



# The evolving and eclectic collection processing project



## CSU Regional Archives Scholarship 2016

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## Introduction

Firstly, I would like to thank Jill and Wayne for offering me the scholarship and their help throughout the time I spent at the archives. I have really appreciated the opportunity. I hope that I have contributed through providing public access to previously unsorted collections.

This scholarship had a different approach to others undertaken in the past. Rather than focusing on a single large collection, the decision was made to work on several smaller ones. In my application, I expressed an interest to work on agricultural and environmental focused collections as my background and formal training is in these areas.

This is where things started, then I was offered the challenge of doing something outside the comfort zone and thought why not, it was good to challenge the brain and see how the same process works regardless of content. The remainder went from there.

Below is the final list of collections that now have a listing within the CSU Regional Archive database.

- Wagga Wagga Urban Landcare group
- Agricultural Bureau of NSW
- Beryl Ingold
- Rural Youth NSW
- Letona Cannery Cooperative
- Australian Ricegrowers Association
- Friends of the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery
- Wagga Wagga Art Society
- Mitchell College of Academic Staff Association
- Charles Sturt University (CSU) Marketing department
- CSU handbooks and graduation books upto 2011

The only thing the above collections have in common is that they all started in a box so hence the title of report. Some of the organisations still exist today while others have closed.

For each collection, an agency history has been written except for CSU. Below is a description for each of the collections worked on during the scholarship. They include an agency history along with some of the challenges and interesting elements within each collection. The final lists and agency histories can be found on the CSU Archives website along with a presentation made to the CSU School of Information Studies during my last week of the scholarship.

## Wagga Wagga Urban Landcare Group (1994 - )



The group formed in 1994 following a public meeting called due to local concern about the salinity that was occurring within the Wagga Wagga urban area. This led to a collaboration with Wagga Wagga City Council and the then NSW Department of Land and Water Conservation to work on the issue.

The Landcare group was successful in obtaining funding to undertake work to address the salinity problem. This involved the development of written publications and a public awareness campaign to educate the local community. The collection contains information on the publications, including one on suitable native garden plants. The group also supported docent program where people were up-skilled to assist in publicising the Group's activities to the wider community.

More recently the group has moved on to look at other issues often associated with the Murrumbidgee River and have been successful in obtaining funding to clear weed infestations on the riverbanks and to revegetate these areas.

The group is involved in regular weeding of community areas within the city, seedling propagation which provides stock

for planting and sale, events such as National Tree Day and Clean Up Australia Day, and have maintained their salinity business awareness program.

### Challenges

Like other groups, unpaid volunteers run the Landcare group and the records reflect this. There are gaps in the correspondence, financial and activities files. The biggest challenge with this collection was the lack of information on the photos included along with missing correspondence and paperwork associated with the funded projects the group was successful in obtaining. While for some, there is evidence such as publications that were produced under the salinity funding, others had the application but no indication of what happened afterwards ie what the area looked like prior to the works being done, how many trees were planted if that was the project, how many participants assisted with implementing the projects.

There is a rather dated video in this collection, looking at the urban salinity issue in Wagga Wagga in the days of data collection.

From this collection, another landcare group's records (Downside) were placed into a new collection as they no connection with Wagga Wagga Urban group expect for a common boundary.

### References

Collection materials  
Wagga Wagga Urban Landcare Group website <http://wwul.org.au/node/2917>

The next collected suggested was the Agricultural Bureau which sounded interesting.

## Agriculture Bureau of NSW (1910 – 2002)



1908 saw the establishment of the Department of Agriculture in NSW. HCL Anderson, Under Secretary of the Department at the time wanted to create opportunities for extension staff to connect with landholders who were not seeking advice at that time and a gap existed that the existing Agricultural Societies were not filling. This nonpolitical and nonsectarian organisation in 1910 grew out of the Young Farmers groups that commenced in the 1850's. NSW Agriculture's aim with the Agricultural Bureau was to connect to young people living in rural areas through providing education and social opportunities that would assist the Department in achieving the aims of its extension program. It was viewed as an organisation that complemented others already in existence.

The 1920's and 1930's saw the greatest number of groups formed despite the depression and a change in the relationship between the Department and the Bureau. The groups become more structured and semi autonomous. These efforts were affected by World War 2 where many groups evolved into War Agricultural groups and did not resume their original function following the war.

The 1950's and 1960's saw a reduction in groups that was attributed to declining rural communities and the advent of television.

At the height of the Bureau's influence there were more than 100 clubs across NSW. The types of activities offered to members included demonstrations and presentations by departmental staff, field days, farm walks, beef herd competitions, social gatherings, film evenings that were organised by individual groups depending on what information and questions they had interest in answering as it was often a challenge to obtain local answers to questions. Another issue was filling some of the committee positions.



Another role was to foster the local Rural Youth groups. As times evolved, the Bureau created links with others assisting the rural community such as those with an environmental focus during the 1990's such as Landcare and Total Catchment Management.

At the state level, the executive committee is responsible for organising the annual conference. Fees collected from the membership are used to finance insurance to cover events and their promotion along with the production of the newsletter.

Early on a gap was identified in the need to assist women with increasing basic skills in household management and nutrition. This led to the appointment of Lorna Byrne to organise the women's section of the Agricultural Bureau in 1927. Women were encouraged to run their own meetings and were able to access information from other organisations as needed.

Another important educational element was the annual conferences. These commenced in a small way in 1923 and built over the years. For the first 43 years they were held at the Hawkesbury Agricultural College where the college facilities were used as part of the experience showing the latest technology. Here the Farrer medal was also presented on an annual basis until the early 1960's.

