

# MOCOSA



ISSUE 48 | DECEMBER 2021

## Dr Simon Livingstone

Student. Lecturer. Principal.

### Turning negatives into positives

Gitte Donvig finds life's  
silver linings

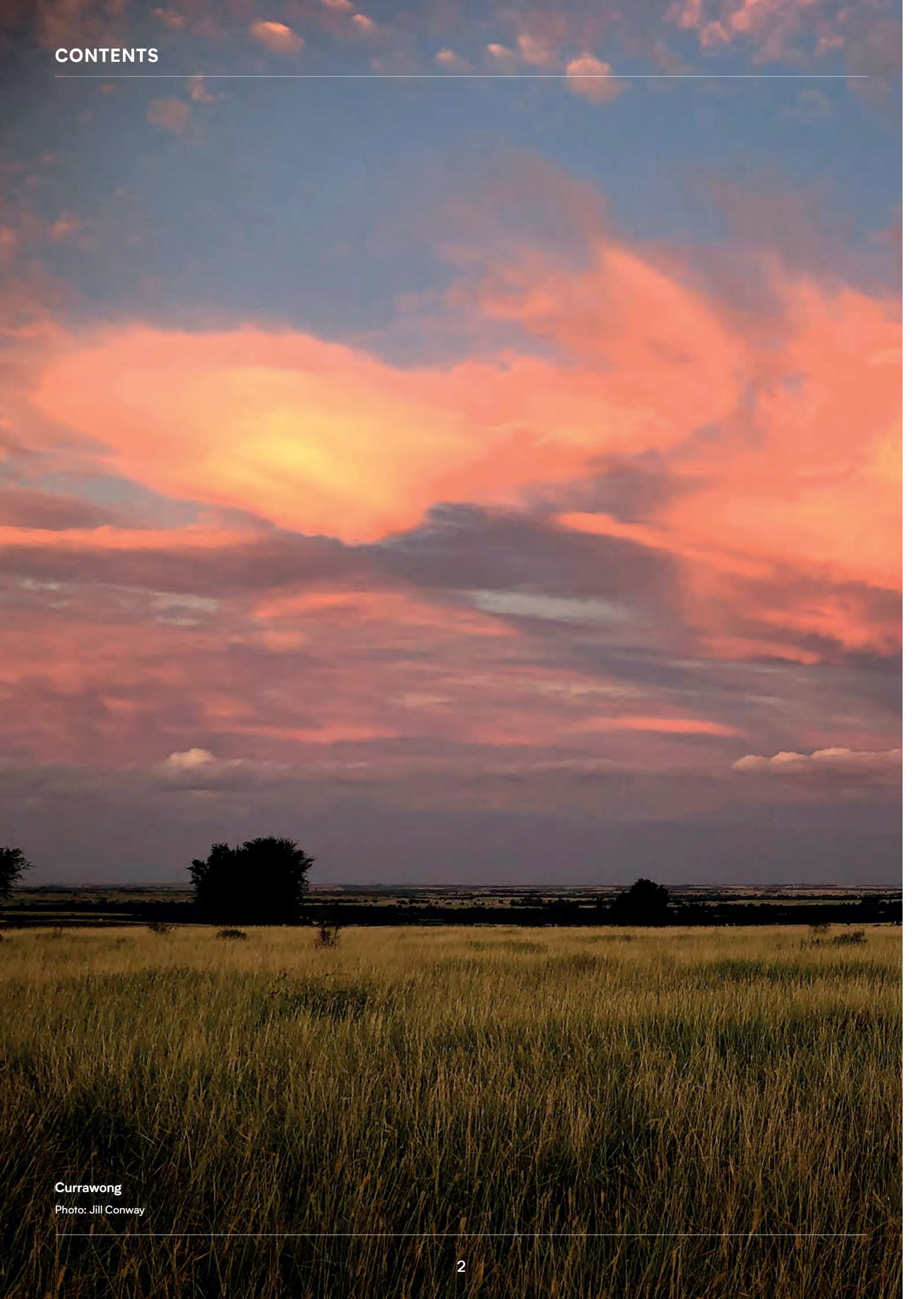
### By design

The business  
of being creative

### Save the date

Marcus Oldham 60th anniversary  
weekend - 21st and 22nd May, 2022





**Currawong**

Photo: Jill Conway



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We acknowledge we are educating on the traditional land of the Wadawurrung people and honour and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

Cover photo:

Portrait of Dr Simon Livingstone by Jaq Grantford  
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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

# Dr Simon Livingstone

This year has been successful for Marcus Oldham on many fronts – new educational offerings, buildings and facilities, landscapes, and plans for the future. Student enrolments are at an all-time high and 2022 is shaping up to be another good year for the college.



The past two years, however, have been difficult for both staff and students as the institution has had to navigate all things COVID. I wish to acknowledge the effort of the Marcus team as they taught our students through these difficult times. The students successfully adjusted to remote learning and progressed their studies with the assistance of the new Douglas Boyd Centre – and supported by the Learning Management System – Desire to Learn (D2L).

Preparation is well underway for next year's intake with construction of thirty new student bedrooms. In addition, the college is developing a comprehensive Accommodation Masterplan which will provide for more rooms to be built in future years. Contained in the Masterplan will be the construction of additional bathroom facilities in the older accommodation wings. Marcus alumni are well-aware how living on campus adds significantly to the whole college experience.

At the end of last year, I notified the Chairman of the College Council, Bruce Wilson, that I would be retiring in December 2021.

I thanked the College Council for their support over my tenure. I have always admired and respected the commitment of the Board as they have undertaken their voluntary governance roles. I have enjoyed Council members' support and friendship over a long period. Successful organisations are those that have a committed and talented workforce. I thank the staff at Marcus for their efforts and particularly those who I have worked with for close to two decades.

I have been fortunate to be associated with a quality organisation for a considerable period of time in a range of capacities. Marcus Oldham has meant a lot to me. My experience as a twenty-one-year-old Queenslander studying farm management at Marcus Oldham in the 1980s was particularly enjoyable and I reflect fondly on the time I had at the college as a student. The MOCOSA editor asked that I write a reflective piece for inclusion in this magazine. I enjoyed undertaking that task and being able to revisit and reminisce on my time as a student, lecturer, and principal.

I am pleased to be leaving the College in good shape. Not all CEOs can pick their departure time. The college's next five-year strategic plan is firmly in place, and I will enjoy seeing Marcus continue to develop and grow over the coming years.

I congratulate Andrew Baker on his promotion as the incoming Principal and wish he and Deputy Principal, Tony McMeel all the best.

I have no doubt the college will continue to make a significant positive contribution to Australian agriculture and the equine sectors well into the future.

Dr Simon Livingstone (Graduate 1987).  
Principal



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FROM THE MOCOSA PRESIDENT

# Peter Stephens

It could be argued that Simon Livingstone's contribution to Marcus Oldham is the embodiment of what Marcus is as an organisation; nothing else quite captures the spirit of what you can achieve in agriculture in this country if you study hard, work hard, and play hard, regardless of whether you are brought up on the family farm or come from the big smoke.



Simon's association with Marcus started in the same fashion as most of us, he drove through the gates in his ute not really expecting what an influence this place would have on his life. After 24 years he leaves after progressing from a student, to lecturer and then a 19-year tenure as Principal, and in the process added a doctorate to his Dip FM qualifications. Simon has overseen the largest capital and student expansion in the College's history and leaves us on the cusp of gaining full university college status.

To Simon, Helen, and Nick, MOCOSA thanks you for not only your contribution but also the way you went about it, always in a friendly bush manner, treating everyone you met with cheerful good grace. Simon has indicated he will continue for a little bit longer on the MOCOSA executive and we look forward to sending him off with a laugh and a few refreshments!

Fittingly, whilst technically not a part of Marcus's alumni, Andrew Baker (AB) has had a 15-year association with the College as lecturer and currently Director of Agribusiness and Agriculture (also current parent of a class of 2021 student). Andrew knows intimately the culture of Marcus and is enthusiastic about maintaining Marcus's role at the forefront of agricultural business management. On behalf of all the alumni I congratulate AB on his succession to the Principal's role and wish him all the best.

As many of you may know Mr. Bruce Wilson has also decided to hang up the boots as Chairman of the College Council. Bruce, likewise, has been in the chair during some tough times and some good in ag but leaves the place in exceptionally good stead with record enrolments and an impressive capital works program under his belt, culminating in the state-of-the-art Learning Centre and the nearly completed accommodation block. MOCOSA wishes Bruce and Judy a well deserved "retirement" in Barwon Heads and we look forward to collaborating with Chairman-Elect Rob McGavin going forward.

Finally, despite the ongoing lockdowns, I have been fortunate to have a good look around parts of S.E Australia, ranging from the Hay Plains in the north to the high country in East Gippsland, as well as the Midlands of Tasmania. Everywhere I went I saw some of the best seasonal conditions you would see, this combined with very solid commodity prices (\$500 + for merino ewes in Hay!!) assures that ag's boom is not over yet by a long shot. Make the most of it and encourage any young aspiring agriculturalists to invest in their future by investing in a Marcus education.

Wishing everyone all the best heading into the summer.

Cheers

Peter Stephens DipFM'83  
MOCOSA President



# The Principal, the Landscape Designer and the WOW factor



Photography by Matthew O'Toole





When people come to Marcus, whether to visit, work, study or live, they are immediately impressed by our fabulous new Learning Centre, shortly followed by our beautiful gardens.

Perched on the Highton hill for sixty years, Marcus has always enjoyed sweeping views over Corio Bay and the rolling Barrabool hills, but the views within campus have increasingly attracted attention.

When Dr Simon Livingstone became Principal, he set about making the College campus more appealing to the eye. Without a grounds plan in place, Dr Livingstone and Farm Management graduate, Ian McMichael OAM, who was Chairman of the Planning Committee, set about developing a long-term vision to transform the site.

To make the plans a reality, the College engaged Lyle Filippe, one of Australia's most creative landscape designers. It was a decision that showed care and concern for those currently involved with the College, but also gave a nod to those who will be here in the future.

Lyle has enjoyed the association and challenges that accompany the task.

**"When I first started with Marcus in 2009, there was a drought. Everything that went in had to be self-sufficient, hardy, and low maintenance."**

The MO symbol sculpture, designed by artist Justin Zahra, surrounded by Lyle Filippe's specimen-focused, succulent garden, combine to achieve the wow factor.



A photograph of two men in a garden. On the left, a man with grey hair, wearing a dark blue suit, light blue shirt, and striped tie, is sitting on a wooden bench. On the right, a man with grey hair and a beard, wearing a grey and black polo shirt and dark trousers, is standing with his hands clasped. They are positioned in front of a large, dense green bush with small purple flowers. Behind the bush is a large tree with thick, gnarled branches. The background is slightly blurred, showing more greenery and a brick wall on the right.

"When I first started in the 90s, the traditional gardens - French, English-style or a woodland garden with roses and perennials were popular, or there were gardens that were strictly natives, there was no sort of Australian identity garden and I think the drought pushed people into being more creative."



"Because Marcus is a public space, we didn't put a lot of cacti in, highly spikey things, or anything too dangerous. Marcus is very exposed on the hill, but exposure and wind are not a problem for me, it's more about drainage. With dry-land things you can plant them, and they grow well in the summer, but when we get a wet winter, they can drown. Quite a lot of the beds are raised or there's a slope and that moderates it, and we don't have frosts. Some of the stuff I've planted has surprised me, it's grown even better than I expected. There's some plants that grew quickly, some might be ephemeral, and some plants 150 years down the track will be iconic."

Lyle has pursued his passion for plants all his life, starting his collection of unusual specimens as a teenager, but for the past 20 years he has been living his dream of owning and running his own nursery, Roraima, in Lara.

"When I first started in the 90s the traditional gardens – French, English-style or a woodland garden with roses and perennials – were popular, or there were gardens that were strictly natives, there was no sort of Australian identity garden and I think the drought pushed people into being more creative. Gardening was probably the number one pastime when I began, now it's on the bottom of the list as people have other things they want to do."

Lyle understands Marcus on several levels, which he brings to his designs, making this a perfect match.

"The feedback I get is that it's created a bit of an atmosphere, if you were coming to check it out as prospective parents or students, you'd be pretty impressed at the effort that's been put into the buildings and gardens; you can wander along the paths as if you're in your own botanical gardens. If you're living onsite or working there, I'm sure it's appreciated. It must seep into the psyche a little bit. When the students in their 20s go back home, they may be inspired to think about their environment and create their own gardens. I see people who went to Marcus 40 years ago who have an affinity with it as part of their childhood. It goes with their curriculum to produce something, be waterwise, it all fits with the ethos of teaching the next generation about new practices. Marcus is all about trying to push the envelope, make your land more productive, think outside the square, diversify."

Lyle has played an integral part in a gardening design revolution.

"Now it's about using a combination of plants very architecturally. Often the garden is landscaped and looks amazing with rocks and levels and steel even before we put a plant in, and the plants are then the garnish at the end. Now it's created to make it look good straight away, then the plants are sort of secondary to the landscape, so it has changed a lot."

"When Marcus is planning a new section, such as the Learning Centre, Simon will give me a call. I make a plan for each section with the plant palette and, because we have been working together for so long, he trusts me to plan not just for now but for the future. I plant stuff and people say, 'What is that thing?' then 20 years later, it grows into something wonderful."

The Principal and the landscape designer have created a wow factor to last.





# By design

Marcus graduates combining business with creativity

## Milly Brett – Dust N Boots

**Milly Brett (nee Terbutt) DipAgri'13** is responsible for designing and marketing for Dust N Boots, the clothing company her mother, Gina Terbutt, started 20 years ago in the shearing shed of the family farm at Warialda, NSW.

The company was born out of frustration.

