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CASE
STUDY

QUAIRADING FARMERS' CO-OPERATIVE Co. LTD – CORNERSTONE OF OUR COMMUNITY



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Case Study Research Report | CERU



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INTRODUCTION

The Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Company Ltd. (QFCC), also known as The Quairading Co-op, is a consumer co-operative located in the town of Quairading, which is the administrative centre of the Shire of Quairading. Nestled in the Central Wheatbelt of Western Australia, the town is approximately 170 kilometres east of the State capital of Perth.



Established in 1916, the QFCC currently operates the town's local supermarket, Quairading Co-op Foodworks, plus additional retail and commercial spaces in the town. The supermarket is located at 29-37 Heal Street, Quairading. In addition, the QFCC owns and leases two retail sites within the Heal Street location, which house the Quairading Pharmacy, and The Makers' Keep gift shop. However, the latter site is being renovated to transform it into a coffee shop. A further commercial site at 34-38 Avon Street, Quairading is owned by QFCC and was leased to Hutton and Northey Sales, a farm machinery agency, spare parts and servicing business with multiple locations across the Wheatbelt. Another retail space located at 29-37 Heal Street, Quairading, was available for lease at time of writing.

The Co-operative provides employment, services, and essential goods to the Shire of Quairading and has proudly served its community for 108 years. As outlined on the company's website,

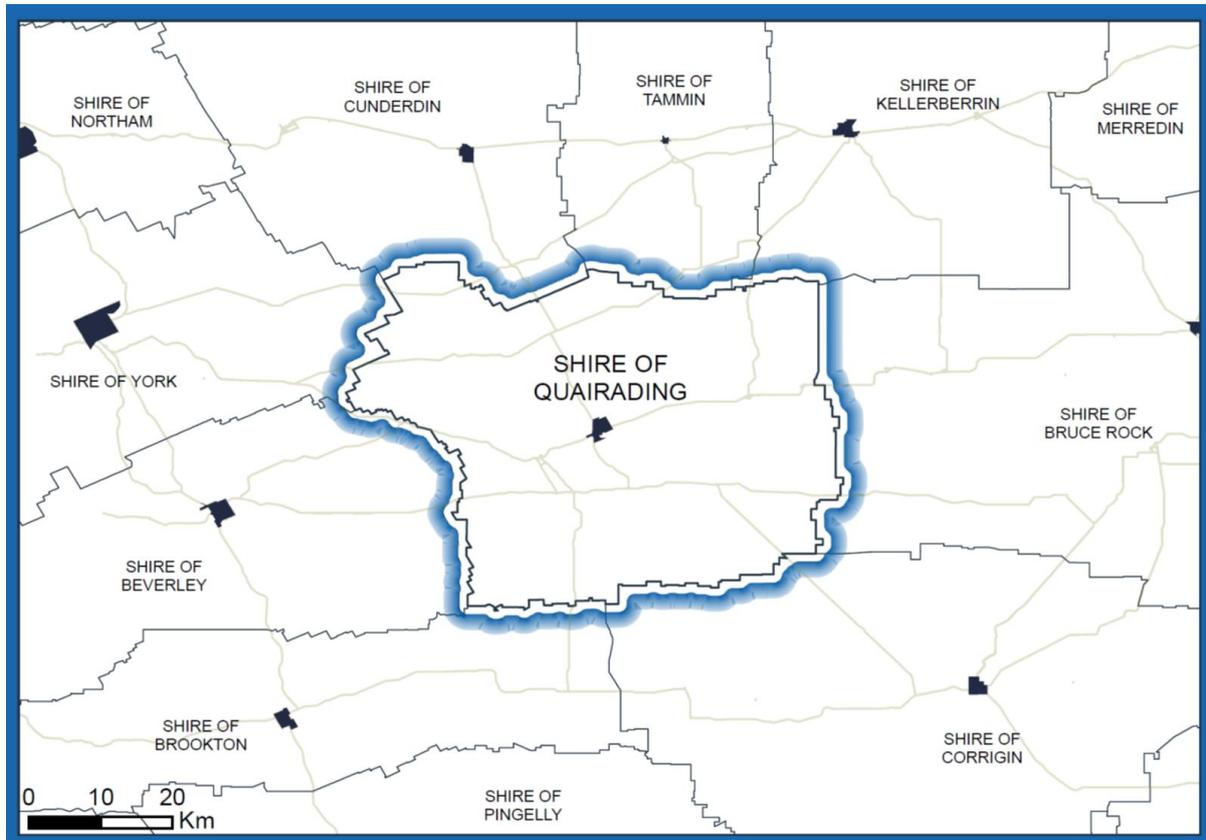
"Founded in 1916, the Quairading Co-op was set up by a group of farmers frustrated with not being able to source goods and services locally, nine years after the townsite of Quairading was gazetted in 1907. Whilst the Co-op has modernised much of the way it operates; the legal structure of ownership remains the same as it did when it was set up over 100 years ago – it is owned by active community shareholders. Over the years, the Quairading Co-op has owned and operated a variety of businesses in town. Any business venture we enter into is to ensure we create value and prosperity for our shareholders and community" (QFCC, 2023a).

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SHIRE OF QUAIRADING

The Shire of Quairading encompasses an area of 201,800 hectares (2,018 km²). It takes its name from an Aboriginal word "Kwirading", which means the home of a small bush kangaroo (Ludbrook, 2003). As shown in Figure 1, the Shire is bounded by the Shires of York, Cunderdin, Tamin, Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock, Corrigin, Brookton, and Beverley. The natural environment within the Shire of Quairading is that of a dry, warm Mediterranean climate that sees cool winters with an average of 10° Celsius, and hot dry summers with average temperatures of 25° Celsius. The average rainfall in the area is 376mm (Keighery et al., 2001).

From a geophysical perspective the Quairading Shire is located within the Avon Wheatbelt Region. This is a phytogeographical area comprising woodland Mallet (*Eucalyptus astringens*), York Gum (*E. loxophleba*) and Wandoo (*E. capillosa*), which are found on the sinuous lateritic ridges. Within the valley floors are Salmon Gum (*E. salmonophloia*), interspersed with Banksia woodlands across low-level sandplains (Keighery et al., 2001).

Figure 1: Shire of Quairading location map



Source: Shire of Quairading.

Most of the land area within the Shire has now been cleared for farming. However, there are still areas of original native vegetation. Most notably, this includes the Quairading Nature Reserve, which spans 527 hectares of unique remnant vegetation, featuring diverse woodland forests and native shrubland. It includes notable examples of wandoo, york, and salmon gum forests, distinctive to the Central Wheatbelt. Other notable natural features include Kokerbin Rock and Mount Stirling nature reserve (Australia’s Golden Outback, 2023). These represent significant granite outcrops located to the northeast of the Quairading town site.

Another noteworthy natural feature is the Pink Lake, located to the east of Quairading town within the Badaling North Nature Reserve. It is considered a natural phenomenon. At certain times of the year, one side of the lake appears dark pink, while the other side remains light pink (Australia’s Golden Outback, 2023).

In 2021 the Shire of Quairading comprised a population of 961 people, consisting of 48 per cent male and 52 per cent female. This community was organised into 208 families and 496 private dwellings. The Aboriginal population within the Shire comprised 74 people, representing 8 per cent of the population. The median age of the community in the Shire was 54 years, and the median weekly household income was \$1,129 (ABS, 2021).

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In May 2024, the Shire of Quairading estimated that the total population within the district was around 1,200. Administratively, it is organised into nine districts comprising, Quairading, Pantapin, Yoting, Badaling, Dangin, South Caroling, Balkuling, Doodenanning and Wamenusking. The principal industries for the district are agriculture and tourism. In the Central Wheatbelt, the Shire of Quairading's agriculture focuses on cereal and grain crops, forestry, wool, sheep, and cattle, supported by rural services (Shire of Quairading, 2024a).

THE NOONGAR BALLARDONG, TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE QUAIRADING DISTRICT

The original inhabitants of the Quairading District are the Noongar Ballardong People who can trace their ancestry back more than 45,000 years. They were divided into smaller groups such as the Waddarok, Ejanok, Keganok, and Gwijanop (Statham Drew & Clack, 2018).

The Ballardong are one of the 14 distinct cultural groups within the Noongar communities, who are the traditional custodians of the southwestern region of Western Australia. The Noongar territory spans from the coastal town of Leeman, located 300 km north of Perth along the Indian Ocean, extending to beyond Cape Arid, 731 km southeast of Perth along the Great Australian Bight in the Southern Ocean (SWALSC, 2024).

The British settlement and the expansion of the wheatbelt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to the Noongar Peoples' traditional hunting lands being claimed by settlers and converted for agricultural and pastoral use. The *Noongar Recognition Act 2016 (WA)* acknowledged the traditional ownership of the land by the Ballardong and other Noongar groups. In 2015, six Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) were lodged by the Yued, Gnaala Karla Boodja, Southwest Boodjah, Wagyl Kaip and Southern Noongar, Whadjuk, and Ballardong Noongar communities (BAC, 2024).

Despite the official recognition of the Noongar People Native Title Rights, legal disputes between the Noongar and the Western Australian State Government over the Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) persisted until 2020 when the matter was referred to the High Court. The court's ruling facilitated the implementation of the ILUAs, leading to the recognition of Native Land Title and financial compensation for lands now held privately, commencing in 2021-2022. The comprehensive Native Title Rights of the Noongar encompass an area of approximately 200,000 km² across the southwest of Western Australia. The land area claimed by the Ballardong extends from Dalwallinu in the north to Wagin and Newdegate in the south. To administer the ILUA for this region, the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation has been established, covering the Shires of York, Northam, Hyden, and Kondinin (BAC, 2024).

CHAPTER 1: A HISTORY OF QUAIRADING TO FEDERATION

This section outlines the history of the Shire of Quairading and the European settlement process in the nineteenth century. As discussed above, the Ballardong Noongar people are the original inhabitants of the Quairading area. Prior to the arrival of the British, the Ballardong were engaged in what has been described as “land moulding” and “pasture-management”, which they undertook using fire to burn off vegetation and stimulate new growth more favourable to kangaroo and other grazing animals (Martens, 2022).

However, the arrival of large-scale British settlement in the Swan River colony from 1829 transformed the landscape and led to the appropriation of Ballardong land by the European settlers. Faced with the increasing arrival of settlers seeking land for the grazing of sheep, and who also competed for native food sources, tensions between the two communities erupted. Violence was a consequence with killing and summary justice perpetrated from both sides. These range wars were a feature of the 1830s and created a legacy that has only just recently begun to work towards reconciliation because of the *Noongar Recognition Act 2016* (WA).

EARLY BRITISH SETTLEMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

British occupation of Western Australia started in 1826 with a penal settlement at King George Sound, now Albany. Major Edmund Lockyer led the settlement, sailing from Sydney with convicts and soldiers on the Brig Amity to claim the western part of Australia for the British Crown (Morgan, 2016).

Originally called Frederick Town, Albany was officially recognised on 27 January 1827 (Morgan, 2016). The Noongar Menang people traditionally inhabited this area, and early relations were mostly amicable (Menck, 2022). However, in 1829, British colonists began large-scale occupation with the foundation of the Swan River colony under Lieutenant Governor Sir James Stirling. Relations between British settlers and the Noongar from Whadjuk, Gnaala Karla Boodja, and Ballardong communities around the Swan, Canning, Avon, and Murray Rivers were much less peaceful.

James Stirling (1791-1865), born in Drumpellier, Lanarkshire, Scotland, joined the Royal Navy aged 12 years, and commanded his first ship at the age of 21 during the Napoleonic Wars. As Captain of HMS Success in 1826, he explored the Swan and Canning River basin, leading to a positive report on its settlement potential. Consequently, he was appointed as the first Governor of Western Australia on 30 December 1828, serving until 2 January 1839 (Government House WA, 2024).

Stirling arrived back in the Swan River colony on the barque *Parmelia* in 1829 as Lieutenant Governor and became Governor in 1831. He returned to Britain in 1832 for a knighthood, returning to the colony in 1834. Major, later Lieutenant Colonel, Frederick Chidley Irwin handled his duties during his absence. Stirling resigned in 1837 and went back to the UK in 1839. He continued with the Royal Navy, becoming Commander in Chief of Naval Forces in China and the East Indies (1854-1856), Vice Admiral in 1857, and Admiral in 1862. He died in Guildford, Surrey, England on April 22, 1865 (Crowley, 1967).

Figure 2: Governor Sir James Stirling (left) and Lt. Col. Frederick Chidley Irwin (right)



Sources: Stirling (1833, Gov. House WA); Irwin (1840. Constitution Centre WA).

Major Irwin led the colonial military forces in the early years of the WA colony. He served from 1809 to 1814 in the Napoleonic Wars, then in South Africa and Ceylon from 1823 to 1828. Known as a devout Anglican and stern officer, he arrived at the Swan River colony as a Captain. After marrying and returning to Western Australia in 1837, he was promoted to Major and later Lieutenant Colonel. He had seven sons and five daughters with his second wife, Elizabeth Courthope. Irwin often stood in for the Governor when needed. Retiring in 1856, he moved back to England in 1858 and died in Cheltenham on 31 March 1860 (Mossenson, 1967).

Stirling's colonisation program involved a systematic settlement plan that required settlers to buy passage to the new colony and receive land based on their capital, which included farming tools, seeds, animals, building materials, and indentured servants (Martens, 2022). Over 1,100 immigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and other countries arrived in the first wave (Mazzarol, 1978). They were accompanied by a Company of the 63rd (West Suffolk) Regiment of Foot commanded by Major Irwin (Oldman, 2022), who was also a cousin of Governor Stirling (Mossenson, 1967). During their time in WA the troops defended the colony and engaged in conflicts with the Noongar.

Despite Stirling's 1927 survey of WA's southwest coast and his optimistic predictions about the Swan Coastal Plain's soil fertility, it became clear that the land was largely unsuitable for agriculture. The settlers had to move up the Swan, Canning, Avon, and Murray Rivers to find arable land (Spillman, 1995). The Swan Coastal Plain, spanning 15,280 km² and stretching 30 km from the Darling Scarp to the Indian Ocean, predominantly consists of sandy or gravelly soils. Early settlers struggled to develop farming and grazing due to the scarcity of fertile soil and potable water sources (Burvill, 1979).

During the time of European settlement, the area was characterised by wetland swamps that provided the Noongar with a fresh water source as well as food and timber. Perth, the capital city, was constructed on reclaimed wetlands, with many lakes and swamps being drained and converted for agricultural purposes (WWF, 2014). As more settlers arrived, Governor Stirling and Surveyor General John Septimus Roe faced increasing pressure to identify suitable land for the newcomers, prompting a search beyond the Darling Scarp.

EXPLORATION OF THE AVON RIVER VALLEY AND THE DISTRICT OF QUAIRADING

Among the soldiers from the 63rd Regiment who arrived in WA in 1829 was nineteen-year-old Ensign Robert Dale. He proved to be a bold explorer, leading nine expeditions in the colony, including the first surveys over the Darling Scarp in 1830. His initial expedition in September 1829, led by Lieutenant William Preston, found the country in the Darling Ranges unimpressive. Nevertheless, Dale continued, making the first journey over the ranges and exploring the Avon River and the area around modern-day York (Oldman, 2022).

Robert Dale was born in Winchester, Hampshire, England, in 1810 to Major Thurston Dale and Helen Matthews. With the help of his great uncle General William Dyott, he became an Ensign (Second Lieutenant) in the 63rd Regiment on 25 October 1827 and was posted to the Swan River colony in 1829. Assigned as an assistant to Surveyor General John Septimus Roe, whom he likely met during their voyage aboard the barque *Parmelia* alongside HMS *Sulphur*, Dale surveyed the Swan Coastal Plain, Darling Ranges, Avon River, and King George Sound. His sketches and diaries are valuable records of the area. Returning to England in 1833, Dale left the Army to join his family's timber company in Liverpool, promoting WA grown jarrah timber. He died from tuberculosis in 1853 at age 43 (Statham Drew & Clack, 2018). Unfortunately, no portraits of Dale can be found.

Dale's role as assistant to the Surveyor General was beneficial for both him and the colony. During the 1830s and 1840s, the colony faced economic hardships due to labour shortages, crop failures, and insufficient capital investment (Spillman, 1995). Legal disputes between landowners and their indentured servants were common, with contracts often modelled after those in England, lasting up to seven years and specifying provisions. However, these terms were difficult to meet, leading to meals of local game like kangaroo, emu, or black swan as substitutes (Mazzarol, 1978).

In early October 1830, Dale led a group, including Lieutenant Governor Sir James Stirling, settlers, servants, horses, and dogs, to the area around present-day York. Stirling was impressed by the land quality, and it was designated for settlement on 11 November 1830. By early 1831, 133,546

hectares (330,000 acres) in the Avon Valley were allocated for settlement, with an additional 2,440 hectares (6,030 acres) released by the end of 1831 (Oldman, 2022).

Later in October 1830, Dale led another exploration further east into the land that now forms the Shire of Quairading. This journey took five days travel from Perth and included six men and five horses. They reached an area of dense eucalyptus trees and brushwood, tea tree and swamp at the foot of two significant granite hills. After camping for the night, Dale's party surveyed the massive granite hills, which he named Mount Stirling after William Stirling, cousin to Governor James Stirling, and Mount Caroline (located in the Shire of Kellerberrin), which he named after the wife of the first Colonial Secretary of the colony Peter Brown (Broun) (Ludbrook, 2003).

These ancient granite rocks were known to the Ballardong people as the "Mullean" (or Moulieu) and their legends told of their formation being created by the great sacred snake, the "Warkarl". The Dreamtime legends told of the massive rocks being the coils of the great serpent that lived in the permanent waterholes, known as "Moulack", found in the rocks. The Ballardong took care not to kill the snakes found in the granite hills out of fear of having the water holes dry up. It was a sacred place, and a source of both water and food in the form of rock wallabies (Sewell, 2021; Ludbrook, 2003).

Dale's exploration of the lands east of York was followed in June 1836 by the Surveyor General John Septimus Roe who travelled with settler George Fletcher Moore searching for additional farming and grazing land and a great inland lake they believed existed (Ludbrook, 2003). This search for farmland was driven by the challenges that beset the Swan River colony in its early years. The paucity of arable farmland and good water within the Swan Coastal Plain had led to the expansion of settlement into the district of York. However, as more settlers arrived looking for a new life, the administration under Stirling's governorship struggled to deliver suitable land.

The colony faced economic difficulties, and Stirling's resignation in 1837 and return to Britain in 1839, were due to his earlier concerns over the insufficient financial support from the British government, which were confirmed during his visit to England from 1832 to 1834. The poor soil quality, lack of labour, and limited inbound investment capital contributed to the commercial and agricultural challenges of the Swan River colony (Crowley, 1967).

According to Crowley (1967), Stirling's approach to land distribution resulted in large allocations being given to individuals more interested in land speculation than agricultural or pastoral development. His enthusiastic approach influenced his official decisions. Stirling's own selection of land allocation, totalling 40,469 hectares (100,000 acres) and often changed, presented a potential conflict of interest. In conclusion Crowley states in relation to Stirling,

"Finally, he never fully realized the inevitable consequences of the settlement's three most obvious deficiencies: an exposed anchorage in Gage Roads and Cockburn Sound, an unnavigable river between port and capital, and an extreme shortage of good farming land. He recognized their existence but grossly underrated their influence in aggravating the privations which plagued the settlement for the first twenty years. Indeed, Albany on the south coast, which had been settled as a convict garrison in December 1826 and became part of the new colony in March 1831, was the colony's chief port for seventy years" (Crowley, 1967).

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These initial mistakes by Stirling in selecting the Swan River for his settlement plan could not be undone once the momentum had commenced. It was therefore unsurprising that after the York district was settled, the movement of settlers would continue to march east into Quairading. Here the land was suitable for grazing and there were springs, soaks, winter creeks, and shallow aquifers beneath the clay soils that contained potable water around 1.5 to 2 metres beneath the surface (Ludbrook, 2003).

SANDALWOOD AND CONVICTS TO THE RESCUE

In the 1840s, labour shortages hindered agricultural development in the fledgling WA colony, especially during harvest. Sandalwood cutting became a key export product starting in 1844 and proving more valuable than whale oil and bone. Sandalwood was worth £10 per ton compared to £4. 10s. for whale oil and bone (Statham-Drew and Clack, 2018). A shipment of sandalwood to Singapore in 1845 received excellent prices, and by 1848 around 45 per cent of the colony's export income was from sandalwood (Ludbrook, 2003).

