

Scholefield Robinson

HORTICULTURAL SERVICES

Newsletter

DECEMBER 2004

BEN ROBINSON RETIRES

Many of our clients already are aware that Ben Robinson retired as a consultant and director of SRHS in October. This certainly is the end of an era, as Ben, along with Peter Scholefield was a founding member of SRHS over 15 years ago. We all wish Ben well in his retirement but know that he will maintain his broad interests in nutrition, horticulture, and viticulture.



A function is planned in early 2005 to acknowledge the contribution that Ben has made to the science of plant nutrition, as well as to the commercial consulting aspects of horticulture and viticulture. More details later on this function.

After about forty years as a practising plant nutrition scientist and consultant there are many things that we all remember about Ben. Some are listed below.

- Ÿ Honours, Agricultural Science degree from Adelaide University, 1963.
- Ÿ PhD from Cambridge University, 1967.
- Ÿ Post Doctoral Scholar (UCLA), 1970.
- Ÿ Awarded a Fellowship of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology.
- Ÿ Membership of many professional bodies.
- Ÿ Research officer with Department of Agriculture, SA between 1964 and 1989.
- Ÿ Expert in horticultural plant nutrition, fertiliser use and studies in fruit, vegetables, grapes and flowers. Interest in soil acidification.
- Ÿ Co-author and editor of "Plant Analysis: An Interpretation Manual". This manual, now in its second edition, is widely acknowledged as the "bible" of tissue analysis.
- Ÿ Member of Plant Breeder's Rights Advisory Committee.
- Ÿ Worked on overseas projects in China, Pakistan, India, and Dubai.
- Ÿ Prepared the Grapevine Nutrition module for the Research to Practice training program for CRC for Viticulture.
- Ÿ Worked on industry projects for the onion, cherry, vegetable, almond and pistachio industries.
- Ÿ Regularly invited to speak on his specialty at conferences and seminars in Australia and overseas.

Ÿ An active member of the Australian Association of Agricultural Consultants, our professional body.

Ben has worked closely with many in the horticultural and viticultural industry. It will be difficult to replace Ben in SRHS with his long experience and recognised position as a leader in his field. However, Dr Ben Thomas has stepped into the shoes of Ben and is enjoying working closely with his clients.

MAJOR PROJECT WORK

Dried Grape Growers Training Project-Pilot Program

In our last newsletter we reported that Scholefield Robinson had completed a contract to develop a training program for dried grape growers. This project was funded by Farmbis and the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, and was proposed by the Australian Dried Fruits Association (ADFA).

The final stage of this project is the implementation of a pilot program for growers. Scholefield Robinson Mildura is currently half way through this 12 month training course, delivering monthly workshops to a pilot group, who will assist in fine tuning the content and delivery of the program, so it can be presented to industry next year. SRHS consultants have contributed to the workshops so far, covering topics such as vine physiology, pest and disease management, plant nutrition and irrigation management.

ADFA is in the process of engaging SRM, along with Rendell McGuckian (RMCG) consultants in Bendigo, to undertake a benchmarking project in the dried grape industry to identify the key drivers of business performance and levels of technology employed in the industry.

AusIndustry Benchmarking Project

Scholefield Robinson Mildura's wine grape benchmarking project, funded by AusIndustry, is continuing for the second year. We currently have about 50 blocks of grapes registered and are looking for a few more in the Sunraysia region.

Angela McGill will be managing the project and will be visiting growers in December to start canopy measurements. Contact Garth or Angela at our Mildura office for more information.

Plant Health Australia (PHA) Projects

During July and August Stuart Pettigrew was involved in a survey of over 250 growers across the citrus, apple & pear and potato industries, as part of a review of on farm monitoring activities for pests and diseases. This project was done on behalf of Plant Health Australia, and involved a combination of face to face and phone interviews with producers in all the major producing regions for these crops.

Stuart has now started a second project for PHA, developing Surveillance Strategies for high priority pests in a range of industries. Lucy Pumpa is also involved in this project assisting with the technical input for developing these strategies.

Resource Information Centre for the SA Murray Darling Basin

Stuart Pettigrew and Charles Drew are involved in a joint project with Perks Business Consulting, developing a Business Case for the development of a Resource Information Centre (RIC) in the South Australian Murray Darling basin. A RIC is a centralised service for managing and delivering natural resource information to a range of clients from government agencies to private growers. This is a challenging project, as it involves up to 35 diverse groups who have an interest in developing this regional service, and who all need to be consulted with as part of the proposal.

Due Diligence Reviews

SRHS has continued to be involved in a wide range of reviews of investment properties, ranging from smaller vineyard and orchard operations, through to a major due diligence for one of the largest horticultural sales in Australia for many years. SRHS has the range of skills to service large investment clients in confidential negotiations between parties. This strength and diversity of skills has been developed by the strong and ongoing relationships we have with an extremely broad range of large and small growers.

Review of Investment Vineyards

Peter Scholefield has been reviewing the vineyard investments of a major vineyard trust throughout Australia and New Zealand. This work is only possible because of the independence that SRHS has tried so hard to maintain over many years, as well as our viticultural expertise and experience.

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SERVICES

Almond Benchmarking

SRHS are offering almond growers the opportunity to participate in a benchmarking program for the industry for the 2004/2005 season. Benchmarking is an extremely useful tool for growers to assess where to apply resources in their orchards to gain the maximum benefit.

The program will involve a site visit, leaf analysis and a full report on your property in comparison to other participants.

