



## ADVENTURES IN AGRICULTURE (PART 1)

The cover of the school magazines prior to 1967 depicted the school buildings and a tractor pulling a header as it harvested the crop so agriculture has always been intertwined with our school. Rural Youth was inaugurated at the school in 1967 and was extremely popular with membership of the club upwards of 100. In 1973 Rural Pursuits was introduced as a subject for boys and compulsory for some of the Year 9 & 10 lads.

In 1990 there was the first mention of a Board Subject related to Agriculture. Students in Years 11 & 12 could, if they wished to travel to Wilsonton every Thursday, participate in Agricultural and Animal Production classes from 4:15 to 7:15. The first student to win a prize for this subject was Bronwyn Horton. The inaugural year of Agricultural Science was not to be until 1995 when Graham O'Sullivan took on the class. Two beehives were established, permanent, irrigated garden beds in place, along with an orchard and a small animal shed stocked with meat chickens that underwent various trials. Year 10 & 12 classes were held in the following years with resources gradually compiled. It was an expensive undertaking supported by the local branches of the Qld Grain Growers' Union, Steggles and a working party to oversee the development of the subject.

Land was fenced, a tractor bought, hay grown, baled and sold, weaner cattle grown out and honey was also on the market. The first exhibition of a Limousin steer took place in 1997 at the Pittsworth Show. The subject grew rapidly and Theo Stiller took the reins from Graham O'Sullivan who had facilitated the subject. In 1998 the Led Steer program came into being. This now is an integral aspect of Agriculture at Pittsworth SHS and in the first year students competed at Farmfest and at the Ekka. Electricity was connected to the farm sheds and students collected Tractor and Machine Operation and Safety Certificates. The classes of 1998 also planted 600 native trees, with the support of the local Landcare. With all classes on deck, the task took just over four hours. Senior Agricultural Science students completed a course in Artificial Insemination of Cattle at Warwick and Year 10s of 2000 learnt about Best Management Practices on local cotton farms.

In 2001 Jacqui Schiller took over from Theo Stiller and expanded the Led Steer team with a Lowline Bull, heifer, embryo's and semen. The show team also expanded with greater numbers and greater participation in regional shows (10 in 2005). Cattle judging went online in 2002 with the school results in the top 10% of the state. Wiz Bang, a Lowline heifer, joined the team and a calf was due in '03. By 2005 some handy sheep farmers had come on board and at the Ekka the school won the Champion School in the Sheep Competition. Andrew Herron and Brendan Mansbridge were registered sheep judges in 2006 with Herron going to Perth to the National Sheep Judging Championships. Jillanta Clapham won a scholarship to show Lowlines in the USA – a wonderful experience. Some of the school's Senior Ag. students also accompanied Mrs Schiller to Beef 2006 for nine days where they were immersed in all aspects of beef and this tradition has continued. Tammy Riehl showed her expertise with the Lowline's at the Sydney Royal Show.

Agricultural and Horticultural Studies was introduced for Senior Students and has been an attractive alternative for many to the more rigorous Ag. Science itself. Lincoln McKinlay, top class auctioneer, emerged as a cattle judge in 2009 and won a trip to New Zealand, thanks to the Australian Lowline group. To be continued.....