

Farming Returns '1994 and 2020'

Comparing the Two

Social isolation and the absence of televised football has led one local resident to engage in the cleaning out of his shed, which yielded an unexpected treasure.

In a pile of newspapers, the observant gentleman spotted a copy of "Stock & Land" dated Thursday, June 2, 1994, with a cover price of \$1.50.

He decided to compare some of the prices noted by the journal with today's prices.

At Wycheproof, 4 1/2-year-old 1st. cross ewes, with Poll Dorset lambs at foot, sold for \$44 per head. At a recent sale, similar outfits made \$380 per head.

In 1994, Merino ewes with Poll Dorset lambs made \$37.

Recently similar outfits made \$259 to \$320 per head.

Last week, heavy lambs traded for from \$240 to \$280 per head. Twenty-six years ago, heavy lambs made from \$39.72 down to \$31.04.

Last week, heavy x-bred ewes made up to \$280, while 26 years ago, similar sheep made from \$30.60 to \$20.80.

Heavy Merino ewes traded between \$26.38 and \$18.13. Heavy wethers traded between \$35.50 and \$19.70, while last

week 40kg wethers traded up to \$280.

Twenty-six years ago, top price wheat landed in Melbourne made \$132 per tonne, compared with today's price of \$400 per tonne.

Today, cereal hay trades for around \$300 per tonne — 26 years ago the price was \$80 to \$100 per tonne.

Crops and Pastures

In the same edition, in a two-part feature under the banner, "Crops and Pastures", "Stock & Land" grains writer Carol Trailor interviews Charlton district farmer, Terry Lane and his wife, Marion, exploring the impact sowing vetch following wheat to achieve outstanding yields, and the Lanes' move to mini-

Under the sub-heading, "Vetch lifts yields in whole-farm plan", Carol reported as follows:

"Cropping wheat following vetch to achieve outstanding yields has typified the new approach to farming taken by Terry and Marion Lane, Charlton, Vic., in the past 10 years.

"Mr Lane said he switched to a cropping-only farm management program about four years ago to achieve better returns.

"About the same time, he began sowing vetch.

"He is now considering increasing vetch because of the outstanding yields achieved in wheat crops following the green manuring of the vetch.

"The Lanes, who run a 404 hectare property and share farm another 430ha, began their whole-farm cropping program after receiving advice from the Agriculture Department. Mr Lane said by using

minimum tillage and direct-drilling trash would be put back into the ground and eventually break down to return nutrients to the soil.

"Farming has changed immensely in the last 10 years or so from the old method of fallowing cereals and pastures," Mr Lane said. He said in that 10 years he had radically changed his "whole farming practice".

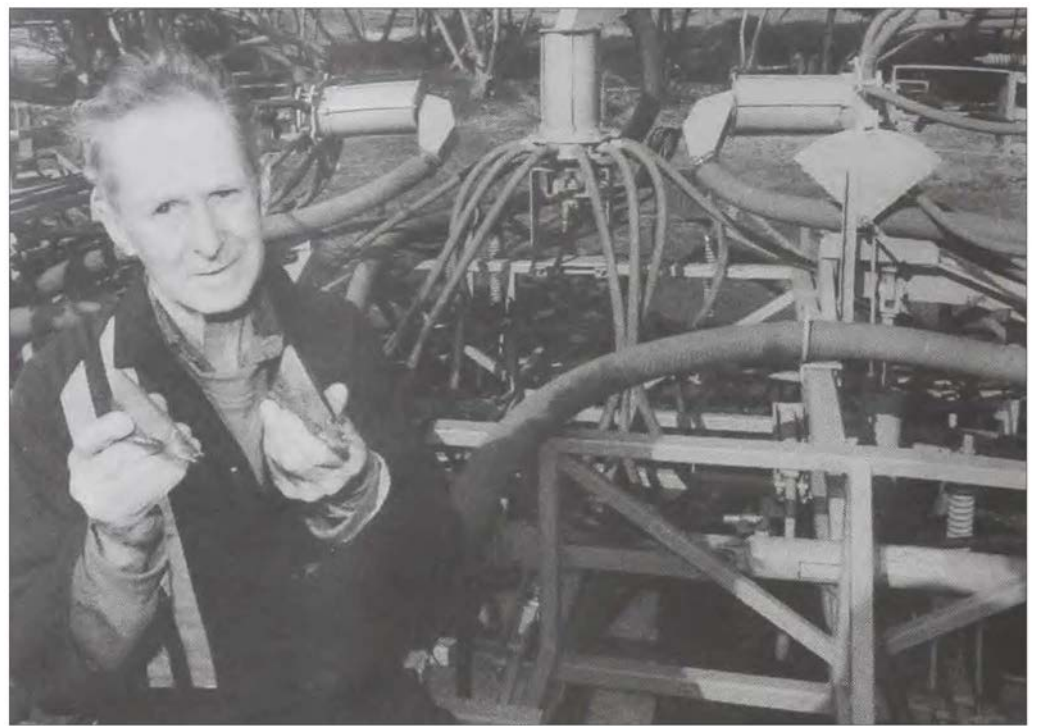
"I have proved that you can get results, especially by following the vetch with the wheat," Mr Lane said, "My aim with green manuring is to try to boost the protein and fertility of the wheat the following year."

