course developments. Rod Tonkin, the Head of Academic Development at OAC, found some common ground with Professor John Dillon, of UNE's Department of Agricultural Economics, who "welcomed the opportunity of working in co-operation with OAC". Both sides saw merit in the idea of a Joint Board of Studies, and discussed the possibility that OAC could provide the future farm management component of education for the University students.

At the time, OAC was contemplating an expansion of its Associate Diploma in Farm Management to a three-year course, and Rodney Tonkin comments that:

Table 4: EFTSU enrolments 1989–1992

Course	1989	1990	1991	1992
Associate Diploma in Farm Management	177	172	185	217
Associate Diploma in Farm Secretarial Studies	145	150	171	188
Associate Diploma in Horticulture	45	59	58	67
Associate Diploma in Horse Management	36	39	46	53
Associate Diploma in Land Management	36	43	37	41
Bachelor of Business (Agricultural Commerce)	28	63	109	144
Total	**467**	**526**	**606**	**710**

► *Chancellor of the University of New England, Dr R.C. Robertson-Cuninghame and Acting Principal of UNE-Orange, John Chudleigh, at the opening of a new administrative wing at the Orange Campus on 14 October 1991.*

> Professor Dillon saw no problem with such a development, and suggested that there would be less difficulty in gaining approval for the course via the Academic Senate than there would have been via the old HEB system. His only other comment was that perhaps it should be at degree level, but accepted the proposal on the grounds that a diploma may be more acceptable to the farmer members of the industry.

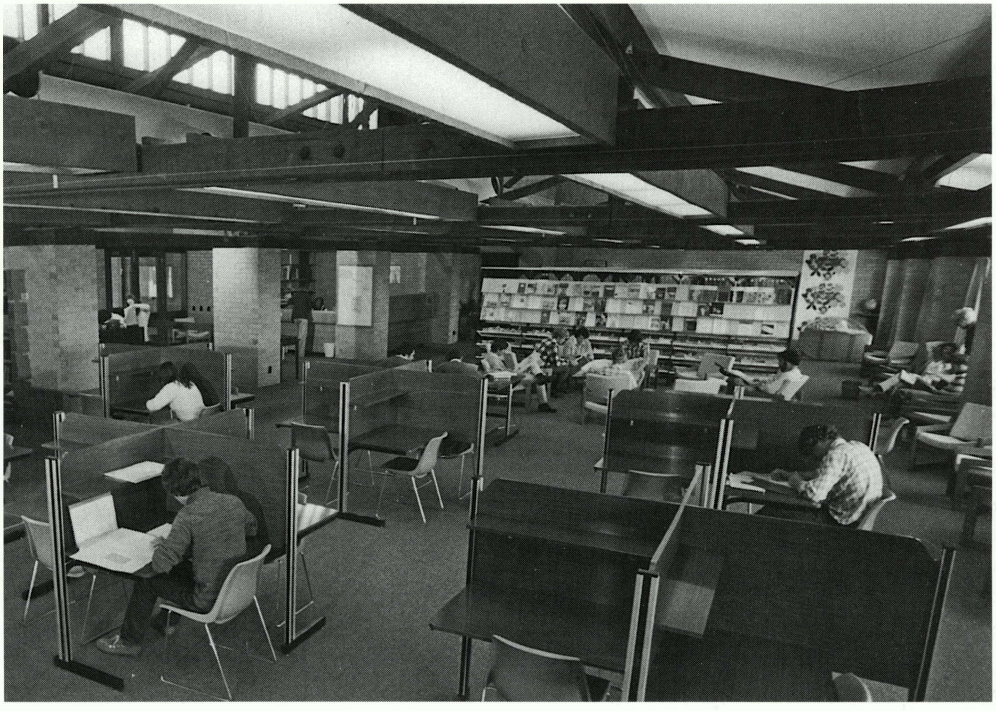
On the basis of these talks, then, Tonkin highlighted three areas "worthy of immediate attention for academic development":

> Farm Management studies in terms of OAC offering a mixed mode package of units for Rural Economics and Science (UNE) students in Farm Management, and OAC, in consultation with the Rural Economics and Rural Science Departments of the University, developing a three-year Farm Management course.
>
> Extension of the Associate Diploma in Horticulture by way of residential schools, and perhaps even full-time studies depending on the student demand, in the Lismore and Coffs Harbour areas. This needs co-ordination with the University's Rural Science Department.
>
> Introduction of OAC's proposed Graduate Diploma course to the Joint Board of Studies in Business Management.

