

GUEST REPORTER BOB HARDY PRESENTS "Behind the Badge"

Family background. I was born 13 March 1940 at Burnie. My father was a butter factory manager, I later to become a Dairy Officer with the Department of Agriculture. His technical knowledge was developed at the Hawkesbury Agriculture College, Richmond, NSW. Two of his brothers also went there. I attended Burnie State/High School, then in the family tradition at 16 was sent to



Hawkesbury to undertake an Agriculture Diploma. On finishing that I had a hankering to go to Uni. so undertook a Degree in Agriculture Science at Melbourne Uni. For that I had a scholarship from the Tas. Dept. of Ag. On my return to Tas. in 1965 Elaine and I married, built a house in Sandy Bay and we had three children.

Dept of Ag – Entomology When I reported to the Dept. in 1965 I was told I would be an entomologist specializing in pasture pests. So lots of on-the-job training. The first big task was to find replacement for the insecticide DDT. Very quickly I found many other pasture pests about which little was known. So I undertook studies to establish their lifecycles and behavior. I also mapped the hairs on the bum (not really, the whole insect larva) for one pest, and published it of course. Entomologists get up to unusual things!! I studied the population dynamics of some, in other words why are they numerous. Overall, I published many papers in scientific journals (this is how many scientists are judged). In 1979 I was given the title Chief Entomologist, with about nine staff.

BOB HARDY (cont.) Dept. of Ag. – Fruit and Ornamentals. In 1982 there was a big reshuffle of the Dept. and I was placed in charge of the Fruit and Ornamentals Branch. Actually, it also covered the tiny wine industry and for that we ran a wine assessment panel (tough gig!). But in those days the industry was little more than the Pirie Bros at Pipers Brook and Claude Alcorso. To the shock and horror of the dyed in the wool apple boys we switched the emphasis to cherries, with a big trial area at Cambridge. Out of that grew today's cherry industry. In 1992 we had another regrouping in the Dept. and I "retired" after 30 year's service.

Sorell Fruit Farm Actually, we saw this regrouping coming and in 1988 we moved from Sandy Bay to Sorell and commenced setting up Sorell Fruit Farm. Sorell Fruit Farm was designed to grow many different fruits (about 10) to provide a fruit picking experience for locals and tourists. We hoped that they would pick almost all the crop, which they did. Apart from the picking experience (30,000 strawberry plants and cherries 600 trees) we made many different jams and vinegars, and had a shop/tea room with extensive outside seating. The first fruit wine was made in 2013 and liqueurs (under the name of Tasmanian Liqueurs) first made in 2006.

The first tour groups from Asia arrived about 1996 and the numbers rapidly increased significantly as the result of our marketing trips to Hong Kong and China. By 2015 we recorded about 500 visitors per day in peak season (Dec-Feb). After retirement from the Dept. in 1992 I became private ag. consultant, with an emphasis on entomology and horticulture . This continued until 2000.

Fruit production advisor. In 2015 we sold Sorell Fruit Farm to a Chinese investor but my involvement with Sorell Fruit Farm continued to this very day as an advisor which involves weekly visits to the farm for about 8 months of the year. In recent times the advisory role has extended to a second orchard.

Cut flower grower. We now live in Bellerive in a house built in 1885 and I am working on the production of colourful calla (*Zantedeschia*) lilies for sale to florists. These lilies are widely grown in New Zealand but are not so common in Australia because of the technical issues in their growth.