"Dad needed a work shirt, that cost less than \$90 and wasn't made from flannelette or polyester, which aren't suitable for the Australian sun. Using our own fabrics, Mum established relationships with quality factories in China."

The company has grown in the five years Milly has been involved, adding linen dresses, skirts, and shorts to their repertoire. Orders now come from all over Australia and New Zealand, the UK, USA, and Canada.

"Our big sales channel is the embroidery we do for businesses. We supply customised shirts for Warrakirri, Paraway Pastoral Company, Brunette Downs and Marcus Oldham! I design everything. I concentrate on durability. We take on feedback and work with people. We test everything that comes in to see how it fits and it's all these points that go towards making the best products."

No matter what field of enterprise, being in business with your family can have its challenges.



Modeled by Milly's husband, Mark Brett BB(Agri)'15

"Dad needed a work shirt, that cost less than \$90 and wasn't made from flannelette or polyester, which aren't suitable for the Australian sun."

"It can be testing working with your mother, but we've both helped it grow by sharing ideas. Mum knows manufacturing and the importance of quality control, and I've helped technologically with a new accounting system, website and Instagram."

Milly found her time at Marcus was valuable when she returned home to design and market the clothing after travelling for two years.

"Everything I learned at Marcus has turned out to be beneficial to the business now. Everything I took advantage of, such as Excel and designing programmes with Des Umbers and the Accounting side with Deanne Whelan, I've really needed. I made the most of what I could in that year, and it gave me the confidence to step into my role at Dust N Boots, knowing I had the skills to help the business grow."

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Modeled by Fenella Milling AssocDA'19





## Claudia Fox – Chute 9

Until recently, when **Claudia Fox BB(Agri) '16** dressed for a day's work, she pulled on a pair of jeans that left her feeling dissatisfied. Between the expense, poor quality, and the compromises she had to make on comfort and style, Claudia felt compelled to design her own.

"There's a big gap in good quality jeans. Over the years I have spent wearing work jeans, I have noticed as a consumer we were paying more for less. They all have a stretch component and priority is given to the decoration of the jeans, but there is nothing practical and classic that is made to withstand a day's work – whether you are in the saddle, working cattle or out fencing," she said. "I hated that I would go out to work and not ever feel protected. It's a simple thing to have a good pair of jeans and makes a big difference."

Seeing the gap in the market for women's jeans, Claudia turned her observations into actions.

"I've always had the idea, but I honestly thought with the resources behind the big companies already producing jeans such as Wrangler, Cinch or RM Williams, they would surely cotton on (mind the pun) to the customers 'wants' and bring out a good line of jeans. Then I had a pretty bad accident when I was working at Headingly Station on the Barkly and ended up in the kitchen for a few months whilst staying out of trouble. With my free time in the afternoons I started measuring jeans up and basically I just built on it."

Seeking quality and having an eye for detail is not new for Claudia, she based her choice of agricultural institution on it.

"I saw Marcus as a College that was doing something well. I liked the way the courses were structured and the business influence throughout the learning curriculum."

Her studies set her up well to pursue her all-Australian-made jeans under the label CHUTE 9.

"Marcus allowed me to develop a whole new outlook on the endless possibilities of business, it made me think outside the box. We went on a lot of tours to different operations, and it made me see there is so much you can do if you think a little more broadly and take the opportunities. That exposure was probably the biggest thing I took away from it, along with lifelong friends and great memories. I had a great time down there."

Not having any experience in the "rag trade", Claudia struggled to find an entry point into our tiny denim industry. Finding the right people to work with that could produce a top-quality product was proving difficult.

"There were definitely times I thought Australia might not have the resources to develop my product and the only choice would be to start looking overseas."

However, following a 12-month stint of running the Early Weaning Program on Carlton Hill Station in the Kimberley's, a door did open and she had an opportunity to meet with a pattern designer in Melbourne who had been working with denim for decades.

"I wanted to make the best jeans, but it was like fishing in an ocean when you do not know where all the fish are, so you are fishing in the wrong spot all the time. I read an article about a denim business in Melbourne that sounded like they had high attention to detail and cared about what they made, so I really hoped something would eventuate. The woman there was a pattern designer who knew the denim industry very well. It is such a small industry in Australia, so when you find someone good, you have to jump on it."

Knowing your customer has also proved to be an essential part of Claudia's business, something she consciously decided to improve on when she changed jobs from cattle work to hospitality, then rural merchandise.

"I needed customer experience because I'd been living out west where you see 20 people a week and then, once I changed jobs, I was seeing up to 100 people a day, sometimes 300, when we were doing functions such as weddings on a Saturday night in conjunction with the accommodation and hospitality. It enabled me to quickly learn how to build good relationships with customers. This one skill is critical in running my business."

Initially, Claudia worked on Chute 9 in the evenings while holding her day job but now she knows the business works, it has become her main focus.

"I have built this from the ground up and now I finally feel the gears starting to turn, but for a long time there I was just building it up. Everything I made during the day I would put into my jeans just to get it off the ground."

The hard yards have paid off as Claudia plans to supply men's and children's jeans in different styles and has added leatherwork to her line.

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## Kirsty Hawkins – NOSS

When **Kirsty Hawkins AssocDA'11** started her ceramics business, NOSS, she had a light-bulb moment.

"I could see what my Dad was talking about, he's a passionate farmer and always said you need to do something that gets you out of bed in the morning," she said. "When I started doing ceramics, there were days I would get out of bed at 4 a.m. and start doing it because I just had this urge to, that's what he was talking about, that feeling."

Growing up on the family farm near Frances, on the border of Victoria and South Australia, Kirsty had a lot of positive conversations about Marcus with her sister, **Laura Hawkins AssocDA'10** and cousin, **Tara Hawkins (now Hindson) BBFM'09**. After a year working on Legune cattle station near Kununurra, Kirsty thought a farming business course would be a good idea. She found Marcus offered that and more.

"The best thing about Marcus is the networking, all the people you meet, the friends you make. One of my friends is **Emily Rigg (McLeod) DipHBM'09**, she did the horse course and has now started her own wool fashion label, Iris and Wool. It's so good to ring her up and talk about the business and learn from each other," she said. "The marketing and business side of things at Marcus was great. It expanded my vision and got me thinking outside the square."

Once Kirsty moved to Tasmania to be with fiancé **Ben Morrison AdDipFBM'10**, it was the right time to start her creative business.

"I've always had a passion for creativity and ceramics so once I made that decision it was easy, I just went straight into it, doing ceramic courses, learning from other people, and asked a lot of questions of the local people here who do ceramics. I bought my own kiln, so I had to learn all about that," she said. "What I have done through my ceramics is I have implemented my childhood images of sheep and cows and other different animals, and brought these memories into my business. I use these on my best seller, the personalised plates."

"I've always been a believer that when you put your mind to something and all your passion and effort into it, it will become successful naturally. When I started, I had a job and did ceramics on the side for a year and as soon as I stopped my fulltime job it ballooned, it went so well. I had a fear around leaving my job, but it all came naturally once I had my first child, Bruce, and was on maternity leave."

Four years down the track, Kirsty is constantly adding to her business, now including cute cotton jumpers for children, sporting her farm images.

"There's always that fear when starting a new product but I thought we only live once and I don't want to be further down the track in life and think, why didn't I give it a crack? It's all about trial and error, growing your business, and I felt so strongly about doing these jumpers that I just had to do them. What I have learned is that once I get an idea for something new, and I make sure it fits with my long-term vision, then I have to do it."

Kirsty would not change a thing.

"I grew more as a person because I went to Marcus, and I feel like my life has led me back to my ceramics. I'm a big believer that your journey takes you to where you are supposed to go in the end, if you listen to it. I have combined my country background while expressing myself."

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## Molly Deans – Molly Mackay Metalwork

When **Molly Deans (nee Mackay) BB(Agri)'19** goes to work, sparks fly. In her metalwork shed on Molly and husband, Linden Deans' property, east of Coonamble, she wields the steel-cutting machine to make her works of art.

Having grown up on her parents' cropping and livestock property next door, Molly manages to balance her creative work with her farm work.

Molly had always been interested in agriculture and decided a course after finishing school would be a good idea.

"I found Marcus offered a great opportunity to learn from industry leaders in a fashion that was going to be applicable for a range of future ventures, whether inside or outside of agriculture," she said. "The full-time approach to study was a big drawcard for me."

While metalwork is not seasonal or market-reliant, much of what was on offer at Marcus has stood Molly in good stead in her new venture.

"Marcus taught me to look at a farm as a business rather than a passion or lifestyle. It allowed me to recognise potential and gave me the skills and confidence to start my own business. Although it isn't textbook agriculture, the basics of business management are the same and transferable."

After Marcus, Molly returned home to work while deciding her next move but three years of drought, not seen since 1929, made for challenging times. Molly's desire to generate another income on the farm, and have a creative outlet, led her somewhere unexpected.

"I have always been creative. I enjoy painting when I have the time. I had never thought of plasma cutting until my husband suggested it, then he built me a shed to work in, and the fun and games – of teaching myself to use it – began," she said. "It does look fairly wild with sparks flying and a machine cutting through steel plate like it's paper, but it is straightforward once you know the process."

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"I am always making new and different pieces, so the flavour of the month seems to move quickly! A close first of my most popular products would be the guinea fowl, I have a collection of live ones and they all have such personalities."



*Other creative graduates include artist Jayde Chandler DipAgri'O6 and Emily Riggs (McLeod) DipHBM'O9 fashion designer and founder of clothing company, Iris and Wool.*



# A very fortunate life.



Photos: Jane Dunning Photography

AB Facey's autobiography "A Fortunate Life" was a best-seller but AC Facey's understanding of property development has made him a best-seller – and buyer.

**Andrew Facey DipFM'66** was, indeed, fortunate to go to Marcus. Without the entry requirements of a school Leaving Certificate or farm employment, a conversation between his father Angus and then Principal, Ivo Dean, luckily resulted in an early entry opportunity for Andrew to study farm management.

"I loved Marcus Oldham when I went there, I made some great mates and I still have them, even though it's fifty odd years ago. I also realise what it's done for me in business, and it's helped me enormously."

Andrew's family had farming properties at Strathbogie and Narre Warren but as his father was also in real estate, Andrew soon joined him after graduating from Marcus.

"I went into the 55-year-old family business, and I enjoyed selling. My father was a wonderful man, and I was only 25 when he let me take over. Then I went into development. I have had a great working life as I've been able to keep my rural interests. I've stayed in the property industry ever since, and I've stayed in the farming industry ever since."

Andrew is now in the fortunate position of being able to give back. He has very generously made a gift of \$1 million to Marcus Oldham College.







**"I would say to students, work out what you want to do, if you love something, you are generally very good at it. Don't try and do what someone else wants you to do."**

"I do feel I should give back as I loved my years at Marcus, a couple of the best years of my life. They taught me a lot. It's great I can give back to help young people and it's lovely to give to something I have so much feeling towards. That's why I want to give it now, so I can see what it does. I don't want to wait until I die."

Andrew credits his success with forward planning.

"The best rural industry I know is buying strategic farmland and chopping it up into little blocks of land for housing. In property development you have to know when to hold and when to fold. I bought farmland well ahead of time and then the rezoning to residential and industrial has come through. Our holdings are mostly around where I grew up, in the Pakenham area, down through Warragul, Grantville

and now Nagambie. I've stayed in my backyard. It pays to stick to what you know and not try to be everywhere."

'Boxgrove' is 1400 acres and has four kilometres of Goulburn River frontage, between the weir and Lake Nagambie, walking distance from the town. While currently running sheep and crops, Andrew has been busy clearing paddocks, planting trees and establishing roads as he works through his development plans. They include a tourist park- Nagambie Waters- with space for cabins, caravans, and camping, right on the river.

Andrew's generosity and sound advice will make a big difference at Marcus.

"I would say to students, work out what you want to do, if you love something, you are generally very good at it. Don't try and do what someone else wants you to do. Mentors are extremely important, pick the right mentor and learn all you can from people you know, trust and respect. Make your mistakes early and make them small."

The College has benefitted greatly from AC Facey's very fortunate life.

"It's wonderful to give back, especially when you know that what you are giving can go a long way. I hope other people do the same if they are in a position to do so."

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A life working in agriculture took a twist as unexpected as any of the plots devised by prolific author **Fleur McDonald AdCertAA'95** since she began to write in 2008.

# When truth is Stranger than fiction

Living out of Esperance with her husband and two children, Fleur was focussed on working hard on the farm and raising her children, both with special needs. At the time, she would have thought it a fictional notion that she would one day have sold 650,000 copies of her now 19 books – and counting.

"My kids were really difficult – Rochelle, who had been diagnosed with Dyspraxia, didn't sleep through the night until she went to kindy, and Hayden was diagnosed with a high risk of autism. Neither of them spoke until they were more than five years' old and life was chock-a-block, working fulltime on the farm, never getting any sleep, teaching them sign language, therapy, screaming kids and never really understanding why, it was a real blur."

Somehow in the fog, Fleur managed to read a book by Australian rural fiction author, Rachael Treasure, and it occurred to her that she could write one too.

"I'd always had an affinity with writing, I'd been writing ever since I could hold a pen and I had loved to read ever since I was taught. Because of that, I subconsciously knew how to structure a book. So, I started writing. I found solace in words

and the storyline just came out of nowhere. I don't remember much about writing that first book to be honest, except I loved playing around with words and sentences. Life was still overwhelming with the kids and everything else I had to do, but the need to write was overwhelming too."

Out of that fog, "Red Dust" – an outback novel of love, intrigue and redemption, Fleur's first Australian rural crime fiction book was born.

"I wrote the first third and submitted it to Allen and Unwin. They bought Red Dust on the first three chapters and offered me a two-book deal. My writing took off from there. I was very much in the right place at the right time. There is so much luck in publishing and there was hunger for this genre of book."

