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Muresk Agricultural College

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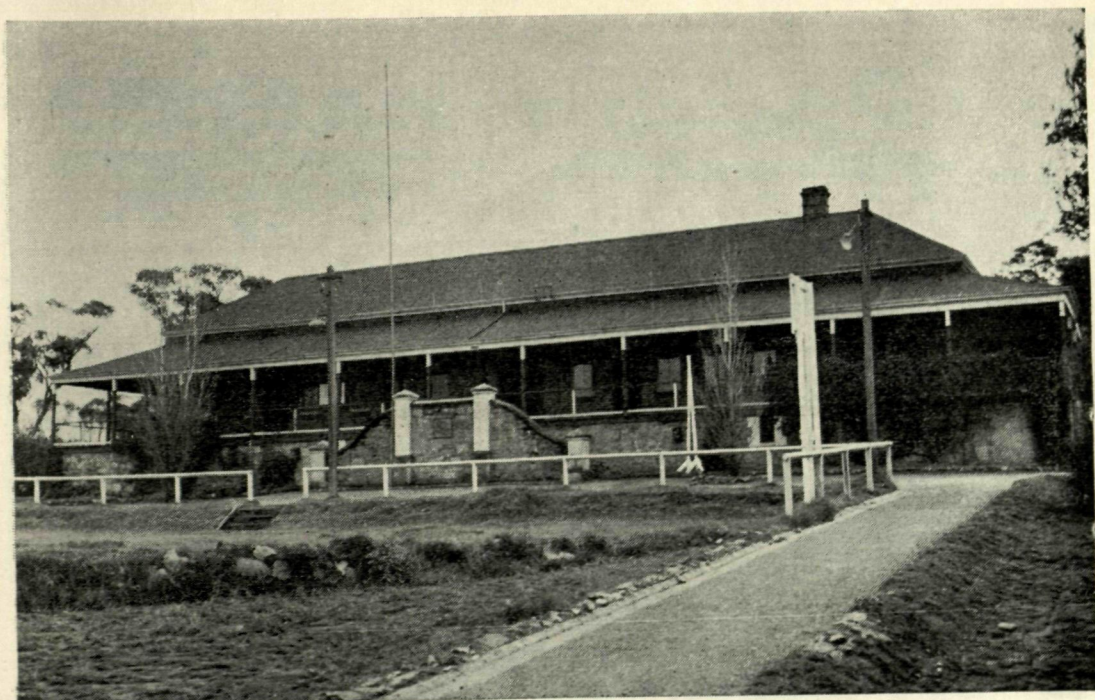


Fig. 1.—The Muresk homestead built by Andrew Dempster in 1899. It houses the College dining room, recreation room and administrative offices.

MURESK AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

By W. SOUTHERN, B.Sc. (Agric.), Dip.Ed., Principal

WHEN the West Australian Government established Muresk Agricultural College in 1926, it added a new chapter to an interesting story of land settlement and utilisation which had its origin in the early years of the Swan River Colony. Much of the present College land was included in a 4,400-acre grant made to Henry Reveley in 1838, but portions of the grant were forfeited in the same year and taken up by Du Bois Agett, the property then being known as Down Farm.

To Down Farm in 1856 came Matthew Oliver with his bride. It was he who planted the large pepper-tree which still stands in front of the West Dormitory. Old records indicate that wheat was grown on Down Farm, a popular variety being Club-head. Although no superphosphate was used, yields of from nine to 26 bushels to the acre were obtained over long periods.

Large quantities of sandalwood provided settlers with a means of augmenting their incomes. This fragrant wood was in keen demand in China, where it was used in the manufacture of joss-sticks, and many dray-loads were carted to Perth for ex-

port. The son of Matthew Oliver remembers journeying to Perth in a dray drawn by a horse and a bullock yoked in tandem.

For some years prior to 1890, Down Farm had been owned by Andrew Dempster, one of the sons of Captain James McLean Dempster, master of a schooner trading between Australia and Mauritius in the 1830's. Captain Dempster became a farmer on the Bucklands Estate at Irish-town near Northam and his sons maintained the family's amphibious traditions by establishing a sheep station at Esperance and annually captaining the sailing ship which took their wool-clip to Adelaide and returned with stores.

