



WOOL, WOOLCLASSING AND WOOL MARKETING A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HISTORY 1901 – 2008

Prepared by Don Plowman, Rod Miller
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WOOL, WOOLCLASSING AND WOOL MARKETING – A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN HISTORY 1901 – 2008

This contribution to the History of Agriculture in South Australia is in a number of separate yet related parts:

- A brief historical summary of woolclassing training in South Australia
- Selected chronology of the wool industry
- Woolclassing in SA – A personal recollection by the late Colin Phillips
- A history of wool auctions in South Australia
- Current and future outlook for SA Wool – Prepared by Rod Miller

Material has been provided by people associated with the Marleston Woolclassers Old Scholars Association and the Adelaide Woolbrokers Association.

The information presented in this collection should be read in conjunction with other contributions to the History of Agriculture in South Australia, in particular:

- Early background to the livestock branch
[https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/aghistory/department_of_agriculture_programs/Live stock Programs/early background to the livestock branch](https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/aghistory/department_of_agriculture_programs/Live_stock_Programs/early_background_to_the_livestock_branch)
- Personal recollection. Shearer training in SA. Andrew Brown
https://www.pir.sa.gov.au/aghistory/people_and_achievements/life_stories

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BRIEF HISTORICAL SUMMARY OF WOOLCLASSING TRAINING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Prepared by Colin Phillips, April 1998 and updated May 2000

Since the South Australian School of Mines and Industries issued the first Wool Classing Certificate in 1901, changes have been many and varied.

The original Wool School was situated on North Terrace in the Exhibition Building known as the School of Mines and later the Institute of Technology; relocated in the Angas Building in Frome Road, and then moved to the Wayville Showgrounds.

An extract from the earliest report of the start and early years of this course are in Attachment 1.

The actual location changed on a number of occasions. In 1971 it was moved from the Wayville Showgrounds site to Marleston under the Technical Education Department originally at Nobletts Furniture Factory (Boss Avenue), then to the new Demac Complex (Desmond Avenue 1976), and from 1983 it was located at 354 Richmond Road, Marleston. In 1997 it moved to Cheltenham Racecourse as part of Torrens Valley TAFE and then in 2000 the program relocated again to the University of Adelaide, Roseworthy campus. Finally, the program moved to Gilles Plains Campus of TAFESA. (See page 3)

As far as can be ascertained, the people involved in wool education during this long period have been George Jeffries, Henshaw Jackson, Wrenford Mathews, Alf Codrington (1930s); Joe Goddard, Cyril Smith and Max Abel (1940-1970); Michael Young, Bruce Taylor, Arthur Green, Wally McGovern, Bill Irvine, Greg Castle, John Patton, Ray Cox, Colin Phillips, Des Staite, Philip Richardson, Don Wight, Bill Bagley, Graeme Gatley, Bob Reid and Colin Loffler. These people have been employed as full-time educators, but there have been many other people from Industry who assisted in the educational programme on a part-time basis.

Prior to 1971 the Wool Classing Course was very basic, concentrating on the actual classing of the wool, but in 1971, at the recommendation of the Australian Wool Commission, the course was changed to include subjects which were relevant to the whole of the Wool Industry. This naturally meant an increase in staff to a staff which has grown quickly to 11 over the years. In 1971 Bruce Taylor became the first Head in Technical Education.

In 1976 the name of the School of Wool was changed to include the word 'Textiles', and from then on provided education in the fields of Art and Craft, Footwear, Clothing, Fashion and Textiles.

The establishment of a wool testing laboratory has been of an educational benefit and has provided guidance for many wool growers. The acquisition and development of 92 acres of land at O'Halloran Hill has allowed further education into the breeding, feeding and health of various breeds of sheep.

During this period Marleston made a wonderful contribution to wool education, mainly through the leadership of Bruce Taylor.

A revolution in classing wool, changing from traditional methods to objective clip preparation based on the mob concept, had taken place. Marleston led the way in on-job training in Australia with lecturers visiting shearing sheds to educate and assess students in actual working conditions as well as establishing a wonderful rapport with many shearing contractors and owners throughout South Australia, north western New South Wales and western Victoria.

Phil Richardson was mainly responsible for developing the owner classers course which was conducted in country centres throughout South Australia for many years. In 1992 through the efforts of Ian Gates, then Head of School, Marleston received a grant of \$67,000 to standardise wool education throughout Australia resulting in the Certificate of Wool Classing being accredited and placed on the State of Natural Registers of Accredited Courses. Colin Phillips made a significant contribution to the writing of the competency-based education and self-paced learning for this course.

In 1997, after a quarter of a century at Marleston, the School of Wool was transferred from Marleston to an annex in the Cheltenham Racecourse complex and was managed by the Torrens Valley Institute. Staff numbers had been reduced to four. The number of full-time students fell and the presence of our students doing "On Job Training" in the sheds was greatly affected.

In the year 2000 the School of Wool became the State Wool Training Centre and was based at the Roseworthy Campus of the University of Adelaide. Staff numbers have been reduced to two, viz Graeme Gatley and Colin Loffler.

The courses offered at Roseworthy were the Professional and Owner Woolclassing course plus the recently developed Woolclassers Development Program (WDP).

The basic message of the WDP was Quality Assurance in the shearing shed, not only for clip preparation during shearing but also documentation, pre-classing and post-classing. Changes to the Code of Practice were highlighted and discussed. The impact on the white wool industry by "Exotic Breeds" was investigated plus the impact of potential Electronic Marketing of the wool clip.

Thus from 1996 the golden years of wool education at Marleston had come to an end. The wool industry had suffered a downturn and the administrators of TAFE chose not to place the same emphasis on the education needed to prepare Australian Wool Clips for sale as it had previously considered essential.

