

Akeringa 1880 - 2009
A farm responsive to the economic climate

Akeringa is part of the old Paterson farm of Nurnoo at Willamulka. Situated 10 kms from Bute and 20 kms from Kadina. This paper will discuss the Paterson farmers, their land, crops, growing wheat, delivering and selling grain and a little bit about these men and their personalities.

A brief History of Four Generations of Patersons

The first members of the Paterson family to begin farming in County Daly were William Henry Brown Paterson, otherwise known as W.H.B. and his younger brother Charles Alexander. W.H.B. was born in Kensington in South Australia in 1843. Williams's father Alexander was a Scots distiller and his mother was a Dorsetshire dressmaker named Maria. WHB's father died when he was only 7 years old and his mother remarried William Town who took WHB under his wing and sparked his interest in farming. In the 1870's, after WHB and Elizabeth Davis were married, the young family took up land at Barunga Gap, between Bute and Snowtown. Several years later they arranged to swap their farm with the Michael family who had land at Willlamulka (27 kms to the West), which is where the Paterson family has been farming ever since. WHB excelled as a farmer and business man, to the point where he was able to set up most of his surviving children with farms of their own. Three boys Five girls! WHB lived to the age of 71.



10 STANDING: WILLIAM PATERSON, MARGARET TRENGOVE, LILIA BAKER, ALLAN PATERSON, ALEX PATERSON
 SITTING: ANNA ROE, W.H.B. PATERSON, MRS. W.H.B. PATERSON, HELEN (NELLIE) MCPHERSON

One of WHB's children was Allan Henry Paterson, known as A.H., who was born in 1879. A.H. had five sons and a daughter, and like his father, he lived to a respectable age of 80 dying in 1959. He also set up his children with farms of their own. One of these sons was Alan Davis Paterson, my husband's father, who was born in 1909. Alan was a force to be reckoned with, and was known to all as "Boss" or A.D. He was a talented engineer, and he designed and built the "Paterson Reel", an innovative reaping front for Horwood Bagshaw. Alan and Joyce had a daughter Jennifer in 1939 and a son Neil in 1943. Alan almost made it to the age of 80, and in fact was buried on his 80th birthday in 1989.

Neil and myself are the current owners and operators of the family farm. Not only has Neil carried on the Paterson tradition of becoming a farmer, (the first to gain tertiary qualifications), he has also continued with several other family traditions. Like his forebears, he is a committed volunteer for his local community, he is a talented sportsman, a skillful engineer, and like the 3 generations before him he was a long serving Councillor on the Bute District Council. Unfortunately, he did not inherit his great grandfather's gardening expertise. WHB had an enormous garden and orchard, imported plants from around the world and

exhibited flowers at the Royal Adelaide Show. Neil says he has a very large garden which ends at the farmhouse gate!

As you can imagine, with all of my husband's ancestors living to a good age they collectively saw a huge variety of challenges and changes in farming throughout their lives. Fortunately, another trait that the Paterson men possessed was a prediliction for recording information on their farming practices. So our family is in quite a unique position of having a wealth of records. Neil has arguably been the most prolific recorder of information, he has kept a diary every day since 1966. In addition, I carried out an oral history interview with A.D. in 1988 focusing on farming during his lifetime.

Today, I would like to compare and contrast key farming issues in the context of the lives of WHB, "AH", "A.D." and Neil. These issues include: farm size and staffing, farming practices, grain varieties, diversification strategies, grain delivery and sales.

Farm size and staff numbers

WHB and his younger brother Charles Alexander started off with five sections totaling 742.19 hectares in 1883. Like many farmers WHB purchased his land through the Strangways credit selection act. Uncle Charlie who lived and farmed at Lower Light sold or deeded his two sections to his brother by about 1900. WHB then proceeded to build up his land holdings. This was a large farm for this era with many farms in County Daly only being in the vicinity of about 160 hectares. Records indicated that WHBs farm supported approximately 20 staff and family members. When WHB's son A.H. was a young man, he was farming approximately 740 hectares progressively this holding grew to 1,857.51 hectares.

A.H. Paterson's era 1935

Farm Equipment used to grow wheat at County Daly

Ploughs	1,490
Tractors, wheeled	374
Combine drills	1061
Cultivators	1029
Harrows	7417
Harvesters	673
Reaper-Threshers	821
Strippers	182
Motor Lorries	253

Workers on Holdings

including owners and family Members (Males) 1784

NOTE: Kerosene, oil and petrol used on farm machinery for the whole of County Daly In 1935 - 36 cost \$18,700.00