After growing up around station country at Orroroo, SA, where her parents had a fuel distribution business, Fleur's father encouraged her to apply to study at Marcus, keen for his daughter to "get a piece of paper". Completing the one-year course in agribusiness has stood her in good stead during her time on the land and now, running her writing business.



"It seemed mandatory that the farmer's wife works her arse off on the farm then goes home at night and spends hours in the office. I needed some help with the business side. Maths and figures are certainly not my strongest skill set, but because I studied Agribusiness at Marcus, I was taught the hows and whys. Applied learning makes so much more sense and for some time now, I've run my own office, whether on the farm or with my business interests. Marcus did that for me, I wouldn't have been able to do what I've done without that agribusiness background."

After Marcus, Fleur and her husband moved into a little demountable hut on land near Esperance, without power or a toilet, while they worked hard to establish themselves on their farm – borrowing heavily and leasing land to get ahead. While there, both children were born.

"We tried to cut costs where we could, so I was very hands-on with lamb marking, hay raking and working in the shearing shed. Some people were horrified at the conditions we were living in, but I didn't see a problem with it. I wished we didn't have to share our home with the snakes which sometimes came inside, but that was part of life."

As the children hit secondary school age, Fleur managed their education.

"I started spending time in town so the kids could go to school and would go back to the farm and work as much as I could. Taking me out of that environment on the farm, I realised there were large problems in my husband's and my relationship. I went to a counsellor one time and said, 'Can you help me change, because I can't live like this any longer.' She said, 'What's going on?' When I told her she said, 'You don't need to change, you are living in a domestic violence situation.' I had no idea. I knew I wasn't happy, and I knew I was fearful,

**"I started 'Breaking the Silence' (now DVassist) because I realised it didn't have to be physical to be violent. There's gaslighting and mind games and playing with your head, that's all domestic violence too."**

and hated where I was, and the kids would spend lots of time in their rooms with the headphones in. But domestic violence? After that, it didn't take me long to leave."

With one in four rural women experiencing domestic violence, Fleur realised she was not alone and turned her attention to helping others.

"I started 'Breaking the Silence' (now DVassist) because I realised it didn't have to be physical to be violent. There's gaslighting and mind games and playing with your head, that's all domestic violence too. This whittles you away and you can never return to the person you were beforehand. It leaves you with no self-confidence or ability to make decisions."

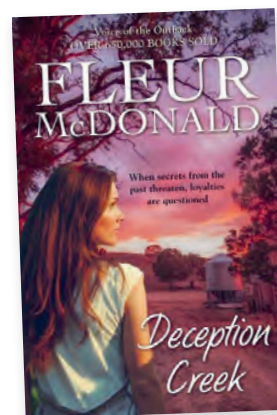
By 2017, Fleur had used a Rural Women's Award and thousands of her money from book sales to set up a domestic violence information website in Esperance and Albany, but the need was greater.

"When I didn't have any more money to put into it, I came across a bloke who was my mentor for a while, Peter Fitzpatrick. We went to Canberra to lobby the government for a federal grant to set up 16 pilot towns in WA and to get the online and phone counselling services happening. I managed to secure a grant worth \$3 million to get DVassist up and running."

Fleur's understanding of domestic abuse in regional and rural areas resulted in important points of difference from support offered in the city. All the counsellors have either lived or worked in rural areas.

"There are so many more complexities in the country, compared with the city. Just down to the fact there are guns, let alone that you might want to report something to the police, but they are best mates with your partner because they play footy together. Add to that the fact that when you are on the farm, your neighbours don't hear you screaming, so there are never any police reports."

Now DVassist is set up, Fleur has been busy with her books and has recently left the service in the capable hands of the staff who are running it now. She writes two books a year and has just signed a contract to write five books in two years. Fleur feels a physical compulsion to write.



"If I didn't write my fingers would get itchy until I got out what I needed to say. It was a physical itch. It is a crazy overnight success story that you don't think is possible. I've just submitted my nineteenth manuscript and even now I think someone's going to say, 'Hey Fleur, we've just been stringing you along.' I still can't understand how this has all happened but I'm very grateful that it has."

[fleur@fleurmcdonald.com](mailto:fleur@fleurmcdonald.com)

<https://dvassist.org.au>

DVassist helpline: 1800 080 083





# Marcus Minds. Mind blowing

By Alannah Halloran,  
Foundation Manager



Mental health, wellbeing, wellness, health and resilience are all words and phrases used to describe someone's mental, emotional and social capabilities.

As we are all too aware, agriculture is associated with a unique set of stressors that include reliance on unpredictable, and often uncontrollable environmental, financial and/or business pressures. These situational stressors have flow on effects throughout rural communities dependent on farming.

Sadly, the rate of people taking their own lives is almost double in rural areas compared with urban. (National Rural Health Alliance, 2017)

But is our mental health simply a mindset? Can we be better equipped to understand and manage our state of mind more capably and confidently? Through education, is it possible to better prepare, navigate our way around and through "tough times," and come out stronger, happier, and mentally richer at the other end?

In 2015, in response to an increased awareness of the varied hardships many faced in agriculture, Marcus Oldham developed and integrated a health and resilience program into course curriculum, across all year groups.

College Principal and graduate, Dr Simon Livingstone said, "The aim of the program is to advance students' understanding of resilience, stress, and well-being. Since the program was implemented, students have learnt the importance of personal reflection and how to develop a 'toolkit of strategies' that can be used now and well into the future. Students are also made aware of their role within a community and the many resources available to them and others."

Fast forward five years, through the fundraising work of the College Foundation and the desire to provide graduates with access to continued learning, the concept of a graduate wellbeing program was born.

It wasn't until early 2019, when graduate **Tim McGavin AdCertAA'94** and **DipAA'99** Executive Chairman and Founder of Laguna Bay, one of the largest privately owned agricultural funds in the world, reached out to the Foundation to discuss how they might be able to support the College in some way, that the concept became a reality.





## LAGUNA BAY

"In today's world, society over-emphasises IQ (intelligence quotient) and under emphasises EQ (emotional quotient) and I think this is doing people in. Life is less about what you make it, and more about how you take it."

Fate is a funny thing and sometimes, the stars align just at the right moment. Not only was the College keen to 'give back' to the graduate network, but the richness in Tim's own journey since leaving Marcus Oldham, made him the perfect partner in this program.

Tim understands the importance and value of managing one's own mental health and getting the best out of yourself in order to soar; personally, emotionally, physically, professionally, spiritually and financially.

That is the exciting difference with the Marcus Minds program compared with others. It isn't predictable. It is unlike anything else out in the market. It is typically Marcus Oldham unique. And what's more, potentially lifechanging.

### **Why is Marcus Minds so important to Tim?**

"In today's world, society over-emphasises IQ (intelligence quotient) and under-emphasises EQ (emotional quotient) and I think this is doing people in. Life is less about what

you make it, and more about how you take it," Tim said. "Ability is not a constant, it is heavily influenced by our attitude. This is exciting because our attitude is 100% manageable. Attitude is affected by our degree of positivity, how we perceive external events and ourselves, our habits and experience etc. But experience can be a hard teacher. It often gives the test first and the lessons afterwards. If we are not careful, we can let setbacks get the better of us. My dad used to say, 'If you think you can, you can, if you think you can't, you can't', he is right, and this is exactly what Marcus Minds is about."

Under the direction of the Director of Postgraduate Studies, Dr Heather Davis, and content analyst, Dr Carroll Graham, Marcus Minds will be offered as a four-part program: exploring self, others, workplace and how to achieve peak performance.

The Marcus Minds program will be launched in conjunction with the Marcus Oldham 60th Birthday celebrations at the College in May 2022.





# Reflections of a time spent at Marcus

Twenty-four years is a significant period to work for an organisation. Marcus Oldham's longest serving Principal, Dr Simon Livingstone, reflects on those years as well as his time as a farm management student studying at the college in the mid-1980s.

## How did you first hear about Marcus Oldham?

I was in Grade 11 when I first heard about Marcus. I was on a family holiday in Tasmania when my father got talking to a farmer. Dad who was a doctor from Brisbane said his young fella (me) was interested in a career in agriculture. The farmer said the best place to study agriculture was at Marcus Oldham. When we left Tasmania on our way back to Queensland we flew into Melbourne, drove to the college, and met Principal Graham McConnell who showed us around the campus. That was 1980.

## What did you do before attending Marcus?

I was working as a jackeroo on a cattle station near Normanton in the Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria when my father flew up to visit me. He said he thought working for three years after school was enough and he believed I needed an education. He reminded me of the college we had visited in Geelong when I was at school, and suggested I apply for entry. I wasn't keen to go to college as I didn't like school and I was enjoying working on cattle stations. I did,

however, make contact with Marcus, and lecturer Alan Blackburn sent me a pre-entry test in the mail. I had to answer questions and return the assessment as a requirement to be accepted into the college. I remember there were questions relating to sheep which I had no idea how to answer. I knew nothing about sheep. Luckily a jackeroo I was working with was from a sheep property in NSW and he told me the answers. I was accepted into Marcus the following year.

## What was your first experience at College?

I drove from Queensland to Geelong in January 1985. I remember driving my HQ ute to the entrance of the college thinking is this really where I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. I had planned to become a head stockman then manager on a large cattle property in Queensland. Being a student in Victoria hadn't been on my radar. It was Sunday afternoon, and the main carpark was full of utes – mostly WBs. I couldn't see anyone and wondered where I was to go. I heard noise coming from near the library so headed in that





direction. As I came around the East Wing, I noticed the tray of a utility loaded with ice and beer with about 30 blokes leaning against the vehicle. A fellow called out to me to come across and join them. I did. Everyone was very welcoming.

### What was it like as a Marcus student?

I learnt a lot. I learnt how to learn. I learnt that I didn't need to be the smartest person in the room to be successful. I learnt that if you are keen and motivated you can get ahead. I also began to understand my academic capabilities studying things I was interested in. I could see for the first time how education and practical experience were going to set me up for a fulfilling career. Having students attend from all over Australia was great – hearing about their experiences and ambitions. The first class was called 'the farm game' and lecturer Sam Inglis told the group that we needed to take the blinkers off. I remember the mid-year case study we had to complete. It took five days and an all-nighter to finish. I remember the relief when I put the assessment in the assignment box.

**"I learnt a lot. I learnt how to learn. I learnt that I didn't need to be the smartest person in the room to be successful. I learnt that if you are keen and motivated you can get ahead."**

The residential life was the fun part. I recall having my 21st birthday celebrations in the social room. There were some big nights at Marcus. I remember often sitting at my desk in the evening to study and mates would come in the door and next minute we were down at the local watering hole – the Ponds. No study that night. There were good-hearted antics that went on in the dorms. I remember one of the third years had a big night and his mates decided to play a prank on him. From memory, a student's girlfriend was a nurse. As Pat slept – the nurse plastered his arm. Next morning Pat woke up under the weather to find his arm in a cast. He asked a couple of blokes in the corridor what had happened. They said, 'can't you remember Pat?' You had a fall last night, we took you to hospital, you are in plaster for a few weeks till everything mends. They let Pat walk around the college for a day or two before they told him there was nothing wrong with his arm. The formal dinners were a highlight of each term along with the student ball in Melbourne. On the sporting side, the main events were the wheelbarrow race, the car rally and the intercollegiate sports day against other agriculture colleges. Great friendships were made at Marcus. At the end of third year, I didn't want to leave. I was chuffed when Graham McConnell gave me the Principal's Award at graduation.

### How did you transition from Student to Lecturer then Principal?

I worked for eight years on cattle stations as a jackeroo, station hand and overseer, followed by tertiary study. My time at Marcus gave me a keenness to learn more – to study more. I completed several degrees and secured my first teaching



position at the Emerald Agricultural College in Queensland. I wasn't that much older than the students. I had to learn all the material and present it in an engaging way. I didn't want to be one of those boring teachers we all experienced at school. I tried to bring life into the classroom. I was interested in the craft of teaching. When I secured a lecturing position at Marcus in 1998, I found it rewarding and stimulating as the students really engaged with the material and they brought their own experiences into class discussions. As a lecturer, I got to know the students. I really enjoyed the study tours and seeing the educational value the tours added to the learning. I regard many graduates as friends, and it is enjoyable to see them years later with their partners and children.

I was appointed Principal at 39 years of age. Quite young really. The promotion was a fair step up. My teaching hours reduced, and my focus was on where the College needed to head. As with all businesses, CEOs focus on management and strategy. I have enjoyed seeing the College grow and develop over the decades – new courses, buildings and facilities, landscapes, and plans for the future.

As Principal I was the disciplinarian. I found that part of the job hard at times – trying to match the punishment to the crime. I endeavoured to create a culture where if something went wrong, if something got broken, the student would let me

He greatly assisted the college through both the good and the tougher times. John was the master of relationship building. I learnt a lot from him. When John Miles retired there were big shoes to fill.

I needed someone who was smart, hardworking, and honest. I had worked with Tony McMeel when we were both lecturers in the late 1990s. He had gone off to work in finance and accounting. I lured Tony back ten years ago and he continues to do a great job for the college.

**"The clear highlight was seeing the new students arrive at the beginning of the year and watching them develop through to graduation. The Marcus model of education is immersive and collegial, so staff often see a big transformation..."**



know – to call into my office and tell me what had happened. Most students did that and we would have a chat. I found the students were good hearted but sometimes made bad decisions when they had consumed too much alcohol. I remember one student who was in my office regularly due to poor decisions he made and actions he had taken. He wrote me a letter after graduation thanking me for my tolerance and guidance throughout the year. I appreciated that.

