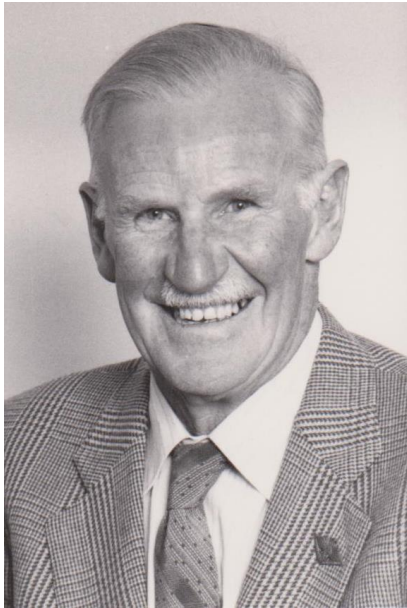


A great mentor to those who followed in his footsteps

John Williams



John Williams was a foundation Councillor, President and Honorary Life member of the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association making during his 18 years as a Council Member an impressive and lasting contribution to the Australian superfine wool industry.

He was a member of the inaugural Council formed in 1971 representing the New England Region, joining the Executive Committee in 1974 and then serving as President from 1984 to 1986.

After serving during the Second World War he managed the family property Eastlake at Uralla. A dedicated and committed superfine grower; he was also a keen conservationist and well ahead of his time in understanding the need for environmental best practice. The extensive tree plantings on Eastlake are a lasting tribute to his memory.

John became involved in many community activities in the Armidale Region including being a foundation committee member of Wool Expo.

As an ASWGA Council Member he faced many challenging issues particularly in establishing a good working relationship with the Australian Wool Corporation in establishing recognition and support for superfine wool types and seeking a fair reserve price. He was also instrumental in gaining Government support and recognition of the importance of fostering the superfine sector of the wool industry. Further he reinforced the necessity for superfine wool to be the flagship for the whole industry with its focus on high quality.

He was a strategic thinker prepared to embrace new technology and ideas if they were demonstrated to be soundly based. The complexities of the moves to objective measurement were an example of where he was determined to see that measurements were fair and accurate for superfine wool. As such he played a pivotal role in the development of research during the move from subjective to objective measurement. He

took a keen interest in all aspects of rural Research & Development and served on CSIRO Research Advisory Panels.

He had an outstanding ability to see all aspects of an issue and to bring together the Council in a united voice that ensured that their views were properly considered and respected. Even in the most earnest discussions he was always a gentleman and when a decision was made he would support that decision being a committed team player.

He developed close links with Universities and strongly supported the development of specialist superfine classing courses. He supported the introduction of the Ermenegildo Zegna National Fleece Competition in 1980 as a means of showcasing the excellence of superfine wool and bringing superfine growers closer together.

During his time as President the superfine industry was facing considerable pressure with superfine wool only 4% of the total Australian clip and with depressed prices for superfine wool. The AWC and Wool Council were focussed on volume rather than quality. John pursued the AWC and IWTO relentlessly to undertake research to develop new products for superfine wool and build demand. This finally led to significant research in this area leading to initiatives such as the “Cool Wool” range moving wool to trans-seasonal ranges and lighter and softer apparel.

Contamination, both in-bale and pack, had become major issue and he addressed both issues with determination, building up the importance of the highest standards of clip preparation and image for quality together with support for research into a replacement for the HDPE and Jute pack. This led to the Paper Nylon pack and finally the present nylon pack.

He developed closer links with our overseas mill members and other clients and worked closely with both AWC and IWTO to establish closer and more cooperative links between superfine growers and their key customers in Italy, Japan, Western Europe and the UK.

In 1986 John led a group of ASWGA members on a study tour of Italy and the UK visiting ASWGA Mill Members and attending the world Merino Conference in Madrid together with the celebration of the Bicentenary of the Rambouillet Research Station in France.

John Williams will be remembered with honour and respect by all who were privileged to work with him. He was a great mentor to those who followed in his footsteps always encouraging younger growers to play their role in advancing Australian superfine wool.