## **Challenges**

The CSU Regional Archive hold a part of the Agricultural Bureau's collection that is generally the last 15 years associated with the support provided by NSW Agriculture in Cowra. The NSW State Library and State Records also hold parts generally prior to this period when the Bureau was managed out of Sydney. These collections were donated prior to the support section of NSW Agriculture being moved to Cowra.

Originally there was 2 collections that needed to be combined. NSW Agriculture has been restructured several times and such material is often disposed of where it has no relevance or ownership by someone working in that office, a common enough risk for such records.

While working on sorting these collections, an interrogation of the archive's database found other items in another collection (Beryl Ingold) that maybe of relevance that should be included here. I was handed several lists from that collection and asked if there was anything of interest in relation to the Agricultural Bureau. The answer was yes so the boxes appeared. Beryl's connection to the Agricultural Bureau was she was the Bureau's first female president during the late 1970's.

Filing by staff has meant that some components such as correspondence and minutes are not complete, ie they start in this collection in 1982 or is patchy prior to this such as with the conference papers. There was also a lot of duplication within the 'dump' files that contained minutes, correspondence and anything else that turned up. This generated a lot of shredding.

Over the years the conference evolved to consider specific issues of interest to the rural community.

A meeting on February 25<sup>th</sup> 2002 saw the motion accepted that the parent body for the NSW Agricultural Bureau be wound up. Any funds were split between various agricultural institutions (Orange Agricultural College, Yanco and Tocal) and Rural Youth for student scholarships and to provide assistance for those groups wishing to continue to incorporate. Individual groups were given the choice of either winding up, joining another group or incorporating and continuing on their own. The need for and cost of public liability insurance was an influence. Groups winding up also had to consider what happened to their funds and equipment.



There were some odd elements found within the collection such as conference papers from early years such as 1932, 1942 and through the 1950's and a conference banner. Further pieces include information on the farm management course run and some random records from individual clubs such as Woodstock and Murrumbateman.

Within the original collection there were few photos and these were mostly of the annual conference from the early years. Also, there were no financial records other than those presented at the Executive meetings. I didn't realise at the time that they might be missing as there were few in the first sorted collection and that they should be there. There is also a history of the Bureau along with membership lists and some newsletters. The history along with the minutes meant the whole story of the Bureau can be found within the collection. Looking back, I wasn't so lucky with other collections.

One item was I unable to work out its context was a file looking at Dumaresq Island. The only conclusion I could come to was a group had been donated land at some point and there were questions about rates etc that needed to be answered as the file does not have a lot of context.

There were a series of audio tapes from Bureau conferences that can be copied into a digital format allowing long term access. Parts of these tapes have poor audio and identifying the speakers was a challenge as the tape was often started after people were introduced and the year was not mentioned. A list if available of the contents, yes I got the job of having a listen and trying to work out what was said or at least the important bits. It was nearly universal as soon as something really important like a name was said the tape didn't capture it and so the conference papers were consulted where possible to fill in the gaps where there was no detail on the tape.

While the final list has a lot of photos listed, it didn't start that way. Most of them arrived later. I might have thought I had all I was going to get for the Agricultural Bureau when these boxes were sorted and listed that didn't quite turn out to be the case.

## **References**

Collection materials

From here it became obvious that the files removed from Beryl Ingold's collection led to this collection being left a little untidy and a clean up would assist with access so Beryl's collections were addressed next.

## Beryl Ingold (1927 – 2011)



Beryl was born in Sydney and raised in Cootamundra in the NSW Riverina. Her parents instilled a love of education and the importance of service to the community in Beryl and her two sisters. After completing her schooling, Beryl went on to study Business Principles by distance education through the Railways Institute, enjoying the opportunity and followed this up with Accountancy. This complemented her work as a book keeper for a local stock and station agent.

Beryl married Edward “Ned” Thomas Ingold, a farmer from Cootamundra, in 1950 and supported him through becoming involved in agricultural organisations. She developed a strong interest in The Agricultural Bureau of NSW due to its educational focus and became a member in 1970. Beryl was elected the first woman President for the Bureau from 1975 – 1979; following her stepping down as President, she took on the role of Treasurer for the next twenty years.

As a result of her work with the Bureau and because of her interest in agricultural education, Beryl served on the Orange Agricultural College Board for 18 years starting in 1978 with 9 years as chair, with her final year as chairperson of the

Advisory Council to the University of Sydney. During this time Beryl also served as Patron for the Rural Youth Organisation of NSW along with being on the State Council as Vice President from 1976-1977.

Amongst many other personal and public commitments, Beryl also served on

- The Cootamundra District Land Board,
- The Cootamundra Hospital Board,
- The Cootamundra Branch of the CWA, (serving as NSW State Vice President of the CWA (1968-1971),
- The Cootamundra Show Society, as Secretary,
- NSW Women’s Advisory Council to the Premier (1981 – 1984),
- The Murrumbidgee College Advisory Board,
- The Riverina/Murray TAFE Advisory Committee,
- The NSW Education Training Foundation,
- Family and Children’s Services Ministerial Advisory Committee, serving as Chairperson from 1985-1987,
- The Cootamundra Public School Council, holding the position as Chairperson for a number of years,
- The Legal Profession Disciplinary Tribunal, and
- The Riverina Industry Development Board (1984 to 1990).