He recommended that the Academic Board become involved in the Joint Board of Studies in Business Management, and "seek that Professor Dillon gain the establishment of a Joint Board of Studies in Rural Economics/ Science/ Management (call it what you will) to facilitate the farm management and horticultural developments". Further preparation for the amalgamation took the form of strategic planning workshops, involving senior staff of the College. The first of these, led by a management consultant, was held over three days (September 27–29) at the Duntryleague Golf Club, with the title, "What O.A.C. wants from the U.N.E. amalgamation."

The participating staff at this inaugural workshop were: Rob Napier, John Chudleigh, Rodney Tonkin, Jenny Hector, Debbie Carroll, Evan Hunt, Dennis Hodgkins, Neil Jones, Jock Fletcher, Ross Wilson, Chris Morgan, Chris Morrison, Bronwen Grey, Robyn Schwartz, Roger Bunch, Peter Cannon, Neil Southorn, Jane Mahony, John Eiseman, Carole Drummond (recorder). Following further meetings in October, the College was as well prepared as one might have expected given the restrictive timeline, and the Council meeting in December endorsed (with a few minor amendments) the Strategic Plan which had emerged from the process. On 1 January 1990, the amalgamation with UNE took effect, and the OAC Council was replaced with a new governing body referred to as the University of New England – Orange Agricultural College Advisory Council. The name may have changed, but continuity of perspective was evident in the election, unopposed, of Beryl Ingold as the Chairman (at the inaugural meeting on 30 March 1990). The new Vice-Chancellor of UNE, Professor Robert Smith, who had taken up his position in February, was also present. In his remarks to the meeting, he said it was "important to preserve the best attributes of each of the traditional bodies which now comprised the larger University, while looking to the future to share a vision for one identity as a combined campus".

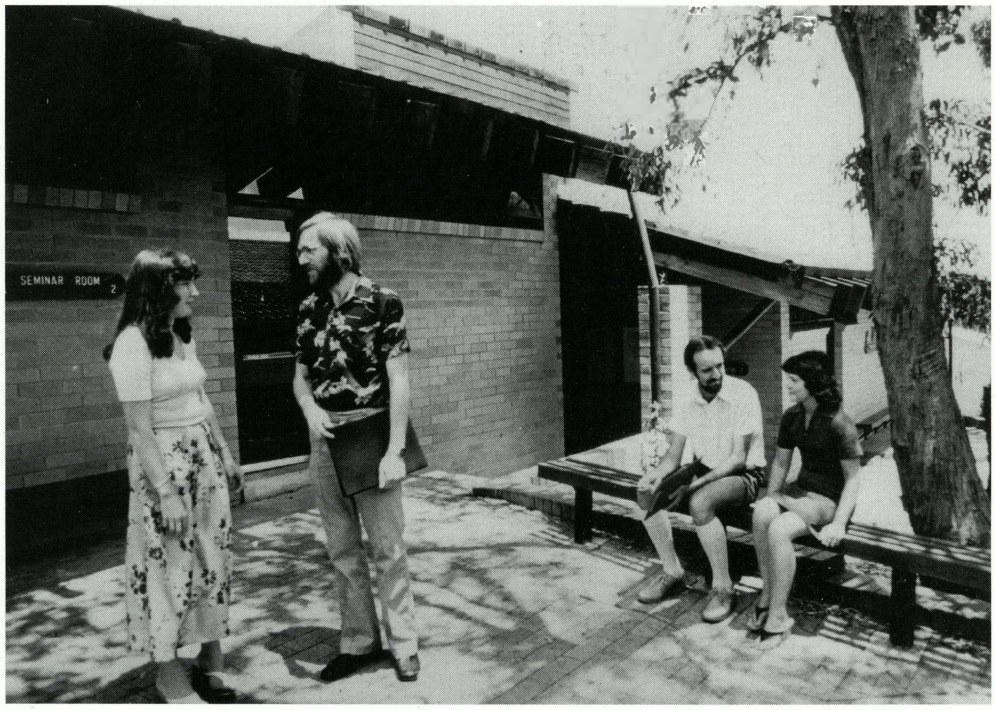
How this was to be accomplished in practice remained an open question, though, given the centrifugal tendencies implicit in the new arrangements, driven by the desire of the Northern Rivers campus at Lismore not to be seen as the junior partner in the amalgamation with UNE at Armidale. Orange was inevitably a bit player in this act, and had little influence over the outcome. In a little over 18 months, faced with the impending dissolution of the amalgamated UNE, OAC found itself looking to Sydney University as a potential sponsor.