Sandalwood continued to be the economic salvation of the colony until 1861 when the export market for the precious wood collapsed (Sunday Times, 1913). Although the export of sandalwood provided economic relief, labour shortages remained a key issue. This led settlers to advocate for WA to receive convicts, despite the convict system ending elsewhere in Australia (Roe, 1974). At a well-attended York Agricultural Society (YAS) meeting on 5 June 1847, it was resolved to ask the WA Colonial Government Legislative Council to request convicts from the British Secretary of State for the Colonies (Inquirer, 1847).

Initial proposals suggested sourcing convicts from Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) or Singapore. However, these were declined in favour of establishing a direct relationship between the colony and the United Kingdom. Even those settlers who had opposed the use of convicts became supporters due to the significant demand for labour (Inquirer, 1847).

With similar appeals from what went on to become the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australian (RASWA) and other groups across the colony, an agreement was made for Western Australia to become a destination for convicts in 1849, with the first group arriving on the ship *Scindian* in 1850. The convict transportation system that began in 1850 continued until 1868, during which time an additional 12,821 people, including convicts, military guards, and single emigrant women, arrived in the colony (SRO, 2021).

The convict system significantly influenced WA during the 1850s and 1860s, with the non-indigenous population increasing from 7,186 in 1851 to 15,346 in 1860 (Cotter, 1967). To prevent social issues and improve the skilled workforce, convicts selected for WA were chosen based on their good behaviour and skills. Many were skilled tradesmen, often referred to as 'mechanics', and received parole (known as a 'ticket-of-leave') upon arrival in the colony. This allowed them to work for an employer or become self-employed (Gregory & Marshall, 2020).

Convict transportation brought funding from British authorities, supporting convicts, guards, administrators, and the construction of public buildings and roads in Perth, Fremantle, and other areas. Convict depots were constructed in York, Toodyay and Guildford during 1853 and 1854 using locally made clay bricks and rammed earth. They were accompanied by Pensioner Guards

who had arrived with the convicts. The Enrolled Pensioner Force WA was comprised of discharged soldiers who received pensions, free passage, accommodation, and land grants. From 1850 to 1874, a total of 1,248 Pensioner Guards arrived in WA (FHWA, 2023).

INITIAL SETTLEMENT BY THE PARKER FAMILY

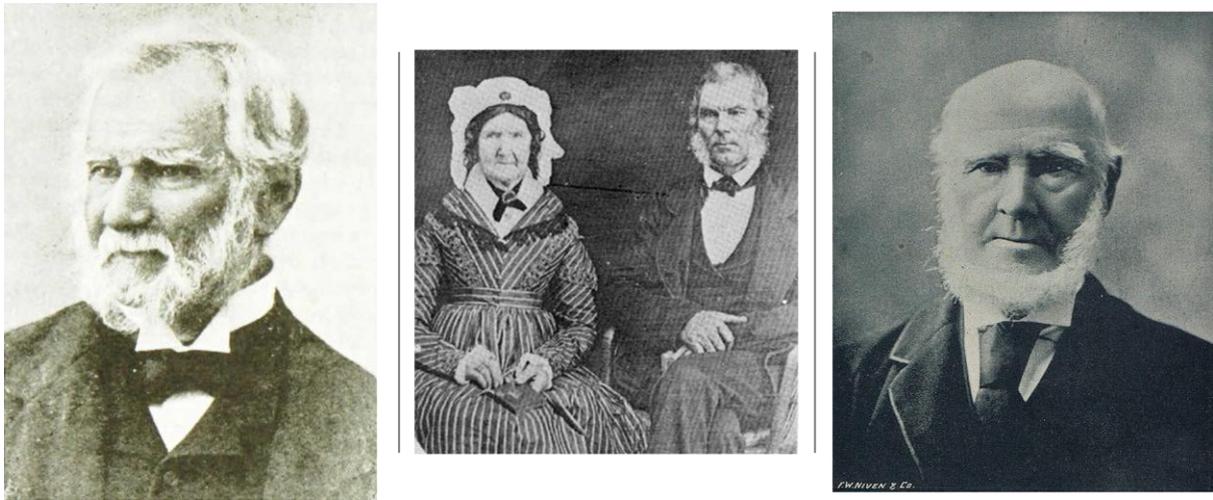
The first settlement within the Shire of Quairading took place in 1859 when Edward Read Parker established a residence on grazing land at Dangin Springs. Edward's father, Stephen Parker, along with his mother, Susannah and two older brothers arrived in the colony in 1830 as part of the land settlement scheme organised by Thomas Peel within the Peel Estuary area, now Mandurah. By the time of their arrival most of the best land had been allocated. They initially took up a parcel of land in Guildford but subsequently moved to York where they settled in 1836 (Ludbrook, 2003).

Stephen Parker was born in Northbourne Kent, England in 1796 and died at the age of 83 in York, WA. His wife, Susannah (nee Wyborn) was born in 1785 in Kent, England, and died in 1860 aged 75 at York, WA. She had three sons, John Wyborn Parker (born 1814 in Kent England, died 1897 York WA), Stephen Stanley Parker (born 1817 Kent England, died 1904), and Edward Read Parker (born 1820 Kent England, died 1905 York WA) (People Australia, 2024). The family property "Northbourne" in the Shire of York was named after the father's place of birth in Kent, England. It remained in the family and was passed onto Stephen Stanley Parker in 1879. He ran the farm comprising around 405 hectares (1,000 acres) and took ownership of additional farming properties in the York district. He also became a flour miller, a Justice of the Peace, Chair of the Roads Board, a Town Councillor in York, and a nominee member of the Legislative Council in 1874. In retirement, he was appointed a member of the Aborigines Protection Board and Trustee of the Anglican Diocese of WA (Kimberly, 1897).

As the youngest of the three brothers Edward Read Parker explored the opportunities for land to the east of the York district acquiring pastoral leases at Dangin and Mount Stirling in Quairading, and Boonmull near Greenhills in the York District. The first of these was Dangin Springs. Named after the Ballardong word "Djanja" or "place of needle bush" (e.g., hakea), Dangin, is located 56.5 km southeast of York, and 7.5 km from Quairading. In 1863 he cleared land within the Dangin area and cut a track from York to Dangin. Throughout the 1860s the Parker family acquired additional pastoral land across the Quairading district. This included "Moulien Spring", at the foot of Mount Stirling, which at the time was the farthest east of any sheep station in WA. Also included were landholdings at Badjaling Spring, approximately 6.5 km north of present-day Quairading townsite, and Yoting Spring (Ludbrook, 2003).

The Dangin property was the primary residence of Edward Parker, which served as the main area for shearing sheep grazed on the pastoral leases at Mount Stirling and Boonmull. He retired in 1888 and moved back to York, passing ownership of the Dangin property to this eldest son Jonah Smith Wells Parker, with the properties at Mount Stirling and Boonmull (Greenhills) passing to his second son Giffard Parker (West Australian, 1905). Edward Parker was married three times, and apart from his pastoral enterprises, he devoted himself to the Anglican Church, writing books, and also to the welfare of the Ballardong people to whom he was known as "Dangin Parker" (Obituaries Australia, 2024).

Figure 3: Edward Read Parker (left), Susannah & Stephen Parker (centre), Stephen Stanley Parker (right)



Sources: www.findagrave.com public domain.

PASTORAL EXPANSION CONTINUES

Throughout the 1860s and 1870s pastoral leases were established across the Quairading district. For example, by 1872 there were sufficient settlers running pastoral leases within the district to warrant the establishment of a fortnightly mail service. This ran from York via the sheep stations located at Dangin, Coraling, and Mount Stirling (Mulyeen), then via the police station at Youndegin, back to York. This was increased to a weekly service by 1875 (Ludbrook, 2003).

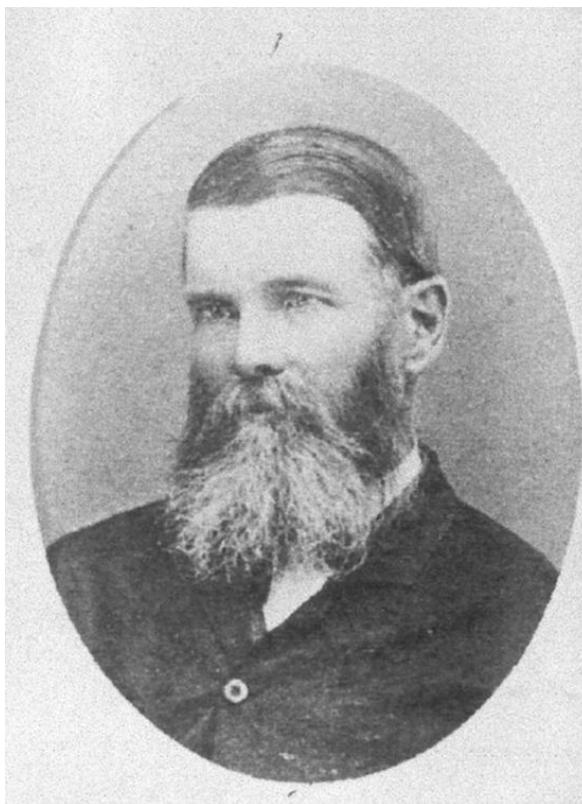
This mail service followed bush tracks that had been cut into the vegetation by sandalwood teams cutting the valuable wood during the 1840s (Ludbrook, 2003). In addition to the Parkers, the most significant pastoralists in the district were brothers Charles and James Heal, who took over the “Coraling” pastoral lease in 1883 from John Wells who had held the lease since 1860. This lease was located approximately 12.5 km east of present-day Quairading. They also owned the “Cumminin” lease, which they held until 1906, but it was around 83 km east of present-day Quairading in what it now the Shire of Narembeen (Eaton, 1979). It was a more difficult environment than “Coraling”, which offered better water and more reliable rainfall (Ludbrook, 2003).

From 1870 pastoral leases were granted in the area instead of freehold farmland. The minimum lease was 20,000 acres (approx. 8,094 hectares), which carried an annual rental to the Colonial Government of 2 shillings 6 pence per 1,000 acres for the initial 5-year period, followed by an annual rental of 5 shillings per 1,000 acres (Eaton, 1979). In 1887 freehold land was possible to facilitate the development of agricultural activities in the area (Burvill, 1979). As a result, until the 1890s there was little European settlement in the Quairading district other than the large pastoralists like the Parker and Heal families (Ludbrook, 2003).

In addition to the Parker and Heal families, Quairading district was also home to Frederick Lee Sewell (born 1827, died 1888). He was the youngest son of John and Ann Sewell, and migrated to Western Australia along with his parents, brother Sampson, and four sisters Elizabeth, Susannah, Sarah and Martha, aboard the brig “Mary and Jane” in 1841. The family settled on a property “Egoline” west of Mount Ommamney, Northam, adjacent to the Avon River in 1846 (Sewell, 2021).

Frederick Sewell married Charlotte Matilda Shepherd (born 1841, died 1924) and they initially lived at the family property “Egoline”. The small size of the European population in WA at the time meant that settler families were well-known to each other and had frequent intermarriages between them. For example, Stephen Stanley Parker was Frederick Sewell’s brother-in-law having married his sister Elizabeth (Sewell, 2021).

Figure 4: Frederick Sewell (left), and Charlotte Sewell (right)



Source: Sewell (2021).

For the pastoralists living in the Quairading district their neighbours were located across the area usually with separation of around 30 to 70 kilometres. For example, the Heal family property at “Coraling” was some 19 km from Jonah Parker’s property at Dangin, 29 km from the Parker family property at Mount Stirling, and 32 km from the Sewell family property at Mount Caroline (Eaton, 1979). Despite these distances, which had to be travelled by horseback, carriage, or foot, over rough sandy tracks, the little community maintained good relations.

NEW LEGISLATION, EXPEDITIONS AND A TRANSITION TO FARMING

The introduction by the WA Colonial Government of the *Land Regulations 1887* served as a catalyst for the development of farming within the Quairading district. It laid out the arrangements under which freehold land could be purchased within the colony. Proclaimed on 2 March 1887, the Act introduced a more regulated system of land distribution in the colony (WA Legislation, 1887).

It ended free grants of land and raised the price of land per acre. It was part of a larger reform of land legislation within WA that replaced the earlier system of granting land based on the capital a settler brought into the colony. The new legislation helped to promote the spread of agriculture across the Wheatbelt, which benefitted the settlement of new migrants. This was the primary purpose of the Act, as stated by WA Governor Sir Frederick Napier Broome, who served in this office from June 1883 to December 1889. In a letter published in the *West Australian* newspaper on 5 March 1887, Governor Broome spoke of the *Land Regulations 1887* in the following terms,

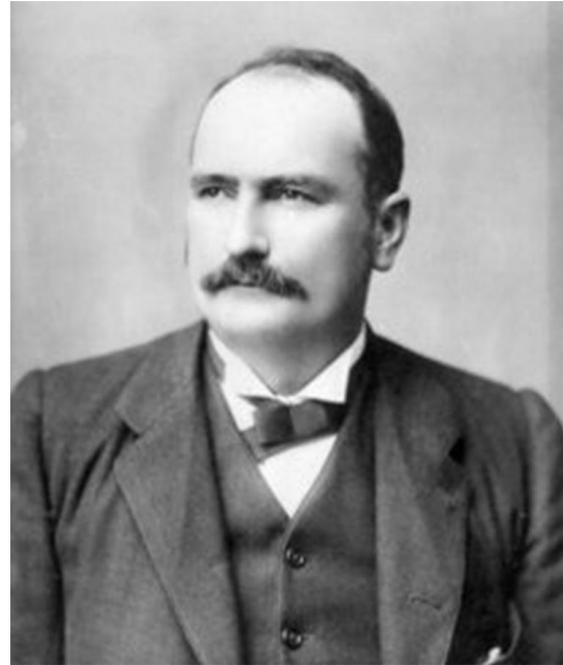
"I need not further analyse or recapitulate the Regulations, which I hope, will be found to explain themselves pretty clearly. I believe them to be good Regulations as a whole, and, though it would be easy to criticise them from different points of view – since no two persons seem to agree on the land question in any colony – I do not think that a code can at the present time be devised which would be more generally acceptable, or which would be better worth the experiment of its adoption. The existing Regulations, have, no doubt, worked reasonably well: but the new code makes an altogether stronger effort to secure the settlement and cultivation of the soil, and to deal with the whole land question" (Sir F. N. Broome, Governor WA, *West Australian*, 1887).

However, the legislation had a negative impact on the Aboriginal population in WA. For example, the Ballardong were forced to give up their traditional hunting and foraging lands, which were placed under cropping, and fenced off. Their options were to work on the farms and pastoral stations or seek welfare from the Christian missions. Some Aboriginal people secured land for farming, but they were operating very small plots of land and were significantly undercapitalised (Tilbrook, 1983).

Somewhat ironically, the plight of the Ballardong people in the loss of their tribal lands was partly facilitated by the support they provided to the settlers in exploration work as they searched for suitable farming and grazing land. For example, in 1870, two Ballardong men, Billy Nooncale Kickett, and Tommy Windich acted as guides for John and Alexander Forrest, brothers who were active in leading a series of explorations during the 1870s.

John Forrest was born in Bunbury on 22 August 1847 to a large Scottish migrant family. He led his first exploration in 1869 in a search from Perth into the arid inland around Lakes Moore and Barlee located approximately 300 to 470 km northeast of the WA capital, in search of the ill-fated expedition of German explorer Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig Leichhardt. His party of six men and sixteen horse covered around 3,200 km but found no trace of the Leichhardt party (Crowley, 1981).

Figure 5: Sir John Forrest (left), and Alexander Forrest (right)



Sources: National Library of Australia and ACT Heritage Library (1900s).

Forrest's experience in searching for the ill-fated Leichardt expedition led him to be appointed to lead a major expedition from Perth to Adelaide across the Nullarbor Plain. This also included six men and sixteen horses. It departed Perth on 20 March 1870 and arrived in Adelaide by 27 August 1870. Although it failed to discover any promising agricultural or pastoral land, it did path the way for the installation of the telegraph line, which was completed by 1877 (Crowley, 1981). John Forrest led several other major expeditions in 1878, 1880 and 1881, and was appointed Deputy Surveyor General in 1876 and awarded a founder's gold medal by the Royal Geographical Society. The same year he married Margaret Elvire Hamersley, a well-known Perth socialite and eldest daughter of Edward Hamersley of Guildford. In 1883 he was made Surveyor General and Commissioner for Crown Lands and moved to coordinating and organising expeditions. His brother Alexander led expeditions to survey the Kimberley Region in 1879, which led to pastoral settlement in WA's northwest (Bolton, 1981).

John Forrest led his last expedition, also in the Kimberley in 1883, which was a large-scale inland survey. This included the discovery of the port of Wyndham. He was elected to the Legislative Council representing Bunbury in 1890 and appointed as the Colonial Treasurer. In May 1891 he became the first West Australian-born citizen to be awarded a knighthood becoming Sir John Forrest. His appointment as "Premier" was an informal title that did not exist prior to Federation. Following Federation in 1901, Sir John Forrest served as Federal Treasurer, Minister for Defence, and Minister for Home Affairs. He died on 3 September 1918, aged 71, aboard the troopship *Marathon* enroute to London carrying soldiers from the First Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and his body was returned to Perth for burial at Karrakatta (Crowley, 1981).

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His younger brother Alexander, who was born in Bunbury on 22 September 1849, was also an intrepid explorer. Where his older brother was very considered in his planning, and cautious in the execution of his travel, Alexander was described as “a better bushman than John”, but a less careful surveyor and someone more likely to take calculated risks (Bolton, 1981). He was the Second in Command of John Forrest’s Perth to Adelaide expedition in 1870 and led a further inland expedition looking for pastoral lands in 1871. He was again Second in Command of the second expedition to Adelaide led by John Forrest in 1874. This left from Geraldton and took an inland route. The six-man party left WA on 1 April and arrived in Adelaide on 3 November having lost all sixteen horses, escaped violent encounters with hostile Aboriginal tribes, and suffered from a lack of drinking water, but received a hero’s welcome (Crowley, 1981).

Alexander Forrest was elected to the Legislative Council representing the Kimberley district in 1887. Although he was employed by the Survey Department, he quit his employment there and became an independent licenced surveyor, and land agent specialising in the Kimberley region. Officials from the Survey Department were not allowed to personally benefit from their land discoveries, and this change of employment allowed Alexander to build up a profitable business as the pastoral leases within the Kimberley area developed during the 1870s and 1880s. He also invested in the gold discovery in Yilgarn in 1888, funding a mining company, and speculating on the stock market throughout the rest of his life. In January 1880 he married Amy Eliza Barrett-Lennard, with whom he fathered a daughter and four sons. His son Anthony was killed (aged 17) in 1901 fighting in the South African (Boer) War. His wife Amy died at the age of 45 in 1897. Alexander himself died from kidney trouble on 20 June 1901 age 51 and was buried in Karrakatta cemetery.

Both Sir John and Alexander Forrest were significant in their influence on the development of the agricultural and pastoral industries in Colonial WA. Their surveying work was instrumental in identifying and promoting the agricultural and pastoral lands across most of WA. Yet, these expeditions were greatly facilitated by the work of Aboriginal trackers and guides such as Tommy Windich and Billy Nooncale Kickett (Tilbrook, 1983).

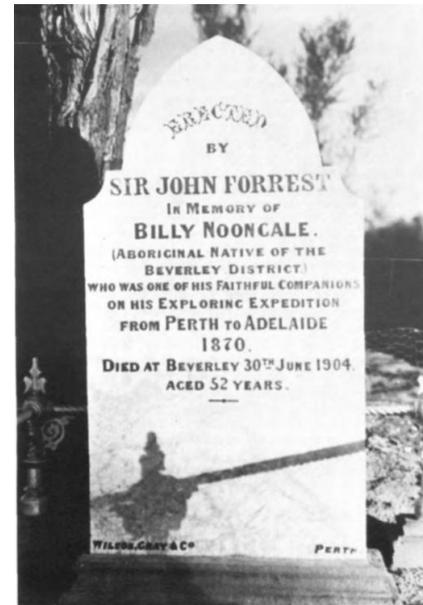
Windich, who was born at Mount Stirling, in 1840, acted as a guide for Charles Heal, when he cut a track from York to Cumminin in 1863. He worked as an assistant police tracker in his twenties at York and Beverley, helping track down numerous criminals including Joseph Johns, aka “Moondyne Joe”, WA’s only bushranger. He also supported both John Forrest and Alexander Forrest in their numerous explorations. Windich died at Esperance in 1876 aged 35. Kickett died at Beverley in 1904 aged 52 (Ludbrook, 2003; Tilbrook, 1983; Eaton, 1979).