Data extracted from South Australian Agricultural Statistical Returns 1025 1026

When A.D. returned from PAC in 1925 he worked at the Ardrossan works of Clarence H. Smith learning about tractors and how to repair them. When he was approximately 28 years old he SHAREFARMED a total of 445.15 Hectares and he and his brother Gilbert employed three permanent staff plus numerous seasonal workers. All of the brothers received 918 acres (371.5 hectares) from their parents in the late 1930's. When Neil and I went to live on the farm it was clear that this amount of land was not enough to support 2 families, so we began what has become an ongoing process of acquiring land. When A.D. died in 1989, Neil and I had 1,112.89 Hectares. We currently farm 1,415.46 Hectares. Interestingly, this amount of land farmed is not vastly different to WHB's. Within 100 years, the Nurnoo farm has gone from supporting 20 workers to only one extra worker besides Neil. Moreover, the land that WHB and Elizabeth farmed, is now worth approx \$5,000) per hectare

During W.W.II, the Paterson brothers Gilbert and Malcolm were serving in the armed forces On the Nurnoo farm over the period 1940 - 1945, the labor shortage was quite severe, with 13 men enlisting in the armed services. To ameliorate this loss, Alan and his brother Len, were allocated three Italian Prisoners of War from Ravenna. Apart from working with the crops and livestock they built a large concrete machinery shed which is still in use today. After Mass on a Sunday they would all meet at Nurnoo and cook a special pasta dinner which was shared with the Paterson's.

A.D.P. Paterson's era 1955 Equipment in County Daly

Farm Equipment used to grow wheat at County Daly

Ploughs	1,839		
Crawler Tractors	70		
Tractors, wheeled	1145		
Combine drills	1369		
Drills (others)	199		
Fertiliser Broadcasters	138		
Harvesters	934		
		M	F
Workers on Holdings including owners and family Members	1528		160

Data extracted from South Australian Agricultural Statistical Returns 1955 - 1956

Nature of the land

When WHB started farming in the region, in the 1870's the land around Akeringa was covered in thick scrub. One of the main objectives of the early farmers of the region was to clear the land so that it could be cropped. In other areas this timber would simply be burnt, but farmers on upper Yorke Peninsula were able to sell this wood to the mining operators at Wallaroo Mines and Moonta. This timber was used to timber the shafts and drives in the mines and also to fire the Cornish boilers. The extensive clearing of trees up until approximately 1940, caused problems with soil erosion, which has been managed by the eradication of rabbits and conservative tilling of the soil. In addition, A.D. carried out extensive replanting of native trees around the homestead in the 1960s. As a result, native birds are prolific. During WHB's and A.H.'s era, kangaroos and other native animals were considered pests and were shot. Due to this and competition from rabbits, wild cats and foxes, native fauna was a rare sight throughout the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Currently, however, kangaroos have returned to the area.

Wheat Varieties and improvements in growing practices

Only damn trouble with Federation was that it used to take rust pretty badly ... Gluyas was an offspring of Wards Prolific, only trouble with that was that it used to go down terribly badly ... Gluyas stuck it out the longest of those old wheats.

Said Alan Paterson in 1988

William Farrer was Australia's most renowned wheat breeder. In 1902, he produced Federation which remained the dominant wheat from 1910 until 1925. Federation is described as having 'a short stiff straw which was tailored to the stripper, a dark bronze ear and sparse stooling'. Other wheats used in County Daly were Nabawa, Bencubbin and Bungulla. These wheats were bred from Gluyas. Perhaps because G.J. Gluyas farmed at Port Germein close to the northern border of County Daly, the old wheat was well suited to the region. Port Germein's growing season and rainfall were somewhat similar to County Daly. It was said that farmers were seeking qualities other than high yielding wheats, and these included resistance to rust, smut, bunt, root rot, ease of harvesting, strength of straw and improved flour quality.

Dr Lindsay O'Brien of the Wheat Research Institute, Horsham, Victoria, has found that variety improvement was responsible for about 1/3 of the increase in yield of a unit area between 1895 and 1975.

On 16 December 1969, Neil Paterson wrote in his farm diary:

Finished reaping Nurnoo paddock, was mainly Gamenya wheat, finished with Heron wheat. Heron contained some rust. Yield 11 bags, quite a good sample but some chaff, 3% screenings.

Delivering and selling grain

The major port for the export of grain in County Daly was and is to this present day, Wallaroo. It has held this position since 1867 when the first grain was exported from this port. Wallaroo has had a multi-faceted role as a port for the export of copper ingots and grain, the import of coal, phosphate rock for the Superphosphate Works and as a transit port for the shipment of agricultural machinery to Eyre Peninsula, along with passengers and mail going from Adelaide to Wallaroo and onto the West Coast.

Currently Wallaroo has a capacity of 600,000 tonnes in its silos and extensive bulk grain loading facilities for export purposes.