#### **Were there individual people who greatly assisted you as Principal?**

Plenty. Marcus is a people business. The staff are the key to the college's success. Not all staff fully connect with the culture and ethos, but most do. Students can tell when the staff are happy and that flows through to the whole positive experience students enjoy at Marcus. There are too many staff to name everyone who has assisted, but it would be remiss if I didn't mention the two Deputy Principals. I was lucky when I started as Principal to work with John Miles. Marcus Oldham was very fortunate to have John as an employee.

#### **What were some of the highlights of your tenure as Principal?**

The clear highlight was seeing the new students arrive at the beginning of the year and watching them develop through to graduation. The Marcus model of education is immersive and collegial, so staff often see a big transformation and development of the students over the period they are studying. Graduation is a celebration of the students' achievements and the whole college community feel a sense of satisfaction.

I have enjoyed many highlights over the time I have been Principal. I have been fortunate to have been part of an institution that is well regarded in both the agriculture and the education sectors. A personal achievement over my tenure was the completion of a PhD in education. It took eight years to finish whilst I held the position of Principal. I worked nights and weekends on the doctorate. I found immersing myself in the research allowed me time out from thinking about all the things going on at the college. In some ways the study became my hobby.



A work achievement over my time as Principal which I hadn't anticipated was securing two large financial contributions which allowed significant infrastructure development. Working closely with generous benefactor Philip Myer led to the donation of Murradoc Farm. The funds from that asset seeded the magnificent Douglas Boyd Centre. Without Philip's belief in young people and education it is unlikely the Centre would have been built. The recent announcement of \$2.5 million from the Victorian Government was a first for Marcus and has allowed the College to construct thirty new student bedrooms.

Many projects have been supported by the College Foundation. I have worked with Ant Baillieu for all of the years I have been Principal. Ant's commitment to Marcus Oldham over the decades in his capacity of Chairman of the Foundation has been outstanding. Fundraising is never easy, and Ant should look back with pride at what he has achieved for Marcus Oldham. He has always been, and he remains modest about his contribution.

### How did you find working with the College Board?

I enjoyed working with the Marcus Board. People would say to me it must be difficult working with a Board comprising up to 18 members. It must be hard to progress any ideas or get things done with so many bosses? I never found that to be the

College well, its culture and history. Over the fourteen years we worked together, the College progressed significantly on many fronts. Bruce and I held similar views on the strategic direction of Marcus, and I think that synergy proved beneficial to positioning the College for the future.

### How did you find living on campus?

My wife Helen, son Nick who is nineteen, and I, have enjoyed living on the two-hundred-hectare campus overlooking Geelong. Nick has spent all of his life at Marcus, and we have lived in three College houses over our time. He has seen plenty of student antics and activities over the years. I did have a chuckle recently when Nick had been out with his school mates and was getting a ride home around midnight. The driver dropped him at the front security gate of the College. As he got out of the car, a group of Marcus students who were waiting for uber eats to arrive asked who he was. He told them he was the Principal's son. They said, oh you must be Livo? You had better come up and join us in the social room. Nick got home late. The Marcus students got around him which was great. Next morning, I woke and saw an empty UDL can on the kitchen bench. I knew Nick doesn't usually drink UDLs – but the students do. I knew where he had been that night.

Helen has been a great support to me over our time at



**"My wife Helen, son Nick who is nineteen, and I have enjoyed living on the two-hundred-hectare campus overlooking Geelong."**

case. I was fortunate, Robert Beggs AM was chairman when I commenced as Principal. Robert was a statesman and a mentor in many ways to me. He was always supportive, and we spent a lot of time together. I admired his commitment to the college. Past Chairman, Stewart McArthur AM, had been 20 years in the Chairman role so he was able to provide valuable guidance and support to a young Principal. I owe a lot to both Robert and Stewart.

The majority of my time as Principal, however, was spent with Chairman Bruce Wilson. Being a graduate, Bruce knew the

Marcus. As with many CEOs, it is the partner who at night hears about the deliberations and events that occurred during the workday. In many ways, Helen has lived and breathed my experiences as Principal, and similarly, she has enjoyed her association and involvement with the college.

### What does life after Marcus look like?

Helen and I have bought an acre five minutes from Torquay beach on the surf coast. We are renovating the house and looking forward to moving in at the end of this year. I have a Non-Executive Director position with the Canberra-based Primary Industries Education Foundation which was formed through the collaboration of the Australian Government, primary industries organisations and the education sector. This appointment will involve interstate travel and keep me involved in agricultural education issues. Son Nick is completing an engineering degree in Melbourne, and he plays AFL for University Blues. Helen and I will continue to enjoy watching his games. I'm active in the share market and have other interests. I don't think I will be bored.



# New Principal

In September, Andrew Baker, Director of Agriculture and Agribusiness at Marcus, was appointed as Principal of the College, to start in the new year. After a global search to replace Dr Simon Livingstone, Andrew's internal appointment has been a source of pride for the College. Equally, it has been a source of excitement for Andrew.

"When Rob McGavin called me and said, 'It's you', I was quite overwhelmed. I've really enjoyed teaching at Marcus Oldham, it's given me a great deal of satisfaction – I also knew before applying what a big role this is, but I am very keen to ensure Marcus is moving forward. I am extremely excited to become Principal of Marcus Oldham."

Andrew, or AB as he is known on campus, was born in 1968 and raised on a mixed cropping farm in Zimbabwe until 1982, when his parents moved to Hay, NSW. Education has been a strong focus for Andrew, in between jackarooing at Augathella in Queensland and working on farms on the Hay Plains, he attended Dookie Agricultural College in Victoria and studied a Bachelor of Business at Charles Sturt University, NSW. During a stint in agribusiness with the ANZ Bank where he spent a few years in Moree, Longreach, and Goondiwindi, ultimately as a manager, he also completed a Master of Agribusiness through the University of Melbourne. Wanting to step out of the banking industry, he became a financial analyst, assisting farmers in a small practice in Harden, NSW. However, his strong interest in education saw him jump at the opportunity to join the Marcus team at the end of 2005 as a Lecturer in Accounting.



When AB talks about Marcus, his face lights up.

"Apart from the sense of energy you get when you are surrounded by people wanting to grow and improve, I love the culture at Marcus. For anyone wanting a career in agriculture, agribusiness or in equine, Marcus is the place – from the curriculum, the immersive teaching and learning environment,



**"... I love the culture at Marcus. For anyone wanting a career in agriculture, agribusiness or in equine, Marcus is the place..."**

the networks that are built, and the sense of community, whether you are extremely academic or not, if you work hard, Marcus gives you every opportunity to succeed – there is nothing better than seeing people succeed."

In his downtime AB enjoys family life with wife, Catherine, a social worker, and their three children – one of whom has just finished first year agriculture, the eldest is interested in IT and the youngest is studying Film and Television in Melbourne. He is never far from his bicycle, but his interests are broad.

"I am best known for riding my bicycle, probably for some insane distances. I join a group of friends most mornings at 5.30 for a ride around the back roads of Geelong. But I do other things. I try and learn one new thing each year. This year I am learning to surf. I am not very good yet but it is a great activity. Last year I tried my hand at bladesmithing and made a couple of kitchen knives."

The sixth Principal is positive about the future of the College he will lead.

"I am looking forward to taking Marcus Oldham along its journey. Marcus is currently in a really great position, therefore the challenge is to keep the college going forward in the best possible way. I am not a person who says, 'job done'. I am always looking for improvements. As the world changes, we must change too. Marcus has a terrific core – the "Marcus learning model". We need to preserve this whilst continuing to adapt to ensure we are at the front."

Congratulations AB, and we wish you well in your new role.





# New Deputy Principal

**A second Deputy Principal role to work alongside Tony McMeel has been created, focussing on Culture and Development. Elizabeth 'Winks' Gubbins will join the college in the new year.**

Winks has enjoyed a diverse professional career focussed equally on education, business, and young people. She is currently a senior school executive and educator at Methodist Ladies' College (MLC) in Melbourne, where she has worked since 2013. She is looking forward to joining the Marcus team.

"I cannot wait for day one next year. I absolutely love working with young people, I love their ambition, energy, and passion for life. That's why I ended up in education. I am really attracted to the culture of the college; it's a wonderful mixture of contemporary vision, tradition, and history. It has such strong connections with both rural and corporate Australia and I am so impressed by its forward-thinking outlook. My role includes being part of the outward face of Marcus and I plan to travel throughout Australia listening to the educational needs of the rural communities and reaching out to our Alumni. I feel privileged and excited for the opportunity to be a part of the college's ongoing journey."

Winks has a Graduate Diploma of Education (Applied Learning), an Advanced Diploma in Public Relations (Commerce) and is currently completing a Graduate Certificate in Career Development Practice. Prior to joining MLC, she taught at Ruyton Girls' School in Melbourne and Monivae College in Hamilton. She believes strongly in the difference education can make.

"Ultimately my main aim is to positively influence every one of our students to help them become the best they can be – well prepared for their futures with the courage and confidence required to take their next steps. I believe I'm an approachable person so my door will always be open. I'm looking forward to getting to know the students and becoming a part of a caring and progressive Marcus executive team. How we care for our students while they are with us is as vital as the education we deliver to them. The bonds they make and experiences they have at Marcus will last a lifetime."

Winks has always had a long connection with agriculture.

"I had extended family farming near Forbes, NSW where we visited each year, when I was growing up. I moved to south-west Victoria when I married Charlie. We lived on the family property and worked with the family cattle stud, Te Mania Angus. We then moved to Hamilton with our three young children where we ran an agricultural and forestry contracting business."

When moving to Melbourne 10 years ago, Charlie patented a brick inlay system supplying to the commercial building sector. He will move his business 'Formbrick' from Melbourne to North Geelong. All their children live in Melbourne; Bec is an account manager in advertising, Chris a financial advisor in a stockbroking firm, and Harry has just completed a Bachelor of Arts in Communications.

For fun Winks loves spending time with her family and friends and escaping to Port Fairy when she can.

"I love to cook and over the last 18 months I believe I've pretty much nailed the art of sourdough bread-making. I play golf, inconsistently, but with unbridled enthusiasm, and being a passionate supporter of the Melbourne Football Club (go Dees!) I will be an embarrassingly vocal and visible minority in red and blue whenever they play at Kardinia Park."

Elizabeth is mostly known by her nickname, Winks.

"It's a nickname I've had all my life. I was a bit of a knockabout little kid, so perhaps Elizabeth was too serious a name for me back then. I did have a few other nicknames along the way, but this is the one that stuck. While it's very similar to the famous racing mare (Winx), I'm afraid I'm not quite as structurally sound."

We wish Winks well with her move on to campus and look forward to welcoming her to the Marcus team.



# Currawong

"The values we cherish most in agriculture are honesty, integrity, solid relationships, hard work, a good attitude and above all –family."



Photography: Edwina Robertson

Jill and Denis Conway walk the talk. Their property, Currawong, at Taroom in Queensland is very much a family business. The couple, together with daughters **Olivia Martin (nee Conway) BB(Ag)'14**, **Sally Edwards (nee Conway) AssocDFBM'18**, son Ben, and their spouses, have run their property and are now implementing the family succession plan, together.

"The three children did the succession planning, choosing which property they would inherit, allowing them the certainty of expanding nearby if the opportunity presents. Our fundamental belief about providing for the future of the next generation is to multiply the pie, not divide it, and expand family ownership by parents retaining first mortgage. It is our lifelong ambition for our children to continue their farming heritage and pass that privilege on," Denis said.

With the next and fifth generation's combined skill set of daughters as Marcus graduates in Farm Management and Agribusiness, son a diesel mechanic, and in-laws a helicopter pilot and social worker, they make for a complementary and effective team.

Sally, who happens to be married to another Marcus graduate, **Charlie Edwards DipAgri'18**, feels lucky to have lived the Marcus experience.

"Marcus equips its students with not only a deep theoretical understanding of primary production but, more importantly, with a set of business skills which ultimately governs the graduates' way of thinking and approaching the real-world, post-Marcus. I was always attracted to this aspect prior to becoming a student of Marcus Oldham, however, it is now as a graduate that I truly value it," she said.

Sally cites the domestic and international tours as highlights, and credits her favourite lecturers, including Andrew Mackay, David Cornish and CJ (Campbell Jeffrey) – with opening her eyes and mind. Sally and Olivia agree on one lecturer's impact in particular – Ian Farran.

"Seeing Faz return, again, was a shared period of joy," said Sally.

"Faz was an engineering genius," agreed Olivia.

Olivia found Marcus gave her an ability to understand





**"Try to help your fellow human beings to succeed - treat them as you would like to be treated yourself. And above all else do everything in your power to hold your immediate and extended family together."**

different businesses, to look for the next opportunity and weigh up the pros and cons of pursuing that opportunity.

"The whole experience, and education gives you the tools to be confident in decision making and problem solving. Marcus encourages you to set the bar high and to aim above it," she said.

Over the past 33 years Denis and Jill have been expanding their operation by acquiring land, establishing leucaena, and improving pastures. With the assistance of capable and loyal staff, the Conway family are now backgrounding steers and turning off larger numbers annually than ever before.

As they move into semi-retirement, and the sixth-generation revels in their country upbringing, the future looks bright for Currawong.

"Our philosophy is to try and do everything to the best of your ability and be educated on the subject. Surround yourself with capable and successful people. Despite conditions on the land often being challenging, with adversities such as droughts, floods, financial difficulties, commodity prices, and more recently, COVID, understand

that with every adversity, there are opportunities. It all depends on your attitude, the only thing we can truly control in life is our attitude – how we perceive and react to a situation, circumstance or occurrence will dictate the outcome," Denis said.

But for the Conway's the final consideration remains family.

"Try to help your fellow human beings to succeed – treat them as you would like to be treated yourself. And above all else, do everything in your power to hold your immediate and extended family together," Jill said.