Her previous work in promoting agricultural education led to the opportunity in 1975 (the International Year of Women) to convene the “Status of Women on the Land” Committee, acknowledging the increasing recognition of the contribution of women in agriculture.



In 1970 Cootamundra recognised Beryl as its Lion's Citizen of the Year. She was awarded an MBE in 1979 for services to agriculture and to the community; in the late 1980s she was given an honorary Bachelor of Applied Science from the Riverina Murray Institute of Higher Education (now Charles Sturt University) and in 1991 she received an honorary doctorate from the University of New England. Further recognition of her work occurred in 1988 when she was awarded the Bicentennial Medal.

On 1 January 2001 Beryl received the Centenary Medal for long and outstanding service to agriculture, education and the community. As a Queen's Birthday Honour that year, she was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for service to the rural community in the areas of regional development and education, particularly recognition of the importance of management training in the agribusiness sector, the development of agricultural industries, and to the welfare of rural women.

## Challenges

This is a very disjointed collection. There were no personal papers such as diaries or letters that would assist in providing some insight into Beryl and what she did.

The collection contains conference papers, newsletters that often bore little relationship to others. This was evident when sorting the collection to try and group things together. Some were obvious as education, agriculture and women, CWA and were grouped as such while trying to make the connection between the former and with the Cootamundra Hospital Board, Cootamundra Public School and the Solicitor's Statutory Committee. Basically there isn't a connection so each was kept separate in files towards the end of the collection and split to make access easier.

This was the first time I encountered the issue of restricted files owing to their contents.

In writing a history on Beryl it became obvious that she had been involved with a diverse range of initiatives throughout her life and searching for information on this did help to put the collection into perspective.

I spent a morning at the Cootamundra library in the hope of answering the question as to the reason for awarding the 1970's Citizen of the Year as there were no details in the file along with the Bicentennial medal and some context would have been great. The papers didn't help, the 1970's was basically a gossip rag, if you wanted to know where someone was then that was your local source. The 1988 paper mentioned that the Ingold family had the largest representation at the Australia Day awards but not why they might have been there. The written local histories did not add anything that wasn't already known.

## References

Collection

Website <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0302b.htm>

What next? From going through the Agricultural Bureau it was obvious that Rural Youth also involved the same people from the Cowra Department of Agriculture so logically it was a good decision to have a look at this collection and process it.

## Rural Youth NSW (1928 – 2003)



The aim of the Rural Youth Organisation was to encourage and assist young people who are interested in the land, the farm, the home and their local community. Important skills such as public speaking, debating, organisation and “hands-on” expertise such as fencing and stock appraisal are fostered. It was for young people aged 10 to 25 years who wanted to become self-reliant, responsible and effective citizens. It was a club for its members and run by its members, providing a social and support network for young people for all backgrounds. There were clubs throughout the state from rural areas to the city.



Rural Youth's motto was I Aspire, I Achieve.

Objectives for Rural Youth include:

- To develop an understanding of the principles of efficient agriculture and home economics, thereby raising the standards of rural practices and home and family living.
- To provide opportunities for learning and applying the

principles of democratic leadership.

- To stimulate interests which maybe conducive to the beneficial use of leisure time.
- To help youth to adjust to changing social, cultural and economic conditions.
- To initiative and implement educational programs for rural youth.
- To provide opportunities for social interaction.
- To foster in young people a sense of personal and community responsibility and to stimulate interest in civic affairs and the processes of government at home and abroad.
- To bring members closer together in understanding, sympathy and cooperative effort.

Members received a regular newsletter called “Contact” which reported on club events and achievements as well as members’ competition results.

The Rural Youth Organisation was started in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by a Bathurst school teacher, John Halsted, who encouraged students to grow vegetables and crops at school. Success occurred where students had their own garden to look after and these related to the ‘projects’ that members would carry out in later years. John also encouraged homecraft projects, show exhibits and other activities, all initiatives that the Rural Youth Organisation adopted.



During 1924 numerous local agricultural societies showed interest in forming clubs for young people. During the first meetings held in 1926, the decision was made to form clubs called “Junior Farmers Clubs”. While the first State Council secretary was employed by the NSW Department of Agriculture, staff from the Department of Education were to be involved and, later on, responsibility for the Organisation was transferred to that Department.

Ernest Breakwell was the first State Organiser for the Junior Farmer’s Clubs (who later became the first Principal of Yanco Agricultural High School. He held the former position until his retirement in 1943.

The first field officers were Jack Webb and George Blacklock who covered the northern and southern parts of the state; their work led to the formation of groups across the state including around Bega, Wagga Wagga (Downside), Glen Innes, Kempsey and Singleton. Within the first 12 months there were 35 clubs across the state. The Glen Innes Club is acknowledged as the first club formed due to its membership fees arriving at Head Office on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1928.

During the 1930’s and through World War 2 the movement spread and played an important role in easing food shortages. It was often associated with the teaching of agriculture in schools in many instances.

In 1943 George Blacklock succeeded Ernest Breakwell until 1953 when William Tearle took over and the position was renamed Principal Rural Youth Officer in 1972. Tearle retired in early 1976.

Canadian Dr Harold Baker’s visit in 1964 to survey club work had significant influences on the organisation and his recommendations were implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> July 1966. These included a name change from Junior Farmers to the Rural Youth Organisation and the provision was made allowing junior and senior clubs. The State Council retained its control while the number of sponsors on the Council was reduced.

Further constitutional changes occurred on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1972, providing the opportunity for autonomous Junior and Senior Sections with the Rural Youth Council providing the functions of advice, coordination and education.