N.T. Paterson 1988 List of Grain Growing Equipment

Farm Equipment Used in the 1980's to Grow Wheat at Akeringa

1 Steiger Tractor 187.5 kilowatts
 1 New Holland Air Seeder
 1 New-Farm Boomspray 20 metres wide
 2 farm utilities
 1 Yeomans Tritter
 1 Tubulator
 1 Field Bin holding 30 tonnes
 1 Venning Auger 12 metres long
 4 U.H.F. Radios
 1 Fiat Tractor 48.75 kilowatts
 1 Grasslands Cultivator 10 metres wide
 1 set of Newbold Harrows 20 meters wide
 1 water cart 3,000 litres capacity
 2 single drive tip trucks
 1 Bourne Stonepicker
 1 Laverda Header 8 metre cut
 Pick-up Bin holding 10 tonnes
 1 Newbold Slasher
 1 International Tractor 109 kilowatts 1 Ford Front End Loader 54 kilowatts
 1 Bogie drive *tri-axle* semi tipper trailer and prime mover

Smaller ports of Port Broughton, Tickera and Moonta Bay were also grain ports but to a much lesser extent. Bagged grain was stockpiled at these ports, loaded onto ketches and transferred to Wallaroo. According to Sands and McDougall's directories, Port Broughton in 1908 had eight wheat agents and a harbourmaster, later in 1919 there were six wheat agents, one stevedore and a dredge master. By 1929 this figure had fallen to three wheat agents but rose again to four in 1939. Gradually the larger ports of Port Pine (to the north of Port Broughton) and Wallaroo took over the greater portion of grain shipments. On the east coast of the Yorke Peninsula, Port Clinton was the only port for the shipping of grain in County Daly. With the larger port of Ardrossan to the south, Port Clinton had a short life as a port. In the time studied (1908-88) only in 1908 was a wheat' agent listed as residing in the tiny port. Other ports used by the wheat farmers of County Daly were Balgowan on Spencer Gulf and Port Wakefield on St Vincents Gulf.

By 1908 all railway lines in the County were well established and a number of sidings had been built and paid for by the Moonta and Wallaroo Mining and Smelting Company to facilitate the delivery of wood. However, as farming became established, the sidings became main centres of activity for wheat agents. On the Port Wakefield-Moonta line, sidings such as South Hummocks, Melton,

Paskeville, Kadina and Moonta were sites of huge stockpiles of bagged wheat. On the Bowmans-Port Pine line, Snowtown and Red Hill were major wheat stacking areas. The railway line between Snowtown and Wallaroo had a number of wheat stacks operated by Darling and Co., Bunge and Co. and Farmers Union. Wheat stacks were situated at Barunga Gap, Bute, Mona and Willamulka.

Alan Paterson spoke of the grain buyers:

They had their agents at every siding ... or you could pool your wheat . . . Farmers Union used to run it really ... a lot of gambling went on with wheat of course and still is.

Following the building of the Ardrossan silos in 1952, other silos were built within County Daly, at Snowtown, Red Hill, Paskeville and Bute and a major grain terminal at Wallaroo.

Diversification

Another strategy that the Patersons have employed to increase profitability has been to diversify their produce. W.H.B. sold wood to the mines, Allan Henry had many sheep for wool, A.D. specialized in fat lambs and Neil has had a piggery which currently runs 4,000 pigs with six staff. Not only wheat is grown on the farm, barley, field peas, canola, clover seed, lentils and chick peas have all been grown at varying times.

* N.T. Paterson 2009 List of Grain Growing Equipment

- 2 Stieger tract 187.5 kilowatts
- 1 New Holland Air Seeder with a Gason Bar with knife points and press wheels
- 2 Gold Acres Boomsprays 25 metres wide
- 3 farm utilities
- 1 Tubulator
- 4 Field Bins holding 25 tonnes each.
- 2 Venning Augers one 12 metres long and one 15 metres long.
- 2 single drive tip trucks
- 1 tandem drive tip truck
- 2 Bogie drive tri- axle semi tipper trailer and prime mover
- 1 Bourne Stonepicker
- 1 New Holland TR98 Header 12 metre cut
- 1 Honey Bee cereal front and a flex front for pulse crops
- Pick-up Bin holding 10 tonnes
- 1 Slasher 11 metres wide
- 1 International Tractor 109 kilowatts
- 2 Chamberlain Tractors one 100 h.p. & 140 h.p.
- 1 International 140 h.p. tractor
- 1 John Deere Telehandler

In Conclusion:

You may be wondering what the future holds for Akeringa. Well, our two daughters Verity and Bethany now play an important role in the management of the farm. Bethany's husband John is the manager of the piggery, and their son Hudson is currently 2 years old. He already has a keen interest in animals and farm machinery, and constantly pesters Neil for a ride in the truck.

Since 1880, the only thing that has remained constant is change. The farm has gone from sowing grain by hand to direct drilling with machinery that WHB could never have imagined. No one can really predict what changes Hudson will see during his lifetime. But it is safe to say that he will require the adaptability and progressive thinking of his ancestors to cope with the economic challenges that will come his way.



Thankyou.