The State Wool Training Centre is providing education for owner classers and correspondence students seeking professional status in the year 2000. There are no full-time students, the first time since 1901. The effects of continuing low prices for wool are clearly evident.

EARLY WOOLCLASSING AT THE SCHOOL OF MINES

A one-year course in Woolsorting was listed in the first prospectus of the S. A. School of Mines and Industries in 1889.

Mr. A. E. Hamilton was primarily responsible for the Introduction of the first class in 1897. He led a deputation of about 6 prospective students to the then President of the School Council (Sir Langdon Bonython). It was agreed that the class would begin if 12 students could be found. Twenty students enrolled, and an evening class began in the third term of 1897. The Instructor was Mr. George Jeffrey.

First and second year classes were held in 1898.

In 1899 a day class was also instituted.

Classes in the country began in 1900 (as distinct from practical instruction on stations for Adelaide students, which began earlier).

The first published list of examination results (1900) shows A. E. Hamilton in top place.

First graduates (1901) were Norman Bickford and A. E. Hamilton.

A few other graduates - A. H. Codrington and C« A. Goddard (1903), Spen Williams (1906), Ewen Waterman (1926).

SELECTED CHRONOLOGY OF THE WOOL INDUSTRY

This chronology has been drawn from publications by Anstey Giles, the Wool Buyers Association and information from the History of Agriculture in SA website. It is intended to focus primarily on the development of the wool industry, wool classing training and marketing arrangements.

Preamble

The wool industry is nearly as old as white settlement, descendants from the pure Spanish merinos brought to the colony of NSW in 1797, followed by more from England. In 1807 the first 110kg of pure merino wool was shipped to England. By the early 1960s wool was earning nearly half of the nations export income. By the mid 1980s with increase of other exports (wheat, wine, cars, cattle, minerals) wool declined to about 10% of the national exports, however remained a significant source of export income.

The first auction of Australian wool was held at Garraway's Coffee House in London in 1821 and brought \$2.27 per kg. To gain higher prices on the London market, sheep were washed before shearing, clean wool was pack in bales for shipment, and research commenced to investigate and control problems with sheep diseases.

Besides the Spanish breed, Saxon and Vermont Merinos were imported, together with English breeds such as Lincoln, English Leicester and Border Leicester. From these breeds, sheep were evolved to suit the Australian and South Australian climate.

George Peppin assembled a Merino flock in the Riverina. The Peppin Merino strain which emerged is now the most numerous and productive wool growing sheep in the world.

Between 1788 and 1838 sheep had moved into every colony, the annual wool clip was over two million kg., and wool had become Australia's main export.

Wool was shipped to England and Europe Via the Cape of Good Hope by fast wool clippers. The days of the clippers came to an end with the opening of the Suez Canal and the introduction of steamships.

South Australian History

1842

Before a formal land survey of the colony was undertaken the Government of the day decided upon a "Waste Lands Act" allowing graziers to take up an annual occupation licence. Soon after a large number of wealthy graziers took up country in the interior parts and mid-north ranges of South Australia. They established hardy merino strains of sheep producing fine wool in this arid climate.

Charles Brown Fisher, John Howard Angas, Thomas Elder and Robert Barr-Smith were prominent. The names of some of the future wool companies can be seen to have been formed from these graziers.

Scottish immigrants who were many of the early pioneers of the state were the first to realize how profitable the wool industry could be.

A period of boom times, 14 year pastoral leases were issued, the Flinders Ranges were taken up for sheep grazing.

A consortium of powerful graziers in the colony of South Australia formed a wool broking company, Elder-Stirling A Co. Most of the woolclip was shipped to England.

Near the riverbank at Port Adelaide on the corner of Upson and Divett Streets a large stone construction two-storey wool store was built.

1838 to 1888

Woolgrowers experienced boom periods and depressions. At one stage, when prices fell drastically, it was more profitable to boil down sheep to extract tallow, and tan their hides for leather. Wool auctions began in the 1840s, but the bulk of the wool clip was still sold on the London market throughout the 19th Century.

1880

The beginning period of a wool boom. Large wool stores were built by Elder Smith A Co, Goldsbrough Mort and Southern Farmers Co-op Ltd. in Crozier Street Port Adelaide. With the big increase in wool production, more stores of brick and stone construction were erected in Barlow and Bower Crescent area of Port Adelaide. These buildings were used for storage, sorting and dumping and handling heavy wool bales and packing machinery. Further iron and timber sheds were also built along Bedford Street.

1888

Southern Farmers Co-op Union Ltd had wool broking operations at Port Adelaide started.

Shearers began to form unions in the late 1880s to seek a uniform rate for shearing and better working conditions. After years of conflict between pastoralists and shearers, the early unions united in 1894 to form the Australian Worker's Union.

The first shearing machine was invented by Frederick York Wolseley in the 1880s. By 1990, most sheds had switched to machine shearing. Today's shearing machine is still based on the Wolseley design.

1895-1903

During one of the most severe droughts in Australia's history, from 1895-1903, sheep numbers fell by almost half. It took nearly 30 years for flocks to build up to the previous record of 106 million. When pastoralists began to spread further inland away from river frontages, the practice of washing sheep before shearing had to be discontinued. Most of the clip was now exported as greasy wool.

1897 to 1973

Wool auctions commenced in 1897 in the Brookman building 35 Grenfell St Adelaide and remained there until the transfer in 1973 to Pt Adelaide.

1901

Establishment of South Australia's first Wool Classing Certificate course at the SA School of Mines, Exhibition Building, in North Terrace.

1909

Southern Farmers Co-op Union Ltd celebrates 21 years of woolbroking operations at Port Adelaide. Shareholders of the Company totalled 4,571.

1919

Southern Farmers Co-op Union Ltd opened further woolstores. Bennett A Fisher Ltd laid the foundation stone for the new wool store broking business.