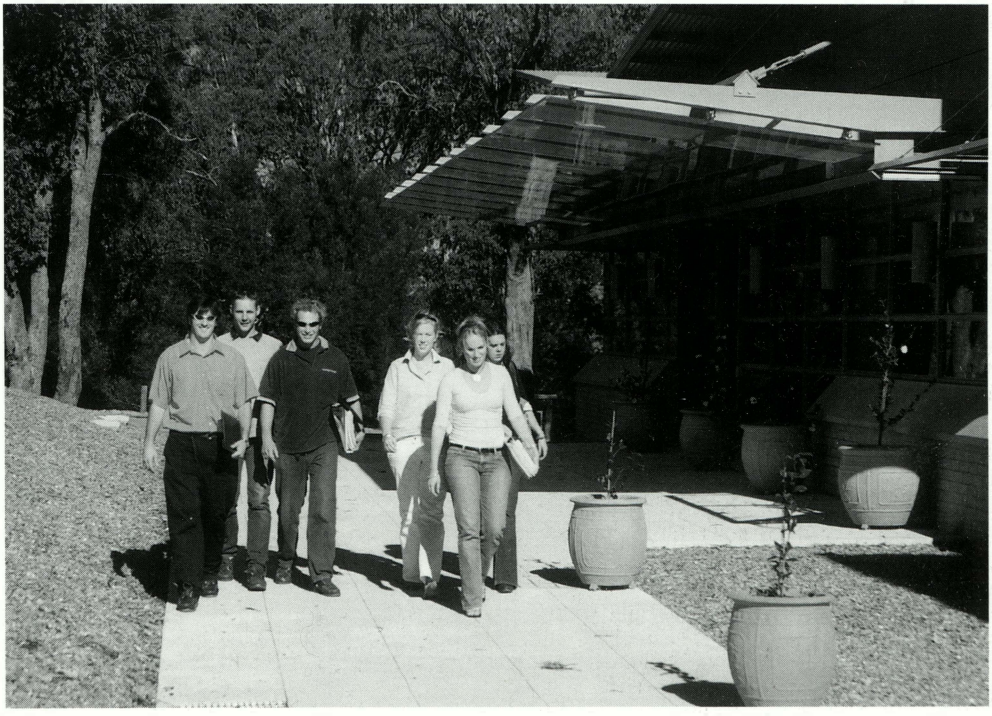
◄ *A view of the College library, taken in the late 1980s.*

► *Students relax in the College library.*

Afterword: The dissolution of UNE



► *Students of OAC between classes in the early 1980s.*



◄ *Students of CSU Orange between classes in the late 2000s.*

Within three years of joining the UNE network, Orange Agricultural College had once again to deal with the prospect of being cast into the wilderness, as apparently irreconcilable differences made the network arrangements look increasingly unworkable. A memorandum from the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Robert Smith, on 26 March 1992, gave the blunt diagnosis that:

> [All] four components of the University are dissatisfied with the capacity of the Academic Senate to function as an effective review and approval forum for new academic programmes. The devolution of managerial responsibility in the University has no parallel in the academic realm, largely because of conflicting views about the composition and function – in that order – of the Academic Senate.