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***The Currawong Scholarship offers support for students studying agriculture or agribusiness, who reside in Queensland or the Northern Territory and are a minimum of 25 years of age.***



# Dark clouds, Silver linings



In October 2019 when Australian Grand Prix rider, **Gitte Donvig Dip HBM'00**, hit the ground after her horse was spooked, she joked she did not break a nail. Instead, Gitte almost broke her neck.

"I was just walking a young horse at the end of the day, she got a fright, shot forward, tripped over and came down with me. I just hit the ground with her. It was a sandy surface, I had a helmet on, and it wasn't even a hard fall, but I had C1, C2, spinal cord, brain stem and cerebellum damage. It was a diffused axonal injury of the most severe kind; they gave me a 5% chance of living."

Waking up in ICU from an induced coma after being airlifted from her training base, "Ellanbrae Park" in Macedon, Gitte had no idea what had happened to her.

"I became aware of where I was and what was going on when I was in the rehabilitation centre at Royal Talbot in Melbourne and I remember waking up and looking around and thinking, 'Oh, Mum's here, that's serious.' Then I wiggled my toes and thought, 'I'll probably be ok'."

Gitte grew up around horses with her mother, Mary Hanna, six-time Olympic dressage competitor (including most recently at the Tokyo games) and her late father, Gert Donvig, Danish junior dressage champion.

"I have been horsey from dot but there was no expectation for me to be so and it wasn't an interest of mine when I was very young. I always rode but it wasn't something I considered seriously as a career. I started competing when I was 14 then did my first small tour test when I was 16. I did my first Grand Prix when I was 18. Once I got into it, I got into it seriously."

Gitte heard about Marcus when she saw an advertisement in a magazine for a scholarship, applied and became the Australian Equestrian scholarship recipient in 2000.



"It was a bit different for me when I came to Marcus Oldham because I was already practically a professional rider. What interested me was learning to run a business, and that absolutely happened for me. That and gaining marketing knowledge were most beneficial and I could apply them to the horse industry. I made lifelong friends, 21 years later we still catch up."

After a year working at Kasselmann's Performance Sales International in Germany, Gitte returned home and started putting together a team of her own horses and teaching, a passion she inherited from her father. She also helped clients import horses.

"I used to call myself the Tinder of the horse world. It was my job to match the riders with horses for love affairs. I'm not interested in selling a horse for money, I'm interested in matching a horse with a rider so they can fulfill their dreams, and that's been the most satisfying thing for me."

After experiencing so much trauma it would be understandable for Gitte to second guess herself, but she has a unique approach to handling fear.

"I don't have any fear. Fear's a funny thing, I used to feel it when I was younger, but I'd already worked my way through that fear. I can shrug and say, 'shit happens'. When I was working in Germany, I used to say to myself as I put my foot in the stirrup, 'Today's a good day to die'. It's like an acceptance that something you are doing is risky and feeling comfortable with it. If you are nervous or worried when you are hopping on, then you won't have the right reactions when something does go wrong."

She puts her strength down to her childhood.

"A series of life experiences gave me my philosophy at an early age and made me a strong person. I lost my Dad in a car accident when I was eight and, because Mum was away so much, I just became very independent and determined. I haven't really changed my approach since the accident, I'm still being a stubborn, pain in the ass."

With her three children as inspiration, Gitte has worked hard to recover from her near-fatal accident. Having been told



**"Fear's a funny thing, I used to feel it when I was younger, but I'd already worked my way through that fear. I can shrug and say, 'shit happens'."**

she was not to ride for 12 months, she left Royal Talbot within three months and was back on a horse within three weeks.

"I was very careful, I made sure I started with the right kind of horse, I took it easy, and it was like being home again being on the back of a horse; getting on and off is the hardest bit."

As she continues to recover, Gitte is enjoying her family and working as a mentor and riding teacher where she practices gratitude to counteract performance nerves and finds fulfilment in helping others realise their dreams.

"I'm still determined to get stuff done and bring up my children. COVID has been challenging but it has given me more time with them so that's the silver lining. We deal in silver linings."

Two years on, Gitte continues to turn the negatives into positives.

"For sure there are days when you just want to crawl in a hole and die, but I allow myself that couple of hours to take a moment then get back into it. At the start I was saying to the rehab staff, 'Can you put me in touch with someone who has had a similar injury who can be a motivation for me, an inspiration?' And they said, 'No, no-one's gone as far as you have'. People assume you will learn a big life lesson out of such an accident, I think I'd had those lessons anyway and that's what enabled me to progress through the recovery the way I have. Considering how bad it was, my recovery puts me in miracle territory."

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# A glass and a half for Mark

Photography: Andrew Bain

When it comes to the dairy industry, the glass is more than half full, it's a glass and a half for **Mark Griffin DipAgri'14**

"I love dairy. It's a great way to grow wealth quickly. I think there's so much opportunity. It's crucial to the Tasmanian and Australian agricultural industry. It provides such a strong cash flow from a business point of view, giving you a reliable, low-risk income."

Mark's family has been farming at Moltema, in the Deloraine area in Tasmania since 1845. The original mixed enterprise of sheep, cropping and dairy now has a singular focus on dairy.

"We've chosen the enterprise that is most suited to our land and gives us our most profitable outcome. It's been a great move. We have an average rainfall of 950mm and over the last 15-20 years we have been able to double the land's productivity with centre pivot irrigation. We just match our milk production curve to our grass growing curve to keep our cost of production as low as possible."

The results speak for themselves. Milking 900 cows, producing 5.5 million litres per year, Mark's high-quality commodity has been recognised as one of the top five dairy farms in Tasmania, and included in the top 100 in Australia for milk quality for the past five years.

Mark loves what he does.

"Whatever you do, you have to love it. The stigma of dairy not being a chosen career is out of touch. You have to work in an industry before you form your beliefs around it. I think dairy has a lot to offer. We manage a very intense system. I love working with animals in the low stress environment we've





created, and dairy farmers are arguably the best pasture managers in the country. There's so many parts to the jigsaw puzzle."

Like all farming enterprises, when it is busy, it can be very busy. Mark's cross-bred cattle calve once a year in August, averaging 25 calvings a day. But there is also more flexibility in milking than that reflected by the general perception of dairy farming.

"The age-old style of milking twice a day every day for 10 months of the year and getting up early is changing. There are different milking intervals being studied where you are milking the cows 10 times in seven days rather than 14. Those changes mean you are only doing one milking a day on a Saturday and Sunday, which will make it a more appealing industry to join if people feel they don't have to get up early on the weekend. So that perception of having to get up early every day and not having that work-life balance is changing."

Mark's involvement in the dairy industry beyond the farm gate has been empowered by his time at Marcus.

"Marcus took my business skill set to another level and stood me in good stead to be a valuable Director at the Board table of TasHerd Pty Ltd, the state's main milk testing laboratory at the young age of 25. My involvement with the Young Dairy Network, a Tasmanian group for people aged 18-35, means I have a heavy involvement in producing the next generation of dairy farmers. I'm also active with the Tasmanian Dairy Focus Farm which offers the other 390 dairy farms in the state the opportunity to look at all their figures and benchmark against it. It's the Dairy Farm of the Year from last year, so it's number one in the state. I sit on an advisory committee of nine farmers, and we all give them strategic direction and feedback on what has and hasn't worked well. That's been a fantastic learning opportunity for me."

His education also set him up to succeed when managing people.

"Marcus Oldham had a big impact on me developing my leadership skills. When it comes to work-life balance I think it comes back to the manager developing a great team and workplace culture for employees to thrive in. By offering a flexible workplace and understanding your employees' commitments outside the workplace, I think you can achieve something pretty special."

We all have the chance to enjoy Mark's nationally recognised milk. The "glass and a half" in our chocolate bar could well be from Mark's farm.

"We supply Cadbury, our 5.5 million litres goes into making 8 million blocks of chocolate a year. COVID-19 has been a little bit of a blessing for us because chocolate consumption is through the roof with people comfort-eating. One in twenty pieces of Cadbury chocolate comes from our dairy farm."

**mgriffin3140@hotmail.com**

*Dairy Australia offers the Dairy Australia Farm Managers Scholarships to students enrolled in the Bachelor of Business (Agriculture) at Marcus Oldham with a genuine interest in pursuing a career in the industry.*

[www.marcusoldham.vic.edu.au/scholarship/dairy-australia-farm-managers](http://www.marcusoldham.vic.edu.au/scholarship/dairy-australia-farm-managers)

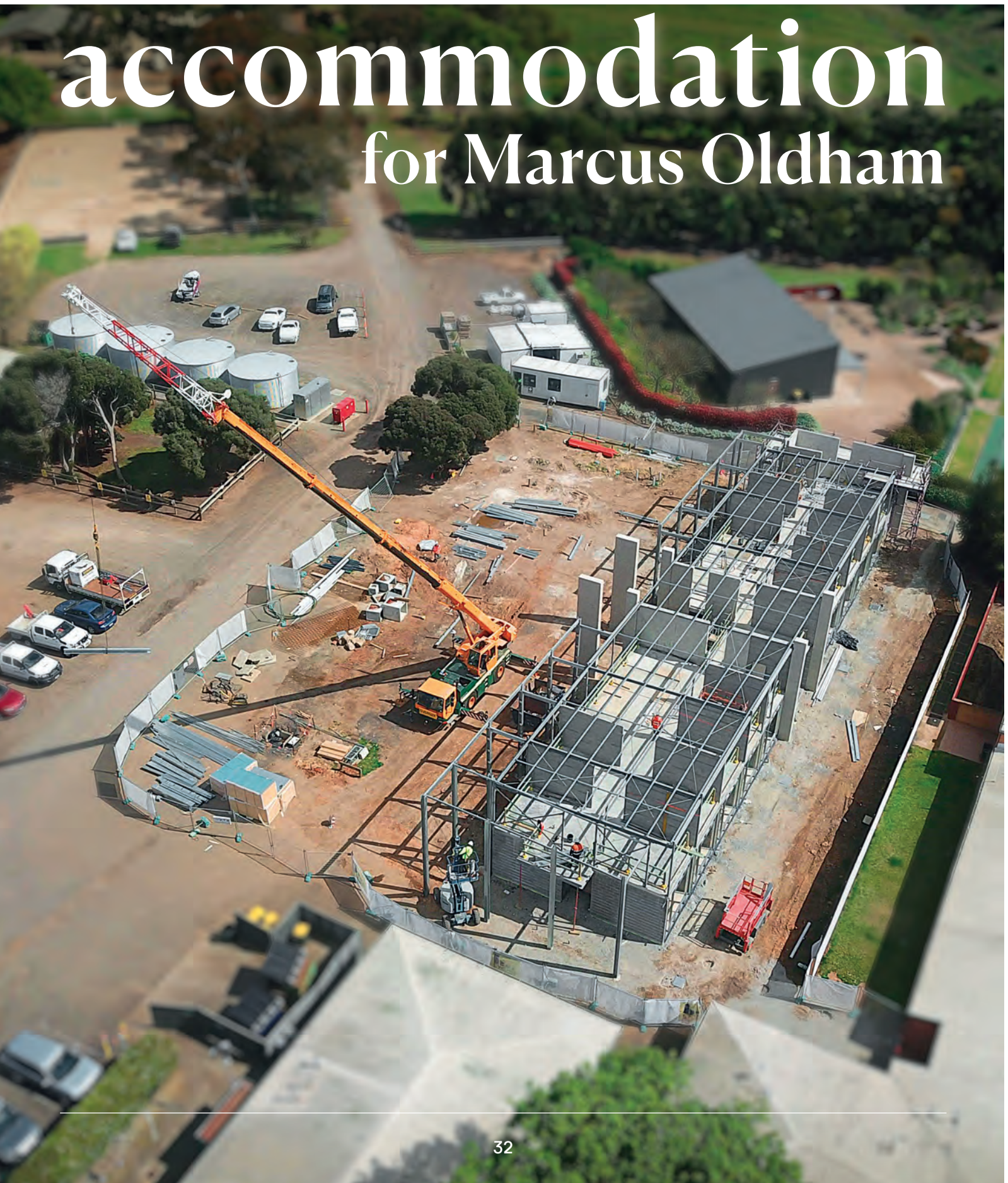
**"I love working with animals in the low stress environment we've created, and dairy farmers are arguably the best pasture managers in the country. There's so many parts to the jigsaw puzzle."**





# Additional accommodation for Marcus Oldham

By Tony McMeel, Deputy Principal





One of the exciting developments happening at Marcus Oldham is the construction of a new accommodation wing comprising 30 additional bedrooms. The College is grateful to the Victorian State Government for providing \$2.5M in funding under the Agricultural College Modernisation Program. The funding has allowed the College to proceed with the build earlier and with more certainty than would normally have been possible. Due to good planning by the College the early stages of design work and the planning process had been completed, making the project “shovel ready” and Marcus Oldham eligible for some state government funding for the first time.

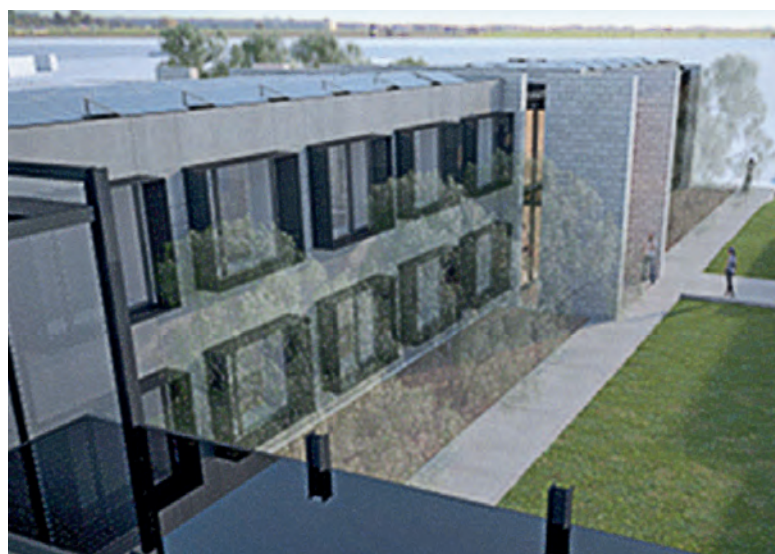
Demand for bedrooms is high because demand for student places at Marcus continues to be strong. Over recent years, there have been many students required to live in off-campus accommodation as there have been insufficient beds on campus. The College has been renting a number of houses in the area in order to assist.