1920

By the mid 1920s, nearly half the wool clip was still bought by Britain, but Japan and the United States were emerging as major buyers at auction sales throughout Australia.

At the request of woolgrowers, legislation was passed requiring them to pay a tax on all wool produced and sold in Australia, the proceeds to be devoted to wool promotion.

1929

A drought in the pastoral region of South Australia—Wooltana Station affected. By the 1930s, wool represented over 62% of the total export value of primary products. Australia's fine wool was in great demand worldwide.

1934

Bennett A Fisher Ltd, new east woolstore opened by Sir Sydney Kidman, a prominent grazier.

1949

A record South Australian wool price, 98 pence per pound. Woolbroker Bennett A Fisher wool produced in the South-East from Naracoorte

1951

Immediately after the second world war and start of the Korean war, a period of boom wool prices, with the best wool sold for a pound for a pound.

1957

A merino ram sale at the Perth Royal Show attracted a record ram price 4,500 guineas.

1940s to 1970s

Adelaide frontier in wool marketing

During this period there was five wool broking stores situated close together at Pt Adelaide, Elder-Smith/Dalgety, Bennett and Fisher, Goldsborough Mort and Southern Farmers. Wool sales were held at Brookman Building, Grenfell Street, Adelaide starting at 1.30pm. In later years sales moved to Pt Adelaide at the Southern Farmers old wool offices; another sales room upstairs sold the rest (i.e. cardings).

The Wool buyers Association consisted of 126 members and many buyers travelled from Melbourne and Perth. The Adelaide wool sales usually held the same week as the Albury and Tasmanian sales were known as 'split markets'.

Elder-Smith was probably the busiest wool store, the Store Foreman, Charlie Bateau was with Elders for 50 years. A list of all the wool stores and staff who worked during this period is available in a book compiled by Bob Williams; it can be purchased from the Port Adelaide Library, History Room.

1971

The wool classing training program transferred from the Wayville Showgrounds site to Marleston under the Technical Education Department. The actual location changed on a number of occasions.

1973

The Australian Wool Corporation, established in 1973, assumed the functions and responsibilities of the former Australian Wool Board and the Australian Wool Commission (formed in 1970 to operate a flexible reserve price scheme at wool auctions).

To protect woolgrowers, the Australian Wool Corporation introduced the minimum reserve price scheme (Price Averaging Plan - PAP) in 1974. The scheme guaranteed minimum prices throughout each wool selling season. This is financed by a Market Support Fund funded by woolgrowers.

The Corporation encourages woolgrowers to adopt the highest standards in all aspects of wool production, preparation and handling. Cleaner, well-presented wool will gain a higher price at auction.

Promotion of wool in Australia is also the responsibility of the Corporation, and principal activities include advertising and promotion programs for both apparel and interior textiles.

Location of the wool auction rooms transferred from 35 Grenfell St in the city to the rooms of Southern Farmers and Dalgety at Port Adelaide.

1976

The School of Wool at Marleston was renamed the School of Wool and Textiles.

1988

An international promotion event was held in Australia to demonstrate how the world's leading fashion designers use wool. This major event focused on the important export-earning capacity.

1997

The School of Wool was transferred from the Technical and Further Education facilities at Marleston to the Cheltenham Racecourse under the management of the Torrens Valley Institute.

1999

Switch to nylon bales

2000

The State Wool Training Centre was established at the Roseworthy campus of the University of Adelaide. The new centre was established with the transfer of the service from Cheltenham Racecourse.

2001

The wool courses offered at Roseworthy were expanded to include the Professional and Owner Woolclassing course and the Woolclassers Development Program.

2002

The Stockpile of 4.75 million bales of wool was sold and proceeds distributed to Wool Growers.

WOOLCLASSING IN SA – A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION BY THE LATE COLIN PHILLIPS

The following personal recollection has been extracted from documents of the late Colin Phillips and includes recollections of his time as a wool classer with a number of the major wool broking firms. This should be read as part of the history of wool classing and wool classing training in SA.

The first shed I classed was STONELEIGH at Mundulla in the south east. Mr Ted Satchell the owner drove me down from Adelaide. He told me that this would be the last shearing as he was selling his property and he said I usually split the clip and sell half to Goldsbrough's and half to Dalgety's. What do you think? I replied quickly, don't split it sell through Goldsbrough's and he asked WHY. Always sell through the biggest and buy through the smallest I replied and that is what happened. Because of my training as a wool sorter at MICHELLS I had developed a distinct style.

I went to Goldsbrough's to see it. It had prime position first lot on the show floor. Mr Doug Richmond the head wool valuer escorted me up onto the show floor to see how the lots were displayed. Not only had it topped the market, Goldsbrough's had sold the entire clip of 150 bales. I was most welcome and taken to the bulk class and offered a job which I accepted and started to learn that classing the entire wool produced in SA every day was far different to being in the one shed classing the wool grown on one property.

Years later when classing wool benefitted by accurate measurement and the emphasis was on keeping mobs separate the strategy is still the same.

The merger in November 1962 was a big event as the two largest wool brokers, Elder Smith and Goldsbrough Mort, combined to form the largest bulk classing establishment in South Australia. Before the merger there were five bulk classing stores, Elder Smith, Goldsbrough Mort, Dalgety, South Australian Farmers Union, and Bennett & Fisher.