Sir John Forrest and his brother Alexander paid for a gravestone for Tommy Windich, and Sir John also paid for a gravestone for Billy Nooncale Kickett (See Figure 6). On the gravestone of Windich is written the following epitaph,

“Erected by John and Alexander Forrest in memory of Tommy Windich. Born near Mt. Sterling (sic) 1840. Died at Esperance Bay 1876. He was an Aboriginal native of Western Australia of great intelligence and fidelity who accompanied them on EXPLORING EXPEDITIONS into the interior of Australia – two of which were from Perth to Adelaide, ‘Be Ye also Ready’.”



Figure 6: Gravestones of Tommy Windich (left), and Billy Nooncale Kickett (right)



Source: Tilbrook (1983).

On the gravestone of Billy Nooncale Kickett the epitaph reads,

"Erected by Sir John Forrest in memory of Billy Nooncale. (Aboriginal native of the Beverley District) who was one of his faithful companions on his exploring expedition from Perth to Adelaide 1870. Died at Beverley 30th June 1904 aged 52 years."

The *Land Regulation Act 1887* was subsequently amended by the *Mineral Lands Act 1892*. However, it was supplemented by the *Homestead Act 1893*, which focused on developing agricultural land development across WA. Applicants were granted small parcels of land (e.g., 65 to 81 hectares). Those seeking such land had to occupy their land within six months of their application being approved, and they had to live on the land for at least six months per year for the first five years. In addition, they had to demonstrate that they were developing the property by building a house, clearing the land, setting up orchards or vineyards, fencing at least a quarter of the farmland within the first five years, and the entire farm within seven years (WA Legislation, 1893; Western Mail, 1893).

In 1888 gold was discovered in Yilgarn near Southern Cross approximately 400 km east of Perth. It followed an earlier gold discovery in the Kimberley region of Northwest WA in 1885 that triggered a goldrush. However, the Kimberley gold fields proved limited, and most of the miners moved south to Yilgarn in search of their fortunes. This discovery was followed by even larger discoveries in Coolgardie in 1892, and Kalgoorlie in 1893, located some 595 km northeast of Perth (WAM, 2017).



During the late 1880s and during the 1890s, the influx of migrants increased significantly as people arrived from other Australian colonies, or from overseas, attracted by the goldrush taking place in the Goldfields around Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. This prompted the WA Colonial Government to commence planning for the expansion of the agricultural sector. It was anticipated that the goldrush would end, and that even if it continued, the growing population would need to be fed. The *Land Regulation Act 1887* and *Homestead Act 1893* provided a regulatory framework that enabled the expansion of the Wheatbelt from the 1890s and beyond. It was also a time when the eastern colonies were experiencing a severe economic downturn, and many ‘T’othersiders’ moved to WA either seeking a future in mining gold, or taking up farming (Ludbrook, 2003; SLWA, 2024).

The *Land Act 1898* also required that the land had to be a specified distance from populated areas, not located within a town or suburban area, nor a proclaimed gold field. Furthermore, the land could not be under lease to another person for mining purposes, and not reserved for use as a town, village, or water supply area (WA Legislation, 1898).

Despite WA’s poor-quality soils and low rainfall, the Wheatbelt thrived in agricultural production due to its hot dry summers and cool wet winters ideal for large-scale farming (Phillips, 2009; Sudmeyer, 2021). Public and political backing stemmed from food importation needs, imperial obligations to Britain, declining birth rates, and urban degeneration concerns (Gaynor, 2002). As gold production waned post-1890s boom, the WA Colonial Government promoted agriculture to boost employment and revenue (Spillman, 1995).

Between 1890 and 1930, the western areas of the Great Western Woodlands region, now known as the Wheatbelt, were converted into open farmland through extensive land clearing. Towns developed around railway sidings during this period (Halse, 2009; Sauman, 2009; Hughes-d’Aeth, 2017). Additionally, the *Homesteads Act 1893* (WA), which provided free homestead farms and leases to support settlement, played a role in this development (Zekulich, 1997).

It was against this context that the expansion of agriculture into the Quairading District took place during the early years of the twentieth century. As Ludbrook (2003) summed up the process of developing the farming community in the district,

“Following the turn of the century, with gold fever subsiding, and the need for more land to be developed for agriculture and pasture, white settlers would begin to arrive in places with unfamiliar names (apart from Mt Stirling and Jacob’s Well) such as Bulkuling, Doodenanning, Dulbelling, Pantapin, Jennaberring, Mooranning, Yoting, Dangin, Badjaling, Wamenusking, Coalling (Coraling), Quairading. With the settlers would come fences, tracks and surveyed roads criss-crossing the land over which a people once freely roamed and which the first explorers judge a ‘nothing of consequence’” (Ludbrook, 2003, p. 14).

FROM GOLDRUSHES TO FEDERATION

The 1890s was a particularly strong period of economic growth and social development for WA. For example, in 1890 the WA Constitution was proclaimed on 21 October, and Sir John Forrest became the first Premier on 22 December. The following year the WA Parliament was officially

opened on 20 January 1891. The construction and dredging of Fremantle Harbour commenced in 1892, and that same year women became eligible to own property (Menck, 2022).

During 1894 all mining centres in the Goldfields were connected via telegraph to Perth, and the Eastern Railway was extended via Northam from Perth to Southern Cross (Le Page, 1986). The next year compulsory school attendance was introduced in WA, and in 1898 the Conditional Purchase Scheme was introduced under the *Land Act 1898*. This legislation enabled conditional purchase of land for agricultural purposes. Applicants could request to purchase between 100 and 1,000 acres of land (40.5 to 405 hectares). However, they had to live on the property for a minimum of six months each year, fence one-tenth of the land within the first two years, and the entire land area within five years. They also had to invest a sum of money into improvements equal to the original purchase price of the land within the first 10 years (WA Legislation, 1898).

In 1901 Australia's colonial governments united together to form the Commonwealth of Australia and create a Federal system with state and territory parliaments, and a national parliament that eventually moved from Melbourne to Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory. The goldrush and mining boom of the 1890s had peaked, and Federation caused WA to lose significant revenue from tariffs on goods imported from other states. These inter-colonial tariffs made up about half of WA's government revenue in the 1890s. Additionally, Commonwealth tariffs on imported goods, mainly benefiting manufacturers in Victoria and NSW, severely impacted WA (Musgrave, 2003).



CHAPTER 2: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF QUAIRADING

Quairading, officially established in 1907, was historically a meeting place for the Ballardong people due to its natural spring "Kwirading Spring", also called "Minnel's soak" after Aboriginal tracker Billie Minnel who lived nearby. The area was created by a rocky outcrop and supplied water to settlers for many years, with a stone-walled well-built to facilitate water access. It was subsequently filled in (Eaton, 1979).

Alexander Forrest surveyed the area in the 1870s and secured a pastoral lease named "Cubbine" in 1873. This property was acquired by the National Bank of Australia in 1901. It was then transferred to Alexander Forrest, and subsequently to Sir John Forrest in 1904, following Alexander's death in 1901. The first agricultural settlement was in 1892 when Albert Eaton purchased 100 acres (approx. 40 hectares) in the area. Settlement of the current town of Quairading has been traced back to 1905, when Jim Caldwell opened a general store mid-way between the early farm settlers to the north and south of the present town. As described by Eaton (1979),

"It is thought that Mr Jim Caldwell opened a store in the bush between the north and south settlers about 1905. It was a hessian structure with an iron roof. He stocked only tinned goods and bought kangaroo skins from anyone hunting in the area. Young Bill Haythornwaite, a lad of about fifteen years, used to ride from the family farm some ten miles south of the store and hunt around the Cubbine area during 1905 selling his kangaroo skins at Caldwell's Store on the way home" (Eaton, 1979, p. 86).

Quairading's formal declaration as a town took place on 7 August 1907. The railway was extended the next year, running within 100 yards (91 metres) from Caldwell's little store. By 1909 the town boasted a General Store, run by Charles Prince, a Blacksmiths shop, operated by Mr. Eccleston, a Bakery, run by Mr. Commins, and branches of the National Bank, and Bank of Western Australia, which were managed respectively by Mr W. J. Callaghan, and Mr H. R. Blake (Eaton, 1979, p. 88).

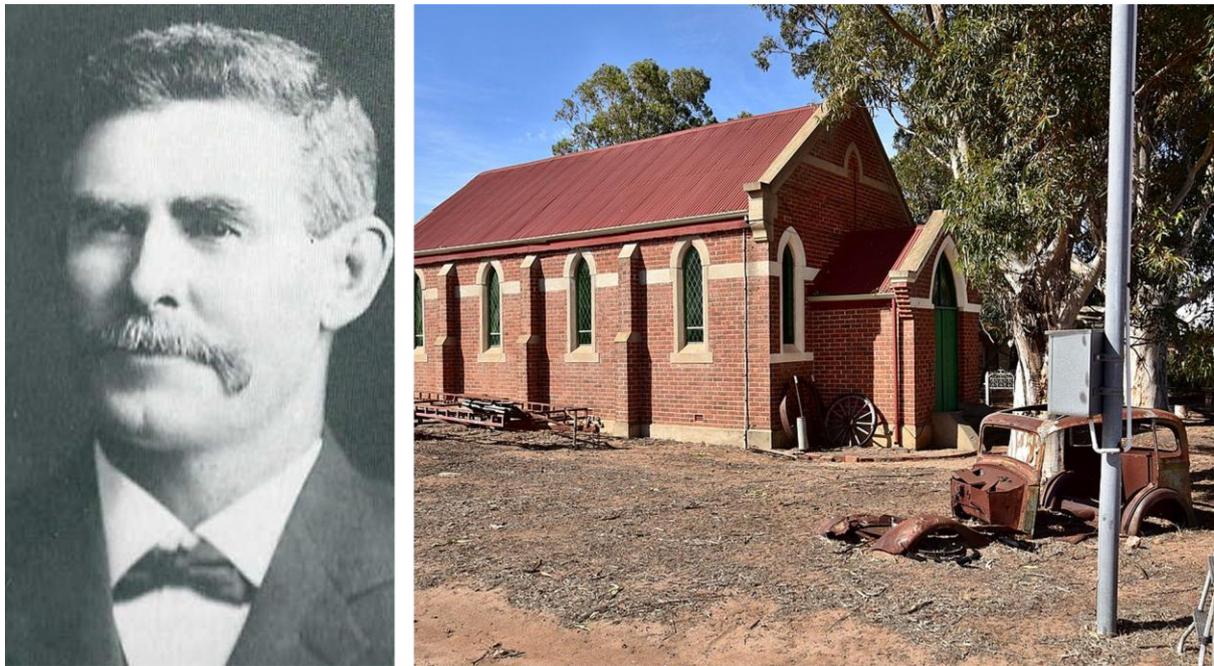
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DANGIN

Prior to the foundation of Quairading another town was established within the district that was the brainchild of Jonah Smith Wells Parker. He was born on 2 August 1863 at Dangin Springs, the son of Edward Read Parker and Mary Irwin Henrietta Parker (nee Wells), He married twice, the first time to Jane Elizabeth Mercy Parker (nee Bailey), and then to Clara Lilian Parker (nee Morris) (Geni, 2024).

Jane Parker was born in Beverley WA in 1865, and had two children, Cecil Alwyn Read Parker (born 5 April 1890) and Alwyn Ernest Parker (born 5 September 1891). Unfortunately, Jane Parker died at York, on 17 September 1891 at the young age of 25. Clara Parker was born in Fremantle on 18 April 1872, she did not have any children with Jonah Parker but out lived him. He died in Beverley on 28 September 1914 aged 51. Clara Parker lived to age 84 and was buried in Perth on 1 February 1957 (Geni, 2024).



Figure 7: Jonah Parker (left), and the former Methodist Church, Dangin (right)



Sources: J. Parker, (Just Jack, 1900); Methodist Church (Bahnfrend, 2018).

Jonah Parker took control of the Dangin family property after his father's retirement in 1888. Following his father's death in 1905, he expanded the property by acquiring more land through the Conditional Purchase Scheme and developing the land his father had owned under a pastoral lease. The Dangin property had access to good water via the Dangin Spring (Eaton, 1979).

In 1900, Jonah Parker subdivided the family property and sold land to establish Dangin as a private townsite. The town was officially proclaimed and gazetted in 1902. Over time it developed to include a Methodist Church, a local school, a Co-operative store, and a railway station. According to Eaton (1979),

"The buildings in the town at this time were a two storied Hotel, two mixed stores, one drapery, one bank (an official from York came once a week) Post Office and shop run by White Brothers, one Agricultural Hall, one Hospital, a Methodist Church and small manse, one blacksmith shop, one bakery and about 12 dwellings (Eaton, 1979, p. 17).

Another feature of Dangin was its fencing, as the town was situated within the Parker family property. Access was controlled by a gate, which Parker required to be kept closed to prevent unwanted animals from entering his farmland. This was to cause problems later on (Eaton, 1979).

Jonah Parker was actively engaged in promoting Dangin and in 1909 he participated in field trials of the latest ploughs, imported from Melbourne, which offered stump-jump capability, and the ability to raise and lower the discs in order to navigate heavier soils.



As a report from the *Eastern Districts Chronicle* described the event,

“The last machine to be tried was a 9-furrow stump-jump cultivating plough. This plough was greatly admired, and with five horses did beautiful work in turning over fallow. At the special request of Mr. Parker it was tried in the virgin ground, and here again turned its 9-furrows in good style, jumping freely over obstacles and ploughing uniformly 4 inches deep”
(EDC, 1909, p. 2).

Jonah Parker was a Methodist, and he enforced a ban on alcohol within the town. In 1910, he built a non-alcohol Temperance Hotel. However, the hotel without alcohol proved unsuccessful. In addition, attempts to get a post office established in the town were rejected by the Commonwealth Postal Inspector. Despite this, the Dangin storekeeper was given permission to perform the duties of a Postmaster on behalf of the Commonwealth Government (Beverley Times, 1907a).

In 1912 Jonah Parker, in need of a water supply for the town of Dangin, chose Toapin Rock, located 8 km northeast of the townsite as a suitable source. The rock formation made an ideal natural weir. Parker acquired the site and invested £5,000 (approx. \$747,464 in 2024 dollars) to provide a reliable water supply to the town. By that time, Jonah Parker had around 5,000 acres (approx. 2,023 hectares) under cultivation and employed a large labour force. His private town had grown, but there was trouble caused by his insistence on the retention of gates between the town and his personal farmland (Eaton, 1979).

In October 1913, the gates and some sections of fencing were removed by the Avon Road Board. This triggered a court case, instigated by Parker, in pursuit of damages for the destruction of the gate and fencing. He lost the case, then subsequently appealed it to the Supreme Court, and lost the appeal. This entire event appears to have taken a toll on his health, leading to his death in September 1914 (Eaton, 1979).

Memories of Dangin – Vincent Hadlow

Vincent Hadlow, locally known as “Bullet”, is a local historian, whose ancestors migrated from England around 1892, establishing themselves in the Dangin area in 1910-1911. He recalls that the Methodist dominance in the Dangin area led the town to be called “Lemonade Valley” due to the absence of alcohol within the town. As he recalled, *“Well, in that area, including South Caroling, the majority of people were Methodists, as were my family. So, in the local Dangin Hotel, you couldn’t get alcohol, only lemonade or at least cool drink.”*

He noted that the Dangin Hotel closed and after the Second World War, it was demolished, and the bricks and other components of the building were used to build houses. He explained that most of the hotels built in the area at that time were constructed much the same, using bricks and sound materials brought up from Perth. According to Vincent, the population of Dangin peaked during the 1920s and 1930s as a result of the soldier settler and group settlement schemes that led to the expansion of the Wheatbelt. He pointed out that both Dangin and South Caroling were significant communities during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



In relation to the Dangin Co-operative, Vincent explained that the Co-operative was established in 1916 as the Dangin & South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd. (DSCCS), which was earlier than the Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Ltd. He recalled that the first Manager of the Co-operative was Mr. Frank Strickland, whose sons had farms in the Dangin area.

Like most of the district co-operatives, the DSCCS was a member of Wesfarmers and the local farmers in the Dangin area received Wesfarmers shares, which proved lucrative from a financial perspective. As he explained, *"Well, most of the cockies out there were Methodists, and because they didn't drink, and as they never spent as much on socialising, they were able to save their pennies."*

He noted that the DSCCS operated like all the other district co-operatives explaining that *"They bought and sold wheat and wool, farm machinery, as well as all the general household stuff."*

He explained that it was in the mid-1960s that the DSCCS was being Managed by Mr. Dave Smith. At that time Vincent was only a child, but he remembers that the Co-operative was a place to go for the bread, milk, and newspaper, plus the weekly groceries. As he remembers, *"By that time, they weren't selling the farm machinery or other supplies. It was only a supermarket, and a post office. Wesfarmers and Elders had moved to Quairading with their major agency. So, there wasn't any farm gear sold in Dangin. It was really just a convenience store. As kids we used to get lollies there."*

He recalls that even by the mid-1960s, Dangin had its own cricket club and tennis club, but there was a steady migration into Quairading. During that same time, the State Electricity Commission (SEC) put the electric grid network into the district. Prior to that every farm and household relied upon generators. He remembered that some people lived in a basic tin shed without running water, power or other things that today are taken for granted. To that time the railway line that connected the towns to each other and the city of Perth were vital to the communities. As he explained, *"In those days the railway line did everything. It carted your stock, the cattle, the sheep, all the fertiliser was carted up on the train. The stockyards were located close to the Quairading railway station. I can still recall the old stockyards that were around during the late 1960s. As a kid we used to play in them."*

When asked about the Parker family, Vincent explained that the family continued on with a daughter, Patricia Parker, who married Alex McLennan. However, they had now all left the district.

Source: Hadlow (2023a).

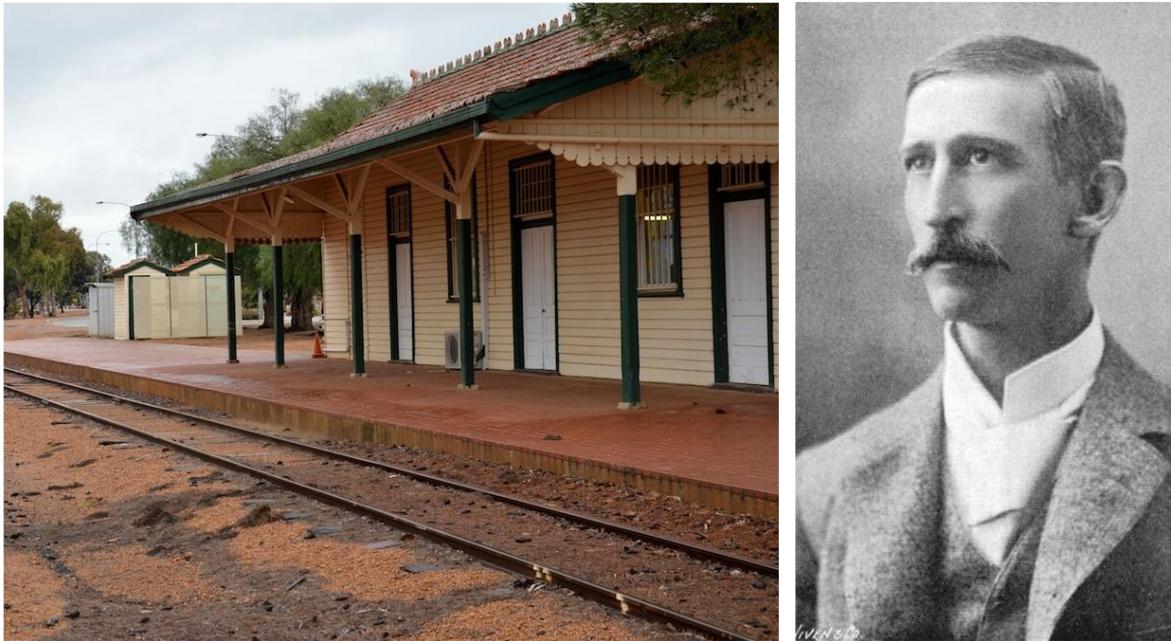
THE GREENHILLS TO QUAIRADING RAILWAY

In 1908, the railway line was extended from York through Greenhills and Dangin to Quairading. It was a major event as it brought these towns much needed transportation for goods, produce, and passengers (Ludbrook, 2003). Referred to as the "Greenhills to Quairading" railway it linked Quairading to Perth and the port of Fremantle a distance of 217 kilometres (Sunday Times, 1908).

