

# *Yanco Experiment Farm*



*Celebrating 100 years of advancing agriculture*  
**1908-2008**





*Yanco Agricultural Institute, 2005*

### Cover photos

*Centre:* Yanco Experiment Farm front gate, 1950s (photo Paul Dann)

*Bottom left and right:* The majestic avenue of trees along the main driveway was planted in 1908. The date palms, from California were planted as a variety trial and are the source of many palm trees growing in the local district today. The Department of Agriculture's Fruit Expert, WJ Allen wrote in 1908: "Unfortunately all of our trees and palms for the avenue were very small, and it will take them some time before they are large enough to make a good show, but when they are grown it will be one of the prettiest drives in Australia". His vision has certainly come to pass and this driveway is now an important landmark of the area.

*Second from left:* Department of Agriculture Resident Officers Tom Hayes and Don Jamieson in front of palms at Yanco Experiment Farm, circa 1910.

*Second from right:* Technical Officer Brian Dunn, EM surveying a field to assess rice land suitability at Yanco Agricultural Institute, 1996.

*Film strip below:* Yanco Agricultural Institute 2007 (left to right) dining room verandah; administration block and hall; main quadrangle; old officers' block; Short Course Centre

## YANCO EXPERIMENT FARM CENTENARY

1908-2008

### Celebrating 100 years of advancing agriculture

'Yanco Experiment Farm' was established in 1908, by the NSW Department of Agriculture as a demonstration farm for irrigated agriculture in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA), then under development. One hundred years on, it is now fitting to celebrate this event and reflect on the interesting history of the site, one that makes Yanco unique among research stations of the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Yanco Farm has played an important role in the development of the irrigated cropping, horticulture and dairy industries in the MIA, through demonstration and research with crops such as rice, wheat, citrus, stone fruit, lucerne and vegetables. It has also played a significant role in the education of farmers.

The site was used as a home for boys during the 1930s and as an internment camp during World War II. However research, demonstration and education activities have been the focus since the War.

Today NSW DPI staff at Yanco Agricultural Institute continue to conduct world class research and provide education for farmers and the broader community through the Murrumbidgee Rural Studies Centre. It remains a centre from which extension and regulatory services are provided for both the local area and the state as a whole.

I am privileged and honoured to serve in the role first held by Mr Fred Chomley in 1908, and filled with distinction in later years by men such as John L. Green and Faulkner Mackenzie. The Institute has provided great service to agriculture over the last 100 years in the Riverina in particular, and to New South Wales generally. We look forward to continuing to 'advance agriculture' over the next 100 years.

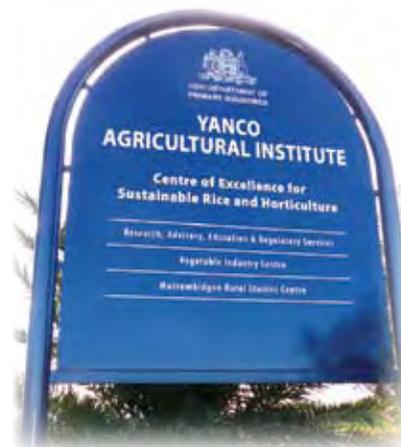


George Stevens

Manager

Yanco Agricultural Institute

January 2008



## YANCO AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE—A BRIEF HISTORY

Yanco Experiment Farm played a large part in the early development of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation area. It was established to provide an up-to-date demonstration farm for irrigated agriculture to assist settlers moving into the area. The site was considered an advantage, as people arriving in the area by train could see crops growing as they travelled past.

- 1908 323 acres purchased from Sir Samuel McCaughey for £2/10/- per acre. Subsequent purchases brought the total to 2045 acres (830 ha).
- 1908–1928 *Yanco Experimental Farm*—The Department of Agriculture of NSW conducted research and training on irrigated crops, horticulture and dairying.
- 1913 Status raised to Farm School, accepting paying students.
- 1928–1942 *Riverina Welfare Farm*—operated by the Department of Child Welfare. Research moved to the *Yanco Rice Research Station*.
- 1942–1947 Riverina Welfare Farm operated as a *prisoner of war camp*. This joint federal/state operation was managed by the Department of Agriculture during WWII for vegetable and seed production.
- 1947–1960 *Yanco Experiment Farm*—the Department of Agriculture regained control and scientific agricultural research resumed. Rural training provided for returning ex-servicemen and other farmers.
- 1951 The land was finally dedicated for public purposes as an experiment farm. Woodlot planted to assess tree species.
- 1961 *Yanco Agricultural Research Station*—name changed.
- 1963 *Yanco Agricultural College and Research Station*—new buildings completed. Residential training course for young farmers commenced. The College and Research Station operated as separate entities.
- 1972 *New library* opened.
- 1977 *New research laboratories* opened.
- 1983 *Yanco Agricultural Institute (YAI)*—functions amalgamated. The College became *Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture*. *Leeton Agricultural Research Station* became a field station of YAI.