I had come from Goldsbrough's which was in Z Store on the corner of Crozier Street and Bedford Street and had started there in 1954. The bulk class had previously been situated at YY which was a Wool Commission Store (one of several stores built in Bedford Street, Gillman, to hold the wool clip during the War), and before that at SVS, a store in St Vincent Street near the wharfs. I'd spent a few years in the bush rouseabouting, and had classed my first shed, "Stoneleigh", at Mundulla in the southeast. It had topped the market, so I was welcomed with open arms when I applied for a job in the bulk. In those days it was known as Jackson's. Henshaw Jackson had started bulk classing years before and his son, who was then I'd guess about 60, was in charge. His name was Percival, but it was shortened to Val and he really was a tough old bastard! I think Goldsbrough's must have assumed the Jackson contract to handle the wool as I only knew the bulk as Goldsbrough's

From memory there were five or six classers in the fleece section four in the oddments, and four classers in the re-class. There were four pressers using the tumbling tommies, similar to the Ferrier where the top box was pulled over onto the bottom box by a rope or a pulley and a sandbag to help as the presser swung onto the rope and tumbled back pulling the top box over on top of the bottom box. Then the cables were attached to the monkey and the long lever pulled down on a ratchet to keep the monkey down. Later on, the blue birds were bought which used an electric motor to press the wool rather than the manual lever. After that came the MacIodge which, to my mind was, and still is the best wool press ever made.

When the clips came into the main store the bales for bulk classing were separated and transported over to the bulk. They were identified as either fleece or oddments with a chalk mark J for JACKSONS. It is still the same at Elders today (1996), the J referring to the influence of Henshaw Jackson who started the bulk class years ago then passed it on to Val, his son. Their knowledge and skill in preparing bulk class wools for sale was outstanding, and Goldsbrough's was regarded as the best bulk class in South Australia. Classers trained at Goldsbrough's later on headed bulk classes at Bennett's, Farmers Union, Dalgety's and Elders-GM.

Unfortunately, their knowledge of wool didn't extend on their type system. As the amount of wool increased it seemed to me they added another number, and there was no logic or arithmetical progression or sequence to the system. The AWC type system was the same, and most buyers had to carry a braeme (paper calculator) with them to identify the 900 or so types. .

Later on they must have realized the typing system was a shambles because it was changed. I'd like to think I had made some contribution to this event. Anyhow, it simplified typing wool - in fact within a fortnight of a classer coming into the bulk he could be typing his own wool. We used a combination of alphabetical letters and numbers, e.g. CIB

- C was the colour or district
- I was the quality
- B was the vegetable matter content

We had fifteen different colours or districts.

- Superfine
- Light grey from the South East
- Brown Hills (straw coloured from Adelaide Hills)
- Upper South East
- Dark grey agricultural
- Brown agricultural
- Clean pastoral
- Dusty pastoral
- Brown dusty agricultural
- Inferior far west coast
- Grey sandy
- Clean brown/red
- Charcoal coloured from burnt country from upper Southeast
- Grey pastoral from river flats generally containing Noogoora burr usually from the West Darling, NSW

VEGETABLE MATTER

B - free or light seed or burr

D - heavy usually PCS or BLS

C - medium

K - burr on burr lots of it

To match wools was very important. There was no measurement of yield available as it is today, so lines had to look like peas in a pod when they were displayed on the show floor.

Most of Goldsbrough's classers used to go to the sheds in early February and return in October/November. I had a seven months run north of Broken Hill this side of Tibooburra and Milparinka, White Cliffs classing for four shearers - not rolling one side. The contractor wouldn't allow that - the wool had to be handled properly. I used to do the books as well. Later on in the year we would class in the southeast and then all return to the bulk. It worked out that twelve weeks in the sheds and 40 weeks

I think the wages were £31-11-0 per week classing and rolling one side, and in the store we all aspired to getting £20 per week (or \$ 40).

The merger in November 1962 was quite funny to my mind. Because of the intense rivalry between the two largest companies, it was decided that Goldsbrough's classers would do all the fleece and Elders classers would class all the oddments. This was in C store in Crosier Street, and the fleece was on the first floor and the oddments on the second floor. The third floor was the show floor where all the bulk classed wools were displayed. There were twelve sales per year, and I remember taking out figures once we had classed over 50,000 bales per year for over 10 years. During that time there was a record sale of 6,800 bales. There were at times up to twelve classers in the fleece section and seven or eight in the oddments. There were five pressers on the MacLodge Press's and sometimes to get the sale ready there would be five in the fleece section. They would start early, and by about 1 .00pm when they would knock off they would have pressed over 300 bales.

I was the bin walker or overlooker in the fleece section having taken over from Stan Filsell. Each of the bales were opened, tipped out and classed, typed and weighed, and then carried to the bin by labourers. There were 647 fleece lines and over 500 oddment lines. Each bale was entered in the catalogue and the bales were pre-branded and placed on the bins for the presser.

I think Elders moved out to Gillman in 1975. The multi-level wool stores were considered too costly with bales going up elevators and down drops. Fork lifts could transport bales more quickly. C store remained in Crosier Street until 1986 when its role was transferred out to the main complex. Just before 1974 because of objective measurement, the fleece lines were cut down to about 200. The colour which had been so important to match, suddenly didn't matter - it all comes out white at the end of the scour.

In 1997 almost all of the bales to be bulk classed were transferred to Victoria being classed in a very large facility at Lara near Geelong.

From an educationalist's viewpoint this is sad. For years it has been widely accepted that, "the best shed classers have had experience in the bulk" and it is very true indeed because each day they saw and classed a very wide range of wools.

The educational program at Marlestone included some time spent in bulk classing facilities and many of our students found work there and used that experience as a stepping stone to advance to top positions in the wool industry. By moving bulk classing interstate this did eliminate a vital aspect of educational experience.

An old saying is, "there is nothing more constant than change" and it is quite true. Only time can reveal whether change is for the better or worse. I hope the present wool educational program allows the learner to experience handling the complete range of wool which they are expected to class during a professional career. Whatever the initial educational progress contains and however it is implemented I am confident that the graduates will adapt to the ever demanding efforts to contain costs not only out in the sheds, but at the marketing and manufacturing levels.