The railway line linking Quairading to Perth went via York, Greenhills, Kauring, Dulbelling and Dangin. It was officially opened on 24 April 1908. The opening ceremony attracted a significant contingent of prominent people who travelled from Perth to Quairading aboard the first train to make the total journey (The West Australian, 1908).



Figure 8: Quairading Railway Station and Frederick Charles Monger



Sources: Railway Station (Jarrah Tree, 2013); F. C. Monger (Kimberley, W. B., 1897)

Figure 9: Sir Walter Hartwell James (Left) and William Beattie Gordon (Right)



Sources: W. H. James & W. B. Gordon (Parliament of WA, 1904)

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Among the leadership of the delegation was Frederick Charles Monger (born 25 January 1863 – died 15 November 1919), the son of John Henry Monger Jnr, a pioneering settler from York, and the brother of Alexander Joseph Monger. At the time of the opening ceremony Frederick Monger was a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of WA, representing the constituency of York (Birman, 1986a). Also present at the opening ceremony was William Beattie Gordon MLA., the WA Parliamentary Whip (Parliament of WA, 2022), and Sir Walter Hartwell James, a former Premier of WA (1902-1904), and Agent General for WA (1904-1907), in London (Hunt, 1983). There were many other prominent people including Jonah Parker and his wife Clara. The Mayoress of York, Mrs. T. C. Evans was also present, along with Charles and Sophie Heal, owners of the “Caroling” property in South Quairading, and Charles Baxter, Chairman of the Quairading Progress Association (QPA) (The West Australian, 1908).

At the ceremony the Mayoress of York Mrs. T. C. Evans and Clara Parker were tasked to hold a ribbon across the track as the steam engine rolled through cutting the ribbon. This was met with hearty cheers from the assembled crowd. Frederick Monger delivered the main keynote address. He congratulated the district of Quairading in having the railway now linked to their town. Then, mindful of the ongoing political lobbying in Perth to extend the railway line to link up with the Eastern line running from Perth via Northam to the Goldfields, was reported that,

“His great desire ... was to see the line extended and he hoped that ere long he would be asked to witness the turning of the first sod of that extension” (The West Australian, 1908, p. 3).

This statement was received with a loud applause from the crowd. He followed with a description of the “battle of the routes”, which referred to the disputes that were being held in Perth over the development of the railway network. This had involved recommendations from engineers seeking to follow routes that would facilitate the most cost-efficient track layout, and the farmers (referred to as Cockies), who felt that they could more effectively ascertain the best routes. Monger concluded his official opening of the line on behalf of the State Government with it reported,

“On behalf of the Government he declared the line open for traffic, wishing the people of Quairading every success, and trusting that the line would prove to be in the best interest of the district and of the State” (The West Australian, 1908, p. 3).

Jonah Parker declared that the landowners in Quairading were focused on progress and would invest their money and energy to develop the district and ensure that the new railway would be “paying handsomely”. Charles Heal expressed the view that the district was “as good as the best in the State”. It was reported later that, over a glass of wine, Charles Baxter, representing the QPA,

“... complained that, notwithstanding promises given, the Government had entirely failed to give the settlers any notification of that ceremony in order that they might prepare suitably to receive the visitors. The only word they had had about the opening of the line was second hand. Had the notice asked for been given, they would have been prepared to receive the visitors far differently. It was, he thought, a standing disgrace to the Public Works Department that the wishes of the whole district from Greenhills to Quairading should have been thus ignored. Mr Monger had spoken of the happy faces to be seen, but he (Mr. Baxter) was sure that the happiness lay entirely with the visitors” (The West Australian, 1908, p. 3).



This statement by Charles Baxter resurrected a public discussion over the challenges that had been faced by the community in getting the State Government to commit to the extension of the railway to Quairading. The delays had meant that goods were left lying exposed at the railway siding at Greenhills, which had cost the settlers in the district demurrage charges (The West Australian, 1908).

Baxter concluded his comments by saying he was sorry to have raised the delays to get the railway line connected, and that the issue of alternative routes should have been left buried. Now it was up to the people of the district to make best use of it and make it payable. In response, William Gordon was affronted by Baxter's comments, stating that he was there as the representative of the Government, but if this was the manner in which he was to be met,

"... he would be chary about accepting similar commissions in the future" (West Australia, 1908, p. 3).

He added that the absence of State Ministers at the opening ceremony was not indicative of the Government's attitude towards the district of Quairading. He explained that that Premier and the Ministers were all either inter-state, or elsewhere in WA attending to important business. The Acting Premier and the Attorney General were remaining in Perth to run the government. He felt the criticism of the Government was unfair and that the railway would pay,

"... because he knew the country was good, and he could see around him many men of grit. If the country ahead was such as they had come through that day, he thought the extension of the line should be accepted as assured" (The West Australian, 1908, p. 3).

An acrimonious public debate ensued that raised much of the public concern felt by many within the Quairading district over the time taken to get the railway connected. Sir Walter James, in a response to Charles Baxter, expressed sympathy with him and those who had worked with him (presumably via the QPA). He accepted that better notification of the opening ceremony should have been given, stating that,

"Mistakes had been made, but he could not believe that Mr. Monger was to blame. By the construction of that railway a few more miles of the wilderness of Western Australia had been brought within reach of the conqueror's arm. As to the rival routes which had been referred to, they might have the wisest possible Government in power, the wisest engineers and surveyors, and the always wise cocky, and still there would be bitter dispute about the route. It was consolatory to know that the question of routes was settled by men honestly anxious to serve the State" (The West Australian, 1908, p. 3).

Much of the tension expressed at the opening of the Greenhills-Quairading Railway extension related to the decision to construct the main Eastern Goldfields Railway via Northam and Southern Cross (Yilgarn) to the Goldfields centres of Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. The Northam to South Cross line was opened on 1 July 1894, and the final connection via Boorabbin to Kalgoorlie was completed by 1 January 1897 (Searle, 1983).

The priority for the WA Government had been to link the Goldfields to Perth, and the roll out of the railway to agricultural centres had not been given the same urgency. The bypassing of York in favour of Northam had been a controversial decision, which had created heated debates in the

Legislative Assembly (King & Parker, 2003). The choice of Northam over York was based on an anticipated saving of £500 (approx. \$93,831 in 2024 dollars)¹ (Garden, 1972).

This decision had long-term implications for the future growth of York, which effectively became sidelined. At that time, railways were the main form of transport for both bulk goods and passengers. They provided a major focal point for the regional towns, and in the case of Quairading, the location of the railway station in the town centre, but facing the northern part of the town, encouraged the development of retailing businesses to be placed along Heal Street. In fact, the businesses not located on the north side of the railway line found that they had to relocate in order to survive (Ludbrook, 2003). The connection of Quairading to the railway network was of vital importance to the future of the town. As noted by Ludbrook (2003),

Without the railway, it is uncertain whether the townsite of Quairading (gazetted on 7 August 1908) would have been established at its present location or even whether it would have been established at all. It was the railway that ensured Quairading's future and, apart from the encouragement it gave to those wishing to take up land, it also brought commercial entrepreneurs such as Jim Hagerty and his wife who built the Quairading Hotel (begun by Jim's brother William Hagerty) to service settler's needs" (Ludbrook, 2003, p. 98).

THE QUAIRADING HOTEL

A hotel was constructed by William Hagerty (aka Haggerty) and his brother James at Lots 19 and 20, on the corner of Cubbine road and Heal street.² It opened in 1910 and was described at the time as follows,

"The Quairading Hotel, a fine commodious two storey building has recently been completed and is under the personal direction of Mr and Mrs Hagerty" (Eastern Districts Chronicle, 1910, cited in Eaton, 1979 p. 88.).

James J. Hagerty arrived in WA from Tasmania with the ambition of making his fortune on the Goldfields at Kalgoorlie. However, he soon turned to retailing, opening a butcher's shop, and then selling water. He acquired a condensing plant and made good money selling water, which at the time was in very short supply due to the absence of any natural water in the Goldfields. With the money he made in the Kalgoorlie water business, he was able to purchase a farm at Narrogin, a Wheatbelt town located 192 kilometres southeast of Perth. He had sufficient money to allow him to build the Quairading Hotel (Ludbrook, 2003). The hotel has survived to the present day (see Figure 10) and is an impressive example of an early federation era building. James Hagerty held the Publican's General Licence for the hotel. However, while he was the owner of the hotel, he was contracting people to operate as the licensee. For example, on 19 August 1910, George Newman, a resident of York, made an application for the licence stating that James Hagerty had agreed to transfer the licence to him, and that he would move from York to take up residence in the Quairading Hotel along with his wife and family (EDC, 1910).

¹ Reserve Bank of Australia Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator.

² James Hagerty was referred to as J. J. Hagerty in contemporary newspapers at that time, but his name has been spelt "Haggerty" by both Eaton (1979) and Ludbrook (2003).

Figure 10: Quairading Hotel



Source: Bahnfreund, (2018).

In his application Mr. Newman declared that he had previously held a Publican's General Licence for the Plympton Hotel, East Fremantle for 6½ years, and the Newmarket Hotel, South Fremantle, for 4½ years (EDC, 1910). Later, in July 1917, a Mr Adair, was operating as the hotel licensee and manager of the hotel, but transferred the license back to James Hagerty (EDC, 1917).

Although George Newman became the licensee, by March 1912, he and James Hagerty ended up in the Licensing Court due to the hotel not having sufficient bedrooms. It was found to lack as many as six bedrooms. At the court hearing, the owners, James Hagerty and his wife, via their lawyer, Mr J. Hourigan, explained that the hotel had not been built to the original plans due to shortages at the time of building materials and water. This revelation upset the Chair of the Licensing Court Mr. W. D. Cowan,

"The Chairman spoke very strongly against the manner in which the hotel had been built in the first instance. The original plans passed by the Court were disregarded. He considered the Court had been flouted" (EDC, 1912, p. 2).

The hearing at the Licensing Court became acrimonious, and following a retirement of the bench to consider the case, the Chair returned to declare that the original licence had been issued on a provisional basis to William Hagerty and then secured by his brother James. The latter had entered into a bond of £176 (approx. \$26,311 in 2024 dollars), to build the hotel in accordance with the original plans (EDC, 1912).

However, an application was subsequently made to have the plans altered and the number of rooms reduced, but this was refused by the Licensing Court. Then, the original plans had somehow disappeared from the Court, perhaps passed back to the architect (a Mr. Giles) or the landlord (James Hagerty) (EDC, 1912).

Although the Court had ordered that the six additional rooms be added, the hotel was built without them thereby flouting the Court's orders. The Court Chair, Mr. Cowan then agreed to renew the licence in order not to penalise George Newman as licensee. However, he stated that he would consider whether James Hagerty would be punished by the forfeiture of the bond (EDC, 1912).

In 1919, James Hagerty was prosecuted by the Local Board of Health for adulterating rum by watering down the spirit strength to 26.52 degrees under proof. The matter was heard in the Quairading Court on 26 November 1919. However, the case was dismissed due to technicalities associated with the management of the evidence, and two other related cases associated with whisky were withdrawn. The case generated a great deal of interest within the local Quairading community at the time (EDC, 1919a). James Hagerty regularly promoted the hotel via the *Eastern Districts Chronicle*. For example, in November 1919 he published an advertisement that read,

"Quairading Hotel, Quairading. J. J. Hagerty Proprietor. The Quairading Hotel is under the personal direction of Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Hagerty, and both residents and visitors may rely on the very best attention in all departments. Extensive Stabling, Accommodation and Attentive Ostler" (EDC, 1919b).

THE QUAIRADING AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY

The Western Australian Agricultural Society, later the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australian (RASWA) was established in 1831 with a foundation membership of 20 farmer settlers. It was created in order to collect and share information about agriculture and farming practices. Additionally, the Society promoted enhanced efficiency in farming and husbandry, using prizes to reward farmers for best practice. Furthermore, it aimed to cultivate friendly relations with the local Aboriginal community (Statham-Drew and Clack, 2018).

By 1900 there were around 40 regional Agricultural Societies located in the WA Wheatbelt that were affiliated with the RASWA. In 1902 the WA Government granted the RASWA a parcel of land in Claremont of 14.2 hectares (35 acres) as a site for the annual agricultural shows. It took until 1913 for Quairading to establish the Quairading and Surrounding Districts Agricultural Society Steering Committee. The following year the Quairading Agricultural Society (QAS) was established. An article published in *The West Australian* newspaper on 20 June 1914 stated,

"A large and representative gathering, numbering upwards of 60 farmers from the surrounding districts of Quairading held a meeting recently for the purpose of forming an agricultural society. Messrs. Angus and Rutherford's motion, that a Quairading and Districts' Agricultural Society should be formed, was accepted unanimously. The rules of the Royal Agricultural Society, with a few alterations, were adopted. Very keen interest was manifested throughout the meeting, which augurs well for the success of the society" (The West Australian, 1914, p. 7).

The Secretary of the QAS wrote to the RASWA in May 1914 seeking permission to become affiliated with the parent body. On 15 June 1914, it also made a formal application to the WA Department of Lands for a grant of land upon which to build a showground. However, it took until 1920 before the first Quairading and Surrounding Districts Agricultural Society show was held (QAS, 2021).

QUAIRADING AGRICULTURAL HALL

Another pre-World War 1 building erected in Quairading was the Quairading Agricultural Hall. The Hall opened in July 1910 with great fanfare. It was located directly opposite the newly built Railway Station. The Minister for Lands and Agriculture James Mitchell MLA officially opened the new building. Also present was Frederick Monger MLA, who, as the local member, was keen to promote the development of the newly emerging town. *The West Australian* newspaper described the building as follows,

“Situated opposite to the railway terminus, the hall stands out as a prominent object in a straggling township which is rapidly assuming a more compact appearance as a result of the extension of the York-Greenhills railway to that place. The hall, which has been constructed of jarrah and iron, is .70 ft. long and 30ft. wide, and the total cost is set. down at £520, to which, the Government have contributed £150” (The West Australian, 1910, p. 4).

The opening of the Agricultural Hall was another sign that the town of Quairading was making steady progress. This was something that Frederick Monger spoke about in his address to the crowd attending the ceremony. In his response to James Mitchell’s speech, Mr. Monger stated that during the opening of the Greenhills to Quairading line in April 1908 he had assured the people of Quairading that he would push for further eastward extension of the railway. Both Parliament and the Government were committed to this expansion, and he believed it would be highlighted in the Governor’s speech on Thursday as a priority project (The West Australian, 1910).

Monger added that recently, the Railway Advisory Board had inspected the Quairading district, and that their report was soon to be publicly available. He expected that a majority of Parliamentary members would endorse the route recommended by the Board. In his view the newly opened Agricultural Hall was anticipated to facilitate ongoing gatherings and promote numerous reunions (The West Australian, 1910).

Others at the opening ceremony spoke of the positive outlook for Quairading and its surrounding district. The increasing volume of wheat being planted each year was hailed as a sign of the growth taking place in the district. The railway line would soon become a commercial success. The speeches by the visiting dignitaries were received with repeated applause and shouts of “Hear, Hear!” (The West Australian, 1910).

Sadly, the Quairading Agricultural Hall was destroyed by a fire on Saturday 8 September 1923 during a movie show taking place in the hall. The film stock used in the projector caught fire (this was a time before safety film) and quickly spread to the wooden building. The crowd in the hall were able to escape, rescuing the piano and much of the furniture (e.g., seating) as they left. However, the hall could not be saved. Fortunately, it did not spread to the adjacent W.A. Bank building next door (EDC, 1923).

THE QUAIRADING POST OFFICE

As Quairading entered the twentieth century it steadily evolved. The opening of the railway link between Greenhills and Quairading, plus the building of the Quairading Hotel and the Agricultural Hall provided a vibrant little community of at least 150 residents. This placed a priority on the establishment of a post office, police station, and school. Writing in the *Eastern Districts Chronicle* published on 13 January 1911 it was explained that a railway stationmaster's house would soon be built and constructed out of brick. In addition, a new school was also to be built, and that a new Post Office had been built and was "quite up to date" (*Eastern Districts Chronicle*, 1911, p. 2). The same article also explained that property values in the district had been improving, and that the farmers were yielding good average harvests. Finally, Quairading also boasted a strong and active tennis club.

Figure 11: Quairading Post Office, built 1927



Source: Tim Mazzarol (2024).

Although a Post Office had been established in Quairading by 1911, the current Post Office was not constructed until 1927. In March 1920, the Deputy Postmaster General announced a new Post Office building for the town. They were negotiating with the State Government to buy Lots 80 and 81 at Jennaberring Road and McLennan Street (EDC, 1920). In July 1924 the Deputy Postmaster General Mr. J. J. Lloyd stated that approval was granted for the construction of a brick Post Office building on the site at a cost of £2,141 (approx. \$214,588 in 2024 dollars) (*Avon Gazette*, 1924).



The Quairading Post Office is understood to have been built in 1927. As shown in Figure 11, the building is made of red brick and has a corrugated iron hipped roof. The symmetrical Jennaberring Street frontage features an entry on each side and three central windows. Its design was similar to many other post offices built during the 1920s in the Wheatbelt. The presence of the Post Office in the town provided access to a wide variety of services, as well as the reliable movement of letters and parcels. In the early 1980s, post offices statewide were privatised. The Quairading Post Office still handles postal services and also operates the Quairading Library, maintaining its community role (inHerit, 2017).

THE QUAIRADING POLICE STATION

As the population of the Quairading district grew it became apparent that a permanent police presence was required. There was a loss of goods left at the railway station “siding” either in the station’s corrugated iron shed or simply left lying on the ground if they could not be housed. Goods that went missing were often viewed as having been taken by mistake, or as having been stolen. There was also concern over the presence of “undesirables” within the town, who had arrived on the train (Eaton, 1979).

The nearest police station was in Beverley, approximately 53 km from Quairading. Police patrols from Beverley visited Quairading by road on an irregular basis, and the QPA felt that a permanent police presence in the town was required (Eaton, 1979).

In August 1909 the QPA wrote to the Colonial Secretary, Mr. J. D. Connolly in Perth requesting that a permanent Police Constable be based in Quairading in order to protect goods, and the community in general. As stated in their letter,

“Lately there has been some very undesirable characters around about and there have been cases of goods being missed from the siding. Also, note the fact that there are two banks (National and W.A.) established here now in Quairading. Your obedient servant, W. J. Vigus, Secretary” (Eaton, 1979, p. 88).

This request from the QPA was referred to the District Police Officer to investigate and report back to the WA Commissioner of Police. His report was provided by 20 September 1909 stating,

“Quairading consists of 150 persons, one hotel, two banks (National and W. A.), one general store, one blacksmith shop, one carpenter, one baker’s shop. For about sixty miles around is being quietly settled by suitable class of people, all of whom appear to be prosperous and well behaved and well pleased with the area. There are no provisions made by the Railway Department for storing goods, which are dumped off the trucks and exposed until the owners come in to collect. Hence there is a certain amount of stolen goods.”

“The two Bank Managers reported the Hotel to be well run by Mr Hegarty, but owing Police being so far away and undesirables on the run from the police coming in, no matter how well run a Hotel is when in the out blocks and no police, trouble commences and is a happy hunting ground for undesirables. Such is Quairading at the moment. However, with further anticipated railway development in hand, would suggest better police protection to come from York twice weekly by train, and Beverley to visit by road when necessary” (Eaton, 1979, p 89).



The response to the QPA by the Under Secretary Mr. F. D. North, arrived in October 1909. It dismissed the request for a permanent police station and opted instead for the increased police patrols from York and Beverley as recommended by the District Police Officer's report. Any action on a permanent police station in Quairading was to be deferred until the railway extension to connect with the Eastern Goldfields Railway line. This response was not well received by the Quairading community who, in April 1911, organised a petition that they sent to the WA Commissioner of Police requesting that their original request be reconsidered in order to address criminal activity in the town (Eaton, 1979). This action prompted the Police Commissioner to task a Superintendent Lawrence to investigate the matter. He reported that that while the town had around 150 people including children, the overall district had a population of around 700, mostly engaged in farming. He also identified a potential site for the police station (Eaton, 1979).