At the end of 2019, when the College introduced a third trimester into each academic year it allowed the Agriculture (Farm Management) and Agribusiness degrees to be finished in two years of on campus study. That decision to change course delivery was shaped by feedback from past students, who were unable to finish their degree on campus, and has been of great benefit.

## **The additional 30 bedrooms will make a total of 153 rooms which will be close to providing a room for everyone who wants to stay on campus.**

The new residential wing will be a two-storey building on the land directly west of the Ivo Dean dining facility and to the south of the Law-Smith wing. The building is designed to allow each student a comfortable room, slightly larger than the rooms in the Law Smith wing. Each room will have ample storage, a wardrobe, a desk, and a window seat and be fitted out with network connections and air-conditioning. Each section of the wing, (four sections in total), will have shared bathroom facilities, and the wing will also provide upstairs and lower floor common spaces with a laundry on the lower level. The design phase was assisted and influenced by students who provided input into what they thought the rooms should be like at Marcus Oldham.

Completion is hoped for the end of March 2022.





FROM THE FOUNDATION MANAGER

Alannah Halloran

# Invest. Support. Advance.



**Without doubt, 2020 and 2021 will go down in Marcus Oldham history as particularly memorable periods. Not because of the debilitating pandemic that has caused more havoc than could have ever been imagined. Nor due to the changing of the guards in College Principal or Council executive, though historically monumental and exciting in their own right.**

In the past 18 months, our community, through a number of generous supporters, has bequeathed, pledged and donated, almost \$2million to the College Foundation. This giving has extended across important projects such as The Douglas Boyd Centre, the expansion of the student residence, our graduate wellbeing program, the student scholarship and bursary program, and our ever-important bequest program.

The recent Foundation prospectus was designed to provide the community with a clear idea of where the College was heading and what needed to be done to get there. Many of you will have seen the prospectus through digital presentation, others via the booklet. This prospectus was an important project in itself, and through the use of narrative, poetry, imagery and, the now widely accepted QR code, we have been able to bring the College to you in its full glory – from its inception to current day.

We may be small, but we have accomplished so much in our 60-year history. The advancement of the College is largely because of the community around it; graduates and families, industry believers and supporters, philanthropic trusts, and generous individuals who share the same passion for agriculture and the equine industry as we do. Individuals and organisations who understand, that without exceptional,

knowledgeable and well-connected people, Australian agriculture and the equine industries will not advance, nor prosper efficiently or sustainably.

So, a big THANK YOU to those who continue to believe in Marcus Oldham and the Foundation who, combined, strive to provide a unique and excellent learning program and experience.

Having been involved with the College since 1997, I have had the privilege of meeting, talking and breaking bread with many community members from around the country. It isn't something I take for granted, it is what drives my passion and belief in the College's importance and relevance.

Two people who have been extremely generous with their time, knowledge and friendship over the years are Tim McGavin and Andrew Facey. 1994 Agribusiness graduate, Tim, together with Laguna Bay, has enabled the Marcus Minds wellbeing and peak performance program (for graduate and industry professionals) to come to life. And 1966 Farm Business Management graduate and successful businessman, Andrew, has recently pledged an extraordinary "living bequest" of \$1 million. The Foundation is so incredibly grateful to both gentlemen for their continued interest in Marcus Oldham's advancement and we are excited that they will be able to witness the benefits of their generosity first-hand.

Enjoy reading more about these two inspiring gentlemen in this issue of MOCOSA and please reach out to me in the Foundation office should you wish to say hello, discuss your giving interests or simply obtain a copy of our new prospectus.

**Alannah Halloran**

**Foundation Manager**

**[foundation@marcusoldham.vic.edu.au](mailto:foundation@marcusoldham.vic.edu.au)**



# Beef Week

Marcus students and staff both past and present beef it up at Beef Week 2021.



Jason Frecklington DipFM'93 and Tim Kelly AdCertAA'93



Dr Simon Livingstone – Principal, Deb Frecklington MP – Member for Nanango, Berry Reynolds DipAA'98



John McKenzie – current student, Rodney (Fred) Bell– DipFM'72, Andrew Bridle, Drew Abell-King, Charlie Grellman– current students

## Upcoming Reunions

### Save the Date

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 60th ANNIVERSARY OF MARCUS OLDHAM.

The weekend of 21st and 22nd of May, 2022.



For anyone planning a reunion, please contact [alumni@marcusoldham.vic.edu.au](mailto:alumni@marcusoldham.vic.edu.au) or call Neen McKenzie on 03 5247 2927



# Marcus All Over

## David Humble

**David Humble GCert Agri20, AssocDipFM'87** recently completed the Graduate Certificate in Agribusiness at Marcus, while working for Bell Potter Securities, where he has spent the past 20 years. David, who advises private clients, small institutions, family offices and company directors, thought 2020 was a good time to further his undergraduate qualifications so he could add to his skillset to benefit his clients.

"As an undergraduate of Marcus in 1987, and currently working for a stockbroker, there has been a focus for industry-wide upgrading of educational standards. In options jargon, I decided the best course of action was to 'roll up and out'," he said. "The postgraduate agribusiness program at Marcus was an ideal fit, with my exposure to business and the requirement to research, analyse and recommend to clients on appropriate investments."



COVID-19 lockdowns meant not having to chase after children's sport and gave David more time to pursue his study. The access to resources and lectures via a virtual platform, worked well too, but the pandemic also exposed a change that made further study more compelling.

"With COVID, the importance of food and fibre security has been heightened and the rise of agriculture as an investment class is seeing more and more agricultural enterprises list on the stock market. The requirement for agribusiness qualifications to be added to these boards as a skill set, sees the potential to add some non-executive director's roles into the mix."

David's only regret is that he didn't pursue further study earlier as it has focused and sharpened his perspective on commerce and executive decision making, helping with more detailed modelling on companies that can be discussed with executives and institutional investors, on their terms.

"The four core subjects of the Master of Agribusiness that form the Postgraduate Certificate in Agribusiness, are to me very similar to the core of any of the major MBA's that I have looked at: Business Strategy, Systems Analysis, Marketing, and Financial Analysis. Whether the focus is on GrainCorp Ltd or Harvey Norman- is purely academic, the theory and perspective is the same."

An important aspect to David's decision to study was both the negative and positive impact on his family.

"It can be a little stressful to be working, studying, schooling, and living in a confined space, but my family was exceptionally supportive. Another upside was I wanted to set an example for my kids, who are still at school, that education is a lifelong journey, and that one should strive to excel. I do recall last century when studying at Marcus, that my focus was on completion rather than excelling. I now understand that folly."

**DHumble@bellpotter.com.au**

## James Mitchell



**James Mitchell BB(Ag)'20** has joined the executive team within JLL Agribusiness Capital Markets, Brisbane, focusing on the divestment of agricultural properties across Australia.

Growing up in Brisbane, James had always wanted to pursue a career in agriculture so worked for several years on cattle stations and broadacre farms before studying at Marcus.

"I chose Marcus to get ahead in a competitive work environment. It's highly regarded within Australia as a leading agricultural college, and I saw an opportunity to experience life outside of my home state of Queensland," he said. "I got a lot out of the strong mateships I made within the class group and the broader college over the three years of the course. These friendships were further strengthened by many social events like the Marcus Races, social nights on campus, and weekends spent in Geelong and Melbourne."

Despite having his final year disrupted by COVID-19 James said Marcus did everything to make the two lockdowns during 2020 run smoothly for the students.

James is looking forward to his new role with JLL Agribusiness, building new relationships with a range of agricultural industry participants from private family enterprises through to institutional investors.

**JamesA.Mitchell@ap.JLL.com**



## Rachel Watts

### Congratulations to Rachel Watts

**DipEM'05**, Head Groom with Shane Rose Eventing, who after a year of "will we stay or will we go?", managed to add another Olympic Games to her list of achievements and, even better, help secure a silver medal for the Australian Equestrian Team in Tokyo.

Just one month out from competition the Australian Olympic Committee put paid to the rumours and doubt, and told Rachel and Shane they were going. Two weeks later, Rachel stayed on site as Virgil, Shane's 16-year-old gelding, started Pre-Export Quarantine.

"Virgil handled PEQ and the flight really well. We had a great trip over. He had

one when we first arrived, and then daily. Then it was the same as here with social distancing, washing hands all the time, not staying in buildings for too long."

Arriving nine days before competition meant the Australian Equestrian Team, including Andrew Hoy OAM on Vassily De Lassos and Kevin McNab on Don Quidam, was keen to make a start. After dressage on day one, Australia was in sixth place.

"We had all hoped it would be a bit higher, but we knew we had three very good horse and rider combinations in the jumping phase, so we didn't think we were out of it by any stretch of the

"There were a few tears shed. We felt such great support from home and not just from equestrian people. I think it was a COVID thing where people needed to watch something, to look forward to it. It was great feeling that it brought joy to people to watch the Olympics for a couple of weeks, so they could forget about things that were happening in the world. I think it made for a lovely distraction. This one is the best one yet."

Since the Olympics, Rachel has moved on from Bimbadeen Park and is exploring lots of options.

[rachel\\_watts86@hotmail.com](mailto:rachel_watts86@hotmail.com)



flown before so that really helps. They know what they're doing and that they need to relax and sit it out."

The COVID-delayed Olympics' organisers left little to chance with safety measures in place from go to woah which made Rachel feel safe.

"In Australia, anyone who was named as an athlete or official could go into Sydney and get fully vaccinated. It was highly recommended that we do so and about 90% of people, across all sports were fully vaccinated," she said. "To go there we didn't have to quarantine but we had COVID tests three times before we left Australia,

**"I've never been with a team that's worked so hard and so well together..."**

imagination. Then cross country came around and I've never been with a team that's worked so hard and so well together across all areas."

After rocketing up the table to claim silver, they were unable to celebrate immediately with horses to care for and COVID limiting their movements, but that didn't dampen the thrill.





# Ken Bailey

**Ken Bailey DipFM'73**, nutritionist and owner and operator of Haslen Technology, believes his time at Marcus changed his life.

Raised on a small farm north of Kojonup, W.A., Ken learned the physical side of farming from a young age, but it was a fortuitous meeting with the then head of Agriculture Studies at the University of W.A., who suggested he apply to the new agriculture management college in Geelong – called Marcus Oldham, that set him up for life.

“Dr Henry Schapper said Marcus would be well suited to my personality. Not sure what that meant! But the college fees were horrendous so the challenge was set; I began working my guts out to save enough money so I could go to this new college. I did manage to save the first year's fees and worked on weekends to pay for the odds and ends needed while I was at the college – beer and girls mostly, but I couldn't afford a car so was reliant on my fellow students to get around. When I went back for my second year, I had run out of money for the fees, but I had the foresight to apply for a scholarship because I could see the writing on the wall. I worked hard on my studies during the first year at the college and was lucky to receive one. The second year at college was a very good year and eventually I graduated with Honours in March 1974. That ultimately became a pivotal time in my life, little did I know how pivotal.”

After Marcus, Ken tried a range of ventures including dabbling in a bit of gold mining, but it was a job selling mineral-based fertiliser with a company promoting a more sustainable form of agriculture that really interested him.

“This I found fascinating, and it took me on a big learning curve resulting in several trips to the U.S. to study with practitioners who weren't just about NPK (Nitrogen/Phosphorus/Potassium) and chemicals, but wanted to solve problems using nutrition and management. I took to it like the proverbial duck to water.”

Ken has been working across dairy, broadacre and horticultural operations



**Ken sees the real issue for the world is how to abolish mono-culture agriculture and replace it with a system that will provide sufficiently high-quality, nutrient-dense food to feed the world.**

to lift yields and improve soil systems now for close to three decades.

“How do soils, plants and animals interact sustainably with one another in nature? That is the question. I don't have all the answers, but I'm certainly a long way down the track and not allowed to retire because my clients won't let me. They freak out whenever I mention it. Observation and thoughtful analysis should be the cornerstone of everything we do in agriculture. I was recently head-hunted to be a part of the only low rainfall soil carbon sequestration project in W.A. Science says this can't be done but nature says it can. The challenge for me is staying alive because it's a 25-year project!”

Ken sees the real issue for the world is how to abolish monoculture agriculture and replace it with a

system that will provide sufficiently high-quality, nutrient-dense food to feed the world, provide habitat, promote diversity, and build soil carbon levels, all at the same time.

“It can be done. The question for Marcus is – can they provide the next generation of farm managers with sufficient problem-solving skills to leave the planet in a better place than they found it? Two things that made my time at Marcus pivotal are that it taught me how to think; that an enquiring mind is a good thing to have and that an honours diploma from a prestigious organisation opens doors. It gave me a level of credibility that helped me stand out from the crowd. I didn't know that at the time ... but I will be eternally grateful for it.”

**kenneth.bailey1@bigpond.com**



## Cobram Estate

Congratulations to Cobram Estate on successfully setting a new Guinness World Record, for the biggest virtual olive oil tasting.

On the 28th of October, more than 18,500 people registered for the event, co-hosted by **Rob McGavin, CertAA'93, Graduate of Excellence'00**, Co-founder and Chairman of Cobram Estate.

"We wanted to do something that would bring people together, and show that Aussies are world beaters at every level. We are ecstatic to have set a new World Record and want to thank everyone who joined us for what was a really fun night."