Just maybe the Australian wool clip has been so fragmented by over classing that it has become impossible to set simple standards for complete assurance of the quality standards acceptable for manufacture. I believe wool buyers were responsible for this by encouraging classers to make visually matching perfect lines.

A HISTORY OF WOOL AUCTIONS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND SEVENTY-SIX YEARS IN THE BROOKMAN BUILDING WOOL EXCHANGE

COMMISSIONED BY THE ADELAIDE WOOLBROKERS' ASSOCIATION

RESEARCHED & COMPILED BY JASON HOPTON

The information presented here has been drawn from the above report. The report can be accessed in the State Library of South Australia.

Adelaide wool auction sales were held in Brookman Building, 35 Grenfell Street, Adelaide, from November 30th, 1897 until December 13th, 1973, the sales over those 76 years in the one building were of historic significance to South Australia.

Wools grown in Australia had been sold by private treaty from 1807 to 1821.

The first public auction of Australian wool was held in Garraway's Coffee House, Change Alley, Cornhill, London, on August 17th, 1821. Wools from the renowned Captain John Macarthur sold from 29 pence to 124 pence which were wonderful prices and hardly surpassed for a century.

The first Australian wool auction was held in Adelaide on March 3rd, 1840, more than three years before Thomas Sutcliffe Mort held the first auction in Sydney. Five years later, he combined with Richard Goldsbrough and moved into Melbourne and Geelong markets.

Several individuals and small firms entered the wool selling business in the next fifteen years when auctions became fairly well entrenched.

In the 1830s, most woolgrowers sold their clips to local speculative merchants, but it changed when growers had consignments shipped to be sold in London and Liverpool. Of course, buyers at Australian auctions often submitted wools for sale again in Britain.

EARLY AUCTIONS

The South Australian Register of February 22nd 1840, had a notice: "Extensive sale of wool. To be sold at auction by V. and E. Solomon on Tuesday, March 3rd, 1840, at the New Auction Mart, Currie Street. From one to two hundred bales of wool, the clip of the well known flocks of Captain John Finnis, which had been carefully selected from the best flocks from New South Wales. Merchants and others having remittances to make to England will find this a favourable opportunity as it is almost certain on arrival in London to realize one hundred percent on the first cost, and the City of

Adelaide being laid on for London direct, renders it doubly advantageous. Terms made known at the time of the sale. The sale to commence at 12 o'clock precisely." (The City of Adelaide, a 280 ton barque, was unloading at the new harbour in Port Adelaide.)

Captain Finnis also advertised, "to inform gentlemen interested in sheep farming that he had received the first bales of wool from his station to the northward, and being aware the distance is inconvenient for a great many persons to inspect the flocks themselves, he has opened the bales in the spacious auction rooms of V. and E. Solomon."

The first public sale rated a good report in the Register which was "glad to see so numerous and respectable attendance of buyers and others interested in the staple of Australia."

The sheep had been part of 15,000 overlanded by Finnis and F.H. Dutton. In August, it was reported South Australia had 25,000 of the finest condition cattle in Australia and 150,000 sheep, "fattening on the plains and in the valleys."

The wool from the recently overlanded sheep sold: 25 bales at 14 pence a lb., 150 bales at 14 pence, 25 bales at 13.5 pence and 8 bales of washed wools for 18.5 pence, to produce a total return of £3062.

By March, Icely & Co. brought a further 10,000 sheep from New South Wales into South Australia and offered them for sale.

In 1841, South Australia had 250,000 sheep; in 1861 it was 3,083,356, producing 5,971,000 kg. of wool.

The Register of October 12th, 1844, reported auctions by John Bentham Neales, government auctioneer, who was to sell three bales of very superior wool, also 342 lb. of fine wool being one large bale from James Frew (an insolvent).

An advertisement stated: "Sheep farmers are advised to resort to the good English plan of submitting their clips to public competition". It seems in October 1844, seven farmers were selling wool by auction - "undeniably the best way to get the best prices," according to the report. Obviously Neales was keen to boost auctions with messages such as this: "Woolgrowers are informed new purchasers of this staple are daily starting up find it greatly to their advantage to bring buyers together." It related to a sale in King William Street auction rooms on October 16th, 1844.

Wool auctions did not operate freely for some years although Solomon was still advising regular auctions of colonial produce throughout the season from September, 1857.

Then, Green & Co. advertised their first auction for November 18th, the first of fortnightly sales.

Also in November, 1857, the firm of Green, Parr & Luxmoore entered the wooselling field with recommendations about the value of the auction system.

In the Observer of November 13th, 1858, Green, Parr & Luxmoore advised "continuing periodical auctions" using its stores in Adelaide and at the Port, selling from samples.

It was also making use of the Intercolonial Telegraph service offered.

In November 1867, L. Barnard entered the field offering "On sale of wool sold by sample only moderate charges will be made by private arrangement."

Parr & Luxmoore in 1867 were seeking support from woolgrowers and merchants of South Australia and Riverina districts. On July 1st, 1878, a notice in the press informed the public Luxmoore & Co. was "NOT at Gilbert Place, Adelaide, for wool auctions but in Leigh Street, owing to alterations."

The Register of July 22nd, 1878, carried this news item: "Elder, Smith & Co. have decided to add to their mercantile business, that of woolbroker, their intention being to hold regular auction sales of wool. Desired to have a market like Messrs. Goldsbrough and others in Victoria.". The firm indicated it had its eyes on the Riverina Market - too. In the same paper was stated Luxmoore's plan to enlarge stores and to continue periodical wool auctions.

On October 15th, 1878, Elder Smith held its first auction with a catalogue of 1976 bales of which 1484 were sold with greasy prices from 7 pence to 10.5 pence. Bundaleer Station received the top prices for a line of 300 bales of super combing. The report stated the "system of selling, from the box was generally approved."

One bag of mohair was also in the sale. It was said to have been the first auction sale under the European system - from the box.