While similar groups had formed in other Australian states by 1950, NSW is recognised as having the first organisation formed in Australia.

Support wise, on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1973 responsibility for the Rural Youth Organisation was transferred from the Department of Education to the Department of Agriculture offices located in Sydney. Prior to this move there were 5 Head Office staff, 7 Regional Officers and 21 District Officers. Over the next 10 years, support was reduced and in early

1982 the remaining 4 staff were transferred to Cowra to support both the Agricultural Bureau and the Rural Youth Organisation as the Group Activities Unit.

The Rural Youth Organisation had both Patrons and Trustees. Patrons provided support by attending events and promoting the Organisation while Trustees were responsible for ensuring the appropriate administration of the Organisation was carried out. The NSW Minister for Agriculture and the shadow Minister were always invited to be Patrons for Rural Youth and to open Show Camp at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

There were several state wide activities members could participate in, including the State Conference, Top Achiever, Major Awards, Show camp and Roundup. Some activities were split into junior and senior level and others were only available to those over 18 years. Show camp was associated with the Sydney Royal Easter Show, providing an opportunity for rural students to participate in stock judging and touring the numerous pavilions. The Major Awards provided opportunities to undertake exchanges, sometimes overseas. A lot of these activities involved competitions between individuals and clubs such as stock judging, fencing and species identification and were hosted at various locations over the years.



A review of Rural Youth was undertaken in 2003 to ask why there are fewer members and they are hard to keep and how relevant is the organisation today along with what are the options to address these challenges. This led to NSW Agriculture withdrawing administration support for Rural Youth and the groups were required to incorporate if they wished to continue or close due to the need for insurance. Three groups remain active in 2016 Coraki and Kyogle on the north coast and Bega on the south. While younger members are encouraged to hold some positions on the executive, parents hold the position of treasurer and public officer.

Due to the Rural Youth Organisation and the Agricultural Bureau of NSW being managed by the same unit within NSW Agriculture at Cowra, some records were originally archived with the wrong collection. In some cases, information on certain aspects of the Rural Youth Organisation have been left with the original Agricultural Bureau of NSW collection.



## Challenges

This was the largest single collection sorted and listed during the scholarship at 50 boxes (this is some of them, empty).



I thought it would be easier to look at everything even if only briefly so all boxes were brought down. When initially sorting these to work out what Rural Youth information I had, the first trolley load of boxes also had some Agricultural Bureau conference papers within them which were put aside until all boxes on that trolley load were emptied. These conference papers were checked against the existing collection and put aside to be shredded, phew!

The second lot held a variety of Rural Youth files which were emptied and put into piles of similar topics while the third was full of dump files. Some of these were emptied but after a while I ran out of ready space for them and left the balance in the boxes stacked together.

The fourth trolley load contained another lot of surprises, this time the Agricultural Bureau financial records of which I had seen none of in that collection, damn that was going to require a bit of a rethink of

how to incorporate them into the existing collection without needed to relabel the rest. These were put aside to be dealt with later, a decision that proved wise. The balance of the boxes contained all the remaining Rural Youth ephemera such as photos, slides, film, banners, conference tapes, grain samples etc.



By the time this was completed it was getting on in the day so I decided to go through the group files to start with and these contain a lot of lists of members especially during the 1990's. These clubs were located all over the state.

Overnight I gave it some more thought and based on previous experience with the Agricultural Bureau found it would be better to tackle the dump files due to the possibilities that were no doubt contained within their folders. It proved to be a wise choice but one that took a little while, I think there were around 40 all about 4-5cm thick at least they were labelled with a date range which helped later. There was a lot of duplication within the files. It wasn't uncommon to find 3-4 copies of the same 0.5cm item in the same file and more often than not



stacked one on top of another allowing easy decision making (this is them cleaned out).



Rural Youth also has a written history which was great as it helped with writing the agency history. One small problem was the records in the collection stop prior to the decision being made about the future of the organisation. They had commissioned a consultant to look at Rural Youth and make some suggestions about the future. It was getting more challenging to fill positions and the number of groups had shrunk to 9 state wide. The last lot of minutes and correspondence talk about discussing the outcomes at the next meeting but that was it. In the end following some internet searching I got a phone number for a group that operates today and made the call. 45 minutes later following an interesting discussion, I found out the same thing happened to Rural Youth as did to the Agricultural Bureau. The groups were told they needed to incorporate or close due to the need for insurance with the types of activities they like to offer that would no longer be managed by staff at Cowra.

There is an almost complete set of newsletters, "Contact" and a good place

to find out the results of annual state wide competitions.

One thing that challenged me was how did these groups compete with Scouts and Guides in the same area, this question was answered in that 45min phone call as there is overlap between them. Rural Youth could also projects and gain awards. Copies of a lot of the project books can be found in the collection and they cover a wide array of topics.

Just when I thought things were going along okay and there hadn't been too many more donations for the Agricultural Bureau collection, I ran into the photos which were left to the end in case more appeared, tucked elsewhere in the files. The biggest challenge with the photos was the lack of labels. On starting to sort through them, it became obvious that potentially a large proportion of them were likely to be from Agricultural Bureau events as quote "there were too many old people in them sitting in paddocks to be Rural Youth". With the lack of labels this was difficult to prove so those that did not have a label or had the Bureau logo in them were left with Rural Youth. Associated with this were numerous sets of slides. There were a series developed by NSW Agriculture back in 1960's that looked at stock breeds and other elements, obviously used for training.

Another element in the photo collection was the discovery of several of those albums with the sticky faces and plastic coverings, just great!