This was a busy time for the Colonial Secretary who was responsible for the WA Police Force. During 1911 at least eight new police stations were opened across the Wheatbelt, largely in response to the growth of the farming community that were building towns, which were now being connected by railway (Albany Advertiser, 1911). On 25 July 1911 a rudimentary police station was opened in Quairading, with Constable G. H. Hulme (No. 339) appointed to man the post. He became quickly involved in addressing unruly behaviour, in September 1911 he charged two men for striking each other. The overall workload soon grew and Constable Hulme was frequently absent from the town for lengthy periods on patrol around the district. In August 1912, a second policeman, Constable G. Jones (No. 826) was posted to Quairading, along with Police Horse Zoles (PH 322), who both policemen used for patrolling (Eaton, 1979). According to Eaton (1979),

"It is understood from the early settlers that Constable Hulme resided in a tent, pitched behind the railway sheds, and that he tied his offending citizens up to a big log for a short time. The story goes that one such person got thirsty and being a strong fellow, he lifted his log up and carried it under his arm across the railway tracks. On entering the hotel, he rested it on the bar and ordered a long drink. On serving the drink the barman was more than startled to see a snake crawling out of the log. Constable Hulme had a very busy time on his arrival, establishing order in the town and surrounding area. His justices were in demand several days a week" (Eaton, 1979, p. 89).

QUAIRADING'S SCHOOLS

As rural settlement spread across the Wheatbelt during the 1890s and early years of the twentieth century, the number of children living in these districts increased. By 1897 around twelve thousand children were attending government schools across WA. However, this number had more than doubled by 1908. Quairading's school aged population also grew steadily from none to five pupils over the same period. Population growth continued and by 1920 there were eleven small government schools scattered throughout the district (Ludbrook, 2003).

The expansion of the government school system across the Wheatbelt was an outcome of the passage of the *Public Education Act 1899* (WA), which offered free, secular, co-educational, and compulsory education for all children aged six to fourteen years. It was a significant development by the WA Government, and one that proved popular with the rural community.

As Ludbrook (2003) explained,

“No settler complained about such a law. What they often felt compelled to complain about however was their inability to avail themselves of this right – a right the city dweller took for granted” (Ludbrook, 2003, p. 133).

The presence of a government school in the town was recognised by the community as a major attraction for new settlers. The first school to open in the district was at Doodenanning on 6 May 1907. This was a frustration for the community at South Caroling who had been lobbying the WA Education Department to open a school in their town for more than two years. Nevertheless, their school was duly opened on 2 September the same year (Ludbrook, 2003).

The South Caroling government school quickly established itself as a focal point for community activities. For example, on 20 December 1907, it was the centre of a major social function to celebrate the end of the school year and the start of Christmas. As outlined in the *Beverley Times*,

“The social committee is working in conjunction with the school master to ensure a successful evening. A good programme is being compiled. The ladies are required to provide refreshments, and the charge of admission for gentlemen will be 1 shilling. The proceeds will be devoted towards the prize fund” (Beverley Times, 1907, p. 3).

During the following year, the South Caroling government school was the meeting site for the South Caroling Progress Association, who agreed to form a South Caroling Agricultural Society and hold annual shows commencing in October 1909, on land adjacent to the school (EDC, 1908).

The roll out of government schools across the district took time and left many people within the district unhappy with the time taken. For those who had the financial resources, a boarding school in one of Perth’s private schools was an option. However, for those less fortunate, they had to either travel to where they could attend an existing school, while continuing to write letters to the Education Department or local member of parliament, usually via their local Progress Association, seeking to secure a schoolhouse.

ON THE DAWN OF A NEW ERA, 1913

By 1913 the community of Quairading had become firmly established. The railway extension had also been completed by July that year, connecting Quairading to Bruce Rock which then connected to the Merredin to Narrogin railway line (Tilley, 1998). On 17 March of 1913, the construction workers from the WA Railways Department who were completing the line extension from Quairading to Bruce Rock, held a St Patrick’s Day Ball and raised money for Catholic Priest Rev. Father More Hallinan. A sum of £26 (approx. \$3,887 in 2024 dollars), was presented to the priest by local resident Charles Kirkwood who had been elected to Chair the event. In presenting the money Mr. Kirkwood stated,

“The presentation he said was a gift from the employees of the Railway Construction and the people of Quairading to express their appreciation of the good work done by Fr. Hallinan, and a small but earnest endeavour to help him to meet the great expense incurred in travelling such an immense district” (WA Record, 1913, p. 16).

In response Rev. Father Hallinan expressed his gratitude and appreciation of the gift, and related numerous humorous and pathetic incidents associated with his engagement with the railway workers, both in WA and Victoria. He thanked the railway workers and the people of Quairading of their support for his work, which included many people who were non-Catholics. He also noted that the community had provided him with a “good horse” and that,

“... he hoped that on the occasion of his next visit they would be able to admire with pleasure the investment of their golden gift” (WA Record, 1913, p. 16).

On 17 April 1913 the community of Quairading celebrated the season with a Harvest Ball, which was held in the Quairading Agricultural Hall. The women dressed in “harvest” or “fancy” dress, with many covered in flowers such as poppies, roses, and a range of colourful ensembles. Live music was provided by local musicians Messrs. Hardwick and Harris from Jacob’s Well. Prizes were given for the best costume, and for the best “lady waltzer” (EDC, 1913a, p. 5).

In May 1913 a local man John Young was severely burnt when he was out camping at Cox’s Well along with the Quairading Publican George Newman, and a third man from the district. They were travelling from Quairading to Corrigin and had stopped for the night. George Newman had given Mr. Young a bottle of whisky. At 2AM the next morning the group were awakened with calls that John Young was “on fire”. It seems that the whisky had spilled and ignited with a naked flame. He was taken to the York Hospital but died of his injuries. The Coronial Inquiry found that Mr. Young had died from the burns and that it was an accident (EDC, 1913b).

By October 1913, Constable G. H. Hulme from the Quairading Police Station delivered a report to the Government statistician on the situation in Quairading stating,

“The rain came rather late this season, but owing to good rain having subsequently fallen, the crops are looking remarkably well, particularly on land that has been fallowed. This year there is a greater acreage sown than previously, and the present indications are that a bountiful harvest is practically assured” (EDC, 1913c, p. 5).

Finally, in December 1913 Quairading was hit by a massive thunderstorm that unroofed houses and sheds and knocked down trees. Although only 39 points (13.76 mm) of rain were registered, the storm delivered giant hail stones. This impacted the standing crops and did significant damage to the wheat crop. Several farmers had most of their crops destroyed (Daily News, 1913).

It was a devastating way to end the year. However, the year that followed saw the outbreak of the Great War, the end of Empires, and the emergence of a significant increase in co-operative enterprises across the Wheatbelt, which included the 1916 establishment of the Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative Company Ltd.

CHAPTER 3: THE CO-OPERATIVE'S EARLY YEARS

In the post-federation era, Quairading's economy was predominantly centered on agriculture. However, the WA agricultural sector experienced considerable fluctuations during this period. From 1903 to 1914, the sector expanded steadily. However, in 1914, a severe drought significantly impacted agricultural production, coinciding with the onset of the First World War. These factors resulted in an approximate 80 percent decline in grain production that year. Despite this initial setback, the agricultural sector recovered with assistance from the State Government and a substantial 90 percent increase in wheat prices from 1914 to 1930 (Wilson, Layman & Christmas, 2004).

The Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Company Ltd. (QFCC) was established on 23 December 1916 at a meeting held in the Quairading Agricultural Hall. This meeting was organised by the local branch of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association (FSA), and Chaired by Mr. T. H. Argus, who was the Chair of the Quairading FSA. The meeting was attended by around twenty local farmers, and Mr. J. McGregor from the Westralian Farmers Ltd. (QFCC, 1916). Mr. McGregor, and many of the managers from Westralian Farmers Ltd., were keen advocates for the co-operative enterprise. Following its foundation in 1914, Westralian Farmers Ltd., had actively engaged in the creation of farmer-owned co-operatives across the Wheatbelt, which would become the local distributors, suppliers and agents for the company.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE WA CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

To understand the historical context within which the QFCC was established it is necessary to look briefly at the evolution of the Co-operative movement in WA. Co-operative and mutual enterprises (CMEs) were established in Britain and Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Mazzarol, 2024). The CME concept was brought to Australia during the colonial era to address economic and social issues (Patmore & Balnave, 2018). In 1828, Sydney saw its first friendly society offering medical and pharmaceutical services (Exley, 1936). Consumer co-operatives based on the Rochdale Society model began in Brisbane, Australia in 1859 (Balnave & Patmore, 2012).

The first co-operative in WA was the Albany Co-operative Society Ltd., founded in 1867 by P&O Agent William Carmalt Clifton. A consumer co-operative, its establishment was motivated by high prices and store credit charges demanded from local retailers (Baskerville et al., 2022). At that time, there was no colonial legislation specifically for co-operatives, so the Albany Co-operative had to be registered under the *Joint Stock Companies Ordinance 1858*. In 1869, a second consumer co-operative, the Perth Co-operative Society Ltd., was established. Like its Albany counterpart, it sold general merchandise, mainly drapery and clothing (Baskerville, 2019).

The Northam Co-operative Flour Mill Co. Ltd., a producer co-operative (where the members were grain producers supplying the enterprise), was founded in 1873 near York, and operated until 1875 when workplace accidents led to its closure and sale to a private buyer. Around the same time the Perth Co-operative Society Ltd. traded successfully until it was placed into voluntary liquidation in 1879 (Baskerville, 2019). The Albany Co-operative operated until 1885 before also entering voluntary liquidation (Baskerville et al., 2022).

Despite these early struggles with consumer and producer co-operatives in WA, the community maintained a strong 'co-operative spirit' (Baskerville, 2019). The passage of the *Co-operative and Provident Societies Act 1903* (WA) marked a significant progress in the regulation of these enterprises by providing a legislated framework for co-operatives in the state. This legislation, one of the first outside the UK within the British Empire, faced delays from 1897 to 1903 due to concerns over poor management practices in friendly societies (Baskerville, 2019).

This new legislation in WA codified guidelines for co-operatives, including a ban on them providing banking services, a required minimum of seven members, tighter governance rules, the addition of "Society Limited" to their corporate names, and the creation of a State Registrar to oversee them (Baskerville, 2019). The formation of co-operatives in early twentieth century WA was significantly influenced by the contributions of a few individuals dedicated to the co-operative movement. They received support from organisations such as the FSA, which is now known as the Western Australian Farmers' Federation (WAFF, 2012). These organisations recognised that cooperative action provided strength in achieving shared objectives.

One of the most influential people within the WA co-operative movement was Charles Walter Harper (1880-1956), commonly known as 'Walter'. He was the eldest son of settlers Charles and Fanny Harper neé Drummond. Walter grew up on the family farm at Guildford where the focus was on viticulture and horticulture. The family property was Woodbridge Estate, upon which they built a magnificent home, Woodbridge House. Like his father, Walter Harper specialised in fruit growing, and the management of the family estate as he grew to adulthood. He also had a strong passion for co-operatives and played a significant role in establishing producer co-operatives in WA during the years 1912-1913 (Smith, 1983; Baskerville, 2021).

Walter Harper also played a significant role in the longer-term development of the co-operative sector in WA when he proposed the establishment of what was to become the Westralian Farmers Ltd. Although the FSA was essentially a political lobbying organisation, Harper saw the potential for a co-operative company that would provide the WA farmers with a collectively owned business that could provide economic benefits. Harper submitted this proposal to an FSA meeting in March 1913 (Baskerville, 2019).

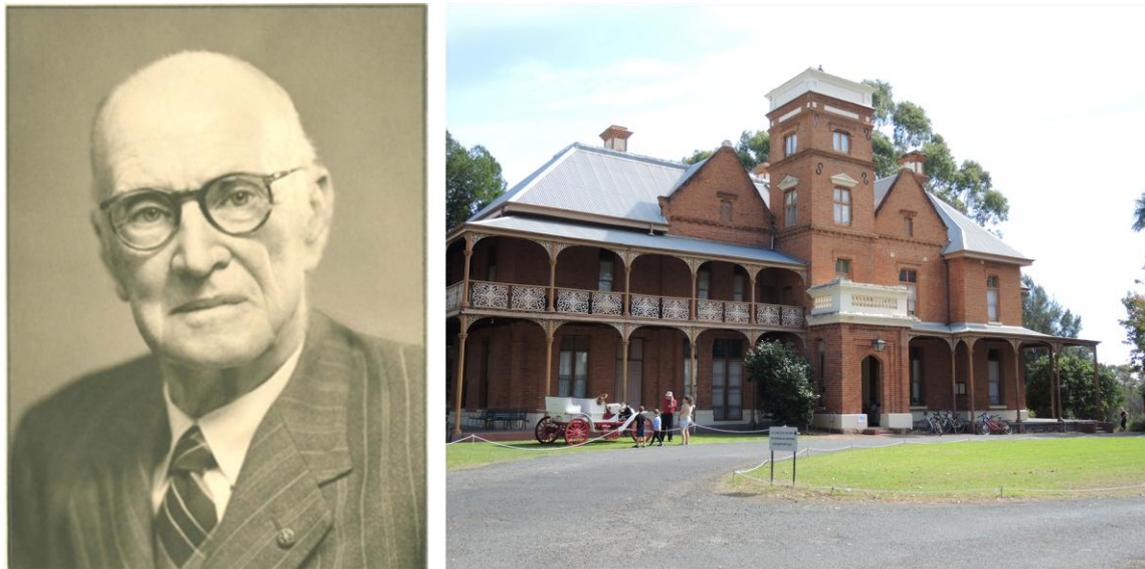
This led to the foundation of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. (the term Co-operative was not included in the name until 1946) (Smith, 1983). The new company was established on 27 June 1914, and incorporated under the *Companies Act 1893* (WA). It quickly became a very successful company and, as noted above, moved rapidly to establish a network of farmer-owned co-operatives throughout the Wheatbelt. It was still actively engaged in establishing producer co-operatives in the 1960s when it was responsible for the creation of the Ord River District Co-operative (ORDCO) in 1963 (Graham-Taylor, 1978). Now known as Wesfarmers Ltd., the company demutualised in November 1984 and has continued to grow into a diversified publicly listed corporation that turned over more than \$43.5 billion in 2023, and employed around 120,000 people (Wesfarmers, 2023).

Walter Harper served as Chair of Wesfarmers from 1921 to 1953. In addition to helping found Wesfarmers, Harper also played a key role in the establishment of The Co-operative Federation of Western Australia (Co-ops WA), in 1919. He was the inaugural Chair of that organisation.

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd. – Cornerstone of our community

Figure 12: Charles Walter Harper and Woodbridge House



Sources: C W. Harper (Wesfarmers, 1921); Woodbridge House (Evad37, 2019).

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE QUAIRADING FARMERS' CO-OPERATIVE CO. LTD.

As noted earlier, the QFCC was launched at the FSA meeting held in Quairading on 22 December 1916. The keynote speaker at the meeting was Mr. J. McGregor from Wesfarmers, who outlined the characteristics of the co-operative business model, and the benefits this type of company offered to its member-shareholders. His address to the Quairading meeting cannot be found within the historical record. However, he gave a similar address to farmers at Beverley in June 1917 which is indicative of the presentation he delivered to the Quairading farmers the previous year. This was reported in the *Beverley Times*,

"Mr. McGregor opened his remarks by stating that the object of co-operation was to enable the farmer to effect necessary economies. He instanced the cost of the middleman to the farming community, which he characterized as unnecessary expenditure. Co-operation also meant increased purchasing power, as it was evident that by uniting together the farmers could obtain much better terms than buying separately as individuals. Another benefit of co-operation was that it provided protection from monopolies. Previous attempts had been made to float co-operative companies, which had failed on account of the fact that a few men with capital had been enabled to buy up the shares and secure a controlling interest. In the present proposal, the maximum number of shares which any one person could hold was strictly limited" (Beverley Times, 1917, p. 2).

McGregor discussed the steady profits generated by the Co-operative established under these arrangements in Dangan during its first five months. He also noted that the decision to form the new co-operative must be made by the majority of farmers in the district.

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After hearing McGregor's speech to the FSA meeting in Quairading the decision was taken to adopt the principles of co-operative trading and move to establish a co-operative company for that purpose. This would be founded on the model proposed by Wesfarmers. Five separate resolutions were agreed upon:

"1st That the share capital shall consist of 1,000 £1 shares.

2nd That the minimum number of shares held by any one person shall not be less than ten.

3rd That sixpence per share shall be paid on allotment.

4th That the directors shall have power to make monthly calls of sixpence per share if necessary.

5th That the name of the Company shall be the Quairading District Co-operative Company Ltd." (QFCC, 1916a, pp. 1-2).³

A provisional board of directors was established comprising Messrs. B. M. Solomon, W. Wishart, and Alex Gordon, with Company Secretary Mr. J. S. White also appointed. The Secretary was tasked to post a notice of the formation of the company. The initial shareholders, who purchased the minimum number of shares at that meeting were: Messrs. W. Wishart, C. W. Heal, T. H. Argus, R. Haythornwaite, C. R. Green, A. Gordon, C. Campbell, J. Haythornwaite, E. W. Shenton, L. A. White, S. Solomon, J. S. White, B. M. Solomon and C. W. Fraser. With this representing a sufficient number of shareholders, the provisional Board and the Secretary were tasked with the registration of the company (QFCC, 1916a).

The provisional board met the following day and Mr. W. Wishart was elected as Chair. The Secretary Mr. J. S. White offered to act as the Manager of the Co-operative either on a salary or commission, stipulating that the salary must not be less than £5 per week (approx. \$621 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1916b). Mr. White served in the dual role of Manager-Secretary throughout 1917, which was not uncommon for rural based co-operatives in the early days.

On 17 March 1917 a general "Statutory" meeting was held, which was well attended. A key item of business was the formal adoption of the Articles of Association under which the Co-operative had been registered. Also agreed was that the Directors should receive a sitting fee of 2 shillings 6 pence (approx. \$14.70 in 2024 dollars), and the Secretary should be paid 5 shillings (approx. \$29.40 in 2024 dollars) for all Board meetings attended (QFCC, 1917b).

The meeting also voted in the first board of directors. Nominations were listed and each of the participating members marked their ballot cards which were collected and scrutinized anonymously. After the votes were counted, the first board of the Co-operative comprised the following persons: Messrs W. Wishart (Chair), J. P. Walters, F. L. Wickstead, B. M. Soloman, S. C. Dall, C. W. Fraser, and W. A. Cook, In addition to the appointment of the Directors, the meeting also formally endorsed the appointment of Mr. J. S. White as Managing Secretary (QFCC, 1917b).

³ 12 pence = 1 shilling; 20 shillings = £1 pound.

In addition, the meeting discussed what the qualifications were for shareholder-members of the Co-operative. Mr. C. R. Green asked if it was mandatory for the shareholders to be farmers, or could a shopkeeper purchase shares? The Chair, Mr. Wishart responded that he felt it was not advisable for shares to be issued to non-farmers. Although he stated that the decision was up to the board of directors to say who should hold shares in the Company (QFCC, 1917b).

Other matters addressed were the decision that the Co-operative should purchase a quantity of bluestone for sale to the members. It was also noted that due to the war, a decision had been made by the British Imperial Government to restrict the export of apples from Australia to England. This was causing hardship for apple growers in the State and so a decision was made for the Managing Secretary Mr. White to purchase apples from these growers and sell them to the members. This led to a resolution for the Managing Secretary to also purchase potatoes from local growers who were unable to export their crops. Finally, the meeting decided to establish a registry of farm workers within the district, and a noticeboard was to be exhibited where farmers could advertise their items for sale, or post requests for items they wished to acquire (QFCC, 1917b).

At the board meeting held after the general meeting, it was agreed that Mr. White should carry out the roles of both Manager and Secretary, and that a total of three directors was sufficient to form a quorum for the board meetings (QFCC, 1917b). At a subsequent board meeting held on 24 March 1917, Mr. White was tasked with the responsibility of opening a bank account for the Co-operative at the W. A. Bank branch in Quairading. The Managing Secretary Mr White and Chair Mr. Wishart would be the two signatories required for all transactions on the bank account (QFCC, 1917c).

The need for the Co-operative to secure its own premises was also discussed at that meeting. However, it was decided that the agreement Mr. White had secured with a Mr. J. B. Harris was satisfactory for the present. However, Mr. White was tasked to make enquiries and obtain prices of suitable blocks of land upon which the Co-operative might build a store and storage facilities (QFCC, 1917c).

In addition, it was agreed that a 10% handling fee be charged on the supply and distribution of fruit. Furthermore, the meeting resolved to notify all the surrounding Co-operative Companies that the QFCC would now be responsible for all agencies within the district of Quairading, and that Wesfarmers be notified of the decision, and to cancel all existing agencies in the district and have them transferred to the Co-operative. The printing of multiple copies of the Articles of Association was also agreed, so as to make these available to the directors. The meeting also agreed to purchase a vehicle (horse buggy) for the Secretary-Manager to use, and to find a horse able to pull it, with the Co-operative providing feed for the animal (QFCC, 1917c).

