



## ' BIDGEE BULLDUST SUMMER 2018

### **NEW MANAGER - PETER SCHOFIELD**

Peter Schofield has now been appointed to the position of Farm Manager at Toopuntul.

The board contacted Peter some time ago when Mick became ill. We discussed with Peter the likelihood of him filling in as interim farm manager. Peter did this in 2004 when Mick was ill, and filled some pretty big shoes.

Peter is very knowledgeable and has worked on Toopuntul for many years after first purchasing a share in 2003.

Peter came onto the property before Easter 2017 and has spent many hours getting the property back to normal after the flood last year.

Many shareholders will know Pete already. If you don't, please take the opportunity to introduce yourself - and if you do, buy him a beer and make him welcome as the new Farm Manager.

Pete can be contacted at [manager@toopuntul.com.au](mailto:manager@toopuntul.com.au) and on 0419 372 090 or 02 6993 6751



# VALE MICK CALLANAN

As many will know, Mick had been ill for some time and he passed away on the 30th October surrounded by family. Mick was a great friend to many shareholders and was Managing Director of Toopuntul Station for 15 years.

Mick came from a background of running Riverina Plant Hire which gave him an encyclopedic knowledge of the Riverina. That, combined with his early years spent living on the family farm - Toopuntul, made the role of Manager at Toopuntul something he could not resist. It helped that Kate's roots are deep within the region and that she also was prepared to take on the challenges.

Mick started improving the breeding herd by selling barren cows, culling unmanageable stock and monitoring weights and ages of the herd. He built a uniform core of breeding cows which would produce more uniform calves which were more marketable.

While there were many highlights there were many setbacks. Mick's herd building ended in heartbreak as droughts required the quality herd to be sold in weak markets ruining years of effort. Mick started again only to be beaten again as drought interfered. In 2011 cattle numbers on Toopuntul peaked at around 1300. By October 2015 we were down to 150 and conditions on the property continued to be poor.

If it wasn't droughts and floods it was tornados - like the one which sliced through the machine shed and twisted trees out of the ground or just blew them down.

Mick and Kate weathered these setbacks and started again with resilience and for the most part acceptance of the randomness of farming life. As Mick's health failed it did not stop him planning ahead. He is the architect of the change in the business strategy of Toopuntul from one of breeding cattle to one of agistment and trading of cattle and of producing dorper sheep.

The turnaround of Toopuntul's fortunes since Mick took the job of Managing Director has been a team effort, with the Board providing leadership and support and Kate being a partner *par excellence* with shareholders pitching in as required. There is no doubt that Mick's drive and energy was a key asset of Toopuntul.

We all owe him a debt of gratitude. Well done Mick and thank you.



# RETIRING DIRECTOR TONY PRATT



After 29 years on the Board as Secretary, Director and Chairman, Tony Pratt has retired.

As mentioned in the BB Winter 2016 edition Tony's involvement has seen a number of significant achievements and a number of serious obstacles overcome.

There are very few achievements at Toopuntul which are the work of one man and the Board and management work as a team to manage the company and to improve the property and opportunities for shareholders.

Boards operate best with leadership and Tony has left no one in doubt about his views over the years and as Chairman has worked with the Board and management to resolve issues in a collegiate manner. In particular his partnership with Kate and Mick over the past 15 years has worked extremely well for the outlook of Toopuntul.

The Chairman of the Board sets the agenda for the Board meetings and makes sure all involved are aware of the issues so the Board can run smoothly. He and the manager work closely together to handle any difficulties arising between meetings and generally if there is a tough issue to handle the Chairman gets the job.

Shareholders see the Chairman in action once a year but he is at work 52 weeks of the year. As current Chairman, Clint Comelli, said at the AGM:

*"Tony has brought some fantastic first hand business experience to the farm, and has been instrumental in making changes to our great place to make it a fantastic place to visit".*

We thank Tony for his remarkable 29 years of service to Toopuntul, and wish him all the best for the future.

# VALE BRIAN JOUNING

Brian Jouning, former Manager of Toopuntul passed away on 8<sup>th</sup> January. Brian was a founding shareholder in Toopuntul and a key figure in raising the funds to buy the property and start Toopuntul Holdings Ltd.

It was his desire to set up a secure duck shooting property for the “exclusive few” as the ad from *The Weekly Times* in 1979 (below) says, that helped create Toopuntul Holdings.



Brian managed Toopuntul from 1979 to 2000 and was the master of ceremonies at most of Toopuntul’s activities during that period – duck shoots, clay target shoots, fishing competitions, Oxley Angling Club, Easter and Cup Weekend festivities and of course the source of many tales around the campfire.