I was lucky enough to do INF 520 Preservation while I was working at the archive and someone posted a link to a YouTube video explaining an option to extract photos from such situations and my not secret weapon is.....



Yes another use for an ordinary household item. Find an unstuck corner, slide floss under and wriggle the floss under the photo and with patience the photo will come off with no damage. It does work. Just use unscented industrial strength stuff.

An interesting element was the Riverina group had collated several scrapbooks on media articles of the what activities they were involved in during the 1970's.

Rural Youth also had some audio files containing conference meeting proceedings and yes there is a list of the contents and the files are now digitally available. Yes I got the job of going through them.

A decision needed to be made about the grain samples that were included. I saw them as a risk of providing a long term food source for anything that could get in if the plastic containers perished. The decision was made to remove these elements from the collection.



This did not see the end of Rural Youth, I thought it did but a chance look into the Agricultural Bureau boxes to find the history some time later had me looking along the shelf for some very unknown reason and I saw more Rural Youth. When these turned up I was hoping with these that the consultant's report about the future may be included but I was disappointed. This new material was combined with this collection where applicable.

Like the Agricultural Bureau, State Records and the NSW State Library also has records about Rural Youth mostly stemming from its time under the Department of Education.

**References**  
Collection  
Jill Wilson

From here a slight change although the same theme remains to look at the Letona cannery.

## Letona Cannery Cooperative (1916 – 1994)



Plantings of canning fruit in the Leeton area started in 1912 with great promise. However, challenges arose with varieties that had been recommended for Australian conditions but proved unsuitable for the Leeton area. Research was undertaken to address this issue. The NSW Government opened the 20 acre Leeton Cannery in 1916 following the establishment of irrigation in the area with water supplied by the Snowy Hydroelectric Scheme.

This management arrangement with the government lasted until 1935 when ownership was transferred to Growers and Shareholders. The new Letona Cannery Cooperative enabled the continuation of fruit and vegetable processing locally through the 500 local farmers putting 10 pounds into a fund, along with an ongoing fruit supply levy. The Cooperative shared the running and maintenance of the irrigation system that supported the area with the government and other users, such as the Ricegrowers' Co-operative.

During World War 2 the cannery supplied vegetables to Allied forces in the south

west Pacific region. Vegetable processing lasted until just after World War 2. Due to competition from other Australian and overseas processors, the vegetable component of Letona ceased (except for tomatoes which Letona classified as a fruit).

Between 1921 and 1924 canning production doubled, which was due to the new soldier settlement schemes following World War 1. Despite a wet 1956 that killed numerous plantings, by 1960 the Leeton area supported 1700 growers, 3.8 million trees that produced 11 million basic cartons. The 1970's saw 1400 contracted landholders, 2.7 million trees producing 7.25 million basic cartons. At that time, it took about 8 hours to process 300 tonnes of peaches which provides around 12,000 cartons.

Peaches and pears were the most common canned fruit, with apricots making up less than 10% of the total. Products were marketed under both the Letona and Golden Areas labels. 1967 saw up to 58% of the cannery employees being women during the height of the season, with employees being drawn from the local area – Griffith, Leeton, Narrandera and itinerants. Fruit prices were set by the Fruit Industry Sugar Concession Committee and growers could not be paid less than the determined amount.

Throughout the life of the cannery, State and Federal governments played a role in assisting marketing through the establishment of a single export desk in 1926, setting prices for inputs such as sugar and fruit for the Australian canning industry which contained as many as 22 canneries.

Another influence was the Fruit Sugar Concession Committee which was implemented during the 1940's. The rebate being paid assisted growers to receive sufficient price for their product due to competition between manufacturers and the glut of fruit present during the 1930's and also created a market for the product and an income for growers. This along with export subsidies assisted the industry.

To assist with farm management, Letona provided landholders with access to a machinery pool which reduced their dependence on having to purchase expensive farming equipment with the small blocks of around 29 acres.

As an example of the sheer scale of local fruit production, in 1969 around 30,000 tonnes of fruit that meet the required specifications were received by road at Letona. This was comprised of:

- 14,000 of peaches
- 2,000 of pears
- 4,000 of apricots
- 4,000 of orange and other citrus
- 6,000 of tomatoes

Within 12 hours these were turned into:

- Canned Fruit – peeled tomatoes, peaches in syrup, pears, apricots, two fruits, fruit cocktail, quinces and plums;
- Nectars – peach, pear and apricot;
- Juices – orange, apple, tomato;
- Paste – tomato;
- Concentrates – orange, plum, apricot, peach, pear, tomato;
- Blended drinks – orange, orange/apricot, orange/passionfruit, orange/peach, fruit punch, apricot, apple/passionfruit; and
- Jams



These products were then transported by rail to market. Despite rail being the only viable transport option for Letona, the freight costs challenged the viability of the plant.

Fruit processing was largely automated although inspections were needed to ensure that machinery ran smoothly. For example, fruit needed to be graded to remove the undesirable elements. Due to the nature of the product, the work was seasonal (December to April), although a proportion of workers were permanent.

Disposal of waste was always a challenge. Some of the solutions they found included selling washed apricot seeds to cosmetics manufacturers and using dried peach stones to fire some of the boilers. In 1969 solids within the waste water were used by a local pig farmer before the water re-entered the main drainage channel.

The cannery had an onsite laboratory which checked aspects of the process for product quality along with the characteristics of the fruit inputs and was involved in product development. The Cannery worked with the NSW Department of Agriculture's Experimental



Farm at Yanco where new varieties were grown then sent to the cannery to determine their processing and canning qualities. Where these experiments were successful, landholders would then establish these species on their own properties.

