



THE WITCHIPOOL WORKERS

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RAINFALL

It was a very dry start to the year with no rain recorded in January and February and only 65 points in early March.

Since the slow start there have been good consistent falls each month with only October being a little disappointing. The elusive inch of rain required around the Donald Show to finish off a good year again failed to materialise.

April	45 points
May	123 points
June	230 points
July	165 points
August	119 points
September	140 points
October (to date)	44 points

The wet conditions on the June long weekend were a little unusual based on the past few years but Jock provided some entertainment by driving straight into a puddle or arrival and getting bogged.

He only had road tyres on his vehicle when he should have realised it was that time of year when one should put on the "bar treads".



Extracting Jock from the Boggy Puddle

THE NEW CROP

The House Block was planted to barley around the ANZAC day weekend on the promise of some

reasonable rain, but only 45 points fell over 5 days with a further 17 in early May.

Both Douglas and the School Paddock have been left fallow this year.

To date the farm has received 931 points of rain, 866 of which has fallen during the growing season. This is 80% of the average GSR (growing season rainfall).

The good rainfall (compared to the last few years) during the growing season should see reasonable yields again this season. Pity about the price of the grain though with both wheat and barley prices down around 30% from last season.

REVEGETATION WORKS

The Third Annual Queens Birthday Tree Planting Weekend was well attended with a number of characters contributing to the tree planting and the obligatory social activities.

Returning tree planters assisting with the works were Susan, Jok, Louise, Rory and Archie, Geraldine, Marc, George and Eugenie, Andrew, Lisa and first timer, Pete. Thommo arrived when the job was almost complete but made a valuable contribution.

The Melicans' were represented by Michael, Doobs, Stephen, Andrew, Emma, Ella, Ari, Jerome, Larry and Ralph.



The Sheltered Workshop

No trees were planted on Saturday due to the wet and windy weather conditions and the leisurely arrival of some of the participants.

The planting conditions on Sunday were new to all the participants. Putting a hole in the mud and then planting a tree in it was certainly an experience not before seen at the farm.



Tree Planters and the Muddy Conditions

The weather cleared to a sunny day on Sunday afternoon and provided more pleasant working conditions but still with a very cold wind.



A bit of Sunshine at Last

All up approximately 800 trees and shrubs were planted, guarded on the Sunday. Approximately 400 were planted up the driveway and an additional 400 were planted to replace some of the losses from last years plantings.



Some of the Support Crew

The obligatory twig was fired up for the duration but the cool wet weather forced some to set up other options like a pot belly stove in the Shearing Shed on Saturday afternoon.

The old wood stove again provided warmth in the kitchen, an abundant supply of hot water and more importantly was put to use by the catering crew to provide some of the excellent meals served over the weekend.

Thanks again to the catering department, the motorbike taxi service and all the workers for their efforts over what was again a most enjoyable weekend.

PIPELINE WORKS

Ongoing pipeline works continued as the connection to the Wimmera Mallee pipeline drew closer.



Jack Death Grading the Trench for the Pipe

The bulk of the poly pipe from the meter point along the Laen Litchfield Road to the large tank in the yard was laid in the old channel. Jack Death extended the “channel” with his grader to the gate in the house yard.

After the pipe was installed, the channel in the Old and Channel Paddocks was filled in making both those paddocks more useable.

The remaining section from the paddock to the new tank was trenched at a later date and the poly pipe installed.

The pipeline was connected to a new overhead tank at Jean's house in Litchfield and a reticulation system installed around the yard.

The connection from the main in the School Paddock to the meter points in the Home Block and Douglas' was installed by the pipeline contractors during the middle of the year and the under road borer installed a pipe under the road in September. The two water meters are still to be installed to provide water to these blocks.



Boring under the Laen Litchfield Road

OTHER WORKS

Cleaning out the Timber Paddock Dam

The final step in the cleaning up process, emptying the old dam in the Timber Paddock was commenced over Christmas and was completed early in January.



The Job about half complete.

Assisting with the works were Jerome, Tim, Rachel and Hayley.

All those items that did not fit into the category "might come in handy one day" were removed to the Donald tip for recycling. All other items were relocated to the timber near the house to add to the collection of potentially handy items.



The Job Finished

The End of Financial Year Storm.

On the 30th June a very severe storm hit the Wimmera and Mallee and in particular the Litchfield area. There was a considerable amount of damage in the district with both David Falla and "The Weed" both losing old barns. A stray water tank took out the new boom gates at the railway crossing in Litchfield and lodged itself up the post with the flashing lights. Most of the other damage was restricted to trees, with some being completely up rooted or broken off.

The damage to structures on the farm was restricted the loss of half a dozen sheets of iron from the roof of the house.



And there they were, gone!

The trees around the farm did not get off as lightly with trees or large branches damaging three sections of fence.



Large Buloke In Douglas' Along Green Road

There was considerable damage to trees in Peter Pendlebury's timber near Douglas', the Bull Mallee remnant near the house and to the timber along McNamara's Road. Only the timber in the House Block along Greens Road and in the School Paddock escaped with minor damage.

The storm completely destroyed

- a 55 foot high buloke along Greens Road,
- the solitary old buloke in the Old Paddock,
- a large black box in Jerimiah's, and
- the only large bull mallee on the west of the channel in Douglas.



The Solitary Buloke Uprooted

The Great Shed Erection of 2009

"Great" in that it seemed to take a great deal of time to reach completion.

After much delay the slab for the shed was laid in late June. It was then a couple of weeks before works commenced assembling the frame.



The Slab set out.

The initial working weekend on the 12th June only resulted in one wall frame being made due to rain falling all Saturday. The rain delay resulted in some less than clear thinking on Sunday and so progress was limited.

The second wall and the trusses were assembled prior to the next working weekend and erected with the assistance of Jack Death and his front end loader.



First Time the Tractor Has Been in a Shed!

The works continued over the next few weeks and weekends with valuable contributions from a number of characters and on 15th August the south section of the roof was installed finally taking the structure to the lockup stage. A certificate of practical completion issued that week.

Since practical completion the shed has been partially fitted out with work benches, shelving and a temporary electrical supply and lighting.

The old anvil has been relocated and only requires a large stump to mount it on. Other tools and equipment have also been relocated to the new shed.



Completed shed with some benches and temporary lighting installed

There is still a small amount of flashing and the downpipes to install to finally completion the shed.

FUTURE WORKS

It is very likely that funding from the Caring for our Country program will be available early next year . The extent of the projects to be funded is not known at this stage but Kevin Spence has prepared an application on our behalf.

The application covers wildlife corridors in Douglas and The Paddock Behind the Dam and revegetation of the Reserve. It potentially will involve planting up to 4,500 to 5,000 trees and shrubs and installing up to 3 kilometres of fencing.

Fencing the driveway planting is the next project to be tackled which will be later this year.