Previously the largest olive oil tasting record was set in 2009, in the Spanish city of Jaen, where 12,909 people attended.

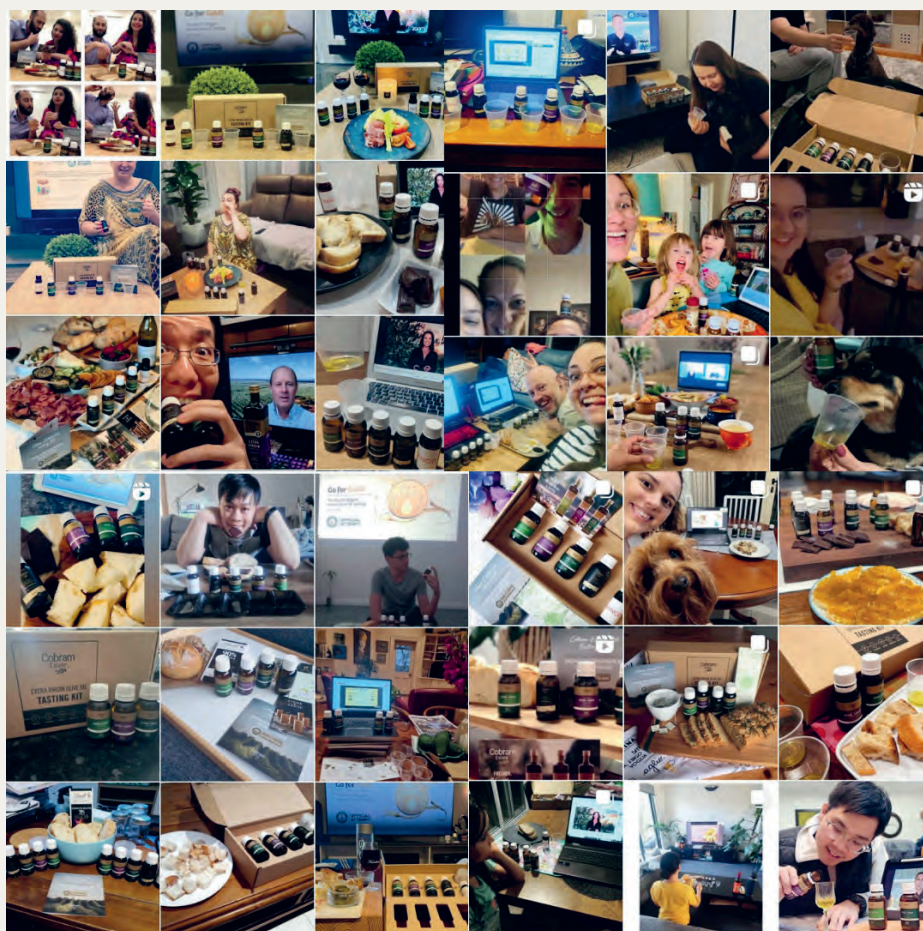
Guinness World Records adjudicator announced live during the event that, "Cobram Estate and everyone watching has set a new Guinness World Records title for the most viewers for an olive oil tasting livestreamed".

[r.mcgvain@cobramestateolives.com](mailto:r.mcgvain@cobramestateolives.com)

"We wanted to do something that would bring people together, and show that Aussies are world beaters at every level. We are ecstatic to have set a new World Record and want to thank everyone who joined us for what was a really fun night."



Pictured (top-left): Event co-hosts, Dr Joanna McMillan, PhD nutrition scientist, accredited practising dietitian, and one of Australia's favourite health/wellness experts, Leandro Ravetti (bottom-left), Chief Oil Maker and co-CEO of Cobram Estate Olives. Rob McGavin (bottom-right), Co-founder and Chairman of Cobram Estate Olives. Top-right: Guinness World Records Adjudicator



Above: Participants in Cobram Estate's world record breaking, biggest virtual olive oil tasting.



# Penny Hooper



## Penny Hooper's BB(Agri)'09

range of experience in different jobs, set her up for success in her current position as Livestock and Silo Manager for Vaucluse Agricultural Company in Conara, Tasmania.

After leaving Marcus she moved between jobs in rural banking and farm work, not finding exactly the right fit.

"I thought I'd go into something like consulting or banking and when I went into those fields, I always found I wanted to be on the other side of the table. It didn't suit me being in an office all the time."

Penny was concerned her frequent career changes might raise red flags for future employers.

"It's been quite a journey and I was worried people would see 18 months here, 12 months there, on my resume as a negative, but they saw it as an advantage because I'd had a lot of

experience in different areas and now, I finally have a job that doesn't feel like a job."

When approached three years ago to work with Vaucluse, Penny was hesitant about joining a corporate farming enterprise but is now a keen advocate.

"With corporates coming in and family farms growing, there are more opportunities for people who don't have the option of going back to a family farm. For me, that's exciting because I would never have had this job without corporate ag. I'm seeing a lot more younger people, particularly women, coming into the industry."

Penny is enthusiastic about the variety of work that makes for a busy job requiring a lot of reporting to ensure accountability.

"We are growing cereals, potatoes, poppies, a couple of small seed crops, then we have the livestock –

an Angus herd, cross-bred ewe flock – and we do a lot of lamb trading and agistment of beef steers and dairy cows. Last winter was our biggest, so far as the number of cows. Before they came on, I did a lot of work on feed budgeting – how we were going to manage them and get them fed. Then when it all worked, it was very rewarding. We have an amazing team at Vaucluse who made it all happen – from getting the fodder crops in after harvest, to being out there in the middle of winter, moving break fences. The other part is we have our own silos, so we store half the grain we harvest, market it later or hold it for people we have sold it to. I like the diversity, no one day is the same."

Penny grew up on a farm at Mount Direction about 30 kilometres up the Tamar River from Launceston and was always helping her father, **Brett Hooper DipFM'72**, so choosing to study at Marcus was not a big decision.



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"I thought I'd go into something like consulting or banking and when I went into those fields, I always found I wanted to be on the other side of the table. It didn't suit me being in an office all the time."

"I liked the way you could get through the course faster, there were a lot of people from Tassie going there, and it had a good reputation. It was a lot of fun living on campus and the networks and connections you get from that are great. The opportunities in terms of the tours you were able to do, and the people you could learn from, was really good."

Penny has a keen eye on what is to come.

"I love focussing on what we can be doing as a team at Vacluse, and as an industry in Tassie, to increase production and do a better job of what we are doing. I'm keen to add to my skills so I can run a whole system, not just the livestock side of it – and this job is giving me the perfect opportunity for that."

Watch this space.

**[penny\\_hooper@hotmail.com](mailto:penny_hooper@hotmail.com)**





## Emily Cahill

Growing up in Sydney, **Emily Cahill DipHBM'13** decided studying at Marcus would enable her to take the first step towards a career in the thoroughbred industry and help her decide what area she would like to pursue.

Em is now Managing Director with 360 Bloodstock and, at 31 years of age, currently lays claim to being the industry's youngest female syndicator.

"Like most students, I had a really great time at Marcus and made some lifelong friends — some of whom are now great connections within the industry. I think my chosen fields of work experience were highly beneficial for my career, especially working with Vikki Leonard in the Arrowfield Stud marketing department. This was a great eye opener to the many career paths on offer within the industry."

After graduating, Em worked on studs from the Hunter Valley to the

Southern Highlands in NSW then joined OTI Racing for the next four years, then decided to start syndicating her own horses.

"Marcus gave me the ability to assess the viability of a new business through thorough planning, and then the skill set to start it up and run it. I'm really glad I spent the time I did doing the hands-on work with horses as it has really helped me whilst syndicating horses and communicating with owners."

In 2019, Em syndicated her first horse, Nightfire, to family and friends. He has so far won two races from his five starts with more exciting things to come. In 2020, Em purchased another yearling colt, Pride of Galway, and gained approval to publicly syndicate horses. So, at the start of this year, Em purchased her first three yearlings to offer via public syndication. She has a two-year-old

colt by Merchant Navy with legendary trainer, Peter Moody, a filly named Outcaster with experienced 360 Bloodstock trainer, Grahame Begg, and an early two-year-old type, Li'l Misshonkytonk with friend and trainer, Shaun Dwyer Jnr.

"The next 12 months on the track is critical for my business' success and I can't wait to see these horses get to the track. I also have a handful of breeding stock in partnership with owners, with our first yearlings hitting the sales ring next year. I wish to get more owners involved in the breeding side of the business, from birth to the sales ring and then onto the track. In the immediate future, I'm hoping to see two or three of our horses racing in the 360 Bloodstock silks this year ... and hopefully winning!"

**emily@360bloodstock.com**

**Em's website: [www.360bloodstock.com](http://www.360bloodstock.com)**



Emily (2nd from left) with owners of 'Nightfire' after his second win at Pakenham.



## James Newmarch

### James Newmarch AssocDipFM'86

has cleverly applied his Marcus studies to his business "Aerial Dimensions".

The media production company produces videos and photography, specialising in agriculture, often with the use of drone footage. Having connections to agriculture and business has provided an advantage and enhanced James' knowledge and skills.

"We often say our work is like being back at Marcus doing a farm tour and producing a visual case study of what we have seen. It is diverse and interesting; we have filmed and produced videos and photography for all sorts of organisations and businesses such as real estate developments, schools, construction, events, the renewable energy industry, and small to large agribusinesses such as Namoi Cotton."

After graduating from Marcus, newly-married James and wife Tess managed his family's 5000-acre mixed farming enterprise near Inverell, NSW for 20 years.

"We primarily ran a merino stud – a daughter to the Hazeldean stud from Cooma. Our rams were ranked 12th most productive rams in the country in the national sire evaluation program. We had cattle and grew summer and winter crops; sunflower, sorghum, mung beans, cow pea, canola, wheat, barley, and oats. During my time there we moved from traditional farm tillage to moisture conservation, zero till farming. I was very involved in pioneering on-farm faecal egg counting to help fight sheep internal parasites – particularly barber's pole worm that is endemic in our area."

James and Tess thought their future was mapped out, but with his father's poor health and a succession planning process that, sadly, did not work out well – an issue common to many families – James made the difficult decision to leave the family farm and move into retail.

"Tess had recently opened a bookstore in Inverell called 'The Dust Jacket'; we then opened a second store in Moree. We had no experience or knowledge in retail so found ourselves on a very steep learning curve – particularly for me, as I really only read my first book after turning 30! It was an exciting time to be in the bookselling industry with



many major releases, and we held events and workshops in the stores and throughout the region. We sold the business after 10 years but during this time we received numerous local business awards, were finalists in a national retail business award for excellence and voted, 'Australia's Favourite Regional Book Shop' by our customers in a national competition."

After the bookshops, James turned his focus to soil conservation.

"I worked as the Gwydir Operations Manager for the Soil Conservation Services covering a very large area of northern NSW. Through my farming and agricultural experience, I have always had a very good understanding of the importance of soil conservation in the sub-tropical, heavy summer rainfall and self-mulching soils of north NSW. In this role I designed and implemented all forms of soil conservation works, managing a team of machinery operators to complete the projects."

**"We often say our work is like being back at Marcus doing a farm tour and producing a visual case study of what we have seen."**



James grew up around aeroplanes. His father was a pilot and, in a natural progression, James also became a certified private pilot. With an interest in all things flying, James added drones to his repertoire becoming the first fully CASA certified UAV (or drone) pilot to operate commercially in the north of NSW. He finds the work rewarding and enjoys running his own business.

"Aside from the business, family, friends (many of whom are Marcus mates), and giving back to the community are important. Spending time with our adult children, Alex, Eliza and Sam and their partners, is what brings much joy, especially our granddaughter, Ellery. Our family hold strong ties to the Inverell community through our businesses, Rotary, and family activities."

In his downtime, James relishes any opportunity to go kitesurfing with his sons.

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# Lucy Morrissey

**"When people begin working cattle without noise, and standing in the right position, it's just pretty to watch when the lightbulb moment happens, and people are working cattle right."**

**Lucy Morrissey AssocDA'16** together with father, Shane, facilitates training and consultation in stockmanship, horsemanship and team development through their business, Morrissey and Friends' – Livestock Services.

"We travel to clients and work on the ground with their stock people several times a year and help them develop their stock handling skills and work more safely through understanding animal behaviour."

Having previously completed a Bachelor of Business Management at La Trobe University, Lucy came to Marcus and was thankful for the practical approach to learning. Her father had worked as a ringer, breaking in horses with current MOC Principal, Dr Simon Livingstone in the 1980s, so Lucy was also drawn to this practical connection.

"It really suited me as it was a smaller group, they were a bit more mature,

and I had more contact time with my tutors which I needed. Marcus was a confidence builder for me. It re-wired my brain. I'm very proud of myself for getting through, it was pretty hard as I'm not academic, but I am determined. I was awarded two scholarships while I was there, left with a distinction average and received the Strategic Management Award for my class. It gave me the mentality that I could achieve what I wanted to, so long





as I worked hard enough for it – slowly but surely that’s paying off for me.”

In her role with Morrissey and Friends, Lucy identified a gap right across the grass-roots level of the beef supply chain with regard to training people in the industry; and revealed a lack of stockmanship skills.

“We provide a support system to our leaders and managers in these really busy roles; we do what they don’t

have time to do which is train their staff. I think we absolutely underrate our people; if we get our people right, we’ll get our cattle right. We increase production levels in our livestock, improve animal welfare, team culture and staff retention.”

Consumers now expect animal handlers to act in the animals’ best interests, so Lucy is determined to make improvements.

“Our consumers want transparency and accountability. Although our industry does mostly operate at an incredibly high level of animal welfare, we are only as strong as our weakest link, and unfortunately our weakest link is still operational. We need to raise the bar, it’s time to pick up our game and start treating these animals as they deserve because the better we treat them, the happier they are; the happier they are, the more productive they are and that helps our margins, our bottom line.”