In the words of the Vice-Chancellor, at UNE-Armidale the "prevailing view" was that the amalgamation which took effect on 17 July 1989 implied a "clear commitment to unitary policies", while UNE-Northern Rivers (formerly the Northern Rivers CAE based at Lismore) argued that the amalgamated entity should be considered as "a federation of relatively equal partners".

But if Orange could not be accommodated as a relatively autonomous member of a rural federation of campuses, it had to look elsewhere. On 20 July 1992, Beryl Ingold wrote to Dr Richard Alaba, the Executive Officer of the Advisory Group on the UNE Network, canvassing a number of possibilities, and invoking the idea of a "rural/urban link". Lest it be thought that this gesture was tantamount to a death bed conversion, Beryl Ingold's letter points out that "in the lead up to the amalgamation with UNE, the College was keen to establish a rural/urban link and pursued a relationship with the University of NSW, particularly the School of Wool and Pastoral Science, with vigour so that the rural/urban link could be developed". If the UNE network was to crash and burn, then other partners must be sought, and overtures to the big smoke justified. Once again, the bottom line was anywhere but Bathurst. As Beryl Ingold argues in her letter, "...the urban universities are in fact closer to Orange than either of the potential country universities at Armidale or Wagga, and there is little relevance in considering the proximity of the Bathurst campus of Charles Sturt as its agricultural component is located at Wagga". In order, then, to prevent a takeover by Bathurst, it was necessary to find some argument to get over the fact that Charles Sturt University was only 55 kilometres away. Perhaps, as Beryl Ingold argued, an association with an urban university would give staff and students "greater access to the commercial world", and "facilitate the development of the

College's expertise in marketing and market opportunities, particularly in Asia".

In the previous chapter, though, we saw how both staff and students of the University of NSW had fought hard against any involvement with a multi-campus university, which left just one option for an urban partner: the University of Sydney. Thus it was that as a result of the lobbying effort on behalf of Orange Agricultural College, the Birt Committee, charged with determining the fate of the UNE network, recommended that Orange come under the umbrella of the University of Sydney.

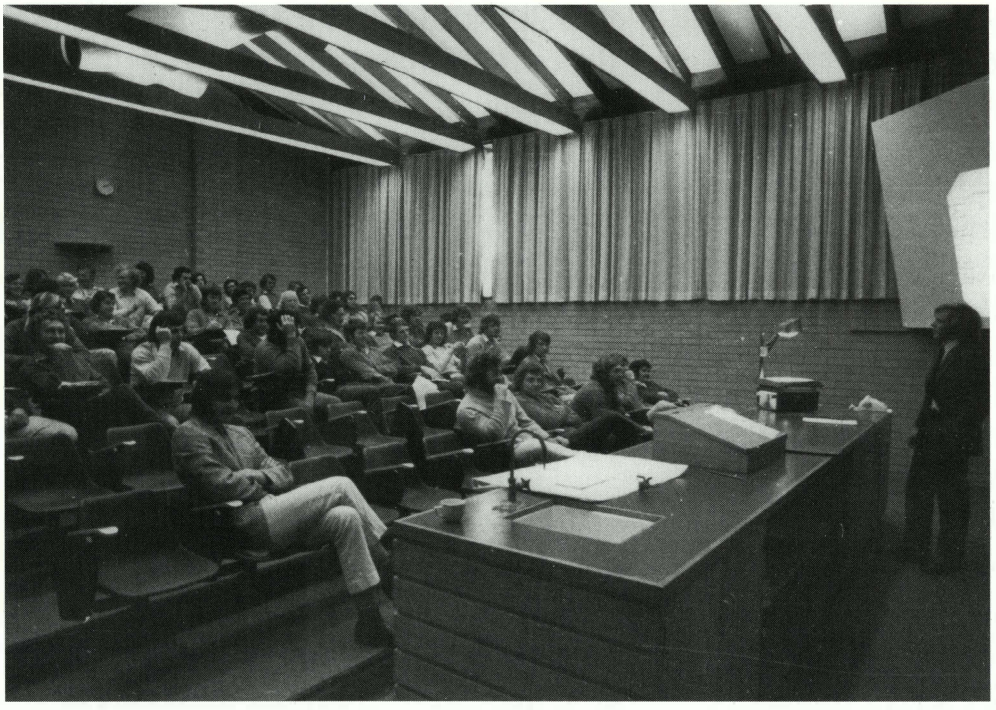
In a matter of months, then, the arguments had been stood on their head. In April, John Chudleigh, the Acting Principal of OAC, had commented in a memorandum to the Advisory Council, that the identification of OAC with another campus as head campus would be "not acceptable to long-term separate image development". The College's mission "would be influenced by [the] parent body", consequently reducing the "morale, commitment and drive of staff". Rural industry support would be "likely to wane over time", since "industry requires autonomy and control of our own destiny", and colleges such as