Data indicates that around 70% of Letona's product is sent overseas to around 40 countries which is around 20,000 tonnes of fruit and vegetable with the main market being the UK.

Some of the challenges faced by the cannery include:

- Changing markets and players such as entry of the UK into the common market
- Subsidising of canned fruit
- Over supply of canned fruit at points in time such as the late 1960's
- Changing exchange rates
- Cost of freight in raw materials such as sugar, cans, cartons, labels, oil
- Seasonal conditions faced by growers that created issues such as disease, insect pest problems, wet conditions leading to split fruit or hail damage

To create a community profile, Letona established an Employees' Welfare Association that staff contributed to. Their responsibility was to provide entertainment, support sick workers and encourage participation in sports (cricket, tennis, quoits were popular) and put on regular events. One of these involved the hiring of films from Sydney and screening them locally. Some of the films that were shown during 1945 include: *Grant Uproar*, *Small Town Idol*, *Ride 'em Cowboy*, *Camera Thrills in Wildest Africa*, *Five Grand and a Girl*, and *His Loyal*

*Highness*. 1946 saw *Rip Van Winkle*, *Circus Capers* and *Yesterday Lives Again*.

In 1977 Letona purchased Mountain Maid, a Batlow-based processing plant owned by a cooperative, which had commenced operations in 1923. Mountain Maid had been established due to the need for cool storage and packing at Batlow. It produced cider, or sparkling apple juice as it is better known as well as processing several thousand tonnes of apples into juice, cider vinegar, apple sauce and apple pie.

During World War 2 the plant produced dehydrated vegetables for the Australian and American forces. Following the war, this evolved into freezing vegetables through its marketing involvement with Birds Eye Foods. It diversified into other vegetables including sweet corn, peas, beans, asparagus, root vegetables and boysenberries.

Unlike Leeton's Letona plant, Mountain Maid survived the 1994 closure and was sold in 1995. This survival was assisted by the selective upgrading of equipment within the plant. In 2002 the Mountain Maid brand was sold to a Tasmanian processor, Hartz.

In 1994 Letona was forced to close. It was a huge loss to Leeton and surrounding district. For example, in 1992 Letona was providing around \$10m in payroll earnings, a further \$8m to their 240 growers while local suppliers and transport operators received \$4.5m. Local authorities received \$5m for electricity and natural gas along with \$20,000 in rates.

This forced closure was due to significant debt and outdated plant equipment some of which dated back to World War 1 and

would have required a \$10-20m upgrade to bring it up to world's best practice. A few rescue options were discussed, such as a purchaser or a rescue package from

the State or Federal Government, but no one was interested in assisting Letona to continue.

## **Challenges**

Initially, there were 5 Letona collections. A large one that was donated by Letona when it closed and had been listed. The 4 smaller ones donated by 2 individuals. My job was to combine the smaller ones into 2 collections. For both pairs one had been listed and further material was donated which was unlisted.

There was the risk of duplication although this was only found for the annual reports despite the potential.

The first pair of collections sorted contained a lot of production diaries (~45 or 6 boxes) and some appointment diaries kept by staff working in the fruit deposit area of Letona from the early 1940's through the 1975. These documented some of the volumes that arrived. Another interesting element was the large amount of fruit specifications for the canned fruit. These often changed during the season reflecting altering conditions experienced by growers for example storm damage or adverse weather conditions.

There was also some of the old promotional materials used for Letona and other industries in the area. This collection has a detailed set of old photographs showing the inside of the cannery and its equipment during the 1940 and 1950's along with some of the supermarket promotions that occurred during this time although a lot of photos were not labelled which made things a challenge. The 3 albums of photos had been broadly listed, I refined the list to provide a little more detail where possible such as what was being canned such as pears, apricots etc.

The second pair of collections had been used as the basis for writing a book on the Letona cannery. There are a lot of machinery diagrams included and these larger ones have now been surrounded in Mylar and placed into map draws to maintain them. Another interesting item was a series of old tin labels for both Australian and Middle Eastern markets, the later denoted by the language the label information is written in. At one point, they had an issue with rusting cans and several samples have been retained in the collection.

This collection had a lot of other reports within it including annual reports from other canneries, the Dried Fruit Board and the Sugar Concession Committee. Only the later was kept as this had a direct relationship to Letona where the others were kept for interest and are not part of the Letona story. What to keep was assisted by a google search that unearthed a paper on the Concession Board explaining its role and another determined that the Dried Fruits Board focused on the Mildura area.

There was also information on Mountain Maid which Letona acquired during the 1970's. This information highlighted some of the challenges faced such as produce quality and with



apple cider which the Mountain Maid brand was known for. Investigations were made into what happened with the brand once the plant shut in 2002 and other processor from Tasmania purchased the brand name but this correspondence was not answered.

A video is included here as well, while the information is clearly dated and things have definitely moved on it is an interesting snap shot of what things were like during the peak of the cannery and its central role within Leeton as an employer. A warning, this video is certainly an occupational health and safety shocker and it is interesting to see how far things have come.

Both collections have recipe books included within them, once it is likely these were a closely guarded secret so if anyone has interest in cooking with canned fruit this is your source.

An interesting thing was the large collection donated by Letona does not have any copies of the annual reports.

## **References**

Collections

Tiffen, Robin, *Letona: The Whole Story*.