On November 1st, 1878, George Laughton advertised auctions of wool, hides, skins and tallow in Currie Street.

Agent for R. Goldsbrough & Co. was E.R. Priestley & Co. which held its "third wool sale" at 84 Currie Street in a newly erected warehouse, on November 6th. Every lot had been carefully sampled. Priestley's first auction was on October 23rd, 1878.

The first wool sale to be held at Port Adelaide was in Elder's store in October, 1881.

ASSOCIATION OF WOOLBROKERS

Five years later, an important event took place in Adelaide where nine men met to form the Adelaide Wool & Hide & Skin Salesmen's Association - the forerunner of the Adelaide Woolbroker's Association.

On July 9th, 1886, in the offices of Luxmoore & Co., representing the firms of Luxmoore, Elder's Wool & Produce Co. Ltd., E. Laughton & Co., George Laughton, R. I. Coombs & Co. and New Zealand Loan & Mercantile Agency Co. Ltd. were S.R. Wakefield (elected president), A.L. Harrold, J. Luxmoore, E. Laughton, Geo. Laughton, R.J. Coombs, A.S. Cheadle, G.N. Cooper and Geo. Dowling (secretary).

They set charges for handling of produce and a fee of one shilling a bale as the nominal charge for handling a bale of wool*

The Association dealt with kangaroo, calf, opossum, wallaby, rabbit skins and tallow and fat.

In August 1886 after some discussion, it was decided to pay C.R. Aldridge's account for champagne consumed after the inaugural meeting.

On September 27th, 1886, the meeting instructed the secretary Ed. Laughton Jnr. to print conditions of wool sales for the various firms.

On August 27th, 1890, the committee decided to hire the Exchange Room, Pirie Street, Adelaide, for sales until December.

In April 1891, the committee in Adelaide decided to revise rules and not accept co-operatives - they were not registered companies. In May, Laughton & Co. left the Association.

In September, the selling order for wool auctions was Elders, Coombs, Luxmoore and New Zealand Loan.

Records indicate that the opening sales were held on September 21st, 1892 and September 27th, 1893.

WOOL SALE ROOMS

The minutes of July 16th, 1896, tell of plans being made with the Town Clerk to have wool sales in the banqueting room of the Town Hall, for the season. The charges were two guineas a day.

A quote from the minute book of October 24th, 1896: "Discussions re Mr. Brookman's proposed new room for wool sales - nothing done, Geo. Dowling. "

From the Adelaide "Observer" dated 7th November, 1896, is an account of the plans for a new building for Mr. George Brookman. It was to be at the "corner Commercial Road adjoining Cavendish Chambers."

There was a drawing of a three story building which was to include on its top floor an arbitration room measuring 55 feet by 46 feet with a wagon-headed ceiling 20 feet high and a platform of 20 feet 6 inches. The contractor was J.J. Leahy, clerk of works Thomas Frost and the architect, the well known Alfred Wells. It was to be completed in nine months on land where the "Old Commercial Inn" was sited.



On January 5th, 1897, Mr. Brookman said he was prepared to build a room fitted suitably for wool auctions in Brookman Building at a cost of £30,000, provided the Association paid a rental of one hundred pounds a year for five years - the woolbrokers having the right to use the room 12 days a year. On January 20th, the Association finalized with Mr. Brookman at eighty pounds "for use of building now being erected in Grenfell Street." On March 26th, the Association agreed to the draft of lease. In April, the Association arranged for seats to be fixed, cane, at least 18 inches square, with sloped wooden backs.

At the time of the 1897 Royal Adelaide Show in Exhibition Hall, in September, the Association members visited the new wool sale room in Brookman Building and agreed about the "fixing of desks and seats."

There were forty five seats in the centre of the room for the Association, and wider seats for brokers and their clerks.

The term "wool exchange" was used.

George Brookman came to South Australia from Glasgow with his father in 1856. He was a Stock Exchange member in 1890. On Friday, October 1st, 1897, the Adelaide Advertiser reported: "The first wool sales of the season were opened on Thursday morning at the new "Woolbrokers Exchange, Brookman's Building, where a very convenient sale-room has been procured."

The sale comprised 6393 bales of which 6040 were sold.

The minutes of March 25th, 1898, record that South Australian Farmers' Co-operative Union had applied for membership and had been refused. Also recorded was the fact that Younghusband & Co. Ltd. had sought a copy of the Association rules.

First mention of the firm of Luxmoore Chapman & Co. as a member was made in August. On August 2nd, 1902, the Brookman Building lease was renewed for five years with George Brookman at eighty five pounds a year.

In January 1906 the Farmers' Union was again refused entry to the Association. In July, the committee sought a new place for the sheepskin sales - apparently the wool exchange had been used.

In August, the sheepskin sales were in the "Elder Smith Room."

Many people have said the additions to Brookman Building to add a fourth floor and the wool sales took place in 1913. According to the Adelaide City Council which bought the building and demolished it in January, 1974, the plans for the addition of the top story were approved on June, 30th, 1914.)

WORLD WAR I

It seems from the minute book of the Association that wool auctions proceeded as usual after the start of World War I but the writings were not explicit as to activities in those days.

It is well known that the 1913-14 prices for wool were under 10 pence a pound greasy, but the Imperial Purchase Scheme operated in 1916-17 (in part) to 1920 when the British Government paid a flat rate of 15.5 pence a pound - it was to get 50% of the profit on resale.

At first, the British Government only wished to take crossbred wools but did eventually take all 7,154,621 bales, and growers received 19.19 pence a pound sterling.

The Association resolved to hold a wool sale on October 15th, 1914, and later arranged sales on November 6th and 27th, the last sale being limited to 18,000 bales.