Sharing knowledge can be challenging at times but the rewards are great.

“For a start we try to teach people about cattle, but if you don’t have the mindset or the culture in the workplace to want to learn, work together, or do a good job, then there’s no point us talking about cattle. We start building relationships with people and work out how to get in the right headspace so then we can focus on cattle and production and animal welfare and start kicking goals towards being a high-performance team. This is the dream job.”

Not surprisingly, Lucy is a keen advocate for agriculture.

“I’d like to encourage young people into the industry and have them pick up some agricultural studies to help them gain a better understanding of what we do. Too often on the land we are depicted by fire, flood, poor animal welfare, depression, and suicide, and although awareness is important, I think in fact we are some

of the luckiest people in the world and have enormous pride in what we do. We have a high level of intelligence and business acumen, empathy for animals and an ability to feed a nation. I just don’t think we are presenting it very well; we probably need to speak up a little bit more, be true and authentic. You don’t have to take your broadbrimmed hat off when you go to the city if you don’t want to.”

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## Dugald Higgins



**"Be bold. Be inquiring.  
Challenge ideas.  
Ask for feedback.  
Be flexible.  
Use networks.  
Find mentors and  
embrace support.  
But above all, back  
yourself."**

"You don't have to be the smartest person in the room. God knows there's enough evidence that I'm not! But you do need to understand what you bring to the table, either for your own business, or someone else's."

That's the advice for Marcus graduates from **Dugald Higgins' AdvDipFBM'98 and BBAM'01**, Head of Responsible Investment and Real Assets with Zenith Investment Partners. Dugald himself was attracted to Marcus by its uniquely holistic approach to teaching future farmers.

"The other colleges of the day seemed very focused on the physical skills. But Marcus, of course, went beyond that, focussing on people who were a bit older and more experienced and wanting to teach farming as a business, not just a job. It was this focus on all the other skills that go into running a successful business that interested me. And ultimately, it was just as well given where I've ended up!"

When Dugald graduated, a diagnosis of severe degenerative arthritis led to a hip replacement and a change of career direction away from the family cattle farm in NSW. Dugald took up working for a firm in Melbourne analysing agricultural investments.

"The agribusiness tax schemes which imploded so spectacularly in the mid-2000s were really taking off. I saw so many fascinating projects around the country in a wide array of industries. However, as time passed, virtually all these projects rotted from within, with the agricultural fundamentals eclipsed by corporate greed, over-borrowing and, in more than a few cases, liberal use of 'alternative facts' to support the assumptions behind the production elements. It was a sobering experience. As well, too many of the analysts in the industry either didn't understand hands-on agriculture or couldn't read a balance sheet, or both! I only saw a small handful of these projects make money – those that were well run and disciplined in how they invested."

Dugald believes businesses and those running them need to continually evolve to thrive.

"Time and time again you see what happens to businesses that stop evolving. They fail. Some might stay afloat for years, paddling to keep up. But if you don't evolve, you consign yourself to a low growth/no growth business that's generally unsustainable in the long term. Evolution is no guarantee of success, but failure to evolve always seems to generate poor outcomes."

Dugald does not just talk the talk, he walks the walk too.

"I thrive on new challenges and the work I am doing on responsible investing and sustainability encompasses issues around some of the biggest global challenges of all, particularly climate change. Those in the rural sector are generally on the front line of these challenges and have been observing the effects for years and trying to adapt to them. I work in a \$4 trillion industry, and we are looking to increasingly mobilise private capital into more sustainable business around the world. That's exciting."

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## Jim Riordan

**Jim Riordan DipFM'93, Graduate of Excellence'17** of Riordan Grains, celebrates his 50th ... Kenworth.

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## Rob Lennon

**Rob Lennon AssocDipFM'87**, contemporary of Principal Dr Simon Livingstone, was the first organic Wagyu producer in Australia, but before Marcus this outcome might have seemed a little unlikely.

Unsure what to expect, Rob fronted his entrance interview for Marcus with then Principal Graham McConnell.

"Graham seemed a little curious as to why this city-based, dyslexic dropout, 'ex-Woolies' trainee, with accountant parents, would possibly be interested in a career in agriculture. Fortunately, enrolments were down, and he allowed me to become a student that next year."

Rob found himself on a steep learning curve.

"All I knew about farms when I left the city was to take my boots off at the door when entering a house. I soon realised how important it was for me to have a grade higher than 'pass' to increase my chances of finding a good property after graduation. I worked very hard and



achieved a 'credit', by the skin of my teeth."

After working as a farm manager in the Leadville NSW area, he purchased local property 'Gundooee' in 1998. Five years later, Gundooee Organics came about—a unique business producing certified organic wagyu beef for butcher shops and restaurants down the eastern seaboard of Australia.

But what of his Marcus mate, Simon?

"Simon was given the nickname 'Ringer' because of his years spent in Queensland stock camps. He was one

of the five cool kids who always bagged the back row of seats on the excursion bus and was often front-and-centre at the social occasions both in and around the college— the Grovedale pub should receive a particular mention here. I don't think many of us saw ourselves as academics, but Simon was usually the first in class to submit his case study. Whether it be because he really liked doing it or really hated doing it remains a mystery. Our surnames were beside each other alphabetically which often put us together by circumstance, but we very quickly found much in common. In more recent times, Simon and I share a passion for the college which is particularly apparent for Simon as a long-standing and progressive principal."

Rob's son Angus is studying Agribusiness at Marcus.

"Words fail me to describe how it feels to have one of my kids continue the Marcus tradition. Angus will be a great ambassador for the college, and I really look forward to watching his post-Marcus life evolve."

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## Ben Nichols

Four years ago, **Ben Nichols AdDipFBM'O4** and his wife Georgina bought Bredal Australia, an importation and wholesale business dealing with fertiliser and lime sprayers based in WA. Now, having moved the business to Gunnedah NSW, they distribute their products through a dealer network of around 60 outlets across Australia.

"It was an interesting time with the eastern seaboard being in drought for the first few years of operation, however with the backing of a very good product we have come through this relatively well and are continually expanding our company's reach through retail dealerships, gradually moving further north and into Queensland as the opportunity arises," Ben said.

Ben considers his time at Marcus to have given him the basic business management and computer skills to take on a national business and grow the company.

"For the first few years after Marcus I was back into farming thinking of following the farm management route. Then I decided to have a look into a different side of agriculture and went to work for a company where we started a machinery dealership. I worked there for four years before

deciding it was time to have a go at something of my own."

Looking back at his time at Marcus, Ben found the diversity of specialist and guest lecturers exposed him to a great deal of industry knowledge and experience. The time he spent in and around high performing agribusiness moulded his outlook on agriculture and agribusiness ventures, confirming it was a sector in which he wanted to remain involved.

As one of the largest export markets for Bredal equipment in the world, Ben deals with clients with a wide range of requirements.

"I think that the exposure that I gained from Marcus to Australian agriculture as a whole industry gave me an outlook and an understanding of the ag systems around the country that has helped me understand our clients' needs for their particular farming systems."

His plans for the future are clear.

"Currently we are still expanding, so the short-term outlook is to consolidate the business structure through the employee base and then consolidate the dealership network in order to maintain our customer satisfaction indefinitely."

For Ben, the benefits of Marcus outside the classroom have been two-fold.

"It was great to have met and lived with a lot of great people. I still have many long-lasting friendships that have come out of my years at Marcus, so from a social point of view my time at Marcus was great. Many of the people I went through with are leaders in their fields, or if not, very close to it, so there is a lot of knowledge that can be drawn on from this network and it is a very valuable resource."

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# Council changes

**Bruce Wilson DipFM'71 and Graduate of Excellence in 1998**, who has held the voluntary position of Chairman of Marcus Oldham Council since 2008 has passed the baton to **Rob McGavin AdCertAA'93 and Graduate of Excellence in 2000**.

Bruce joined the College Council in 1999 and will continue as a member of council.

Bruce has executed his position with wisdom, in a measured and considered manner. His service to the Council



has shown true dedication. His determination to ensure Marcus's continued growth has been balanced by his clear understanding of what makes Marcus unique. He has never lost sight of the essence of the College. Under Bruce's chairmanship, student numbers have grown, major infrastructure has been planned for and developed, and courses have been expanded. Thanks

to Bruce our reputation for producing graduates of a high standard, who are job-ready and in demand continues. We sincerely thank Bruce for his exemplary service.

We thank too, Robert Riordan for his great work as Deputy Chairman and for his time on the Council as he retires, and congratulate **James Bufton DipFM'94** on his new role as Deputy Chairman.

Thank you, Cam Emerson OAM, Ian McClelland and John McKillop for your time as you leave the Council, and welcome Peter O'Loughlin, Stuart Johnston, Julie Macdonald, Graham Dennehy, Peter Stephens, Erin Fitzgerald and Howard Hanson as you join the College Council.

## David Gibbs

**Member, Marcus Oldham College Foundation**

Congratulations to David Gibbs, Member of the Marcus Oldham College Foundation since 2013. David has been made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) which is awarded for service in a particular locality or field of activity or to a particular group.

David's award is for significant service to the community, and to the chartered accounting profession.

His list of services to the community is extensive and enduring, with involvement in the Freemasons Foundation Victoria, Australian Communities Foundation, Mittagundi Outdoor Education Centre, Cancer Council of Victoria, Very Special Kids Foundation, McKenzie Aged Care Group, St Kilda Community Housing, Abbotsford Convent Foundation and Girl Guides Victoria.

David's service to the chartered accounting profession was recognised last year on his inclusion as a Life Member for CAANZ.

Congratulations David, and thank you for your lifetime of service, and continued support of Marcus Oldham College.



## Staff



### Di Hand

**Catering and Accommodation**

Di Hand has retired after 26 years with the catering and accommodation staff at Marcus.

Di started working at Marcus in June 1995 after managing domestic services for the Wimmera Base Hospital in Horsham for 13 years.

Despite having cleaned up after thousands of students she said getting to know them has been a highlight.

"The best part of the job is the people you meet. Every year I meet another 120 new young people and they have all been wonderful, they really have. In my position I see the worst of them as well as the best of them, but they are all good," she said. "I think they're all here for a purpose, they're not silly kids. The first few months they are a bit shy because they don't know you but, after first term, they get to know you and away you go."

Having worked through several mice plagues and COVID-19 the unflappable Di has been involved with

the College on many levels.

"I participated a lot. I would go to the balls, the sports days, help with the netball. You just involve yourself with what goes on. I would do a bit of sewing for people when they want it done."

There is one thing Di will not miss about her work.

"Getting up at 6.30am to get to work is the least favourite part of the job. The actual job does not worry me at all because it's a good workout every day. I like manual work. I will miss the staff and having a chat to people, but I won't miss getting up."

Apart from sleeping in, Di plans to enjoy her craftwork and travel once it is allowed.

We thank Di for all her hard work and will miss her cheery smile.

[dihandmoc@hotmail.com](mailto:dihandmoc@hotmail.com)

### Deanne Whelan

Congratulations to Deanne Whelan, our Lecturer in Accounting, for completing the Graduate Diploma of Applied Tax Law through the Tax Institute. Not only did Deanne do so while continuing to inspire our students, but she was National Dux in three of her subjects – CommLaw 1, 2 and 3.





# The Network

## WEDDINGS

**Molly Deans (nee Mackay) BB(Agri)'19** and Linden Dean.

I met Linden when he finished school and had moved in to his family's property next to ours. We had been good mates for years and he even came to the 2017 Marcus races for a visit. Linden and I celebrated our wedding on the 20th of March this year. We were lucky to be able to celebrate it with family and friends, in the woolshed, on my parent's property "Vatua", east of Coonamble, NSW.

Two of my bridesmaids were in my class at Marcus. **Adelaide Vivers BB(Agri)'19** (2nd from left) and **Claudia Turnbull BB(Agri)'19** (3rd from right).

[mollymackaymetalwork@gmail.com](mailto:mollymackaymetalwork@gmail.com)



## BIRTHS



**John Robert Upton**  
Born Geelong 11/3/21. Son of Anna and **Tom Upton BB(Ag)'15**.  
[tomupton@live.com.au](mailto:tomupton@live.com.au)



**Chase Peter Hanrahan**  
Born Foster 25/2/21. Son of Kirrin and **Pat Hanrahan BB(Ag)'17**.  
[pat@homebushpastoral.com.au](mailto:pat@homebushpastoral.com.au)



**Paddy Alexander Handbury**  
Born Adelaide 2/3/21. Son of Nerida and **Jack Handbury AdDipFBM'11**, and brother of Louise.  
[jack@handburygroup.com.au](mailto:jack@handburygroup.com.au)

## DEATHS



**Dan Bromell Heard AssocDA'12 (1973–2021).**  
Son of Geoffrey (dec.) and Marjorie. Brother of Jock and Penelope.  
Rest in Peace.



Keep in touch with your Marcus mates  
... wherever they are in the world.





# SA Connect. Network. Support.

It's never been easier for Marcus graduates to stay connected with the launch of Marcus Connect.

**Dr Simon  
vingstone**

This completely secure platform has been developed by graduates for graduates and is proudly supported by the Marcus Oldham Old Students Association (MOCOSA).

**Student Lecturer Principal.**

## Mentor

Give back to industry and support the next generation by becoming a mentor.

## Expand

Extend your professional reach by tapping into others' experiences and browse the job board.

## Call a Marcus mate

Lend a hand to fellow graduates or turn to Marcus mates when help is required.

## Connect

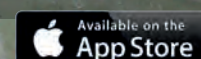
Connect with your Marcus friends or network with fellow graduates from your area or industry.



Save  
the date

**MOCOSA**

Marcus Oldham 60th anniversary  
weekend - 21st and 22nd May, 2022





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