From this collection, there were some annual reports from the Australian Ricegrower's Association which were placed into a new collection as these are not related to Letona.

## Australian Ricegrowers' Association (1928 - )



Rice in Australia is grown in southern NSW along the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers and in Victoria. It grows during the summer months and is flood irrigated. The first rice crops were grown around Griffith and Leeton in 1924. 1928 saw the establishment of the Rice Marketing Board and SunRice was formed as the only buyer for NSW rice. Since 1950 they are responsible for storing, milling, processing, packaging and selling.



The association represents growers and is broken into 8 branches across these areas. Members meet regularly during the season to discuss issues that affect them and look for options to address them. Some years where there is insufficient water no rice is grown as they are the last in the system to receive their water allocation.

### Challenges

There weren't any as there simply just some annual reports and some background information on the development of the industry that did not fit into the Letona collection. These items were kept as the CSU Archives covers the area in NSW where rice is grown.

From here there was a definite change of pace.

## Friends of the Wagga Wagga Art Gallery



Remember those tasty goodies from the numerous exhibition openings? Well, that was the work of the Friends of the Art Gallery. Such work has allowed them to purchase items towards the Art Gallery collection especially in the areas of glass and print collections.

The also organise other functions at the gallery and trips to view exhibitions elsewhere.

### Challenges

This collection was definitely out of the comfort zone although the same approach worked and should. This is sorting the box contents into similar subject piles and go through them. Sometimes they are well labelled and other times manila folders or binders contain a bit of everything. Some things are easy to remove such as old shopping receipts for food etc. purchased for catering while other items require a little more reading.

Other files were split as needed and one key requirement was to have easy access to any documentation on acquisitions which could be needed should questions arise.

### References

Collection

Website site <http://www.fogww.com/>

This change of pace continued....

## Wagga Wagga Art Society (1949 - )



# Wagga Wagga Art Society

The Art Society formed in late 1949 following the meeting of interested people. The aim of the group is to promote enjoyment of fine arts through study and to hold exhibitions locally. The first elected President was Margaret Read in 1950 with the patron being the then local Mayor, Mr Gissing. The group very quickly sorted its first exhibition of member works in September 1950 that was held at the Council chambers.

The following year saw the introduction of Jubilee Art Prize that attracted 55 entries and purchased 3 pictures to commence their collection. This eventually evolved into an annual competition.

1952 saw the Art Society participate in city activities such as painting theatre backdrops and assisting with the visiting National Gallery exhibition. Monthly meetings saw guest speakers talk about various types of media and techniques. This year also saw their first temporary home in a loft which was used for around 12 months before they needed to vacate. This lack of permanent venue affected the regular sketch group that had no place to meet and work.

1954 saw work commence on a hut to make a studio in Small St which saw its first meeting in September 1955. Earlier that year the Society held its first cabaret ball, "A night in Montmartre" and the following year saw "A night in the studio" and a third ball "A night in a gypsy camp".

As the years went on and the Society had a home where groups and classes could meet, a number formed and continue to do so such as the Saturday painting group. Also workshops are run covering a range of techniques for all ages.



The local paper, the Daily Advertiser assisted by publishing a regular column informing the community of activities

along with a regular newsletter to members. Fundraising over the years has enabled the group to purchase items along with items being donated and acquired through the annual competition that focuses on local artists. This collection is on long term loan to the

Wagga Wagga Art Gallery. This ensures that the collection is professionally cared for and available to exhibitions.

A full history has been written on the group and can purchased.

## **Challenges**

Like with other organisations, volunteers run the Art Society although there is no doubt they are passionate. While there are some gaps in the records such as with correspondence and minutes for some eras, the collection contains a wide range of materials.

There are several membership lists stemming from their inception to more recent times.

One lot of items that caused a smile or 2 were the media articles and especially those covering the acquisition of a new item "Blue Tie". This decision clearly caused some friction around the city at the time although eventually the court of public opinion won the day.

If people are seeking a trip down memory lane about the exhibitions held by the Art Society over the years then this collection will help answer those questions. There are catalogues and invites from many.

The main challenge here was working out how the Art Gallery and other local committees fit into the art scene in Wagga Wagga to determine what needed to be kept.

## **Reference**

Collection

Website <http://www.wagga.nsw.gov.au/art-gallery/collections/general/wagga-wagga-art-society-collection>

There was another change of direction and pace.

## CSU collections (1989 - )

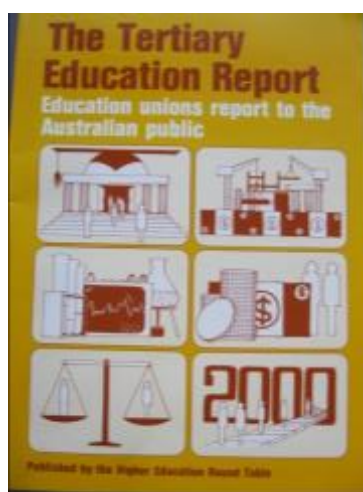


### Mitchell College of Academic Staff Association CSU Marketing department CSU Handbooks and Graduation documents

No agency history has been written here as CSU materials form a significant part of the collection within the Archive and they cover a diverse range of areas.

#### Challenges

This latest change in direction started with a Mitchell College Academic staff union collection. They covered a range of issues from the 1980's election campaigns, policy development for issues we take for granted today such as sexual harassment, discrimination, study leave, to wage negotiations and conditions, professional development to individual staff issues with the college.