Before it took place, Mr. McGregor, president of the Adelaide Wool Buyers' Association, moved successfully to limit the November 30th sale to 15,000, but later it was raised to 20,000 bales.

The fourth sale of the season was limited to 12,500 bales.

On September 6th 1916, Cheadle Crase & Co. applied to join the Association and were accepted unanimously. It was decided to advertise the number of bales to be offered at sales in the daily paper.

In 1917, the minutes had brief references to a move proposed by some growers to withhold their clips - it did not get support, apparently. It appears to be connected to a letter from the South Australian State Wool Committee and a telegram from the "Central Wool Committee." The matter did not arise again in the minutes.

BETWEEN WARS

On July 8th, 1919, Bennett & Fisher was admitted to the Association after its amalgamation with Cheadle Crase & Co.

On September 15th, 1920, the committee members resolved not to give valuations in writing to growers, and star lots were to be three and under.

In October 1921, G. Brookman wrote to say the lease of the wool exchange could not be renewed from its expiry date of April 1st, 1925.

The minutes of February 27th, 1922 state "Our landlord to be asked if he can let us have more lamps of higher candlepower in the wool exchange."

On July 31st, 1923, the committee was told to approach Sir George Brookman about the lease of the exchange. It was to be for ten years for £500 a year, plus taxes of £100. The room was to be used for all wool sales.

In June 1924, the minutes showed the names of firms: Bagot, Shakes & Lewis, Elder Smith & Co., Bennett & Fisher, Dalgety & Co. and S.A. Farmers Union*

In 1924, Goldsbrough Mort & Co. Ltd. absorbed Bagot, Shakes & Lewis which had in 1922 taken over Luxmoore, Chapman & Co.

In November, 1929, the committee arranged with Goldsbrough Mort to supply a saleroom attendant at 25/-d. a sale.

In June 1931, the press was informed that Japan bought 10,000 bales in the 1930-31 season.

In 1935 there was a discussion on the introduction of three-day sales.

WORLD WAR II

On September 8th, the committee spoke of the war, and of plans mooted for purchase of wool by the "Imperial Government." Later, the W.A. Wool & Produce Brokers' Association inquired about lease of the wool exchange and rental in view of cessation of auctions. The Association replied saying it was responsible for rental under its lease as in the case of 1917-20 during the Government Appraisal Scheme. The telephone was discontinued in the star lot room. (The war was on).

On June 28th, 1940, it was stated the big room had not been used, but the Brookman Building caretaker had swept and dusted for which he was given three guineas.

In February 1942, the star lot room was let gratis to Morse Code teachers, and to Volunteer Defence Corps (V.D.C.) signalers who arranged black-out curtains.

In June, the Department of the Interior rented the "Star" room for S.A. Emergency Service Supplies Committee, and the furniture was stored in Elder Smith's wool store, Port Adelaide. Room rent was £125 including rates.

FINAL ERA IN BROOKMAN BUILDING



In November, discussions centered on the official date for the war's end and the tenancy of the star lot room, then in the name of A.M. Cameron, Melbourne.

Plans were laid for the opening series of auctions for the 1946-47 season, on August 20th – 22nd.

In April, a sub-committee, Messrs Yeaman, Wastell and Moss, were to look at the idea of building an Association wool auction room.

On May 6th, 1946, the tenants were out of the auction room, leaving feltex and other fittings behind. They were paid half of a months rent refund.

In June, builders were to re-instate furniture in the star lot room.

In January 1946, Brookman Trust agreed to lease the big wool room for five years for £500 a year, and rooms 100 and 101 (Star lot) for £200, in each case plus rates. The offer was to remain for two months.

In November, the committee sought a third sale room. By January, they had a room on the third floor of Brookman building for sales on the 13th to 15th.

On April 30th, 1948, expert advice was to be sought to combat excessive noises in the big room. It was said lighting in the oddments room was poor. Woods, Bagot, Layborne-Smith and Irwin were paid £25 for an anti-noise plan. But, on March 28th, 1949, the Association wrote the secretary of the Victorian and South Australian Wool Buyers' Association suggesting their members might make less noise during the wool sales in the exchange.

In February 1950, the Brookman Trust offered rooms 105-106 for oddments. It was confirmed for £130 plus rates for a period to March 31st, 1951.

In September, 1950, the oddments room had its rostrum raised, and the big room had more hat pegs installed.

In January 1953, Victorian buyers complained about the ventilation in the big room - the Association secretary was to act. The subject arose again in a conference between woolbrokers and buyers from South Australia and Victoria.

On February 13th, 1957, the chairman I.B. Thomas said the Brookman Trust was not prepared to renew the lease at the old rental and would get a new valuation.

In September, an estimate of £700 was obtained to put foam rubber cushions in three sale rooms. The noise problem arose again, and later buyers sought arm rests, shelves for catalogues and hooks for hats and coats under the desks. Buyers were to be asked to create less noise.

WINDS OF CHANGE

In July 1961 there was discussion on a sub-committee's report about establishment of the Association's own sale room.

In February 1962, members spoke of buying land to meet future needs at Port Adelaide.

In March 1964, there was a report of a land purchase plan at Port Adelaide, an option being taken. Plans for the building of Sale rooms at Port Adelaide were deferred continually from 1964 onward because of the uncertainty of auctions continuing, in view of the various marketing proposals put forward with monotonous regularity.

On March 25th, buyers complained about laxity of auctioneers in interpretation of rules in rooms two and three. The Association suggested senior officers from firms should pay periodical visits.

In 1965, it was stated in the Stock Journal that woolbroking firms had thirteen stores with floor area of 60.5 acres, including eleven show floors with capacity of 90,500 bales and could sell 589,000 bales in a season.

In September 1965, the Victorian and South Australian Wool Buyers' Association sought to have selling rooms at Port Adelaide, and the Association recognised the sense behind the request.