◂ *At the ceremony to commemorate the incorporation of Orange Agricultural College into the University of Sydney on 23 February 1994 were, from left: OAC Acting Principal John Chudleigh, University of Sydney Chancellor Dame Leonie Kramer, University of Sydney Vice-Chancellor Don McNichol and Beryl Ingold.*

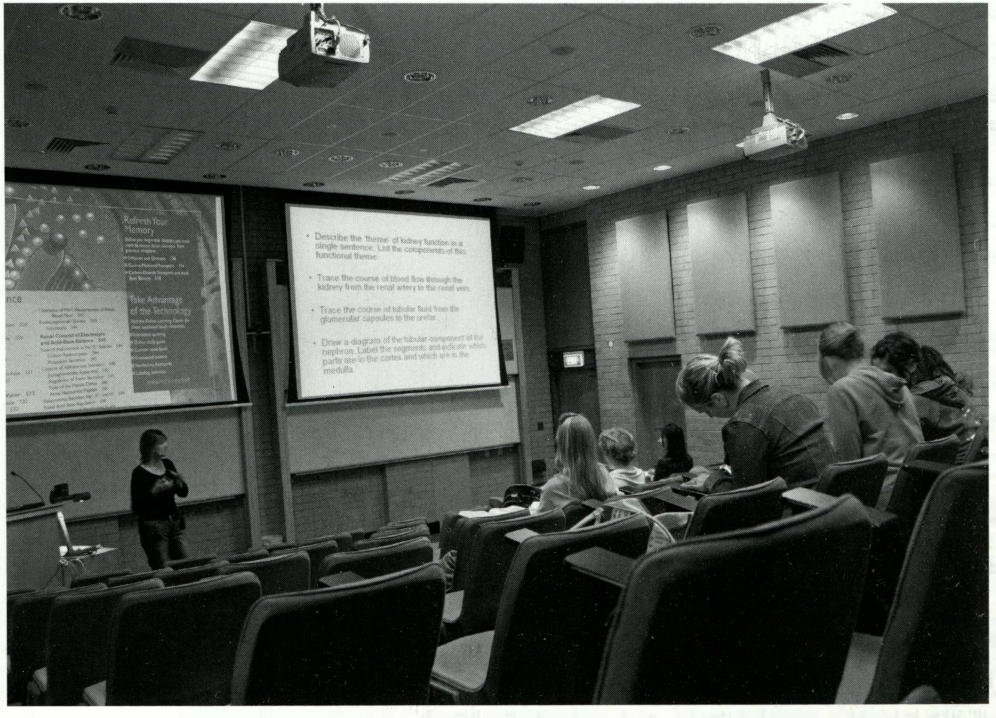
Roseworthy, Gatton, Hawkesbury and Wagga "have forfeited identity". The current staff do not support the faculty concept, and under such a model, would "inevitably...lose control of [their] own destiny". Of course all these comments were assuming some form of association with one of the campuses currently making up the UNE network, but in hindsight one can see that several of these caveats might have been thought to apply equally well to any relationship with Sydney.

