

"Nothing ever stays the same for long"

The retirement of Ben Robinson focussed our attention on the future as we also reminisced about the past at a dinner held in March to acknowledge the contribution Ben made to the viticulture, horticulture and agricultural profession over forty years.

Some of Ben's qualities that were mentioned in speeches at the dinner included:

- "scientific rigour in every thing he does"
- "independent of the influence of specific products"
- "honesty and integrity"
- "ability to focus on one thing to the exclusion of things around him"

Thanks Ben and well done!

The younger consultants at Scholefield Robinson have stepped up in the latter part of the year.

- Ben Thomas has ably taken over the technical management of our soil and tissue analysis service. Many of our clients will have received interpretations prepared by Ben over the last six months.
- Scholefield Robinson now has a greater presence in the Mid North region with Prudence Honner now based at Laura and working in the region for half the week, with the other half being spent at the Adelaide Office. Grapegrowers in Clare, Southern Flinders and other nearby districts can contact Prudence on 0429 811 946.
- Stuart Pettigrew has managed several national projects for Plant Health Australia, showing that we have the capacity to meet the demands of a wide range of clients.
- Lucy Pumpa has spent the last two months looking down a microscope at grape inflorescence primordia. She doesn't exactly know how many buds she has dissected, but it is many thousands.

We look forward to a successful future with our new generation of SRHS consultants.

MAJOR PROJECT WORK

AusCitrus

Charles Drew is leading a team including Garth Swinburn, Peter Scholefield and Prue McMichael to conduct a project designed to assist AusCitrus in relocating their main base to Dareton. The project includes preparation of a detailed plan and budget to guide AusCitrus in its redevelopment of land near Dareton. The team will also assist AusCitrus in reviewing

and further developing their strategies aimed at ensuring that AusCitrus will continue to deliver high health status, true to type propagation and planting material to Australian citrus nurseries and growers.

Plant Health Australia

Stuart Pettigrew and Lucy Pumpa have recently completed the development of a "Generic Surveillance Strategy" for Plant Health Australia. This project involved producing a template for plant industries to develop a comprehensive surveillance program for high priority pests. The next stage will require interaction with peak industry bodies, as well as reviewing overseas examples of similar programs, to develop specific surveillance strategies for a range of pests in the citrus, cotton, apple and pear industries.

In addition, Stuart Pettigrew and several other consultants conducted interviews with 240 grain growers around the country, looking at their on-farm activities for pest surveillance, and how this will fit with an overall industry approach to managing exotic pest threats. The outcomes of this project will assist in the development of the Grains Industry Biosecurity Plan.

Dried Grapes Pilot Training Course and Benchmarking

Scholefield Robinson Mildura has completed a 10 workshop pilot training program with the last workshop in June. SRM has been facilitating the course using guest presenters and organising field visits to provide the participants with an integrated approach to dried grape business management and production. A review process is underway focussing on making changes to the content of the training course and the delivery of the material for the next group starting in August.

The ADFA funded benchmarking project is also coming to a close in June, with 36 local growers participating in the process. Detailed business and production information was collected and collated in a database to allow analysis of the group information. Each grower has received their individual reports and a seminar has been held for the group to review the consolidated information and to discuss the major outcomes of the study.

Resource Information Centre

Stuart Pettigrew and Charles Drew were involved with a project developing a Business Case for a Resource Information Centre in the South Australian Murray Darling basin regions, as reported in the Christmas newsletter. The final report was delivered in April, with progress now being

made by the agencies involved to make the centre a reality.

A Resource Information Centre is essentially a cooperative structure that enables private and government agencies to share and better manage data, with a focus on natural resource management information.

Winegrape Quality

Sunraysia

Susan Saris joined Scholefield Robinson Mildura in March to follow on with the work begun by Angela McGill on an AusIndustry funded project to develop a wine grape index that predicts wine quality. This season 72 vineyard sites were involved from the Riverland, Sunraysia and Swan Hill regions. Susan started just after the grape samples had been collected from the vineyards and is now managing the post harvest part of the project. Grower reports are being prepared, consolidated data has been sent to Provisor for statistical analysis, and the wines have been made at CSIRO from the same 6 vineyards as last year.

McLaren Vale

Prudence Honner has again provided winegrape quality assessments to a large grower group in McLaren Vale who collectively market their grapes to wineries. The assessments consist of canopy measurements, fruit measurements, chemical composition, and sensory evaluation by an independent winemaker.



McLaren Vale Pruning Field Day

Peter Scholefield and Prudence Honner presented a Pruning Field Day in June for the McLaren Vale Grape, Wine & Tourism Industry Association.

A group of 35 growers visited 3 vineyards in McLaren Vale and were informed about the different approaches to pruning to ensure a balance between yield and grape quality. One of the messages was "there are a number of ways to get to the same end point".

