



# ***THE WITCHIPOOL WORKERS***

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## **RAINFALL**

What started off as a year with much promise faded toward the end of the growing season. The required inch of rain around Donald Show week did not materialise and only 92 points fell from August to October.

Although the rainfall for the year was 15.6 inches the growing season rainfall was only 7 inches with a very hard finish and crop yields were reduced accordingly.

There has been 5.75 inches since the end of October with the last rainfall event in mid January. Good for the trees and bloody summer weeds.

## **GENERAL FARM HAPPENINGS**

The last year saw a change to the share farmers. After the number of years with the Downes Boys we have dispensed with their services.

The cropping operations are now being undertaken by part of the Foott Empire, specifically “Jack Death” and “Skunk”. With names like that how could you go wrong.

In mid March a timely 85 points of rain was received. This enabled the boys to work up the entire farm, the first time this has been done for some years. This assisted in removing remaining summer weeds and getting the country into shape for cropping.

After receiving 180 points in late April early May Douglas was sown to barley just prior to another 100 points falling. The House block was sown to wheat and another 140 points fell in late May early June. About 65 acres in the School Paddock a sown later to barley with a large wet area in the middle unable to be sown.

The crop yields were far from spectacular due to the dry finish with the wheat yielding only 4 bags per acre and the barley just under 8 bags. The very good grain prices have compensated for the lower yields but the overall result is a less than average year.

## **REVEGETATION WORKS**

### ***QUEENS BIRTHDAY WEEKEND***

The Queens Birthday weekend saw a number of characters attend a tree planting session and the obligatory social activities associated with these tasks.

Returning tree planters assisting with the works were Louise, Rorey and Archie and Liza and Andrew. A first time tree planter to the farm was Susan.

Planting on both the Saturday and Sunday occurred at a fairly leisurely pace and that was after a much delayed start on both days.

All up approximately 250 trees were planted on each of the two days with understory species planted in the remnant along Greens Road on Saturday afternoon.



***Filling the gaps in the Callitris and Ironbark***

The Sunday planting session started by filling the gaps in the Ironbark and Callitris planted last year

Additional trees were planted in the yard to west of the old machinery shed site with a few strays planted in other locations.



***Planting near the old machinery shed area***

While the tree planters were hard at work on Saturday afternoon Doobs was putting his welding skills to good use fabricating legs for the banqueting table.



***Doobs in steel fabrication mode***

The usual standing/sitting around the fire was the order of the day at the close of the working day accompanied by some pre dinner drinks

Meals were prepared on the barby and by using the old wood stove which was brought out of retirement for the duration of the weekend. The old wood stove performed admirably over the weekend providing a continuously boiling kettle, warmth in the kitchen and hot water.

The banqueting table was installed in the "Banqueting Room" on Saturday evening and while it was a little unstable in one direction proved its worth accommodating all the diners for the evening meals.



***The Banqueting Table***

### ***THE SEPTEMBER PLANTINGS***

It was originally planned to direct seed a 20 m x 1,100 m strip along the Laen Litchfield Road from Greens road South to the "new gate" in the Channel Paddock.. Robert "Rabbit" O'Shannessey was able to source 1,200 seedlings so the direct seeding was abandoned in favour planting tube stock.

The strip was initially ripped up with the scarifier. The rows were then ripped and mounded ready for planting with a "wee ripper" borrowed from David "Dingers" Falla.



***The "Wee Ripper"***

The first planting occurred on the first weekend in September with a small but enthusiastic crew. Mark Melican made a return to the farm for the planting and 760 trees/shrubs were planted on the Saturday. The remaining 40 were planted in the pig yard on Sunday.



The Saturday evening activities were moved inside as the weather was a little cool and windy. The old wood fire in the kitchen was stoked up providing a cosy spot for a couple of thirst quenchers, a roast meal and a bit of a chat.



*The Planting Team and Jean*

The second planting weekend was later in September. A handy crew was in attendance with Thommo assisting with the works and Susan making a return visit. The Melicans were represented by Andrew, Ella and Ari, Doobs, Jerome, Stevie B, Céle and Ralph. Nick made an appearance later on Saturday to assist with the Sunday plantings and Brian and Kate dropped in just in time for a few beers and the barby.

The strip along the Laen Litchfield Road to the new gate in the Channel Paddock was completed on Saturday morning. The remaining trees were planted in the existing revegetation areas in the School Paddock, Jeremiahs and the Timber Paddock.



*A Few Drinks After a Hard Day Work.*

The Sunday works consisted of replanting the sugar gums in the plantation to the south of the house. Very few of the frost affected tube stock planted the previous year had survived.



*Watering Crew Having a Bit of a Rest*

### **WATER OR LACK THEREOF**

Good rains over the summer have added to the levels in the tanks. The new large tank (7,500 gallons) has been topped up with rainwater from the other tanks.

The volume of water in the Grampians storages increased with the good rains earlier in the year and we were able to fill the house dam from the channel run. Prior to the dam being filled the remaining water in the house dam was pumped into the smaller dam to improve the water quality of the main dam.



*Pumping the Dam*





***Water inching its way along The West Laen Channel  
in Douglas  
Possibly The Last Channel Run Ever***

Without good rains next year this years channel run and the dam fill may be the last ever. The installation of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline will make the Wimmera Mallee Domestic and Stock Water Supply channel system redundant.

Supply Section 3 (Birchip) of the pipeline which will service the Litchfield area is schedule to start in 2008 and be completed some time in 2009.

The dams will also become redundant unless they can be modified to incorporate small catchment areas to harvest heavy rainfall events, especially summer thunderstorms which can result in significant runoff.



***The Last Dam Fill ?***

## **FENCING**

Fencing of the strip of new trees along the Laen Litchfield Road started prior to Christmas with the strainers and steel posts installed. The ringlock was subsequently installed a week or so later.



***Installing the First Stay along The  
Laen Litchfield Road Planting***