Almost 60% of the shares in Toopuntul have changed hands since Brian retired, so many of the current shareholders will have to take our word for it that we owe Brian a vote of thanks for his role in establishing and sustaining what we all now enjoy.



## 1999 Board Members of Toopuntul Holdings Ltd

Back Row: Graeme STANTON, Barry HODGSON, Rod JOUNING, Mick CALLANAN

Centre: Tony FERLAZZO

Front Row: Leo CALLANAN, Ray ALEXANDER, Graham WHITE, Brian JOUNING, Tony PRATT

# OXLEY ANGLING CLUB

As many of you may be aware the Oxley Angling Club was originally set up quite some years ago by Wally McGufficke from Bunumburt Station and Brian Jouning to build a self-sustaining number of native fish in both the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan River systems through a fish stocking program. European Carp had a devastating impact on our river's ecology and this was seen as a practical way of tackling the problem. Each year or two Murray Cod and/or Yellow Belly fingerlings were released at strategic locations in both river systems on or close to Toopuntul.



In the Murrumbidgee River, this proved to be very successful with native fish numbers building to the point carp were rarely being caught. Unfortunately, the broad scale flooding experienced a few years back created oxygen starved black water which decimated the native fish populations and again the carp prospered.



*Colin Doyle & Josh releasing fingerlings*

The Oxley Angling Club under the Leadership of Dr Ray Horsey has continued on with this important legacy. Each year Cod fingerlings are purchased and released into the Murrumbidgee on Toopuntul and the results are now showing. At the AGM weekend Josh Pingiaro caught a cod that was of a size consistent with a stocking two years ago.

The Club has been able to obtain grants from the Balranald Shire and the National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW to assist in the purchase of fingerlings which makes our dollar go further, but there is cost involved. In joining the Club, one payment of \$100 will give you a life membership. All proceeds go into restocking.

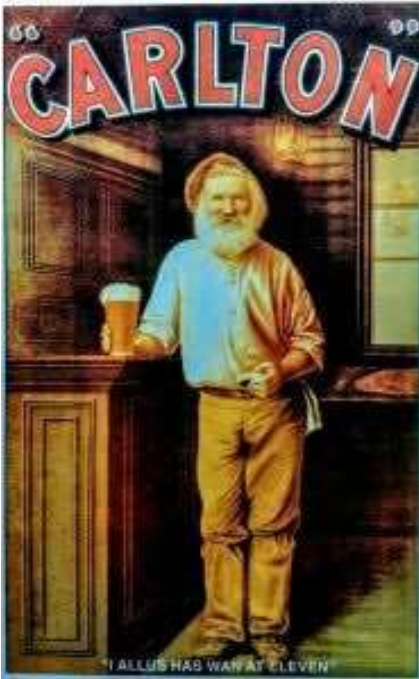


*Josh with his first cod catch*

If you would like to join the Oxley Angling Club and support this important venture please contact Ray Horsey on 0427 385 223, Colin Doyle 0448 024 060 or Rod Jouning 0411 161 723.

# THE CRY GOES UP AT THE COMMUNITY SHED

*All things considered, we haven't really changed that much.....*



## INTRODUCTION OF DORPER MEAT SHEEP

As we all know Toopuntul has traditionally been known for its ability to graze and fatten cattle, but as time goes on we have realized that we need to remain diverse in this marginal country, as it doesn't always rain, it is often dry, it sometimes floods, and we are constantly bombarded by pests & ferals. We are effectively in the hands of mother nature.



Toopuntul has recently had delivered 540 Dorper ewes and 10 Rams. The Dorper meat sheep was initially bred out of sheer necessity by the South Africans in the 1930s, a breed that could take on anything from arid drought stricken landscapes to lush green pastures and regardless of the conditions would maintain rapid growth, good carcass weights and consistently good lambing rates. They are non-selective grazers suiting

Toopuntul's landscape of various grasses, saltbush, bushy groundsel, lignum and boxthorns.

The input required to maintain Dorpers is substantially less than that of any other livestock as they do not require shearing, crutching, mulesing, or fly control and they are disease resistant. This aspect also suits Toopuntul's business model of a single on-farm manager.

Although we cannot predict the future we can learn from our history, and history has shown that droughts are a prevalent part of our weather patterns. We anticipate the introduction of the Dorper meat sheep to Toopuntul will help ease the burden through these tougher times, and along with our agistment program provide a steady source of income for the property going forward.