SCHOLEFIELD ROBINSON HORTICULTURAL SERVICES PTY LTD

ADELAIDE OFFICE
ACN 008 199 737 ABN 63 008 199 737
118A Glen Osmond Road, Parkside SA 5063
PO Box 650, Fullarton SA 5063
Ph: (08) 8373 2488 Fax: (08) 8373 2442
Email: srhs@srhs.com.au

Web Site: www.srhs.com.au

SCHOLEFIELD ROBINSON MILDURA PTY LTD
ACN 097 351 196 ABN 73 097 351 196
101A Ninth Street, Mildura Vic 3500 Australia
PO Box 1446, Mildura Vic 3502
Ph: (03) 5023 4644 Fax: (03) 5022 2556
Email: srm@ncable.com.au

NVHSC

Prue McMichael has continued in her role as Secretariat of the National Vine Health Steering Committee. The Committee's activities this year have involved updating the National Phylloxera Management Protocols, the Review of Vine Health Parameters for high health planting material, linkages with the National Grapevine Leaf Rust Eradication Program and reviewing research programs and submissions on behalf of research providers and funding bodies, including GWRDC.



Protea Inspections

Prue McMichael was recently engaged by a local grower to carry out a visual in-field inspection of Proteas intended for the export market, to evaluate their health status. Prue is a qualified plant pathologist with 20 years experience gained in California and Australia. She can provide you with advice on plant health management, pathology, plant and produce quality, problem-solving, forensic investigations, and loss assessments for a range of horticultural crops.



Almond Disorder

Prue McMichael and Lucy Pumpa have commenced investigations into an unresolved disorder of almonds on the Northern Adelaide Plains. The disorder, which presents as leaf spots and lesions followed by premature leaf drop and reduced bud development the following season, has been most severe on Non-pareil (see photo above). It has also developed on other varieties and has tended to appear, during the last two seasons, in November/early December. The initial trial work is focussing on chemical treatments and 'exclusion' practices.

SERVICES

Soil and Plant Analysis Review

Recently, we have conducted a number of reviews of current and historical soil and plant analysis data for vineyard clients. This has proved invaluable for our clients, putting the results into perspective and highlighting the most important information from the analytical tests. This enables our clients to prepare for the future with a sound knowledge of their soil conditions and plant nutrition requirements. If you would like to know what is involved, or are interested in having a review of your historical soil and plant analysis results conducted, please contact Ben Thomas at our Adelaide office.

Soil Sampling

For those of you who would like to conduct soil tests this season, it's not too late! Soil tests are useful to determine the amount of nutrient that is available to a plant, as well as providing information on possible root zone constraints such as soil sodicity, structural problems and salinity. If you would like to conduct some soil tests, please contact Ben Thomas at our Adelaide office to discuss soil sampling strategies.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Workshops

South East Soils School

Ben Thomas attended the SE Soils School in April. It was conducted by David Maschmedt (DWLBC) and Bruce Billing (DWLBC) and organised by Glenn Bailey (Rural Solutions SA). The school involved assessing the soil types and profiles at numerous sites across the Northern, Central and Southern transects of the South East of South Australia. This was linked with the geological history of the landscape and proved most informative when related to the use of the land for agricultural, horticultural or viticultural purposes.

Conferences

Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators

Charles Drew attended two professional development presentations of the Institute of Arbitrators and Mediators Australia, of which he is a member. The presentations were "Creative approaches to Arbitration and Mediation", and "Forensic Accounting and Alternative Dispute Resolution". The forensic accounting presentation was particularly relevant to SRHS, as Peter, Prue and Charles provide a wide range of expert witness services, and conduct due diligence assessments of many horticultural and other investments.

3rd Australian Wine Industry Environment Conference (AWIEC)

Ben Thomas attended the 3rd AWIEC in February. This conference brought together some of the leading experts on the impact of the wine industry on the environment and included seminars on a wide range of topics such as "Global priorities for environment and trade" and "Managing treated timber vine posts".

Precision Agriculture Conference

Stuart Pettigrew recently attended a Precision Agriculture conference in Sweden to catch up on the latest developments in this exciting new field. He also visited Spain to learn about new technologies for Citrus production.

Business Opportunities in China

Peter Scholefield attended a workshop in Adelaide presented by Austrade to assist small businesses in working in China. The growth of the Chinese economy is very impressive, but we need to fully understand the differences between our two countries and their culture. The messages were "do your homework" and "be patient".

PEOPLE

New Technical Officer

Scholefield Robinson welcomes Susan Saris, our new Technical Officer at the Mildura office. Susan has a science degree from Adelaide University, a Diploma of Education from Ballarat, and a Certificate in Rural Systems Management from the University of Queensland. She will be well known to many Sunraysia and Riverland grape growers from her role as Industry Development Officer with the Murray Valley Winegrowers Association. Susan's duties will include the wine grape quality program as well as project work for the grape industries.



Amanda is Back

Amanda Schapel has returned to work after the birth of Megan last December. We thank Nicole Thomas who worked with us during Amanda's absence.



Wedding Bells

Congratulations to Prudence Honner and John Wilson, who were married on 8th January at St Bartholomew's Church, Maitland. Prudence is now sharing her time between her home office in Laura and our Adelaide office.

OTHER NEWS

Water Restrictions

The Minister for the River Murray in South Australia has imposed water restrictions on irrigators for the period 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006.

Irrigators from the River Murray or reticulated supplies will have their licence allocation reduced by 30%.

Those affected should make plans now to cope with reduced availability of water in the summer, even if the good rains recently experienced continue. Plan for the worst case but hope that it does not eventuate!

COMING EVENTS

- Scholefield Robinson Seminar in Clare "New Directions in Viticulture and Horticulture", 27 July, 2005
- ASVO Symposium in Mildura "Transforming flowers to fruit", 29 July, 2005
- IFOAM Organic World Conference, Adelaide, 20-23 September, 2005