MANAGING THE ANNUAL WHEAT HARVEST

In 1913 the Grain Advisory Board had recommended the adoption of bulk grain handling and storage, which was already well-established in Canada and the United States. During 1914, the Canadian company John Metcalf & Co., were contracted by the Commonwealth Government to undertake a review of Australia's system of grain handling and storage. The report recommended

that Australia adopt a bulk grain handling and storage system. They highlighted the lower cost per tonne and significant efficiency gains of bulk handling and storage compared to the use of jute bags (Ayris, 1999).

In November 1917 Wesfarmers was appointed by the WA Government to be responsible for the handling of the annual wheat harvest. The bid for the grain handling role was presented by Wesfarmers, using the network of farmer-owned co-operatives that they had helped to establish across the Wheatbelt. This appointment was under the State Wheat Marketing Scheme, with Wesfarmers winning the contract over private agents Louis Dreyfus & Co., James Bell & Co., John Darling & Son, and Dalgety & Co. Ltd. Wesfarmers successful bid was due to their competitive handling charges, and the fact that they represented a network of farmer-owned co-operatives. The contract involved the management of grain receivals, weighing, sampling, loading trucks, storage, and the maintenance and issue of grain supply records to the producers (Northam Advertiser, 1917).

This wheat handling contract offered an important service for the farmer-shareholders of regional co-operatives like QFCC. The opportunity to secure this contract was well-understood and at a board meeting on 21 January 1917 the Managing Secretary Mr. White, raised his concerns that the sites for stacking the grain harvest at the Quairading Railway Station were unsatisfactory and that action was needed to create better conditions. The QFCC Board endorsed his concerns and approved appropriate action being taken (QFCC, 1917a).

Securing the commitment of shareholders to supply the Co-operative with their grain so that QFCC could store and handling the wheat crop under its agency with Wesfarmers was a priority. This involved writing to all farmers in the district asking them to promise their wheat to the Co-operative for handling and storage. Letters were circulated during July 1917. During this period there was a degree of negotiation, and at times disputation, over the “rights” that the network of farmer owned co-operatives had to receive the wheat crop. Much depended on the proximity of the farmer to a railway siding. Where a farmer’s closest railway siding within the Co-operative’s district the matter was rarely in dispute. However, if a farmer could deliver their grain more cost-efficiently to a siding used by another co-operative, the matter could become contentious.

EXPANDING THE RANGE OF SERVICES

From its establishment the QFCC was focused on expanding its range of services. In April 1917 one of the founding Directors Mr. B. M. Solomon visited Perth on behalf of the Co-operative and made contact with a wide range of companies for which the QFCC sought to secure an agency agreement. He reported back to the Board, delivering a comprehensive statement of his findings (QFCC, 1917f).

During his visit to Perth, he held negotiations with Wesfarmers in relation to grain handling, real estate, stock and insurance agencies opportunities. He also met with the local representatives of farm machinery manufacturers, International Harvester Co. from the United States, Massey-Harris Co. from Canada, and H. V. McKay & Co. from Australia. His, visit also included discussions with Harris Scarfe Co., the Melbourne-based supplier of homewares, linen, apparel, kitchenware, and electrical goods (QFCC, 1917f). By June 1917 the Co-operative had received mostly positive

responses from these and other suppliers of agricultural and domestic goods. However, it was decided that finalisation of any agency agreements should be postponed until after a conference of co-operative companies, organised by Wesfarmers, had been held (QFCC, 1917d).

Mr. Solomon remained active in his search for business opportunities for the QFCC. For example, in July 1917 he was reporting to the Board about an opportunity for the Co-operative to establish a bacon factory in Quairading. He had been corresponding with the State Minister for Railways, Water Supply and Industries, The Hon. James Mitchell MLA, and in direct discussions with the local Upper House Member, The Hon. Charles Farquharson Baxter MLA⁴, who was “sympathetic” towards the idea but could do nothing at present. It was agreed that the QFCC Chair, Mr. W. Wishart and Mr. B. M. Solomon make direct representations to the Minister in relation to the matter (QFCC, 1917e). In July 1917 the QFCC received positive responses from both the Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) and National Mutual Life Assurance Society (NML) in relation to the Co-operative becoming an agency for both insurance mutuals. The Managing Secretary Mr. White was asked to write to the AMP and NML with the aim of the QFCC becoming an agency of both insurers (QFCC, 1917e).

OUTCOME OF THE CO-OPERATIVES’ CONFERENCE

The Wesfarmers’ Co-operatives’ Conference was held on 27 June 1917 and at the QFCC Board meeting on 7 July 1917, Chair M. W. Wishart and Director Mr. B. M. Solomon reported on what they felt was a positive outcome for the Co-operative. The most important issues arising from the conference were:

- A universal system of accounting and bookkeeping was to be adopted across all WA co-operatives.
- The principles of co-operative trading were affirmed.
- A standard system of the payment of bonuses was to be adopted, which was based on the volume of business transacted with the Co-operative by the member, and that payment be made in the form of bonus shares, with dividends paid at a rate of 7 per cent on paid-up capital.
- Wesfarmers were securing the sole agency rights for the distribution of farm machinery, and the regional farmer-owned co-operatives were to become sub-agents. A locally based Committee of regional farmer-owned co-operatives was being established to which QFCC would become a member.
- A proposal for the regional network of farmer-owned co-operatives to form an Association was not supported. However, the ability of the regional network of farmer-owned co-operatives to become shareholders in Wesfarmers and via this become members with voting rights and control in Wesfarmers was approved (QFCC, 1917e).

⁴ Minister without portfolio from 28 June 1917 to 17 April 1919).

This demonstrated the nature of the Wesfarmers business model, which had essentially become the parent co-operative company that had built a regional network of sub-agents, each an independent self-governing co-operative business, reliant to a high degree on access to agency rights and supply contracts.

CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP, MANAGER ISSUES AND PERMANENT PREMISES

In 1918 Mr. W. Wishart retired from the role of Chair, and was replaced by Mr. B. M. Solomon, who continued in this role until 1920. The dual role of Managing Secretary was changed following Mr. J. S. White's resignation and who was replaced by Mr. G. E. Cliff. However, Mr. Cliff only held the role for a few months before he too resigned.

It is recorded in the board minutes of 3 May 1918 that the Chair Mr. Solomon, had found a shortfall of £20 (approx. \$2,205 in 2024 dollars) in the Company's cash account. When Mr. Cliff was called upon to explain the discrepancy, he,

"... made explanations which were vague and quite unsatisfactory" (QFCC, 1918d, p. 49).

This led to Mr. Cliff tendering his resignation at the 3 May meeting. A resolution of the board stated that,

"Mr. Cliff be asked to amend his Resignation from 31st May to 17th May 1918. That all books of the Company be handed over for Audit. No further Salary to be paid to Mr. Cliff until date of amended resignation. That the amount of deficit be deducted from salary. Mr. Cliff to give receipt in full. Chairman to take possession of Company and Books, and arrange Audit of same" (QFCC, 1918d, p. 49).

The minutes also show that a further resolution passed, which stated that once Mr. Cliff accepted the aforementioned resolution, he be immediately suspended (QFCC, 1918d).

Mr Cliff's departure led the board to seek a replacement manager. Initially, the manager role was offered to a Mr. H. M. Herring. However, after an interview and offer from the board for his appointment, he declined the offer. As a result, Mr. S. C. Dall, a Director of QFCC, assumed the role of secretary, a position he held until 1920. The role of manager was filled by Mr. W. H. Phippard in June 1918, and he served in this role until 1919 (QFCC, 1918c; 1919e).

The QFCC was still searching for suitable premises to purchase and use as its store and administration centre. Offers of suitable premises had been made to the Board, with the arrangements for initial rental and subsequent purchase. In May 1918 the Co-operative was in communication with a Mr. Hogan over the leasing and subsequent purchase of premises referred to as "Hogan's Building". These negotiations had been underway for months. However, at the Board meeting held on 17 May 1918, the decision was made to reject Mr. Hogan's terms of lease for the building (QFCC, 1918a).

An alternative was agreed with Mr. J. B. Harris who owned the building that the Co-operative had been occupying since its establishment in 1916. A weekly rental of 25 shillings (approx. \$138 in 2024 dollars), and a future purchase at a sum of £500 (approx. \$55,126 in 2024 dollars) was agreed (QFCC, 1918b).



Figure 13: Co-op store Heal Street 1919 and 2024



Sources: Upper (Quairading Agricultural Society, 2021); Lower (QFCC, 2024).

At the board meeting held on 27 July 1918, the QFCC directors approved the leasing of Lot 17 for 99 years at an annual rental of £2 per annum (approx. \$220.50 in 2024 dollars) on unimproved capital value of £50 (approx. \$5,514 in 2024 dollars) subject to the lot being occupied and used for the purpose of a Co-operative store, within the next twelve months (QFCC, 1918e). Building of the new store commenced in October 1918 and telephone line was connected to the Company's office (QFCC, 1918f).

Despite the decision to retain the building provided by Mr. Harris, the QFCC Board decided that it needed a dedicated building that would meet its needs over the longer term. At the Board meeting of 15 February 1919, the decision was made to construct a new building (QFCC, 1919a). A subsequent Special Board meeting took place on 1 March 1919 to discuss the new building (QFCC, 1919b). In discussing the new building project, the Chair Mr. B. M. Solomon reported,

"The Chairman explained that the meeting had been called to consider the offer of Prince's Building. The Committee reported that there was approx. half-a-ton of iron in the building all being of various lengths and it was thought difficult to work same into anything like a decent structure without considerable waste. Further, members present were of the opinion that the decision of the previous meeting to build a 30 x 40 structure was too big and agreed to invite tenders for a building 21 x 30 x 11. The Secretary was instructed to write to the

timber merchants requesting quotes for material on trucks and also building erected” (QFCC, 1919b, p. 76).

By April 1919 the QFCC Board had received a tender for £166 (approx. \$16,089 in 2024 dollars) to construct a building of 21 x 30 yards with a front verandah and to include all costs of materials, construction and fittings. This tender was accepted (QFCC, 1919c). Figure 13 shows the original Co-operative store located in Heal Street in 1919 and the Co-operative store in 2024. In 1927, the QFCC was able to secure freehold title over the Heal Street site for the sum of £70 (approx. \$6,937 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1927).

THE GREAT WAR ENDS AND THE WHEATBELT EXPANDS

As the QFCC built a permanent home for itself, the Great War drew to a close and the world made a transition into a new global system. The First World War of 1914-1918 had seen the collapse of the Russian Empire and its replacement with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). In addition, the war had led to the collapse of the Empires of the Turkish Ottomans, the Austro-Hungarians, and the Germans, reshaping the structure of Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

In Australia, the cost of the war had been significant. A total of 416,809 Australians (13.4% of the white male population) volunteered to serve in the First Australia Imperial Force (AIF). Of these soldiers 215,585 (51.7%) became casualties, of whom 63,163 (15%) died (Gammage, 1974). The repatriation of the soldiers who survived the war focused the attention of the State and Federal Governments who promoted ‘soldier settler’ or ‘group settlement’ schemes designed to build up the rural communities and expand the agricultural sector of Australia. This led to an influx of new settlers across the WA Wheatbelt and other areas of the State (Menck, 2022).

The grain handling undertaken by Wesfarmers and its network of farmer-owned co-operatives had responded rapidly to the challenge of managing the wheat harvests of 1917-1918. However, their activities were not without detractors. A review by the Wheat Marketing Royal Commission that was conducted in July 1918 attracted a substantial number of complaints from various sources who expressed criticism of the way in which Wesfarmers had managed grain handling. In a substantial article published in *The West Australian* newspaper on 3 August 1918 Wesfarmers Managing Secretary Henry Joseph Stirling Taylor responded in detail to the many critics (*The West Australian*, 1918).

According to Mr. Taylor the many allegations of Wesfarmers’ “inefficient handling” of the grain harvest were unfounded. He noted that Wesfarmers were no less experienced in grain handling than any other firm, and that much of the problem had been caused by factors that were beyond its direct control. This included the supply of grain in old jute bags that had begun to perish and frequently could not be easily handled. In addition, there were issues of poor-quality wheat that had become damp or infested with vermin. He noted that Wesfarmers had not been able to supply its own new bags and twine, having to rely on old bags and twine in poor condition. When Wesfarmers had been able to supply new bags and twine this problem had not existed (*West Australian*, 1918). He added that,

“He was not, he said, going to claim that no minor mistakes were made, but, in view of the fact that the work was spread over about 302 centres, and many difficulties had necessarily



to be overcome, it would be almost impossible to escape some mistake. As to the evidence given by Mr. Keys, his statements were not correct, and his charge could not be substantiated. An impartial examination of the records would disclose that the operation of the Westralian Farmers, were no more inexperienced during the 1915-16 season than those of the other wheat handling firms. No firm had previously had experience of the best methods to adopt to ensure safe and long storage. He was confident that on examination Mr. Keys's statement that the breaking down of the company's 1915-16 stack had proved to be more costly than those of other firms would prove to be without foundation" (The West Australian, 1918, p. 8).

Mr. Taylor added that the 1916-17 season's grain handling had been made overly challenging due to at least three factors. First, the range of tasks given to Wesfarmers were significantly greater than had been the case in previous seasons. Second, the Wheat Marketing Commission had unduly interfered in the grain handling process. Third, the rival firm Dalgety & Co., retained a monopoly on the agency over inferior wheat. According to Taylor,

"The only sane course to follow in regard to inferior wheat was to adopt that followed in previous years, allowing the acquiring firm to dispose of this class of wheat on the spot. The position to the Westralian Farmers was that the Scheme had 'Strangle Hold' on them. Its attitude was a dog-in-the-manger one. If the company sold at the siding when immediate action was imperative, it was accused of doing so without authority; if it sent forward wheat that got wet, and arrived in a state of fermentation, it was accused of incompetency" (The West Australian, 1918, p. 8).

This reaction from Mr. Taylor came on the heels of a submission Mr. Keys gave to the Royal Commission, which was subsequently published in *The West Australian* newspaper, making numerous accusations of inefficiency and incompetence by Wesfarmers. This had come from Quairading and levelled accusations against the QFCC, all of which were refuted by Taylor (Primary Producer, 1918a). The view from Quairading of these matters was largely in favour of the role Wesfarmers and its network of farmer-owned co-operatives were doing. For example, in letter from the Secretary of the QFCC sent to the *Primary Producer* stated clearly the view from the Co-operative's members stating,

"A representative gathering, with Mr. B. M. Solomon in the chair, was unanimously in favour of co-operative handling of their wheat for the coming season, and expressed their opinion in carrying the following resolution, which has been conveyed to the Premier: - 'Quairading farmers are alarmed at reports regarding attempts made to squash the co-operative federation, and to rely on the National Government to protect the federation. They demand the right to handle their own produce at the siding, depot and seaboard'" (Primary Producer, 1918b, p. 2).

From its establishment in 1916 to the start of a renewed expansion of the WA Wheatbelt, the QFCC had navigated many challenges. These included the Co-operative's engagement with the grain handling program and associated agencies led by Wesfarmers, and the search for a firm homebase from which it could operate and deliver its services. A fitting summary of the QFCC's success was that of an article published the *Nungarin Trayning Mail and Kununoppin Advertiser* in May 1919, which described the benefits of co-operative trading,



“Co-operation in Europe and other older countries is well established, and long since passed the experimental stages, and for that matter this may also be said of the movement in Australasia. Still, there are many who still look askance at what they believe to be an experiment. In many parts of W.A. the farmers co-op, have taken the latter course, with great success to their companies and the shareholders generally.”

“The advantages of the co-operative co. are obvious. All profits, after allowing for working capital, are divided among the shareholders in the way of a certain per cent, of interest on the amount shareholders have paid up on shares, and cash or share bonuses – as may be decided – on a patronage basis, in proportion to the amount of business each shareholder transacts with his company.”

“That means that the shareholder is part and parcel of the whole concern. He can say to himself, that business, those stocks, all partly belong to me. I am one of the clever bricks in that building, and if each shareholder becomes a ‘brick’ and is loyal to his company, he will soon find his loyalty well rewarded” (Nungarin Trayning Mail and Kununoppin Advertiser, 1919, p. 3).

CHAPTER 4: A DECADE OF STEADY GROWTH, 1920-1929

The 1920s saw a revival in agriculture across the WA Wheatbelt, driven by railway construction, tractors and trucks replacing horses, more rural finance, and favourable land and immigration policies. Despite falling wheat prices later in the decade, cultivated land increased. Large-scale land clearing occurred, and while potential salinity issues were identified in 1907, they weren't addressed until much later (Wilson, Layman & Christmas, 2004).

In 1920 the construction of Quairading's Post Office was announced by the Deputy Postmaster, Mr. J. J. Lloyd, with the Commonwealth Government acquiring Lots 80 and 81 in the town for the new building to be located (see Figure 11) (EDC, 1920). Approval of the purchase of the lots for the new Post Office was formally made in July 1924, with a cost of £2,141 (approx. \$214,588 in 2024 dollars) (Avon Gazette, 1924). As noted in Chapter 2, the Quairading Post Office was built in 1927.

In March 1921 the Quairading branch of the Primary Producers' Association (PSA) met to discuss fund raising, with a target of £10,000 (approx. \$980,008 in 2024 dollars). The meeting was chaired by Mr. W. Wishart, the founding chair of the QFCC. Another event in Quairading at this time were plans within the local community to establish a workers' club in the town. Additionally, a dance and social gathering at the Agricultural Hall raised funds for the Children's Hospital (The West Australian, 1921). Finally, in a general summary of the situation in Quairading in 1921 *The West Australian* provided the following description,

"Harvesting is now completely over, and the consequent wheat carting is also drawing to a close. The heavy wagons with their burdens of grain travelling over the light road of the district plays havoc with them, cutting them up and making them both dirty and uncomfortable to other vehicles. A feature of the whole of Quairading district that occasions the road board a good deal of anxiety and makes road building both costly and unsatisfactory is the lack of good gravel for road making and the long distance it has to be carried. The general tone of the township and district is healthy, business is brisk, and new buildings are being erected, this being particularly noticeable on the farms where substantial buildings are replacing the old ones. This district is well supplied with water at present and all classes of stock are, taken on the average, in a very fair order" (The West Australian, 1921, p. 10).

THE RETIREMENT OF MR. W. WISHART

At the annual meeting of the Quairading branch of the FSA held on 30 April 1921, Eric W. Shenton was elected Chair, with Mr. T. H. Argus as Vice Chair. The main topic for discussion was a request to the State Railway Department for temporary reductions in rail freight charges due to the depressed prices that producers were getting for their wool clip. According to the meeting, the Railway Department was making more money in the carriage of wool, hides, skins etc., than the growers (EDC, 1921).

During the evening the FSA held a social function, a feature of which was a valedictory for Mr. W. Wishart and his wife. As noted in the previous chapter, Mr. Wishart was the foundation Chair of the QFCC, and it is clear from this FSA activity that he held a prominent role in the Quairading community.

As reported in the *Eastern Districts Chronicle*,

“For the past sixteen years Mr. Wishart has been a farmer here, being one of the dinkum pioneers, has held the position of vice-chairman for two or three times, and was chairman of the branch and delegate to conference. He was the originator of the February wheat growers’ conference and has been a director of the local co-op, for years and for a time managing director” (EDC, 1921, p. 5).

The event was well-attended and numerous speeches were delivered by those who knew the Wisharts. A gift of a travel rug was presented to the couple. Mr. Wishart responded with what was reported as, “a happy little speech” before supper was served. Following the meal the attendees reportedly had, “a pleasant time spent in tripping the light fantastic toe” (EDC, 1921, p. 5). It should be noted that Mr. Wishart had remained a director of QFCC until 1920.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

In 1920 the Chairperson’s role was transferred from Mr. B. M. Solomon to Mr. S. C. Dall, who had joined the board in 1917 as a founder-director, and who also served as Secretary from 1918 to 1920. He was followed as Chair by Mr. H. R. Simpson (1921-1922), who was subsequently replaced by Mr. J. P. Waters (1922-1923), who was then replaced by Mr. F. S. Jaques (1923-1925), then Mr. J. P. Waters returned to the role (1925-1926), only to be replaced in turn by Mr. T. H. Argus (1926-1927), Mr. S. C. Dall (1927-1928), and then Mr. E. W. Shenton (1928-1930).

This high turnover of Chairpersons contrasted to that of the neighbouring York and District Co-operative Ltd., where the role of Chair was held by Warren Marwick from its establishment in 1917 until his retirement in 1954 (Mazzarol, van Aurich & Baskerville, 2025).