**Jim Gowty**

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# EASTER 2018 (30<sup>TH</sup> MARCH-2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL)

The program at Easter will be the usual format this year:

Good Friday	Social Shoot followed by Good Friday (Fish) BBQ at the Community Shed
Easter Saturday	Fireworks at the airstrip
Easter Sunday	Children's program: Easter Egg Hunt, Activities & Duck Race

The Easter BBQ and activities are put on for the participation and enjoyment of shareholders and their guests. All profits are put back into purchasing items for catering purposes, with the money raised from the Duck Race being donated to the Toopuntul Historical Society.

The prizes for the Sunday Children's Program are donated by the Board and shareholders



Community spirit is what Toopuntul is all about so we are once again seeking support from shareholders to volunteer their assistance with running the program of events. If you are able to help please let Manager Peter Schofield know ASAP.

We are very fortunate to again have the capabilities of long time shareholder Colin Quick from *Quick as a Flash Pyrotechnics* ([www.quickasafashpyrotechnics.com.au](http://www.quickasafashpyrotechnics.com.au)) to conduct our own private fireworks display out on the airstrip. Although always happy to donate a substantial amount to putting on this spectacular which is the highlight of the weekends program, we again encourage contributions from shareholders and their guests.

So that we can ensure that all events are suitably catered for please email Peter Schofield with numbers by **Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March**. (Further info closer to the date).

**Shooting Reminder:** For the safety of shareholders and their guests no game shooting is permitted on the property during the Easter program.

**Camping Fees Reminder (valid from 22nd September 2017)**

SHAREHOLDER (Including partner & own children under 21 & own grandchildren under 16)  
\$40 camping (weekly or part thereof)

GUEST: Includes own children over 20 years - \$40 camping per person (weekly or part thereof)

# FISHING THE 'BIDGEE

Over the last 30 years my family has been fishing the Murrumbidgee river at Toopuntul. It wasn't until 2015 that we caught our first yellow belly. Now we regularly catch yellow belly and we have started to have some good success on Murray Cod.

The area around the Toopuntul camp ground offers some excellent fishing and both bait and lures are very productive. Responsible fishing practice and fish stocking have led to a great fishery.



In 2014 I assisted Brian stock cod into our section of river. Now some 3 years later we have a good number of fish in the system that are about the 50cm range and not far off entering their mature/breeding cycle. Studies show that Murray cod take between 4-6 years to reach a mature size. Cod are slow growing and long lived. Cod can live up to 70 years of age and it's the large mature females that are the key to a successful system.



Based on the stocking that I assisted Brian with and the average size of fish in our system it would be fair to assume that stocking our section of river is a successful and viable strategy.

We have a couple of monster cod in our system as evidence of this is often seen on our fish finders and also the fact that we have snapped and straightened several hooks from massive hookups! These fish are legendary amongst the camp and one of the reasons I fish so hard for them! It's not that I want to keep such a fish, more so meet the legend.

While the cod are great eating, my family has only ever kept one of the many fish we have caught. While we enjoy eating the cod, we would much rather eat a yellow belly and let the cod continue their resurgence. It's a proven fact that large female cod have far higher larval survival rates and make far greater reproductive contributions than the spawnings of small female fish. This further emphasizes why I prefer to let most fish go. (cont...)





It's been great to get out and catch cod with my father, brother, nephew and friends; it's been long awaited the return of great fishing to Toopuntul. There is nothing better than sitting in the shade on a hot day on the bank or boat with a few cold beers listening to the sound of the birds and insects, watching the wildlife come down to the bank for a drink and having a line in the water hoping to have the rod nearly ripped out of your hands by a giant cod!

I catch most of my cod on bait. My favourite bait for cod is yabbies. It's a great asset to have dams that hold good numbers of yabbies both for the pot and for bait. There are also good numbers of yabbies now in the river, further proving that the Murrumbidgee is continuing to regenerate.

Other good baits for cod and yellow belly include worms, shrimp, cheese, grubs and eggs.

I find that during the hot days the cod hide in the deep holes in the river and they just love to lay amongst the snags.

Fishing a bait deep in the snags with just enough weight to keep the bait in place has been my most successful technique. As there are a few monster fish in our system I use gear that would be suited to snapper and gummy sharks in salt water (6-15kg).

When casting lures a baitcaster or spinning reel kitted with a graphite rod and matched with 30-60lb braid is perfect. Spinner baits, surface lures, vibes and stump jumpers are perfect lures. As our section of the river varies greatly in depth trawling can be very hard, however not impossible.