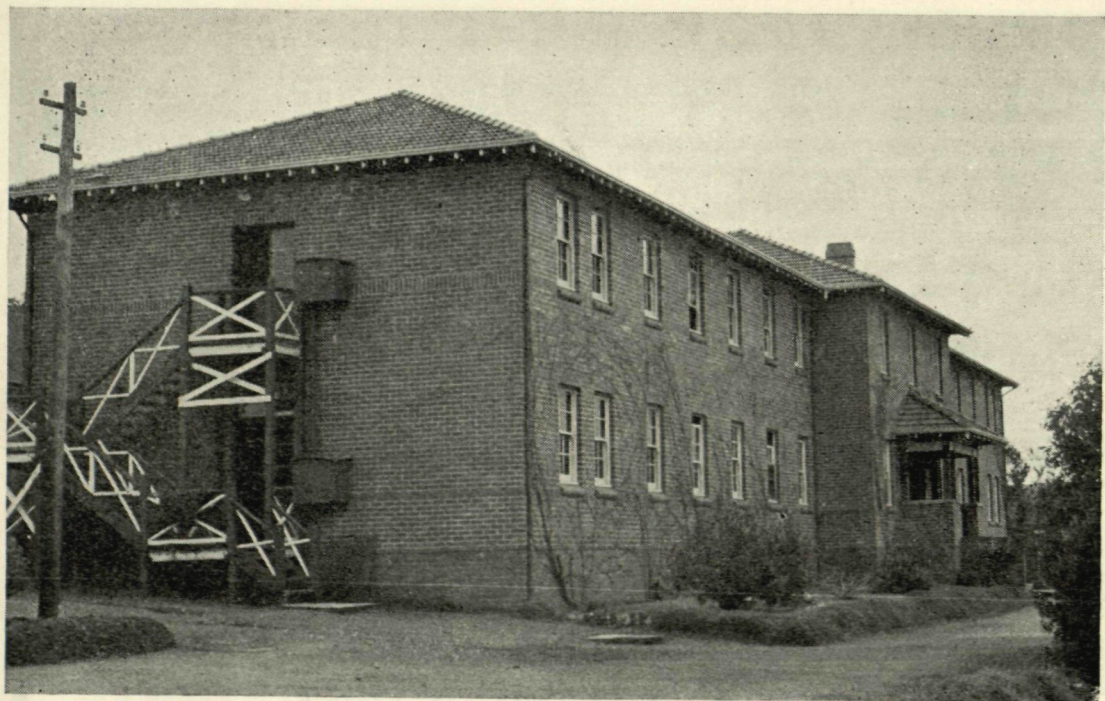


Fig. 2.—One of the two dormitory blocks

In 1887, Mrs. Andrew Dempster became seriously ill at Esperance. With his sick wife, his eldest daughter and two black-fellows, Andrew Dempster set off in a buggy and, with only a small compass to aid him, travelled 600 miles across trackless and virtually unknown country to Northam in order to obtain medical advice. The trip took about three weeks and was accomplished in almost incessant rain. Such a magnificent piece of bushmanship deserved a happy ending but unfortunately Mrs. Dempster died after an operation had been performed.

Perhaps it was this bereavement which influenced Andrew Dempster to take up his abode at Down Farm which had been rented to a man named Smith. In 1899 he built the magnificent homestead which now contains the College dining-room, kitchen and administrative block, and in the following year he renamed the property Muresk after the Dempster's family estate on the River Esk in Scotland.

Andrew Dempster died in 1909 and the portion of the estate on which the homestead stands passed into the possession of

his daughter, Mrs. E. W. Cotton. Mr. and Mrs. Cotton lived at Muresk until its purchase by the State Government in 1925.

MANY ADVANTAGES

The College lands are 2,222 acres in area and are located between Northam and York, nine miles from the former and 15 miles from the latter township. Situated as it is on the verge of the wheatbelt, Muresk has an assured rainfall and its location permits of practical instruction being given in cereal-growing, dairying, fruit-growing and the production of root and forage crops.

The property is located in excellent stock country and affords opportunities for students to receive instruction and practical experience in most branches of animal husbandry.