The union also changed its name several times during the life of the records along with having minutes from the state and

federal level organisations. Their original filing system was interesting. In some cases, it had been done based on topics placed in slit A4 envelopes and labelled while others were placed in a file with a year on it. As some administrative positions within the union changed this was reflected within the filing system.

Looking back at the listing, it is interesting to see how the same issues arise today such as about funding, student fees and teacher supply and demand.



Within this collection was several general publications – Billboard and Mitchell News although only a couple of copies of each. I felt that these wouldn't be found in such a collection and did not fit so where to from here was to find them a home with other university publications. I did not doubt there were numerous other issues of these and these few should be put with



them. Others focusing on union outcomes such as negotiation or campaigns were left in the collection these included the Mitchell College newsletter and Fflash.

To find these publications a home, led to looking at the Marketing department records.

Well, the initial marketing collection contained a bit of everything and anything to do with marketing. Initially it has press releases from CSU and media articles mainly from the local newspapers with the bulk of these from the Wagga Wagga and Albury campuses. While working through these, it became obvious that some of the news releases and articles were likely to also be elsewhere. There was not enough for some years ie large gaps in what was present here such as whole months. So, some further database interrogation led to a number of other collections being raided for their contents to find overlaps and sort out what was present. One nasty surprise came with the 1996 and 1997 bundles. While I had a few from the original collection the rest were obviously elsewhere. The elsewhere had duplicate at best and triplicate at worst of each article. This was soon sorted and the piles shrunk accordingly. By the end, most of the original articles were housed elsewhere leaving the 2006 and 2007 press releases, a few scattered news articles from 1996 to 2004 and all articles from Jan 2005 to Feb 2008 in this collection.

There were several more scattered publications found in here that were added to those found elsewhere but still no home here for all of them.

Also within the collection, there were a range of one off reports and other items.

A search of the database indicated that they might have a home elsewhere so were taken up stairs to see what could be done. Shuffling through numerous boxes created a sizable shredding pile and found homes for most of what was left but not all. The original lists for these collections were adjusted accordingly with their new additions.

Another major item that survived to remain in this collection was the box of videos. Some could be played but others not due to their format. These were comprised of news articles from local TV stations and promos for the university. Some of these are rather dated creating a bit of amusement while being viewed and have an obvious audience. It was also obvious about the predictable nature of some the news items such as start of the university year and graduation.

There were also some photos including of several of the chancellor and vice chancellor.

There were a few stray items and another unsorted collection that were investigated and combined into what became a miscellaneous collection. In this there were large numbers of course and university wide prospectuses stemming from 2008. There were also a few more stray publications and those that had been found originally were put into this collection and listed.



As time was running out, the last collection that was worked on mainly just required listing with minimal sorting. It had had an addition from one of the previous ones as this collection regarding ceremonies and originally contained university handbooks and graduation programs along with some other events.

This collection is widely used by alumni asking questions about their graduation and having it listed will assist staff in accessing it in a more timely manner. The sorting for this collection was mainly with those who had received honorary degrees. There were citations included within the speeches from the graduation ceremonies and these have been separated and listed individually. This will increase access as previously people would have needed to know they had received one and possibly when to easily source the information.



## Conclusion

So what did all this box investigation lead to:

- Emptying about 155 ordinary boxes, 5 oversized, and 4 photo albums
- Put back ~75 boxes, 11 photo albums, 1 over sized box and ¼ of a map draw of contents
- Meaning there is more room upstairs.
- Entered ~1700 database items
- Threw out several plastic bags worth of rusting staples, paper clips, pins and other horrible fastening devices.



- And SHREDDED 8.1m of paper. Rural Youth contributed the most with 3.5m from a single collection. The photos below show what was shredded for Rural Youth and how many bags that was (12). P.S. the shredder has a good appetite, it just needs bags if you don't want to clean up the resulting mess.



One of the challenges with the collections is that some of the organisations no longer exist and combined with that is some had no permanent staff who were responsible for records has led to gaps in their stories. Also finding out what happened to some was challenging as the records stopped before this and given what they were involved in meant changes had occurred but what. The obvious example is Rural Youth.

The wide range of collections allowed experience to be gained in both those whose terms were technically familiar and others that were not. This was great and increase the confidence in having a go.

Reflecting on the experience, being a visual type of person, I found it relatively easy to remember short term at least things I had already seen especially those with a distinctive word or appearance and when the next copy came along they were checked and unnecessary material removed or combined.

Also I was looking for key words etc and read the documents until a decision could be made about whether to keep them or not and the applicable action was taken. I constantly asked the question when things got a bit bogged down, is it part of their story or related to them? If not, then why keep it? For example, annual reports from other organisations. If the answer wasn't obvious then the material may be set aside as sometimes it became clear when more of the collection has been sorted. I found by going through the minutes and correspondence aspects early this helped provide insight into the organisation. I found that minutes could be duplicated and found elsewhere so I had already gone through that material I would add a pile of things to be checked and this would occur when sorting the collection into the final order to be placed into boxes.

The final challenge with all collections was that of working out an order to out what remained worth keeping back in the boxes. For most I started with the governance components such as minutes, correspondence etc and worked from there but it does depend on the collection. For example, Beryl Ingold's doesn't really have this. Dealing with these were often easy to get back in the boxes clearing some table space to work out what to do with the rest. Making links between some of the other items wasn't always easy and looking through the lists, there seems to be a bit disjointed in what comes next. If something didn't fit readily there was always the option of a miscellaneous section which provide invaluable for some collections!



Rural Youth prior to being boxed.

A final word, have a go, you never know until you try what can be achieved.