Nevertheless, a relationship with Sydney was, in the end, considered preferable to absorption by Charles Sturt, and thus it was in 1994 that the Orange Agricultural College became a component of the University of Sydney, and in 2000 the Faculty of Rural Management of the University of Sydney. The campus itself, though, also became in 2002 an outpost of Sydney University's Liberal Studies course, offering first year History, Sociology, English and Italian, and Sydney undertook an expansion of facilities to allow it to offer courses in Nursing and Pharmacy. If this seemed to be the dilution of focus so long feared by the College, it had to be recognised that it was no longer viable as a single-purpose institution. In any case, the Dean of the Faculty of Rural Management, Kevin Parton, argued that the College had to adjust to changes in the nature of agribusiness, and could not afford to look backwards. Sustainability had become the central force in agribusiness, and on the Orange Campus the flagship of this change was a new totally online degree—the Master of Sustainable Management. The Master (and Doctor) of Sustainable Agriculture degrees were then established. At the start of 2004, with enrolments burgeoning, a bright future in the University of Sydney seemed guaranteed.

The final ironic chapter for OAC came in the middle of 2004 when it was announced that the Orange Campus would be transferred to Charles Sturt University. This was part of an arrangement whereby the University of Sydney could expand student load at its main campus. So after many years of avoiding an association with Charles Sturt University, what many had come to regard as inevitable had happened. At the time of writing, Charles Sturt University, Orange offered degree programs in pharmacy, nursing, dentistry, clinical sciences, physiotherapy, health and rehabilitation sciences and, of course, agribusiness. Indeed, recent years have seen a revival in agribusiness, with campus institutions such as the Ag Club being re-established. So perhaps the Spirit of the Orange Agricultural College lives on.



◄ *A College lecture theatre from the late 1970s.*



► *A lecture theatre at CSU Orange during the late-2000s.*

Appendixes

Appendix 1: The first Council

George Brownbill: Elected external student representative, from Horticulture course

Owen Carter: Assistant Principal, Hawkesbury Agricultural College

John Chudleigh: Head, School of Rural Management, OAC

Courtney Hawke: Travel Consultant and former orchardist

Trevor Hewitt: Elected non-academic staff representative, and Maintenance Supervisor, OAC

Beryl Ingold, MBE: Member of family farm business

Neil Jones: Elected academic staff representative, and Head, Plant Production Department, OAC

Donald McDonald: Regional Director of Agriculture, Central West, South East and Illawarra Region

James Munro: Elected internal student representative, from Farm Management course

Robert Napier: Principal, OAC

Christopher O'Donnell: PhD student and formerly Acting Senior Economist, Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation

Leonard Pockley: Farmer

Justin Powell: Elected non-academic staff representative, and Assistant Secretary, OAC

Dudley Roth: General Manager, Group Manufacturing, Email Ltd.

Dr Bryan Rothwell: Deputy Principal, Mitchell CAE

James Selby: Social Planner, Orange City Council

Timothy Sullivan: Mayor of Orange

Christine Urbanski: Teacher, Blayney High School

John Wilkie: Principal, Orange College of TAFE

Ian (Peter) Wrigley: Farmer

Kerry Cochrane: Lecturer, OAC, elected by academic staff to position of Praelector

Don Foster: Secretary, OAC, and Secretary to Council

Appendix 2: On the road again...[1]

The white Toyota pulling the chuck wagon clocked 7,006 kilometres in service of our external ADFSS students – almost three weeks on the road...and what a variety of roads.

Saturday, 8th February [1985], it left OAC with Evan Hunt at the wheel. The long, boring haul across to Roseworthy... West Wyalong, Hay, Mildura, and diesel hard to find on Saturday evening. We arrived at Roseworthy in time for an introductory residential school for fifteen prospective students on the Sunday.

Perhaps the best part about Roseworthy is its location near Gawler at the Adelaide end of the famous Barossa Valley. Monday morning saw us completing last minute provisioning for the Farm Practice Tour from Roseworthy kitchens and the local Coles supermarket in Gawler.