The Co-operative also experienced a degree of turbulence in relation to its management. From 1918 to 1920 the QFCC had three managers, Mr. W. H. Phippard (1918-1919), Mr. E. W. Woods (1919-1920), and Mr. B. M. Solomon (1920). However, in 1920 Mr. E. J. Hadlow was appointed as manager, a position he held until 1925. He was subsequently replaced by Mr. William E. Wishart who served in the role until 1935. Mr W. E. Wishart had also served as Secretary (1922-1924) before handing over that role to Mr. A. Truman (1924-1925), who in-turn was replaced by Mr. A. Power (1925), then Mr. G. F. Jacobs (1925-1931).

This again contrasts with the situation found in the York and District Co-operative Ltd., which had the same Secretary Mr. Gordon Fisher from 1917 to 1941, and same Manager Mr. E. T. Hick, from 1917 to 1922 (Mazzarol et al., 2025). It is unclear why the QFCC experienced such a degree of change within its leadership and management team. However, it was a matter that would emerge again in the 1980s and 1990s.

GENERAL STOREKEEPING

One of the contributions Mr. E. J. Hadlow made as manager was to review the Co-operative’s business activities and make recommendations that it moved to establish itself as a retailer rather than just an agency for Wesfarmers. In 1921 the QFCC made a decision to open a general store within its own premises rather than relying upon the grain handling and agricultural services and equipment agencies it provided on behalf of Wesfarmers.

Initial discussions had taken place between the Co-operative and George Mavros, who owned and operated a general store which he had established in 1910 (Western Mail, 1930). However, his requirements proved unattractive for the QFCC, so it was decided that the Company would open its own general store on its block. A special general meeting of shareholders took place on 29 January 1921, which called upon the shareholders to subscribe to new shares to raise the capital required for the new venture (QFCC, 1921a).

The special general meeting of shareholders was held at the Quairading Agricultural Hall and was chaired by Mr. S. C. Dall. He explained the plan of the board to engage in retailing and the need for the shareholders to be willing to purchase additional shares to help fund this initiative (QFCC, 2021a). The meeting agreed that the Co-operative should commence “general storekeeping” and *The West Australian* reported as follows,

“The Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative Co. held a shareholders’ meeting recently, when the operations of the company were reviewed since the advent of the new manager, Mr. E. J. Hadlow. It was found that the company was making satisfactory progress. It was decided to enter into storekeeping and the manager was authorised to canvas for capital. A satisfactory start was made, 230 shares being applied for during the afternoon” (The West Australian, 1921, p. 10).

However, at the AGM held on 4 June 1921, Mr. S. C. Dall, in his address as Chair, explained that no action had been taken in relation to the Co-operative establishing a general store. He noted that events had changed since the special general meeting in January, which related to Wesfarmers approaching The Co-operative Federation of WA to assume control of wholesale groceries from them. As a result, he asked the shareholders to wait until more was known about the agreement between Wesfarmers and The Co-operative Federation of WA before the QFCC entered into general storekeeping. He asked Mr. B. M. Solomon to address the meeting about these issues (QFCC, 1921b).

In making his address to the shareholders, Mr. Solomon explained that the co-operative companies that comprised the membership of The Co-operative Federation of WA were quite “lax” in their ability to keep the Council of the Federation informed of their activities. This meant that the Council members were kept in ignorance of the co-operatives that they represented. His report led the meeting to pass a resolution stating that,

“A suggestion be made to The Co-operative Federation that they write to all co-operative companies requesting them to get in touch with their representatives and inform them of any matters they may want discussed at Council meetings and for the co-operative companies to hear the report of the conference from their delegates” (QFCC, 1921b, pp. 61-61).

Other matters from the AGM were the resignation of Mr. S. C. Dall as Chair, to be replaced by Mr. H. R. Simpson, and a vote of appreciation from the shareholders to Mr. E. J. Hadlow as manager, and Mr. P. A. Moore, as secretary, in how they had conducted their duties during the previous year. In addition, three new directors, Messrs F. S. Jaques, T. H. Argus, and A. Scott, were elected to the board (QFCC, 1921b).

The Co-operative did eventually open a general store, which included a wide range of departments. For example, by 1929 the QFCC was operating a general store that included Drapery, Groceries and Hardware Departments, fertilisers, and jute bags, as well as providing agencies for Wesfarmers, the Grain Pool of WA, Metters Ltd., (stoves and ovens), Chrysler cars, Fargo trucks, and both general and life insurance (Western Mail, 1930a).

This store also carried a range of goods for farmers such as explosives used in land clearing. However, in November 1921 the QFCC was fined £2/9s (approx. \$240 in 2024 dollars) for a breach of the *Explosives Act* by having 150 lbs (68 kg) of gelignite and 400 detonators on unlicensed premises (BRPCG, 1921).

In September 1928 a decision was made to open a branch store at Yoting, located to the east of Quairading and due south of Mount Stirling (QFCC, 1928). In 1929 the Yoting store was managed by Harry Carter, who married Ms. N. Fitzgerald on 4 April that year. The wedding was attended by representatives from the QFCC, including M. T. H. Argus, who presented the couple with a cheque from the Co-operative as a wedding gift (The West Australian, 1929a).

CHANGES TO THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

Relatively few changes were made to the Co-operative's Articles of Association during the 1920s. However, at the AGM held on 19 June 1920, Chaired by Mr. S. C. Dall, a motion was made to change the Articles of Association to reduce the minimum number of directors required from seven to three. This motion was rejected (QFCC, 1920).

A special general meeting of shareholders was held on 24 March 1923, Chaired by Mr. J. P. Waters, to discuss changes to the Articles of Association. This meeting repealed the existing Articles of Association, and replaced them with new rules (QFCC, 1923a). There is no available record of the reason for these changes or what specifically was changed.

MANAGEMENT OF THE WHEAT HARVEST

A feature of the 1920s was the QFCC's role as a receival agent for Wesfarmers in the annual wheat harvest. For example, in March 1922 the QFCC reported that it had received 90,000 bags of wheat from its suppliers located across Quairading, Badjaling, and Yoting compared to 55,000 bags received during the previous year. However, bushfires were a concern within the district at that time. Despite these challenges the farmers in the Quairading district were actively engaged in land clearing a rate not seen in the previous eight to nine years (The West Australian, 1922).

By December 1925 QFCC reported receiving a total of 26,290 bags, which included 9,981 bags from Quairading, 10,805 bags from Badjaling, and 5,504 bags from Yoting, although more was anticipated (QFCC, 1925a). The following year, in March 1926, the Co-operative reported that it had received a total of 53,443 bags of wheat, with Quairading supplying 16,894 bags, Badjaling 23,147 bags and Yoting 14,402 bags (QFCC, 1926a).

This suggests that the grain harvests in the district were quite good and that the QFCC's role as a receival and handling agent was a significant contribution to the overall wheat production as anticipated by Wesfarmers in its creation of the farmer-owned network of co-operatives.

Figure 14: Sowing wheat bags 1938



Source: State Library of WA

In July 1926 the Co-operative's board decided to contract wheat lumpers to undertake the task of receiving and handling the wheat harvest delivered from the growers in Quairading, Badjaling, and Yoting for whom the QFCC was contracted as an agent of Wesfarmers. A flat rate of 17s/8d per bag was set for both Badjaling and Yoting, and 13s/4d per bag for Quairading. A progress payment of 1s/4d per bag was set with the bags to be loaded into trucks, and 1s/- per bag for bags stacked (QFCC, 1926b).

At the board meeting held on 28 October 1926 questions were raised by Mr. E. W. Shenton as to why there was a price difference between bags handled at Quairading and those handled at Badjaling and Yoting. It was resolved that the manager, William E. Wishart, would arrange for all bags to be priced the same as for Quairading (QFCC, 1926c).

Overall, the wheat handling business proved quite lucrative to the QFCC. As shown in Table 1 the financial distributions made to shareholders during the 1920s were funded in no small part by the fees earned from the wheat handling operations.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND DISTRIBUTIONS, 1920S

Financial management was a key focus of the Co-operative from its inception. For example, a finance committee was established by the QFCC board on 19 May 1917 comprising the directors Messrs. F. L. Wickstead and S. C. Dall (QFCC, 1917d). No financial distributions were made during the years 1916 and 1917. However, due to profits retained by the QFCC in 1918, the board was able to declare that each shareholder would be allowed a reduction of their unpaid portion of share capital as a bonus (QFCC, 1918e).

Full details of the QFCC's financial records were unavailable for the 1920s. However, the annual reports suggest that during the decade, the Co-operative was able to pay dividends and issue bonus shares due to the generation of regular profits. Table 1 provides a summary of these distributions. It can be seen that the first recorded distribution was in 1921 when a dividend of 5 per cent on paid-up capital was paid after some profits were placed in the general reserve. This dividend was raised to 7 per cent in 1922, with a significant sum of retained profit being paid into the Company's reserve fund.

At the AGM of 16 June 1923, Chaired by Mr. J. P. "Jas" Walters, a decision was made for the payment to directors of a sum of 10 shillings in cash for each board sitting replacing a former payment of 5 shillings in bonus shares for each sitting (QFCC, 1923b). In addition, a dividend of 7 per cent on paid-up capital was issued along with £300 (approx. \$29,731 in 2024 dollars) in bonus shares. As can be seen, this was funded from the revenues generated from insurance and wheat handling.

At the AGM of 21 June 1924, Chaired by Mr. F. S. Jaques, it was approved for an additional £1 per month (approx. \$100.23 in 2024 dollars) be paid to the Chair, in order to cover the additional time, they had to devote to the Co-operative (QFCC, 1924). The Co-operative's performance in 2024 was notable, announcing a net profit of £960 (approx. \$96,219 in 2024 dollars), with a rebate of £288 (approx. \$28,866 in 2024 dollars) paid to shareholders. A dividend of 7 per cent on paid up capital was also paid, and £290 (approx. \$29,066 in 2024 dollars) was placed into the reserve fund (Sunday Times, 1924; EDC, 1924).

A similar performance ensued in 1925, with a 7 per cent dividend issued, and £500 (approx. \$50,114 in 2024 dollars) paid into the general reserve. The Co-operative was growing in terms of its operations as general storekeeping grew and a branch store was being planned for Yoting. As a consequence, an extra-ordinary general meeting of shareholders was held on 11 July 1925, Chaired by Mr. J. P. Walters, to authorise the share capital of the Co-operative to be increased from 3,000 £1 shares to 4,000 £1 shares by the issuing of an additional 1,000 shares of £1 per share (QFCC, 1925c).

The remainder of the 1920s saw the QFCC paying regular dividends of 7 per cent on paid-up capital, as well as issuing cash bonus shares for the years 1927 to 1929. It was a time of growth and optimism. In addition to establishing its general store in Heal Street, and a branch store in Yoting, the Co-operative also upgraded the facilities, connected a telephone line, installed a safe in the main office, expanded its range of retail departments and agencies, and purchased its own company car.

Table 1: Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Financial Distributions 1920-1929

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1920	No payments made.
1921	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital with profits transferred into the general reserve fund.
1922	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% on paid-up-capital with profits of £300 (approx. \$30,414 in 2024 dollars) transferred into the general reserve fund.
1923	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% on paid-up-capital and £300 (approx. \$29,731 in 2024 dollars) in bonus shares be issued and paid from £72 (approx. \$7,135 in 2024 dollars) on insurance, £72 on wheat handling, and £15 (approx. \$1,486 in 2024 dollars) on trading pro-rata of business conducted with the Company during the previous year.
1924	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% on paid-up-capital and £360 (approx. \$36,082 in 2024 dollars) in bonus shares be issued, and £300 placed in the general reserve. A rebate of £288 (approx. \$28,886 in 2024 dollars) was paid.
1925	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% on paid-up-capital with £500 (approx. \$50,114 in 2024 dollars) profits transferred into the general reserve fund, after setting aside funds to pay taxation, depreciation on the company car, and wheat handlers from the previous year. Staff were rewarded with a bonus paid from profits and supervised by the manager Mr. E. J. Hadlow.
1926	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% on paid-up-capital with profits transferred into the general reserve fund.
1927	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% on paid-up-capital with profits of £250 (approx. \$24,774 in 2024 dollars) transferred into the general reserve fund. A further issue of 650 fully paid bonus shares were issued from £150 (approx. \$14,865 in 2024 dollars) on store trading, £100 on insurances (approx. \$9,910 in 2024 dollars), £200 on wheat received (approx. \$19,820 in 2024 dollars), and £200 (approx. \$19,820 in 2024 dollars) on general commissions.
1928	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% on paid-up-capital with profits transferred into the general reserve fund, after a cash bonus of £680 (approx. \$67,389 in 2024 dollars) funded from store trading, £200 (approx. \$19,820 in 2024 dollars), £200 on wheat received (approx. \$19820 in 2024 dollars), and £280 (approx. \$27,748 in 2024 dollars) on general commissions.
1929	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% on paid-up-capital with profits transferred into the general reserve fund, after a cash bonus of £760 (approx. \$73,662 in 2024 dollars).

Sources: QFCC Annual Reports, 1920 to 1929.

As an agent of Wesfarmers, the QFCC was actively involved in livestock sales. This took the form of holding sales within Quairading for the public auction of horses, sheep, cattle and pigs, which owners brought to the sales yards (Sunday Times, 1928; 1929). The town of Quairading had also grown during the decade. In a report published in *The West Australian* in January 1929 a range of buildings then being constructed were described, with a total value of £9,000 (approx. \$872,315 in 2024 dollars (The West Australian, 1929b).

The article summarised the building work with the following statement that placed the QFCC as one of the significant projects being pursued,

“Permits for the construction of buildings worth £9,000 were granted last year by the Quairading Road Board. The most important buildings were additions to the hotel (£4,500), Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative store and residence at Yoting, Shell Co.’s residence, and Bank of New South Wales offices and residence at Dangin (£1,800). The Vacuum Oil Co. is building a depot on the railway yards at Quairading” (The West Australian, 1929b, p. 8).

SUMMING UP THE QFCC IN THE 1920S

The QFCC’s performance during the 1920s can be assessed as very good, with steady growth, and an active, hands-on management by the board of directors, who generally played a significant role, not only in attending the board meetings, but, as in the case of the Chairs, being actively engaged with the businesses in Perth securing agencies, and acting as delegates to the conferences held by Wesfarmers and The Co-operative Federation of WA.

On Saturday, 29 June 1929, the AGM of the QFCC was held at the Road Board Hall in Quairading. The Chair was Mr. E. W. Shenton (who served as Chair from 1928 to 1930), and the meeting was attended by Charles Walter Harper, in his role as Chair of the Westralian Farmers (Wesfarmers) Ltd., along with the Wesfarmers Assistant General Manager, Mr. W. Arnold, and the Member for Guildford, The Hon. William Dartnell Johnson MLC (The West Australian, 1929c). They addressed the meeting.

The Chair, Mr. E. W. Shenton reported that the Co-operative had achieved a record year. It had paid to the shareholders a cash sum of £1,588 (approx. \$153,915 in 2024 dollars) and retained a profit of £1,810 (approx. \$175,432 in 2024 dollars). A dividend of 7 per cent on the paid-up capital was also issued, along with a cash bonus of £760 (approx. \$73,662 in 2024 dollars). In addition, the company had opened a new branch store at Yoting (The West Australian, 1929c).

The QFCC financial records show that throughout the 1920s the Co-operative distributed back to its shareholders not only an average annual dividend of 7 per cent on paid-up capital, but at least \$363,955 in 2023 dollars equivalent as cash rebates from trading (e.g., \$300,161 in 2023 dollars), or bonus shares (e.g., \$63,794 in 2023 dollars). At the same time, it was able to put into its general reserve fund around \$131,558 in 2023-dollars equivalent.

The visitors, Harper, Arnold and Johnson also spoke at the 1919 AGM. Their attendance at the AGM reflected the value that the farmer-owned co-operatives, such as QFCC contributed to the Wheatbelt, and the wider community. Over the decade of the 1920s the Wheatbelt had expanded, and the nature of the agricultural sector transformed with the introduction of mechanisation with



motorised tractors and trucks replacing horses. The network of regional farmer-owned co-operatives provided Wesfarmers with an invaluable distribution and agency network. It also enhanced The Co-operative Federation of WA's overall lobbying power, with the majority of WA farmers actively engaged in the ownership and management of these local producer co-operatives. The decade to follow would bring economic depression and a Second World War. However, from the perspective of 1929, the QFCC and its supporting community, could feel justifiably proud of their achievements.

CHAPTER 5: DEPRESSION AND ANOTHER WAR, 1930-1939

The 1929 Wall Street Crash served as a significant indicator of the start of a global economic depression that severely impacted Australia. By 1932, unemployment in Western Australia hit 30 per cent, housing prices dropped 20-25 per cent, capital investment fell 61 per cent, and immigration nearly stopped. Many faced hardship and homelessness (Bolton, 1972; Snooks, 1974; Stannage, 1981). The Great Depression affected most areas of the Australian economy with the rural sector particularly hard hit. There was already a global oversupply of wheat during the late 1920s, which led to plummeting prices, making harvesting unprofitable for many growers (Ayriss, 1999). Numerous soldier settlers and group settlers, often lacking sufficient capital, abandoned their land between 1930 and 1936 due to these hardships (Wilson et al., 2004; Halse, 2009; Sauman, 2009).

This economic depression had mixed effects on farming. From 1926 to 1934, wool production increased despite prices dropping by 60 per cent during 1930-1931. However, a severe drought lasting from 1935 to 1940 devastated WA's agriculture and pastoral sectors. The number of sheep in WA fell from 5.5 million to half its 1934 size, with an estimated 4.2 million sheep dying during the drought (Snooks, 1974). However, the 1930s was also a decade of significant technological innovation and change. Motor vehicles and the mechanisation of farming, trends that had commenced in the 1920s, increased during the period. In addition, public radio, talking cinema, civil intrastate and interstate aviation services, and the expansion of local, interstate, and international telephone services also advanced during the decade (Menck, 2022).

THE QFCC AT THE START OF THE 1930S

In 1930 the QFCC was operating a general store in Quairading and in Yoting. The general manager of the Co-operative was William E. Wishart, and as Figure 15 shows, the company offered a wide range of products via its general store, along with a comprehensive range of services for which it was an agent (Western Mail, 1930a). When the Co-operative commenced trading in 1916 it had paid-up capital of just £54 (approx. \$5,474 in 2024 dollars). By 1930 its paid-up capital was £3,990 (approx. \$404,507 in 2024 dollars) and it was reporting a net profit of £2,542 (approx. \$257,708 in 2024 dollars) for the year (Western Mail, 1930b).

At the AGM held on 21 June 1930, the Chair, Mr. Eric W. Shenton, declared a successful year (QFCC, 1930). The Co-operative had a general reserve of £2,200 (approx. \$223,036 in 2024 dollars), and a liability of £500 (approx. \$50,690 in 2024 dollars) for bad and doubtful debts (BRPCNG, 1930). Also present at the AGM were C. Walter Harper, as Chair of Wesfarmers, and the Member for Guildford-Midland, The Hon. William Dartnell Johnson MLA, but attending in his role as a Director of Wesfarmers, and who spoke to the meeting about co-operative principles (York Chronicle, 1930).

According to a contemporary report of the meeting,

"The directors were able to present a very satisfactory statement of accounts to those present, a condition of finance which reflects the attitude of this company in endeavouring to maintain a reasonable adherence to sound co-operative principles, particularly in regard to a right basis of trading, in running the business" (BRPCNG, 1930, p. 4).



Figure 15: The Quairading Farmers' Co-op Co. Ltd. Advertising 1930

**THE QUAIRADING
FARMERS' CO-OP. Co. Ltd.**
GENERAL MERCHANTS AND COMMISSION AGENTS.



Agencies—

The Co-operative Wheat Pool of W.A.
Westralian Farmers' Ltd.
Horwood Bagshaw Machinery, Jutes, Fertilisers, etc.
Wm. Attwood Motors Ltd.
Chrysler Cars and Fargo Trucks.
Mettters Ltd.

All classes of Insurance transacted. Full stocks of Drapery, Groceries and Hardware always an hand.

W. E. WISHART, Manager.

Source: Western Mail (1930a).

According to the minutes of the AGM,

“Mr. C. W. Harper entertained the meeting with an instructive address on the operations of the Wheat Pool, after which Mr. W. D. Johnson gave an address on co-operation and the activities of the Westralian Farmers Ltd.” (QFCC, 1930).