With recent changes to the way orchards are managed, this is extremely timely for the industry. It is not too late to get involved in this program, as we will be reviewing all participants in January and February prior to reporting on activities after harvest. For further information, please contact Stuart Pettigrew at our Adelaide office.

Tissue Analysis

Our petiole analysis service has been extremely popular again this season. Analyses have almost been completed in most growing regions. If you missed sampling your blocks at flowering don't despair, it is still possible to obtain nutrition recommendations for your blocks using results from leaf blade analysis at veraison. Nicole Thomas (wife of Ben) has been a great help with petiole analysis this season with Amanda Schapel being on maternity leave for 6 months.

Next petiole season, we will send out the historical block names that our clients have used in the past. If you could try to use the same block names from season to season, it will make our job of lining up the historical data for your blocks much easier.

January and February is the time for tissue sampling and analysis of nuts, olives and citrus crops. Please contact Lucy well ahead of time if you would like to use this service, to ensure that sampling bags and questionnaire forms can be sent out to you.

OTHER NEWS

Celebrating 15 Years of Change

A special symposium entitled "15 Years of Change - Where Next for Viticulture & Horticulture?" was held on Friday 20th August at the Charles Hawker Centre, Waite Campus, University of Adelaide, to celebrate 15 years of Scholefield Robinson being in business.

A full program, including eight speakers, was very informative, and key-note speakers Dr Rosemary Stanton (well known for her nutrition segments on the television show *Burkes Backyard*) and Chris Joyce (grower, processor and marketer of nuts, who is actively involved in R&D for the pistachio industry) were especially well received. Topics covered included:

- Nutrition and the future for horticultural products
- Changes to the environment in which viticulture and horticulture operate
- Issues and trends affecting the grape and wine industry
- On-Farm use of data for precision horticulture and management
- Plant Breeder's Rights and the use of

exclusive varieties in the retail area

• Dealing with the litigious society and modern horticulture

Following the seminar, drinks and nibbles were served in the foyer, which gave everyone a chance to mingle and reminisce about the development of Scholefield Robinson over the years.

Presentations were also made to clients and industry in Berri and Mildura on the 10th and 11th of November. Many people who attended were surprised at the scope of work that we do. All the papers from the main symposium are available to view on our website at:

www.srhs.com.au/articles.htm

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Workshops

Grapevine Nutrition Workshops

Ben Thomas and Ben Robinson conducted a one day workshop on grapevine nutrition for the Murray Valley Winegrowers Inc in September 2004. This was repeated a month later. Both workshops were well attended and provided a platform for growers, advisers and industry representatives to discuss various aspects of grapevine nutrition.

Conferences

12th Australian Wine Industry Technical Conference

Peter Scholefield, Garth Swinburn, Prudence Honner, Ben Thomas and Angela McGill all attended the Wine Industry Technical Conference, held in Melbourne in July. The conference was very well attended by growers, consultants, government agencies, researchers and winemakers. Several workshops were attended, including:

- Salinity in the vineyard and in wine
- Managing vineyard variation (Precision Viticulture)
- Getting started with environmental management in viticulture
- Spanish grape varieties

There were numerous posters presented and most were of the highest quality. Prue McMichael prepared a poster on 'Grapevine Health Management - National Industry Strategies', for the National Vine Health Steering Committee.

National Olive Industry Conference

Stuart Pettigrew attended the National Olive Industry Conference held in Perth in October. Conference sessions and workshops were held at the Perth Convention Centre and covered a range of topics, such as export potential, industry collaboration to build the branding of 'Australian' olive oil, as well as domestic marketing issues. The highlight was a field day to Fini Olives in the Moore River region, north of Perth. Demonstrations of technical topics, including irrigation, pest management, and orchard development & training, were given by a range of Australian and overseas experts.

Harnessing the Potential of Horticulture in the Asian Pacific Region

Peter Scholefield attended this conference at Coolom organised by the Australian Society of Horticultural Science and the NZ

Society for Horticultural Science. Some excellent papers were presented on topics ranging from new varieties, integrated export industry development, to functional foods.

Peter renewed contact with many long time colleagues from his past as well as meeting some of the young horticulturists who will be the future leaders of our industry.

Viticulture '04 - Growing Our Future

Ben Thomas presented a seminar entitled 'Developing a Nutritional Program for Your Vineyard' at the Viticulture '04 Conference, held in Mildura in October. This conference was well attended by tablegrape, winegrape and dried grape growers from the Sunraysia district as well as other interstate grapegrowing regions. Most facets of viticulture were discussed with concurrent sessions running for tablegrapes, winegrapes and dried grapes.

2004 Agribusiness Leadership Forum

Charles Drew attended the 2004 Agribusiness Leadership Forum and presented the AIAST Technology and Innovation Award at the Rabobank Agribusiness Awards Dinner in Melbourne on 28 October. The next day he attended the Monash University/Australian Agribusiness Association 2004 Agri-Food Forum.

PEOPLE



Wedding Bells

Congratulations goes to the Technical Officer at our Mildura office, Angela McGill (nee Herridge), who married James McGill on 2nd October at Ampelon Gardens, Gol Gol.

Happy Birthday!

Peter Scholefield celebrated a milestone this year, turning 60 in early December. Staff and friends were treated to a retrospective slideshow of Peter's life, compiled by his wife Pat and his eldest son, Nick.



Baby News!

Amanda and Sean Schapel were pleased to announce the arrival of their second child, Megan Taylor Schapel on the 1st of December, weighing 2.72 kg (6 lbs).

Merry Christmas from all of us at

Scholefield Robinson!

