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Fig. 1.—Mr. Bateman discussed the construction of bench terraces on his Piesses Brook orchard

## A ROVING FIELD DAY

### Successful Innovation in the Hills Area

**O**NE of the most successful of a number of field days organised by the Horticultural Division during 1955 was an all-day tour of the Darling Range and Pickering Brook districts during the winter period. This "roving field day," as it was termed, proved to be a most enjoyable outing for a number of orchardists and their families and enabled the participants to inspect and discuss several interesting features of horticultural practice.

At the assembly point Mr. R. C. Owen, M.L.A., the President of the Darling Range Fruitgrowers' Association welcomed the visitors and wished them a successful day. Many growers were accompanied by their wives and families and there was quite an impressive scene as the long convoy of cars wended its way to the first stopping place, the property of Mr. E. Bateman of Piesses Brook.

Keen interest was shown in the many features on Mr. Bateman's ten-acre citrus orchard, perhaps the most spectacular of which was the series of bench terraces which had been constructed by the owner

in consultation with the Soil Conservation Service of the Department. As pointed out by Mr. T. C. Miller, Assistant Superintendent of Horticulture, moisture and soil conservation were adequately provided for by this type of layout, the first of its kind in an orchard in this State. The only cultivation would be a relatively narrow strip along each terrace and subterranean clover would be used to provide a semi-permanent ground cover.

The pruning of citrus trees was discussed by Mr. R. L. Cailles, the local Horticultural Instructor, and Mr. Bateman explained his current pruning programme.



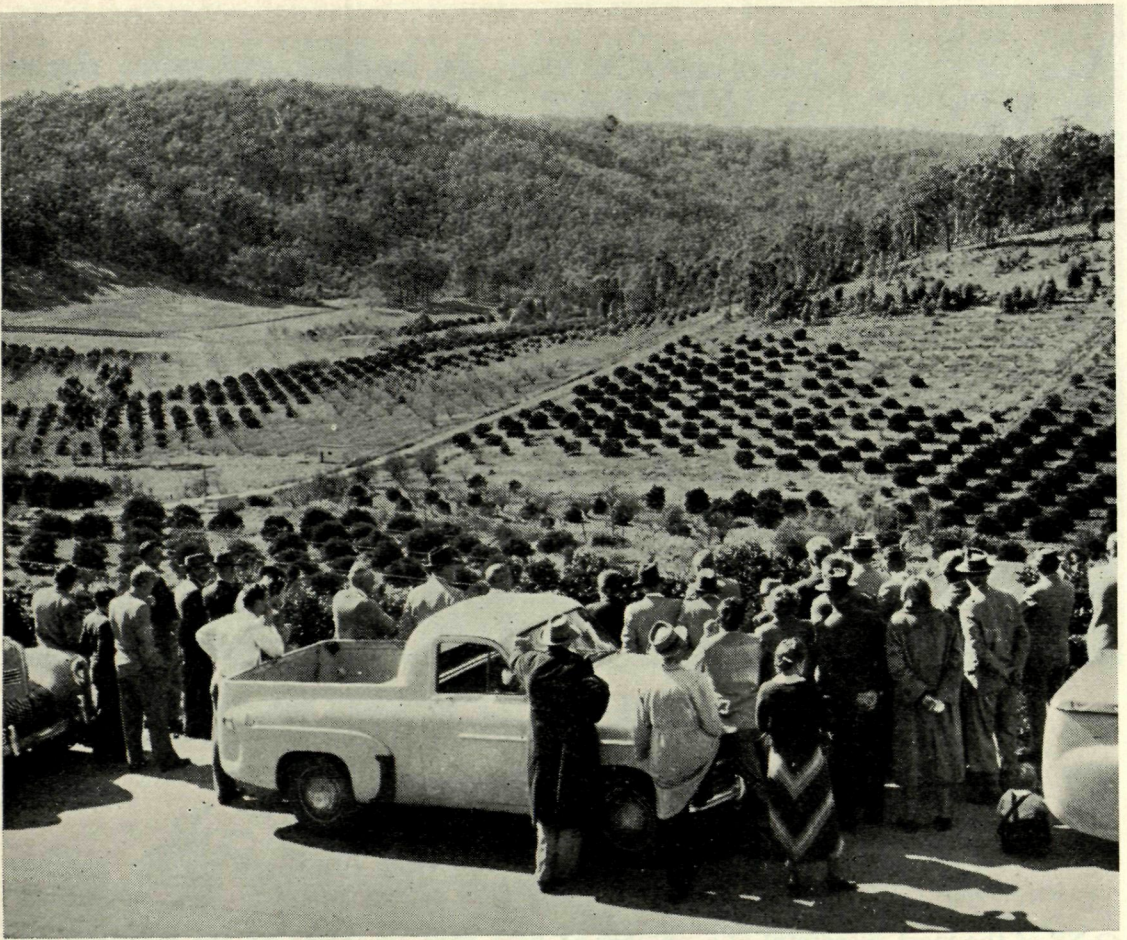


Fig. 2.—The picturesque Bickley Valley—scene of the Oriental Fruit Moth eradication campaign

The visitors were impressed with the control of white wax scale, which had been achieved by an efficient spray programme on the property. A small experimental planting of Washington Navel and Valencia orange trees raised from selected bud strains obtained from the Eastern States was also inspected.