The College buildings are on rising ground commanding a noble view of the Avon Valley. The Avon River flows through the property, adding to its beauty and affording the students facilities for swimming.

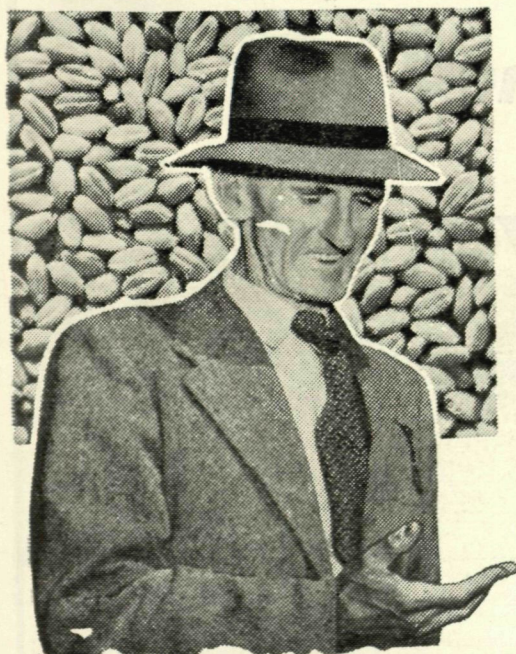
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			lb. per Acre Extra Seed	lb. per Acre of Nitrogen Fixed	lb. Weight	Value in Shillings
White Clover . . .	1½ lb.	10d.	1/10th lb.	1/2 lb. nitrogen	102 lb.	172/-
Red Clover . . .	4 lb.	1/2d.	1/5th lb.	2/3rd lb. "	114 lb.	190/-
Lucerne	15 lb.	4/4d.	1/2 lb.	2½ lb. "	194 lb.	323/-
Field Peas	4 lb.	1/2d.	1/4 lb.	2/3rd lb. "	50 lb.	83/-
Vetch	60 lb.	8/9d.	8 lb.	5 lb. "	80 lb.	133/-
Sub. Clover	60 lb.	8/9d.	11 lb.	5 lb. "	50 lb.	83/-
Lupins	60 lb.	8/9d.	10 lb.	5 lb. "	151 lb.	251/-

Value of nitrogen fixed (last column) based on nitrogen as a commercial fertilizer, would be much higher if based on increases in yields of following crops, due to increased nitrogen content in soil.

The extra available nitrogen taken from the air, and added to the plant by NODULAID can make spectacular increases in yields. But there are also other benefits . . . less spectacular . . . but just as valuable. Protein content is higher making better feed. Plants are more vigorous . . . and crops grown during the following years benefit from the extra nitrogen left in the soil.

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Fig. 3.—The Muresk science block containing laboratories and lecture rooms

The surrounding country is undulating and well-wooded and the average elevation of the property is 600ft. above sea level, an altitude which makes the location a particularly healthy site.

Being only 64 miles from Perth, the College is readily accessible by road or rail, which facilitates the close association between it and the Department of Agriculture.

Muresk is similar in standard to other Australian agricultural colleges, such as Dookie, Gatton, Hawkesbury, Longeronong, Roseworthy and Wagga, and has already made worthwhile contributions to tertiary education in our State.

Its aims are:—

- (1) To train students in the science of agriculture and farming practices, and at the same time to provide opportunities for continuing with some aspects of general education.
- (2) To raise the general standard of efficiency in farming by holding short courses of instruction for farmers.

(3) To carry out research work.

(4) To raise the standard of stock in farming areas by breeding and distributing pure-bred stock.

Wheat, oats, barley and peas are grown on the College lands and, in accordance with the rotation which obtains at the College, certain of the paddocks are laid down to pasture, principally subterranean clover and Wimmera ryegrass. To provide green feed in summer for the dairy herd, pigs and poultry, a plot has been laid down under irrigation.

For instructional purposes, the College has an orchard, vineyard, vegetable garden and apiary.

The Muresk dairy herd consists of pedigreed Guernsey cattle and is noted as being one of the finest herds of that breed in Australia. Pig herds of improved Berkshire and Tamworth have been founded on foundation stock imported from Great Britain, New Zealand and elsewhere and these are two of the leading pig studs in the State.