I would like to remind everyone that the cod fishing has only just returned and that we all must only keep fish for our immediate needs. It's just so much fun to have a few quite beers, enjoy the river and actually have a great chance of catching a Cod. We all want this to continue for many years to come.

Tight lines everyone!

**Josh**



# THE ROYAL JOURNAL

## A WET WEEKEND (SOMETIME LAST CENTURY)

By Robert Sturzaker



### Friday 21st May 1999

John Tailby, Les Eastoe and Rob Sturzaker in residence.

Arrived 12.30am! Mild 18 deg. River low and clear. Fishing could be interesting. Big day - JT proved his expertise as a fisherman by catching 1 ½ lbs silver perch. RS caught small yella belly (first edible fish) Les - bugger all. But we are grateful he did not fall down the bank!!!

And now a comment from Les:

*At least I retained all my toys for another day, it was funny really, and don't we get even. Bless the system.*

RS - to explain Les' remark. JT and RS rolled the boat over into the river and lost JT and RS' fishing tackle. Broke RS rod but got the fish. RS very humiliated, his motor is knackered.

Had lovely dinner of beef stroganoff (thank you Lucille), mashed potatoes & peas. Yummy!

Where is Pinky?

### 21st May 1999 (Friday) – Graham "Pinky" Kemp

Pinky arrives at 8.30pm, Les (Silver Fox) in cheerful spirits after plenty of Bourbon, RS and John Tailby appear very sheepish, quiet, and down and out. It soon becomes apparent that they had major trouble, tipping their boat upside down and losing everything - the Quicks have some competition!!

RS and John "everything wet", not very happy but tomorrow is another day.

### Sat 22nd May 1999 (Saturday) - GK

Big clay target (Sporting Clays) shoot at the Oxley Gun Club

RS, JT, Pinky in same squad as Brian Jouning & Alan Powers (nearby property manager)

RS – 41 / John – 41 / Pinky - 44

PINKY - HIGH GUN AND CHAMPION SHOOTER!!

Big shoot off with RS, JT and John Treble in "A" grade as all shot 41.

JT 4/6, RS 3/6 and JohnTreble 0/6.

BBQ Sat night and with Pinky the hero and receiving congratulations and top prize.

RS again not very happy.

(cont.....)

## Sun 23rd May 1999 - GK

We go out to a duck shoot at Dry Lake. Pinky in rocket RS and JT in RS's unstoppable 4WD. Pinky shoots 1 duck (magnificent blue wing shoveler) and makes hasty retreat as it starts to rain. On way back to camp sees the Quicks with Norm asking why Pinky is going back. Arrives back at 9.30am. Silver Fox asleep and it has not stopped raining since. Pinky made it back safe! Silver Fox very happy and reports there is not a movement, no-one in sight because we believe they are all stuck out in the swamp! It is now 11.46am and still raining and they are still out there without breakfast and again we don't believe RS will be very happy - noting he will be wet, hungry with no more change of clothes.

### **RS - (Not true - 1 lot of clothes left)**

RS - JT and I shot at Dry Lake and went on to Cumbungi Lake and had a good shoot until rain came. RS wet as a shag and lost Biggles! The Quicks and Mick found Biggles and we travelled out together - what a trip.

Raining continuously and Quicks with only the "Bogged Mobile". Norm stood on the back bumper and Colin drove. Very slippery and we found John Treble stopped in the paddock. The Lancaster's were bogged at the front gate near the house. Slippery as buggery. We followed the Chairman (Big Graham White) back until he stopped at the Lancaster's car. We then took to the bush and slid thru to home. Still raining. Les and Pinky here stuffing their faces.

The score you ask?

Pinky - 1 (Pinky left the swamp so he would not get wet!) (and he reckons he is a duck shooter!) / JT - 4 / RS - 10

You will notice Pink's glory is short lived. Sturzy is back in town as Top Gun! You can't eat clay targets!

## Mon 24th May 1999 - GK

Overcast but only a sprinkle of rain. Flushed the outboard with oil and started tidying up. Invited ourselves to the Chairman's (Big Graham White) for tea - he is not happy! Rang home to advise of delay.

Went fishing - JT 3 carp , RS 1 carp, Les S.F.A

Now quite cool and we have sliced up last night's venison roast for entree. Brian Jouning had to go to the front gate to get heart pills for a shareholder. He thinks maybe we try tomorrow PM to leave. We will see.

**JT** - Very enjoyable week - most happy to have survived it.

**(Ed Note :** No further entries that weekend so it must have dried up and we bolted).