In April 1970, the Association heard costs to set up new rooms would be \$70000 to \$80000. The Brookman Trust was to be told when definite plans were known.

In May 1970 it was decided to defer a change and to renew the Brookman lease. It appeared the old rooms were likely to be available until November 1972 or March 1973.

The Association renewed its Brookman Trust lease from April 1971 to December 31st, 1972 for \$3750 rent a year. By June, the Association was told the lease would definitely expire but it might be renewed on a monthly basis to the end of March, 1973.

In October, it was said the Brookman Building might be available until March, 1974, and at the end of November, the Association's Trade Committee reported on the areas suitable for sale rooms at Port Adelaide. One possibility mentioned was in a proposed new building to be erected for the Wool Commission at Gillman.

The City Council told the Association in 1973 its use of the Brookman Building would cease in December, and this was confirmed by the Brookman Trust which had sold the building.

In April, it was stated there was no chance of the Association getting sale rooms in the A.W.C. building at Port Adelaide.

On July 3rd, 1973, it was recommended use be made of space at Port Adelaide - No. 1 and 2 Rooms in Southern Farmers' stores and No. 3 in the Dalgety Store, leased by Bennett & Fisher Limited,

On August 13th, a minute stated, "It is time a definite plan for sale rooms be told to the buyers." It was anticipated all would be ready at Port Adelaide for the first sale in January, 1974 and \$25000 was authorized for renovation of premises and new furniture.

"Wool prices higher by up to 10%" was the caption above the report of the final sales in the Wool Exchange's No. 1 Room of Brookman Building on December 11th, 12th and 13th.

Top price for the series was 295.5\$ a kg. for four bales of AAA, Account Charles Smith of Naracoorte, in an offering of 40,560 bales including 17,404 bales submitted by sample with certified micron and yield results.

Southern Farmers offered 7337 bales, sold 7184; Elders-GM offered 24,648, sold 24,171; Bennett & Fisher Limited offered 8575 and sold 8385, the total bales sold being 39,740. (Auctioneers were Rex Glennon, Bruce Woolman and Bill Callaby) .

The sales took place in hot weather, some windows had been removed or broken by wreckers, scaffolding protruded into the room, noises were worse than ever before but competition was keen from Eastern Europe; as the main buyer, supported by Japan and Western Europe with local mills and British buyers lending support.

Estimates indicated almost 22 000 000 bales were sold for \$2,364,000 000 for an average price of \$209 a bale over 60 years of selling in Brookman Building.

Early morning starts and late finishes to sales were the pattern of many years ago when buyers had to move between wool sales centres by train. Food and refreshments were supplied in the wool exchange during breaks in selling.

At one period, all concerned adjourned for an evening meal elsewhere and returned in good heart to finish the sales.

On January 22nd, the seventh series of the 1973/74 sales commenced in the new Sale Rooms at Port Adelaide.

CURRENT AND FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIAN WOOL

Prepared by Rod Miller

21st century consumers dictate the future for SA Wool and Sheep production, preparation and sale.

SA Sheep and Wool industry participants have forged the future for the global wool industry for a century by both being early adopters and responding to strong market messages for change. The messages for both fibre and food producers and preparers are now well established and clear. They are seeking provenance down to farm level, environmental impact in production with evidence, and contributing to combatting global warming. The mulesing debate in Australia will be consigned to history. The protectors of these merits are the global brands who seek consumer favor for their products. From a history of production focused supply chain commodity comes demand chain product focus to achieve price premiums and long-term contracts.

At the time of writing (2022), we are seeing a separation of commodity and product markets for wool. For example the New Zealand active leisure brand Icebreaker owned by American VF Corporation, and another innovate wool product in Allbirds pure wool leisure shoes and runners demonstrate this point. They are contracting NM (non-mulesed) Wool producers in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa at significant premium prices to the spot auction market for times frames out to 10 years. With premium price locked in these producers then need to focus on producing to contract specifications, and the balance of the clip goes through auction. Even these auction wools receive large premiums because they are accredited to an Integrity brand under third party audit conditions on animal welfare, environmental and social contracts.

Social media is a significant influence in sending stories and messages to consumers globally directly from the wool producing properties in South Australia. This invites tourism and people seeking the actual experience, and meeting the people involved. Shearing shed and on property experiences will appear as growers and industry participants equally wish to engage with visitors to their authentic world. Larger scale family enterprises will be the drivers in iconic SA regions of Kangaroo Island, The Barossa, and the Flinders Ranges.

These social contracts recognize all people participating in the growing (including the stud breeders), harvesting, and marketing of that clip. Shearing contractors, shearers, Wool classers and shed hands are recognized as critical people in the process, and part of the provenance story that is relayed to the consumer. Wool Brokers remain key to these relationships, and Australian Wool Innovation remains the industry political representative body for wool growers through a statutory tax.

The Wool selling system under the Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX) and National Council of Wool Selling Brokers (NCWSB), and Private Treaty Merchants and Wool Processors have an impeccable record in the marketing of the Australian Wool clip and financial security in the transfer of payment between growers, buyers, exporters, and processors. All export lots are underpinned by the integrity of AWEX registered Wool classers, and a National Wool Declaration detailed and signed by the owner/manager.

An even stronger scientific underpinning of this trade is all lots sold with Australian Wool Testing Authority (AWTA) certificates. These underpin millions of dollar trade globally under international laboratory change test results and trade contracts and credit notes from major international banks. AWTA maintain a presence at the core lines of wool brokers and merchants at Pt Adelaide.

The current industry structures and organizations are well equipped for the future, and the South Australian history in training and preparing industry participants for the challenges and opportunities of the next 50 years is solid. Many that have been party of the last 50 years are accepting the legacy responsibility to pass their knowledge on to younger people to fully equip them for the challenges. They have the same youthful passion we once had, and we still do with experience to share.