The College sheep flock consists of Merino ewes run as a commercial flock. Border Leicester x Merino ewes are also

bred from these for mating with British breeds in connection with the raising of fat lambs for export and the local market.

In the poultry section the main breeds are the Australorp, White Leghorn and Rhode Island Red.

A complete building scheme has been laid down for the College and subsequent additions will conform generally to this plan. The present College buildings consist of two dormitories, a science block, lecture rooms, a domestic block, and residences for members of the staff. In the dormitories each student has a separate room and in the bathrooms hot and cold showers are installed.

A large common-room, a library and reading rooms and a dark-room are set apart for the use of students. Radios have been installed.

The science blocks contain laboratories and lecture rooms. An up-to-date gas plant is in use in the laboratories. A carpenter's workshop and engineering workshop are provided in which technical instruction is given to the students.

The College is linked with the S.E.C. mains which supply light and power for the buildings, and for its water supply the establishment is connected to the Goldfields Water Scheme. The septic tank system has been adopted for the treatment of sewage.

ADMISSION STANDARD

A selection is made each year after the Junior Certificate results are known. The successful applicants then continue with secondary school studies for another year. Some prefer to do still another year and take the Leaving Certificate before starting the Muresk Course.

Preliminary knowledge of agricultural science, as a subject, is not necessary. It is much more desirable that applicants have basic knowledge of science and other subjects; and consequently the subjects which must be studied prior to selection are:—

(1) At Junior Certificate Standard.

English, Mathematics (Arithmetic and Algebra), Mathematics (Geometry and Trigonometry), Physics, Chemistry, Book-keeping.

Other subjects are optional but it is suggested that Geography be one of them.

(2) At Sub-Leaving Standard.

English, Mathematics A, Physics (including Heat, Magnetism and Electricity), Chemistry and others.

Some applicants find it convenient to take Junior Standard Book-keeping in the Sub-Leaving Year.

When Chemistry and Physics cannot be taken at the applicant's school, General Science can be substituted but the student must attend a High School (or other school which is prepared to supply the necessary tuition) for special sub-leaving courses in Physics and Chemistry, in order that the necessary standard can be attained.

APPLICATIONS

The completed application should reach the College by December 31, of the year that the student takes the Junior Certificate.

A selection is made as soon as the Junior Certificate results are known. Those chosen are certain of a place in 13 months' time provided they perform a satisfactory Sub-Leaving year in the meantime.

Examples.—A student chosen at the end of 1957 enters Muresk in 1959 provided his 1958 report is satisfactory. A place will be reserved for 1960 admission if he wishes to take the Leaving Certificate in 1959, again provided that satisfactory progress has been made.

Any vacancies which exist after the preliminary selections are filled, in order of receipt, by qualified applicants.

Each application must include:—

- (a) Completed application forms (forms supplied on request).
- (b) Headmaster's testimonial.
- (c) Another testimonial.
- (d) Medical certificate of general fitness.
- (e) Applicant's own statement as to his interests, future intentions, etc.
- (f) Scholarship applications—if such are being made (forms supplied on request).

THE DIPLOMA IN AGRICULTURE COURSE (M.D.A.)

The course is one of two years' duration. A large number of subjects are covered including English, Farm Management and Economics, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Chemistry, Engineering, Book-keeping, Veterinary Science, Woolclassing, Surveying, etc.

Students are engaged in practical work on the various farm sections, every alternate week.

First-year students have to remain for further practical experience during four weeks of the summer vacation. Second-year students remain for two weeks during the winter vacation.

Lectures and demonstrations are given to the students in the lecture-room and laboratories. Records are kept by the students of all work performed and a farm dairy course covers routine work on the farm.

Excursions are arranged to places of agricultural interest, and in addition to theoretical and laboratory work, students must cover the full range of practical work. They take part in all field operations on the farm and work in the engineering and carpenters' shops. Their training covers the handling of tractors, various implements and different types of machinery.

Each student is given practical instruction in building construction and mechanical work and in turn they spend time in the dairy, piggery, poultry sheds, orchards, vineyard and garden. They also gain practical experience in the breeding and management of stock, and work in the sheep yards and woolshed.

FEES, SCHOLARSHIPS, ETC.