The tour departed on schedule at 11am...we made a few "pick ups" on the way – a slight detour to Mannum for Flos, who as our oldest external (over 70, we're not divulging how much over) merits special consideration.

First property inspection: a six hundred cow dairy right on the edge of Lake Alexandrina at Narung...impressive in itself, but even more impressive was the Lucerne being grown under centre pivot irrigation to feed the cows... Overnight in the best shearers' quarters we have ever stayed in on a 15,000 ha property near Salt Creek on the Coorong. Very interesting and efficiently managed property – the one manager for 27 years – rotationally grazing lucerne with cattle followed by sheep....Nothing matched their commercial Hereford steers – 430 kg at 11 months. Top pastures, top management and a top co-operator....

From our [Robe] base we went to the Mount Burr forestry, one of the scenes of the devastating Ash Wednesday fires in 1983. One of the features of the southeast of S.A. is that the water table is almost at the surface. Now, since drainage, the peat soils are most productive and untold water is available for irrigation about three metres below the surface. We visited a cattle property at Penola with marvellous strawberry white clover and rye pastures with "wild" irrigation – water just so available....

The next two nights were spent in a camping centre near Naracoorte, and from there we visited Struan Research Centre. Mike Delande was very interesting with a resume of cattle crossbreeding work, and Trent Potter told us about oilseed growing in that part of the world. Only a few people are trying

[1]These excerpts from Una Wettenhall's report on this extended road trip have been included to capture some of the flavour of the early farm tours. The arrangement with Roseworthy lasted until October 1987, when it was decided, owing to declining enrolments, not to renew the contract for 1988.

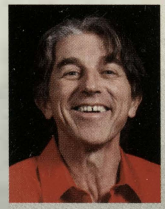
◄ *Horticulture Lecturer John Eisemann drives a mini-bus on one of the College's regular farm tours.*

oilseeds, but both sunnies and rape are quite successful, particularly good returns from the sunnies....

Last day of tour was spent visiting a big property near Padthaway. Cereal growing, livestock, small seeds and a newly-planted vineyard. The grapes are transported from there to the Barossa for processing. Padthaway, like Coonawarra is a developing area for vineyards, the cool summer climate is ideal for the production of varietal dry whites which are currently top-selling lines.

Evan to Adelaide for the return flight to Orange, Una and the cruiser from Adelaide across to just north of Bendigo to pick up the first Victorian student to begin the Farm Practice II tour. It was long, lonely trek...then off again to Corowa where three of the other Victorians came "over the hill" (quite a big hill, Mount Hotham). We met up at Fidelity Feeds piggery, across to Holbrook where we made our rendezvous with Barry Smart driving the OAC bus collecting students en route.

The author

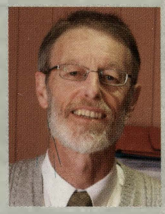


Philip Gissing studied History and Philosophy of Science at the University of NSW, and completed his PhD, on the career of Sir Philip Baxter, in 1999, under the supervision of Dr David Miller.

He has taught at both UNSW and the University of Sydney, and spent a couple of years at the Orange campus as a tutor in History and Sociology, under the auspices of the Centre for Regional Education, Orange. Encouraged by Professor Kevin Parton and the academic staff at what was then the Faculty of Rural Management of the University of Sydney, he began archival research into the history of the Orange campus.

Since finishing his postgraduate studies, Philip has also contributed articles on Sir Philip, and the philosopher Alan Ker Stout, to the "Australian Dictionary of Biography".

The editor



Professor Kevin Parton is the Head of Campus of Charles Sturt University Orange. A leading agricultural economist, he is well known in the fields of agriculture and rural health.

In 2001 he was appointed founding Dean of the University of Sydney's Faculty of Rural Management, Orange. Prior to this, he was Chair of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Business at Ontario Agricultural College, the University of Guelph.

Before working in Canada, Professor Parton was the Director of the Centre for Health Research and Development at The University of New England.

Currently he teaches marketing in CSU's School of Business. His research focus is on the agricultural and health related impacts of climate change, and options for emissions trading schemes and carbon taxes.

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