"The all-cropping program led to a move toward minimum tillage cropping practices for the Lanes, with some minimum tillage cultivation and some direct drilling. (See story this page)

"The Lanes intend to sow canola for the first time this year.

Other Crops

"Other crops include chick peas (100ha), Meering and Rosella wheat (240ha), field peas (160ha) safflower (50ha) and barley (100). The Lanes grow Schooner barley and this



• Charlton farmer, Terry Lane, as pictured in the "Stock & Land" of Thursday, June 2, 1994, with the caption that included "Terry Lane, Charlton, Vic., shows the tungsten-tipped Keech

parison 'with the combine he used to use. "

year will incorporate 24ha of Arapiles for the first time.

"The Lanes planted the vetch for seed the first season but since have been green manuring it and grazing it until November before leaving it fallow and sowing wheat on the ground the following year.

"Last year the wheat on paddocks following vetch yielded 5.5 tonnes a hectare and the previous season averaged nearly 6.7 tonnes/ha.

"The whole-farm average wheat yield last year was 3.7 tonnes/ha on a 80ha paddock and 5.5 tonnes/ha on a 100ha paddock. In the past, Mr Lane sowed about 100ha a year of vetch, but this year will only be sowing 56ha as he has 'too many other crops to sow'.

"The Lanes have sown the vetch at about 25 kilograms a hectare with the first autumn break but this year built this up to 40kg/ha for better coverage.

It was sown dry about two months ago to anticipate the autumn break.

"Previously, the Lanes grazed their vetch 'right down' until November and broke the soil up with the first rains but this year will turn the whole crop in without grazing. Mr Lane said this was because of Agriculture Department advice that he would probably get more nitrogen input if he did not graze down.

"He said the only problem in following vetch with a cereal was its presence as a weed in a cereal crop, but he controlled this with about 85mm of Lontrel applied to wheat at early tillering.

"His rotation is vetch, followed by wheat, followed by legume. He said this was a 'very flexible rotation'. Canola will be planted in the place of wheat this year.

"On the high-yielding wheat crops, Mr Lane said he found it harder to get high protein, but was trying to build up nitrogen and nutrient levels in the soil.

Preparation

"His ground preparation for all crops includes working up the ground about twice with a chisel plough or cultivator to combat rhizoctonia and take-

all, but this year he will only cultivate it once.

"He also gives the land a 'cross-work' and on paddocks to be sown with cereals he pre-drills urea at about 60 kilograms/ha, although this is increased to up to 100kg/ha for land to be sown to canola and on soil which appears to lack fertility.

"The soil pH is about 8 to 8.5 percent, and Mr Lane said he found the soil needed zinc.

"Soil tests in 1985 highlighted a zinc deficiency in the soil and Mr Lane has been working since then to improve the problem. He applies 70kg/ha of super and 2.5kg/ha of zinc.

"Mr Lane quoted a report prepared by crop specialist John Land, which said the result had been "a dramatic increase in pasture growth and improved grain yield."

"Mr Lane applies Gyrat Legume super with zinc to legumes, which adds sulphur to the soil, which, he said, was lacking in the double super he used to use.

"He sows barley at 60kg/ha. Last year the barley was eaten out by mice and re-sown, which Mr Lane said 'significantly decreased the yield'.

"He sows peas at 100kg/ha to yield about 2.2 tonnes/ha. Chick peas are sown at similar rates, but yield slightly less — about two tonnes/ha.

"The canola will be sown at five kilograms/ha, and Mr Lane said the best safflower yields were achieved when sown at about 15kg/ha."

Minimum Tillage

On the same page, under the sub-heading, "Minimum tillage means switch in machinery", Carol reported as follows:

"A move to minimum tillage meant a change in machinery for Charlton, Vic. grain growers Terry and Marion Lane.

"The Lanes switched last year from using a 4.5 metre b. It t d d com me cu tva or an see er to a 9.1 metre T220 Gyrat tilther fitted with a Gyrat two-behind air seeder bin with 30 centimetre spacings.

"Mr Lane said the new tilther provided more clearance than the combine and the switch was a key factor in his new minimum tillage, trash-retention program.

"It has a hydraulically-driven motor under the three heads which help to evenly circulate the seed and stop blockages," Mr Lane said.

"I've sown a lot of seed which hasn't been cleaned thoroughly, without any blockages,"

"He said he changed because the combine, although going through a lot of trash, had a lot of blockages on crops such as chick peas.

"We decided to go to the airseeder and it cuts double the width," he said.

"It uses heavier Keech points which are tungsten tipped and they have been hardfaced by Gyrat."

"Mr Lane said there was 'no comparison' between the combine and his new tilther.

"I've done about 3000 acres with this set (of points) and I am just starting to replace them now," he said."