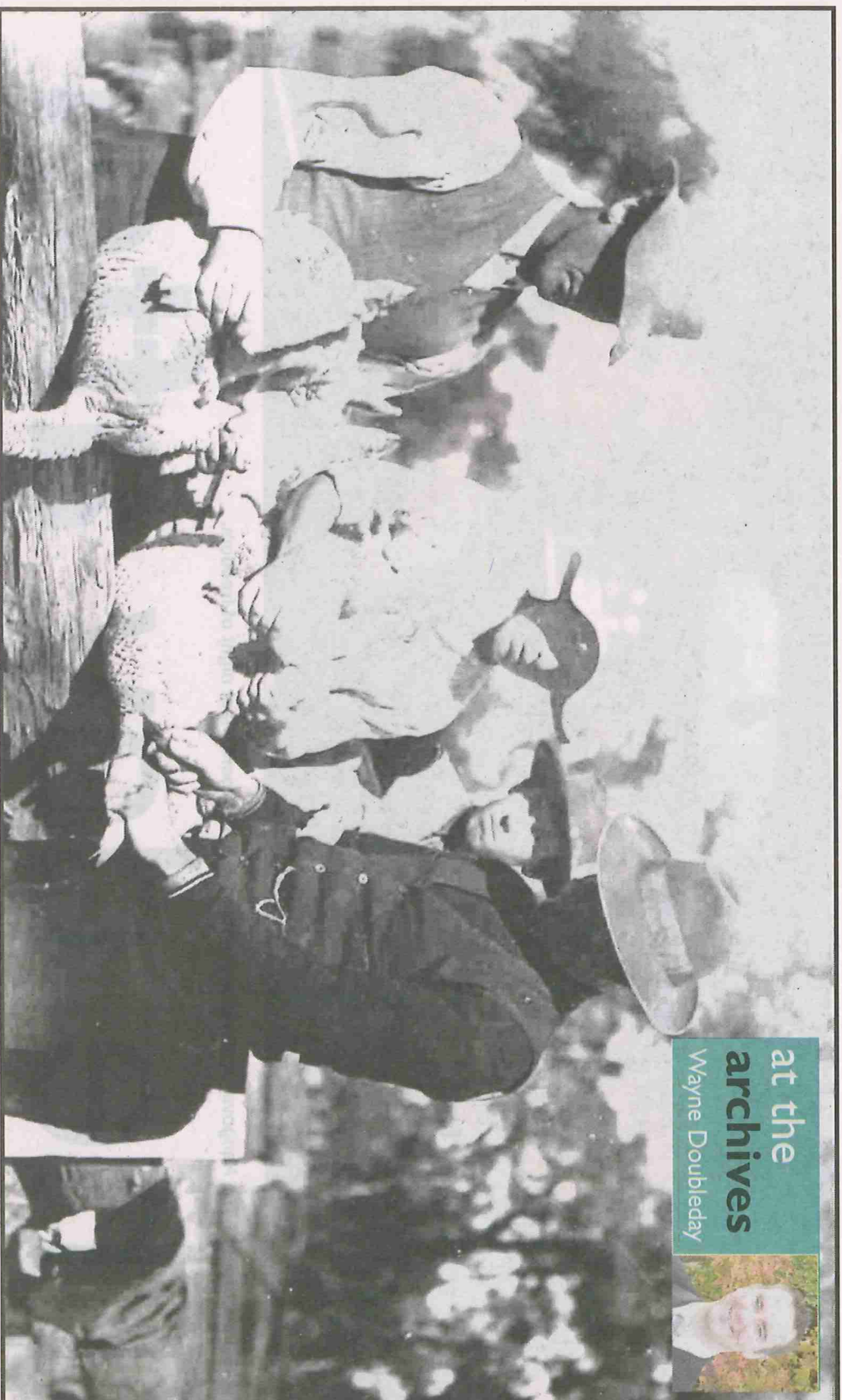


What you should know

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue.

■ Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour, including copying and postage.

■ For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au or visit the website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



at the archives
Wayne Doubleday

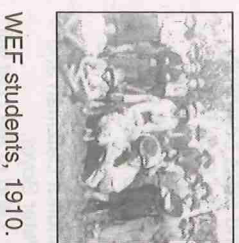
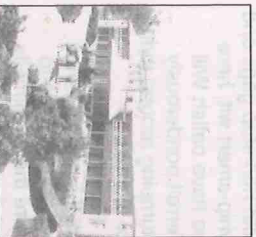


Above: Lamb marking 1910.

