

Greg Brinsmead



I was born at Morwell in 1944 and grew up on a beef and sheep farm at Driffield. I attended Driffield Primary School, a school of 17 pupils, and Morwell High School in 1956, its inaugural year. I began Leaving Certificate in 1960 but received a late offer from Longerenong, which I accepted and arrived as a 16 year old in the second week, hence undertook “Slavery” after others had finished, a rather lonely experience I shared with Jeff Doran. **I thoroughly enjoyed my three years at Longerenong. I loved the sport, the blend of academic and practical work and the comradery of fellow students. Skills and knowledge I learnt at Longerenong I still use today.**

Following graduation, I received a Commonwealth Scholarship to study Agricultural Science at the University of Melbourne. The attractions of university life were fully appreciated, and I did manage to pass two subjects. Rather than repeat first year, I went back to the family farm and taught science at Mirboo North High School, which opened my eyes to the rewards of teaching. In 1968 the State Electricity Commission compulsorily acquired the farm for a brown coal open cut mine, and I decided to return to study for teaching. I attended the University of Melbourne and the Secondary Teachers College and obtained a Bachelor of Science and Higher Diploma of Teaching. Upon graduation in 1969 I was offered a position at the Secondary Teachers College as a Lecturer in Geography, specialising in Agriculture.

While working at the Secondary Teachers College, I completed a Master of Science with a thesis on “The Victorian Dairy Manufacturing Industry, 1850 to 1914”. At that time, I was also the President of the Victorian Geography Teachers Association and the Chief Examiner of HSC/VCE Geography as well as publishing school texts on Agricultural Geography. In the 1980s I was appointed a Senior Lecturer and in 1989 I moved to be Deputy Principal of McMillian Rural Studies College in Gippsland. McMillian was part of the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture (VCAH). This college conducted a range of courses for farmers and the rural industries and I was reunited with the head of VCAH, Bob Luff. At this stage I moved from Melbourne to a hobby farm at Drouin and ran a few Belted Galway cattle. At this stage we managed to introduce Agriculture and Horticulture as a year twelve subject, and I took on the task of State Reviewer.

In 1992 I moved to Dookie Agricultural College as Deputy Principal and again became involved with Higher Education and seeking degree status for the College whereby the former Diploma became a Bachelor of Applied Agriculture. In 1996, Melbourne University took over VCAH and proceeded to rationalise the Colleges which lead to the closure and sale of Longerenong and Glenormiston. In 1997, I was fortunate to gain appointment as Principal of Marcus Oldham Farm Management College in Geelong. Marcus was a private college and the archrival of Glenormiston and specialised in business management training for the farm, agribusiness and equine industries. Again, my main task was to seek degree granting status and to re-badge Marcus as a private university.

I retired in 2002 when I turned 60, but then used my original science teacher training as a part-time science teacher at Christian College in Geelong. I finally retired in 2008 and by now was residing in Jan Juc, next to the Torquay Golf Club where I now spend half my time. My wife Carole and I have a blended family of 6 daughters and 8 grandchildren. Three daughters live overseas in England, Germany, and USA so we spend a lot of time travelling to catch up with grandkids. When home I play golf and tennis and am involved with the local Probus and U3A clubs as well as minding the grandkids that live locally. As many have found, life can be busier than when we worked.

What did I get out of Longerenong? I loved the sport and the Intercoll trips were a yearly highlight. I enjoyed being challenged by some of the lecturers and their subjects, especially Barry May, Kevin Bartels and Clem Jepson, and I still treasure skills learned, especially carpentry, painting and surveying. The mix of classroom and farm work certainly meant things never became boring. The social experiences were also very rewarding, be it the college dances or the Saturday night trip into the pictures or dance in Horsham. In reflection, I still find it amazing that a group of 17 plus year old men would all quietly attend church in the hall on a Sunday morning or sit up and listen to Clem Jepson reading a story. How things have changed. I do think back with some regret on some of the stupid behaviour I was involved in but then I suppose that was part of growing up.

Finally, one of my funniest recollections occurred soon after I arrived at the College when Ian Reid told me to take the tractor up to the hill paddock and start scarifying. I drove on and on looking for the hill paddock until I was rudely stopped by “Mouse” who asked me where the f*** I was going, I replied, “to the hill paddock”. “You are on the f***ing hill” was Mouse’s reply. Having grown up in the Gippsland Hills that small rise was definitely not a hill!