## YANCO EXPERIMENT FARM

# CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

## October Long Weekend 2008

See inside back cover for more information

- 1985 *Advisory and Short Course Centre* opened—advisory and regulatory services relocated from Leeton to YAI. Short courses offered to farmers.
- 1993 *Amaroo Conference Centre* and motel-style accommodation opened.
- 1997–2005 Headquarters of *Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Rice Production*
- 1998 Named *Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Rice and Horticulture*
- 1999 *Vegetable Industry Training Centre* opened.
- 2003 *Murrumbidgee College of Agriculture* closed. Residential courses ceased but short courses continued.
- 2004 *NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI)*—NSW Agriculture amalgamated with the Departments of Mineral Resources, Forests and Fisheries. Some Forestry functions and Fisheries research relocated from Narrandera to Yanco Agricultural Institute.
- 2006 *Murrumbidgee Rural Studies Centre (MRSC)*—college amalgamated with Tocal College and was renamed.
- 2008 *Yanco Agricultural Institute*—now incorporates agricultural research, extension, education and regulatory functions, as well as forestry and fisheries services of NSW DPI, and includes MRSC and Leeton Field Station. It also houses state-wide soils testing laboratories for the Department of Water and Energy.



# January



*Above: Flood irrigating, Yanco, circa 1913*



*Right: Workers' camp, 1908 (top);  
Planting the first vineyard, 1908 (middle);  
Don Jamieson, Resident Officer (bottom);  
Far right: Settlers camp, 1908*



## THE EARLY DAYS 1908–1928

Yanco Experiment Farm was cleared by hand, then worked and graded by teams of six horses and various implements, as well as two traction engines and a scarifier on loan from Sir Samuel McCaughey. Stables, hay sheds, cottages and the manager's residence were built.

The first crops of barley, oats and wheat were sown in July 1908, along with lucerne, grapes, various nut, fruit and olive trees. Some of the



original olive and sugar gum windbreaks, and palm trees in the main driveway still exist today.

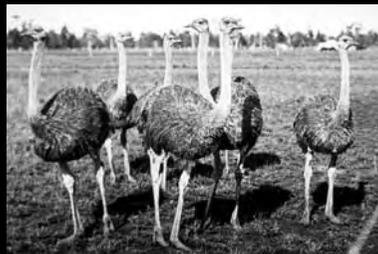
Research was conducted on fruit trees, vegetables, lucerne, pastures, fodder and green manure crops, cereals, rice, maize and ostriches for feather production. The farm also had a fruit canning plant and drying racks for processing fruit; a pure-bred dairy herd; a stud piggery; and breeding programs for horses and mules.

Irrigation water was initially supplied from the Murrumbidgee River via Sir Samuel McCaughey's irrigation channels until the 'turning on' of the water in July 1912. Both flood and spray irrigation were used on the 200 irrigable acres.

In 1913 the status of the farm was raised to Farm School. Young students (16–20 years) paid £15 for the first year and the second year was free if their work and conduct was satisfactory.

Many photographs of the early development of the farm and local area that survive today were taken by Hilton West, Sheep and Wool Officer, one of the first appointees to the Farm in 1908.

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	
<b>Yanco Experiment Farm</b> <b>CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS</b> <b>October Long Weekend 2008</b> See inside back cover for more information		<b>1</b>	<i>New Years Day</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<i>Australia Day holiday</i>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<i>Photos left to right:</i> <i>Driveway, circa 1910</i> <i>Cultivating, 1908</i> <i>Ostriches, 1912</i> <i>Fruit drying racks, circa 1913</i> <i>Main irrigation canal (photo H. West)</i>	



# February



## MH SAXBY

MH (Harry) Saxby transformed the Riverina Welfare Farm from an institution of fear and punishment to one which provided education and life skills to the inmates. He took an interest in the boys and introduced activities such as football, athletics, a boy scout troop and club-room, a drama club and literary club. He was well respected by staff and inmates.

The photographs on this page are from albums presented to Mr Saxby on his departure from Yanco. We acknowledge and thank his son Maurice Saxby, who also lived at Yanco during those years, for allowing us to use them in this publication and for valuable information supplied.



## RIVERINA WELFARE FARM 1928-1942

The Riverina Welfare Farm was operated by the Department of Child Welfare as a training institution for young first offenders, many of whom were homeless or orphans.

The first Superintendent, Major Parsonage ran the institution along military lines with severe punishment for misdemeanours. He was replaced by Mr M.H. Saxby in 1936 who introduced many reforms and innovations. These, together with a £50,000 building program, made the Welfare Farm one of the most successful in NSW and one of the most up-to-date corrective institutions in the Commonwealth.



Many of the current buildings were built during this period. Those around the main quadrangle accommodated 128 boys. Other buildings included a small hospital and matron's flat, kitchen and dining area, school room, shower block, laundry and community hall. There was also a gaol and a solitary confinement cell. The farm was largely self sufficient and supplied Yanco High School and other government institutions with produce.

During this period the Department of Agriculture retained an interest in the existing orchard and vineyard experiments.

The Welfare Farm ended in 1942 and the boys were transferred to the Gosford Boys' Home.

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Yanco Experiment Farm <b>CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS</b> October Long Weekend 2008 See inside back cover for more information					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 <i>St. Valentine's Day</i>	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	<i>Photos (circa 1930s) left to right:            Wool classing in the school room            Shower block            Rugby team            Fruit grading            Bakery</i>