In conclusion Mr. Bateman briefly outlined his orchard record system for keeping detailed records of tree performance. By this means uneconomical trees are pinpointed and already a start has been made to rework or replace unprofitable trees.

In the heart of the Bickley Valley a brief stop was made to enjoy the lovely panorama of mixed orchards where all types of fruits and also walnuts are being

successfully grown. It was in this area that oriental fruit moth was discovered in 1951, but by a rigorous campaign as described by Mr. L. Neave the local inspector, it now seemed certain that the pest would be eradicated.

A picnic lunch at Walliston where hot water and lunching facilities were provided by the local growers organisation, provided a welcome break before continuing with the afternoon's proceedings.

The first stop after lunch was at the property of Mr. Wm. Annetts at Carmel. Here visiting growers entered freely into a discussion of peach tree pruning as demonstrated by Mr. Cailles and also listened to the comments of Mr. Annetts on his method of training the trees. An excellent orchard spray plant constructed



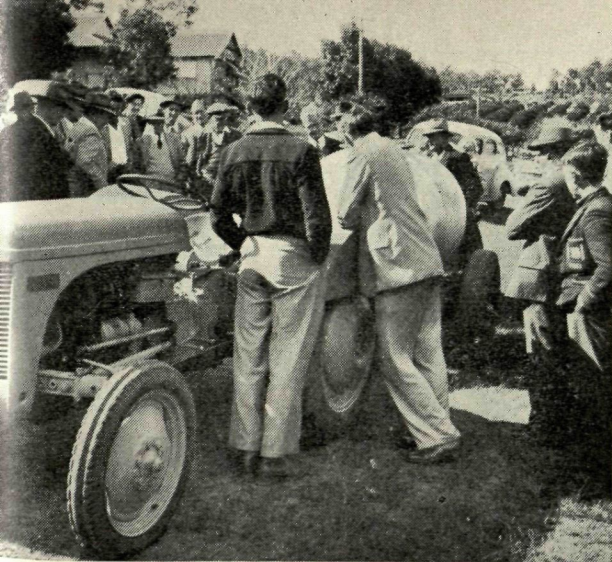


Fig. 3.—A grower-built spray plant created much interest on Mr. Annett's property at Carmel

by the grower from standard items of equipment was on display and provided new ideas for growers interested in building plants of their own.

The pros and cons of reworking citrus trees by budding were discussed by Mr. Cailles supplemented by the grower, who indicated the reason for changing the variety. While growers were in the citrus orchard Mr. F. Melville took the opportunity of telling them of a survey of citrus plantings recently conducted in the main citrus districts. The problem of citrus tree decline has caused concern for many years and the survey was conducted with the object of obtaining information on how widespread nematode and phytophthora root infection are in citrus orchards and their relationship to tree decline. One of the most serious aspects of the problem is the replanting of declining citrus orchards. It would appear that the most profitable lines of attack lie in resistant rootstocks and improved soil management.

The increasing importance of the Hills districts for fruitgrowing was well illustrated by the short tour of the Pickering Brook district on the way to the property of Mr. A. Niven. Extensive plantings of Granny Smith apples have been made in recent years as well as stonefruits and

citrus and the production from areas such as these in the near future will be substantial.

An interesting feature on Mr. Niven's property was the recently built 6,000 case cool store. It consists of four chambers each with an independent unit but so arranged that any unit may be switched to either of two adjacent rooms. The value of a store such as this to the grower and the surrounding orchardists was amply demonstrated by the fact that all chambers were filled to capacity. In a short talk on fruit storage Mr. F. Melville indicated that in the last two years seven cool stores had been built on growers properties in the hills and that a number of others were contemplated. Such facilities gave the grower much better control over the handling and marketing of his fruit and in all cases had proved very worthwhile.

A very spectacular demonstration of sprinkler irrigation was provided by the high pressure Buchner system. Each head irrigates almost two acres of orchard.

The enjoyable afternoon tea served by the ladies of the Pickering Brook-Karragullen district at the end of the afternoon provided a pleasant conclusion to a most interesting day.

The efforts of the growers who made their orchards available and went to considerable trouble to show visitors around their properties were greatly appreciated by everyone present.

Fig. 4.—A high pressure Buchner sprinkler on Mr. A. Niven's property at Pickering Brook irrigated almost two acres at a time







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