OUR RURAL beginnings

The Wagga Experiment Farm

Centre block – student accommodation.



WEF students, 1910.

■ **References:**
From Farm Boys to PhD's: Agricultural Education at Wagga Wagga 1896-1996, June Sutherland (1996); **A History of Wagga Wagga Keith Swan (1970)**; **Wagga Wagga – A History**, Sherry Morris (1999); **R.J.E. Gormly Card Index (held at CSU Regional Archives)**.

summarised the importance of the experiment farm by stating that, "its establishment was evidence that the government of the day appreciated the agricultural possibilities of the region ... very important experimental work was done there and agriculture throughout Australia benefited."

The first experiment farm established in NSW was the Murrumbidgee Experimental Farm, which was later renamed the Wagga Experiment Farm.

This had been brought to fruition after the urging of many prominent locals, including James Gormly (MLA), who had been corresponding and petitioning on the topic with the Director of Agriculture since at least 1890.

The site of the farm was chosen in 1891 and officially gazetted on October 25, 1892. It comprised 1994 acres of Crown land which included part of the North Wagga Common.

The first superintendent of the farm was John Coleman,

he oldest of Charles Sturt University's precursor institutions is the Wagga Experiment Farm, whose origins date back to 1892. Keith Swan

appointed in January 1892 to establish the farm. Other influential and well known people who later had a role at the farm included an American, Dr Nathan Cobb, and the famous William Farrer who experimented on many varieties of wheat.

George Valder succeeded Coleman when he left the farm in 1895 and his first tasks included the establishment of an orchard and a vineyard. The first buildings constructed were a seed room (also used for accommodation by Valder) and a stable.

These were followed in 1896 with the construction of a manager's residence, a laboratory and an extension to the stables.

The Wagga Experiment Farm was officially opened on October 1, 1896, however at the time only six students were enrolled. By the start of 1897 the number of students in residence had risen dramatically to 27.

Students were required to be at least 15 years of age and were expected to work a 48-hour week comprising practical work during the day and lectures at night.

Only those students who completed two years at the farm and passed both theoretical and practical examinations were presented with certificates.

George Valder departed the farm in June 1897 after he was appointed the new principal of the Hawkesbury Agricultural

College. Dr Nathan Cobb was selected as the acting manager, and although his stay was short-lived, he too continued an active building program highlighted by a two-storey brick laboratory.

He left the farm later the same year and was replaced as manager by George Maurice McKeown, who was to remain at the farm for over 20 years.

Aside from teaching and training in agricultural techniques, the Wagga Experiment Farm was also the site of many important tests, trials and activities.

William Farrer's efforts focused on breeding and selecting improved varieties of wheat. He was also able to produce new wheats which were rust resistant. Meanwhile, Cobb conducted experiments in bulk handling and wheat fertilisers.

Another aim of the farm included testing the suitability of local conditions for new types of commercial crops, including the aforementioned vineyard and orchards, as well as legumes, maize, melons and potatoes and vast quantities of wheat and barley.

The farm also bred sheep, cattle, pigs and horses, which were all crucial to the subjects being offered to students.

By 1913 the subjects examined were: book-keeping, poultry, manures (fertilisers), sheep and wool, wheat, fodder crops, dairy

testing, dairy farming, dairy hygiene, ensilage, orchard, pigs, mathematics, veterinary science and plant breeding.

Practical exams were also undertaken in farm, dairy, orchard, sheep and wool-classing. Students also took an active role in representing the farm in sporting events.

The farm fielded teams in rugby union, rugby league, tennis and cricket and often played against Wagga teams or visiting teams from out of town.

During World War I, the farm struggled due to a decrease in the number of students resulting from students enlisting in the armed forces, industrial and economic problems and the drought of 1916 to 17.

Likewise, numbers decreased during the Great Depression of the early 1930s, and drastically after the declaration of war in 1939. By June of 1942 only 14 students were enrolled at the farm.

After the conclusion of World War II debate concerning farming and agricultural education was paramount.

This change in direction resulted in the establishment of the Wagga Agricultural College in 1949 on the site of the experiment farm.

The official opening and naming of the Wagga Agricultural College took place on September 9, 1949.