The fees charged are very low—in accordance with Government policy—and are approximately £100 per annum.

Several scholarships for Muresk are available and awarded each year and the selection of applicants is made at the end of the year and immediately prior to the year of entry to the College.

Education Department scholarships and allowances may be continued at the College and the "living away from home"

allowance of £50 per annum is available to students entitled to it.

The McCaughey Bequest and the Can-
teens Service Fund's assistance apply to Muresk College students who come within the provisions of the scheme.

GENERAL

The College year is divided into two terms of 20 weeks each; the first term begins late in February and ends early in July and the second term commences in August and concludes at Christmas.

Students have the advantages of a residential college and facilities are provided for sports. General recreation committees are elected for the control of cricket, football, tennis, swimming, athletics, rifle shooting, gymnastics, etc. The annual sports meeting is held just prior to the Royal Show and a swimming carnival is held annually in the attractive college pool.

For indoor recreation there are two reading rooms, piano and radios, a billiard table, table tennis outfits and a technical and fiction library provides literature to meet the needs of the students.

Hobbies such as photography are encouraged and facilities are provided. The College has a cinematograph with a sound track and films are shown frequently.

The College conducts its own savings bank agency, book store, tuckshop and post office.

The majority of the students are farmers' sons who return to the family farms but there are many other avenues of employment open to Muresk graduates. Those with good academic qualifications may proceed to the University in order to study for the degree in agriculture, or in veterinary science.

The College is a sub-department of the Department of Agriculture and copies of the College prospectus may be secured from the Principal, Muresk Agricultural College, Muresk, W.A., or the Department of Agriculture, St. George's Terrace, Perth.

FARMERS' WINTER COURSES

During the winter vacation (four weeks in July-August) two short courses for farmers are conducted. The subjects of

the courses vary from year to year and details are announced in the press and on the radio.

Students go into residence at the College for three or four days and the chosen topics are thoroughly discussed and illustrated by demonstrators, the showing of suitable films and slides together with lectures and practical field work.

Intending applicants are advised to apply early as accommodation at the College is limited and each year many applicants have to be refused admission on this account. A nominal fee is charged.

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CREAM
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Currants, sultanas,
enough to cover
well the bottom of
pastry case.

Sugar.

Pinch mixed spice.

Thin cream.

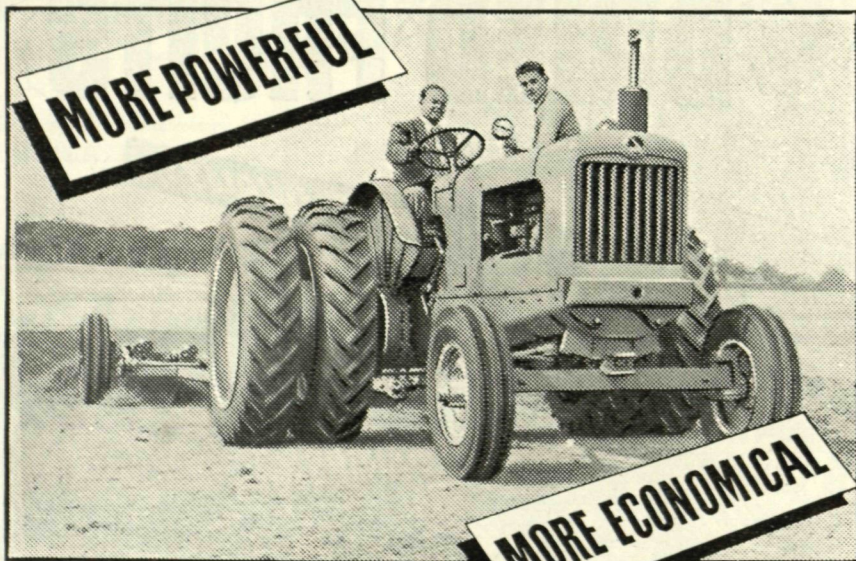
This is what you do—

Put currants and sultanas in
pastry case, sprinkle with sugar and
pinch of mixed spice. Pour thin
cream over the top until fruit is
almost covered. Bake in a hot oven
until cream is set and golden in
colour. Tinned cream thinned with
a little milk may be used in place
of fresh cream.

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