At the AGM the position of Chair was transferred from Eric Shenton to Mr. James “Jas” P. Waters. One of the founder directors of the QFCC, James Waters served on the board from 1917 to 1935. During that time, he held the position of Chair three times, in 1922-1923, then in 1925-1926, and finally in 1930-1931. In an article in the *Western Mail* about the QFCC, he was described as follows,

“One of the prime movers in the establishment of the company was Mr. J. P. Waters, whose efforts have been largely responsible for the present standing of the company. Mr. Waters is the chairman of directors, and with him are associated Messrs, T. H. Argus, S. C. Dall, J. Stacey and E. W. Shenton. The company since its establishment has continued to make steady progress and generally pays dividends of 7 per cent” (Western Mail, 1930, p. 33).

CHANGES TO THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

A feature of the 1930s was the regular amendments made to the Articles of Association of the QFCC. This was a pattern found in other similar co-operatives, e.g., York and District Co-operative Ltd. (see: Mazzarol, van Aurich & Baskerville, 2025). It was sometimes motivated by changes to the State legislation, which require the Articles of Association to be amended to comply with the new or amended legislation. However, it was also motivated by the need of the board to change the financial, or governance (e.g., size and composition of the board) structure and provisions.

On 6 September 1930 a special general meeting of shareholders was held to discuss changes to the Articles of Association. Chaired by Mr. James Waters, the meeting examined the need to change the Articles of Association to ensure that they complied with the *Companies Act, Amendment Act 1929 (WA)*. This was a clear case of the changes being made in response to State legislation amendments.

At the AGM held on 8 July 1933, chaired by Mr. S. C. Dall, a motion was put for a change to clause 22 of the Articles of Association to read,

“Provided that debentures shall only be issued after authorisation by an ordinary or extraordinary meeting of member of the company” (QFCC, 1933a, p. 207).

This motion was defeated but it generated a protest from the floor, which led to the board agreeing to take advice and respond via an extraordinary general meeting that was held on 5 August 1933. This was undertaken and the follow-up meeting led to the board reporting that a committee would be formed to consider the matter and report at the next AGM (QFCC, 1933b).

At the AGM held on 16 July 1934, chaired by Mr. E. W. Shenton, substantive amendments were made to the Articles of Association, Sections, 22, 23, 26, 27, 34, 35, 37, 44, 45, 51, and 68. These related to how the Company dealt with bonus share distributions and the eligibility requirements of shareholders for such distributions (QFCC, 1934). This case illustrates changes motivated by the board’s desire to control financial management of the company.

Further amendments were made to the Articles of Association at the AGM held on 6 July 1935. At this time the Chair was Mr. A. Wilson. The motion was put forward by QFCC director Mr. T. Argus and read,

“That the number of directors shall not be less than three or more than ten unless the company by special resolution orders otherwise and shall include a director (called a nominee director) appointed from time to time by the executive council of The Co-operative Federation of WA. Such council may time to time revoke any such appointment and make a new appointment” (York Chronicle, 1935, p. 4).

In proposing the motion, Mr. Argus stated that all directors agreed on appointing a nominee director for board meetings to assist with management and maintain a link to The Co-operative Federation of WA. He was pleased to announce that Mr. William E. Wishart, the QFCC’s manager, had been chosen for this role and had been released by the board from his management duties (York Chronicle, 1935).

At the meeting was Mr. Arnott, a representative from The Co-operative Federation of WA, who responded by supporting the motion. He also explained that the Federation had aimed to establish such nominee director roles across the entire WA co-operatives sector in order to support the governance of these companies. He noted that since 1922 a total of forty-eight companies had ceased trading due to poor governance. By contrast, the QFCC had demonstrated that it possessed both the management and board of directors who were able to provide good governance (York Chronicle, 1935).

However, while there was strong support for the proposed amendment, there were some, like Mr. Parker and Mr. E. G. Shenton, who felt it was unnecessary and potentially dangerous because it resulted in outside influence over the company, which was against the co-operative principles. Nevertheless, when the motion was put to a vote it was carried 42 in favour and only 4 against (York Chronicle, 1935).

This case, while not associated with changes to State legislation, was motivated by external rather than internal factors. The significant number of co-operatives that had ceased trading due to “poor governance” or most likely financial problems, may reflect weaknesses within the boards of these companies. However, it is also likely that many experienced financial challenges due to the impact of the Great Depression.

With many farmers abandoning their farms due to hardship, it is probable that this would adversely affect the farmer-owned co-operatives. The case also shows that The Co-operative Federation of WA was playing an important role in helping maintain the regional network of co-operatives. This “nominee director” role has similarities to that of the “independent director” that has become a feature of the Co-operative National Law (CNL) now operating across Australia.

A further amendment to the Articles of Association took place during the AGM held on 3 July 1937, which was Chaired by Mr. T. H. Argus. A motion was made by a director Mr. H. Parker, who served on the board from 1935 to 1937 and again from 1939 to 1942, to change the Articles of Association (York Chronicle, 1937).

This stated that two ordinary shares should be the minimum shareholding to be a Member, rather than five shares then required. This motion was carried, thereby approving the amendment to the Articles of Association of the Co-operative (York Chronicle, 1937). In this case, the amendment was motivated by internal factors relating to financial issues.

MANAGEMENT OF THE WHEAT HARVEST

At the AGM held on 20 June 1931, Charles Walter Harper attended the meeting as a guest and spoke about the price of jute bags, and the possibility of WA introducing bulk handling and storage of wheat, along with the financial outlook for the wheat growing industry (QFCC, 1931).

A special general meeting of the shareholders, chaired by Mr. S. C. Dall, was held on 15 December 1932 to discuss the matter of a new agreement between the QFCC and Wesfarmers in relation to the handling of the wheat harvest (QFCC, 1932b). At the AGM held on 8 July 1933, chaired by Mr. S. C. Dall, a motion was put for a committee to be formed to investigate the establishment of grain handling facilities by the QFCC at Quairading, Badjaling, and Yoting, with the committee reporting to a special general meeting within a fortnight (QFCC, 1933a).

The establishment of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. (CBH) in 1933 removed the need for the farmer-owned co-operatives such as QFCC to engage in the management of the wheat harvest. It should be noted that during the Great Depression, Wesfarmers built horizontal wheat silos across the wheatbelt, holding 14,000 tonnes of wheat (Ayris, 1999). They also constructed a bulk grain storage facility at Fremantle port and converted around 200 railway wagons for grain transport (Zekulich, 1997). This investment was significant and it was estimated by Charles Walter Harper that this bulk handling system saved Wyalkatchem district farmers an estimated £21,000 (around \$2.6 million in 2024 dollars) (Baskerville, 2019).

On 5 April 1933, CBH was established with seed capital contributions from both Wesfarmers and the Wheat Pool of WA. The total investment amounted to £100,000 (approximately \$12.4 million in 2024 dollars) divided into £1 shares. The Wheat Pool of WA (later to be named the Grain Pool of WA) contributed £80,000 (approximately \$9.94 million in 2024 dollars) while Wesfarmers provided the remaining amount (The West Australian, 1933; Farmers' Weekly, 1954). Its formation removed the need for the network of farmer-owned co-operatives to undertake the role of receival-point managers. For many of the wheat farmers struggling to survive, the WA Government's passage of the *Debts Adjustment Amendment Act 1931* (WA), served to reduce the risk of bankruptcy, and enabled them to remain on the land and work to pay off debts (Ayris, 1999).

CBH was established with a Board of Trustees representing Wesfarmers and The Grain Pool of WA, who provided the initial seed capital. Growers paid a toll on their grain supply, with the initial capital intended to be repaid by 31 October 1948 (The West Australian, 1933). However, CBH repaid the investment by 1943, transitioning the Co-operative to grower ownership and control (Goldfinch, 2003). Alexander Joseph Monger chaired CBH from 1933 until 1944, when ownership was transferred to members, and then Thomas Henry Bath chaired the company until 1947 (see Figure 16). The CBH proved to be a highly successful business. However, it removed the wheat handling role of the farmer-owned co-operatives and with it the income that generated.

Figure 16: Alexander Joseph Monger (left) and Thomas Henry Bath (right)



Source: CBH (1936)

Alexander Joseph Monger, was the third son of John Henry Monger Jnr. He was a founder of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association (FSA) in 1912 and served as its President from 1912 to 1924. After a falling out with his father, a prominent businessman in York, he joined a camel train and travelled to the Goldfields during the 1890s to make his fortune. With a loan from Dalgety & Co. he opened general stores in both Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, followed by a third in Southern Cross, which performed well. This led him to form a business partnership with Sir Ernest Lee-Steere focused on purchasing and improving pastoral leases in the Gascoyne region. He purchased Daliak farm in York and held several board positions including Chair of CBH and as a Trustee of the Wheat Pool of Western Australia (Birman, 1986b).

Thomas Henry Bath was born in New South Wales in 1875, the son of Thomas Henry Richard Bath, an itinerant miner, and Sarah Ann Bath (nee' Barrow). He moved to the WA Goldfields in 1896 and was a foundation member of the Amalgamated Workers' Association, established in 1897, and an active Trade Unionist. He was co-editor of the *Westralian Worker* newspaper from 1907 to 1910. He became a wheat farmer at Tammin in 1907 having obtained the farmland via the Government Land Settlement Scheme. From 1922 he was a leader in the farmers' co-operative movement and was a founder and trustee of the Wheat Pool of WA from 1925, and the Secretary of The Co-operative Federation of Western Australia. He advocated for the introduction of bulk handling, and became Vice Chairman of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. From 1943-1948 (Parliament of WA, 2015).

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd. – Cornerstone of our community

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND DISTRIBUTIONS, 1930S

Although the Australian economy, and the agricultural and pastoral sectors in particular, were heavily impacted by the Great Depression, the QFCC was able to report a good profit for both the 1930 and 1931 years (York Chronicle, 1930; 1931).

As listed in Table 2, good profits generated in 1930 and 1931 enabled the QFCC to issue generous dividends of 7 per cent on paid-up capital, with a cash bonus paid in 1930. The dividends issued for the following years between 1932 and 1937 were either reduced or not issued. For example, the dividend fell to 6 per cent on paid-up capital in 1932, then to 5 per cent in 1933 and 1934, only rising to 7 per cent in 1935.

Table 2: Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Financial Distributions 1930-1939

Year	Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves
1930	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% on paid-up-capital and £1,070 (approx. \$108,477 in 2024 dollars) paid in cash. The balance of funds from the annual profit of £2,452/19s/7d (approx. \$248,683 in 2024 dollars) was transferred to general reserve fund.
1931	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% on paid-up-capital with profits transferred to the general reserve fund. A net profit £1,093/9s/2d (approx. \$123,646 in 2024 dollars).
1932	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% on paid-up-capital with profits transferred to the general reserve fund.
1933	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and cash bonus of £467 (approx. \$58,014 in 2024 dollars), with the balance of profits transferred to the general reserve fund.
1934	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and a cash bonus of £555 (approx. \$67,057 in 2024 dollars), with the balance of profits transferred to the general reserve fund.
1935	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and a cash bonus of £555 (approx. \$66,151 in 2024 dollars), with the balance of profits transferred to the general reserve fund.
1936	Distributions unknown.
1937	Distributions unknown. However, total income was £24,715 (approx. \$2,794,720 in 2024 dollars), with cash reserves of £5,334 (approx. \$603,157 in 2024 dollars), and debtors owing £2,339 (approx. \$257,877 in 2024 dollars).
1938	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital of £3,903 (approx. \$403,309 in 2024 dollars), with a profit distribution of £449/14s/8d (approx. \$49,583 in 2024 dollars) paid on both store trading and agency. A further £5,533 (approx. \$610,018 in 2024 dollars) was transferred to general reserves, and £1,046 (approx. \$115,322 in 2024 dollars) was placed in the profit and loss account.
1939	Distributions unknown.

Sources: QFCC Annual Reports (1930 to 1939); York Chronicle (1930-1938).

By 1935 the worst of effects of the Great Depression had been felt, and things were improving for the rural sector. The establishment of CBH in 1933 saw the rollout of bulk handling within the WA Wheatbelt, which did a lot to help reduce the farmers' handling costs. At the AGM of the QFCC held on 6 July 1935, Mr. A. Wilson, as Chair, reported that the Co-operative had enjoyed a very successful year with annual turnover of £21,235 (approx. \$2,531,004 in 2024 dollars), and net profit of £1,084/5s/9d (approx. \$129,236 in 2024 dollars) (York Chronicle, 1935).

Also attending the meeting were Mr. Arnott from The Co-operative Federation of WA, and Charles Walter Harper, representing the Westralian Farmers Ltd. (Wesfarmers). The main issues that the AGM addressed were the changes to the Articles of Association, relating to the appointment of "nominee directors" (as discussed earlier), and the opening hours of the Co-operative's store. A shareholder Mr. V. Clemens moved a motion that the QFCC store should remain open during lunch hours and the tea-break hour on Saturdays. The manager, Mr. William "Bill" Blackwell, spoke to the meeting about the rationale for the store closure and the motion was defeated at the vote. Nevertheless, further discussion took place over the store's operating hours on Saturday.

The general pattern of AGMs held by QFCC at the time, was for the meeting to commence around 2pm, receive the Chair's report on financial performance, distributions, and related matters, then address the issues of electing directors, voting on changes to the Articles of Association, or other strategic matters, and addressing matters of general business. This was followed by a tea and supper break, and then a formal presentation by a visitor to the meeting, after which the meeting became a social event with music and dancing. The keynote speaker for the AGM of 1935 was Walter Harper, who had travelled from Perth, along with Mr. Arnott, for the meeting. His address to the shareholders was recorded in the *York Chronicle* as follows,

"He complimented the Company on its social activities. He said that as the Royal Commission on wheat was still sitting, he could not say a great deal about it, but he could say definitely that as a result of their trip through the Eastern States' wheatbelts the Commission was heartily pro-farmers. He was not hopeful of the immediate wheat future but was optimistic regarding lifting the farmers out of their difficulties. One thing the Commission had done was to cause a full realisation of the farmers' difficulties amongst the industrial centres, and any government could now ask anything in reason on behalf of the farmer and be sure of getting support."

"He briefly traced the history of the co-operative movement and stated that WA had a stronger movement than any of the other States. He mentioned the formation of the farmers' organisations and while not wishing to deplore them he showed that it would be disadvantageous to the farmers to divide their business into many channels. All organisations should be unanimous on the larger issues."

"Mr. Harper outlined the wheat pool's activities and claimed that it renders good service and handles wheat more cheaply than any other organisation. The local co-op gives a complete service to the farmer, and it is not possible to have a cheaper distribution while there is competition. The speaker defended Westralian Farmers for joining the various associations – jute, auctioneers, underwriters – it was necessary to for protection. He concluded with an appeal to the farmers to support their co-operative company and the wheat pool" (York Chronicle, 1935, p. 4).



The AGM for 1936 took place on 4 July in the Quairading Hall. The Chair was Mr. T. H. Argus. Following the AGM at 6pm, tea was served and the meeting was again addressed by Mr. Walter Harper, with a social evening of music and dancing afterwards (York Chronicle, 1936). Details of this AGM have not been found although given the positive status of the Co-operative in 1935 and subsequently in 1937 and 1938, there is good reason to assume that it would have been similar to those years.

The 1937 AGM of QFCC took place on 3 July, once again in the Quairading Hall. It was reportedly well attended by a “very large and keen group of shareholders” (York Chronicle, 1937, p. 4). Mr. T. H. Argus was once again in the Chair. He reported that the company had had another successful year with sales revenue of £24,715 (approx. \$2,794,720 in 2024 dollars). According to the record Mr Argus stated that,

“The board was continuing its efforts to render as complete a service as possible, to its members and customers, and had increased the range of stocks. A new agency taken during the year is that of Ford products. The assets of the company, comprised of buildings, plant, including fittings and fixtures, and stock on hand, have been improved. Improvements costing approximately £400 were made to the building and an expenditure on plant, including fittings and fixtures, amounted to approximately £700, while the stock on hand has been increased by about £800. The year’s operations have resulted in the satisfactory profit of £889/11s/9d” (York Chronicle, 1937, p. 4).

Mr Argus expressed his thanks to the directors of the QFCC as well as the effective work of the manager Mr. W. Blackwell, and his staff. The meeting also focused on the joint venture bakery that involved the QFCC, and the co-operatives from Danging and Balkuling. The share of the net profit from the bakery for the QFCC was estimated to be £140 (approx. \$15,831 in 2024 dollars). He noted that the price of bread had not been reduced as the directors did not want to undercut other bakeries. However, the profits would be distributed to the shareholders in dividends and bonuses (York Chronicle, 1937).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the meeting approved a change to the Co-operative’s Articles of Association. Discussion also took place in relation to the establishment of a building fund to provide for future extensions of the company store. However, a motion for this was defeated. Finally, two further motions were passed, which stated,

*“That consideration be given to the provision of a suitable lighting plant at Yoting”, and
“That the directors take whatever steps are necessary to alter the method of voting, to save time at the general meeting”* (York Chronicle, 1937, p. 4).

A dinner and social function followed the AGM. Thomas Henry Bath was the keynote speaker for the meeting. His address was recorded by the *York Chronicle* as follows,

“Mr. Bath intimated that he was all for building up the movement and for progressing. There was room for great expansion along co-op lines. He wanted particularly to appeal to the young people of the State to take an interest in and to loyally support the co-op movement. He wished to heartily congregate the Quairading company on their very successful year. The reading of the balance sheet had given him considerable pleasure and he complimented the directors, the management and the shareholders on the result” (York Chronicle, 1937, p. 4).



Mr. Bath compared the financial performance of the QFCC in the period 1929-1930 with that of 1936-1937. At the start of the decade the Co-operative had liabilities to creditors of £1,135 (approx. \$128,343 in 2024 dollars), a bank overdraft of £1,116 (approx. \$126,195 in 2024 dollars), reserves of £3,764 (approx. \$425,625 in 2024 dollars), and debtors owing £3,771 (approx. \$426,417 in 2024 dollars). This left the directors bound under a joint and several guaranteed bond to the bank. By contrast in the most recent period the Co-operative had liabilities to creditors of £188 (approx. \$21,259 in 2024 dollars), credit of £791 (approx. \$89,445 in 2024 dollars), cash reserves of £5,334 (approx. \$603,157 in 2024 dollars), and debtors owing £2,339 (approx. \$264,489 in 2024 dollars) (York Chronicle, 1937).

Mr. Bath continued his address noting that in 1921 only ten co-operative companies were in operation within WA. This number had grown to seventeen by 1934, and thirty-four by 1936. He also spoke about the bulk handling scheme for wheat noting that,

"... a number of authorities, one from Canada, one from America, and others from other wheat producing countries, had expressed unqualified approval of the bulk handling system in WA. Bulk handling in Canada incurred charges amounting to 6d. per bushel as against WA's 2.35 pence per bushel" (York Chronicle, 1937, p. 4).

In relation to the wheat industry at the time, Mr. Bath suggested that in comparison to many of the world's wheat producing countries, the outlook for prices in Australia was very satisfactory and would remain so for many years. The presentation was followed by thanks and then a live orchestra played, and the event finished with a dance (York Chronicle, 1937).

The 1938 AGM took place on 16 July, again at the Quairading Hall. Around 50 shareholders attended along with the Chair, Mr. S. C. Dall, the company directors, Mr. W. Blackwell, the manager, Mr. E. E. Dovey, the company secretary. Mr. Dall reported that the Co-operative had enjoyed one of the largest turnovers for any single year since its foundation. It had generated a record annual revenue of £29,488 (approx. \$3,251,079 in 2024 dollars). The profit from the year was £1,045/13s/10d (approx. \$115,288 in 2024 dollars). During the meeting,

"Considerable discussions took place on the question of establishing a garage and service station, but the discussion was postponed to the next annual shareholders' meeting. It was recommended that in the meantime the directors secure full information as to the cost of establishing the suggested service station and also go into the matter of financing same" (York Chronicle, 1938, p. 4).

The meeting was attended by The Hon. W. D. Johnson MLA who delivered an after-dinner speech, and a concert was given by members of the Westralian Farmers Ltd., orchestra headed by Mr. L. Warrell, and the proceedings were accompanied by a dance (York Chronicle, 1938).

Full details of the AGM of 1939 have not been found. However, the meeting was held on 1 July 1939 commencing at 2.30pm. The focus was on filling two vacancies for the board of directors. The nominations were to be sent in writing to the company secretary Mr. E. E. Dovey by Saturday 3 June 1939 (York Leader, 1939). This brought the decade of the 1930s to a close. It can be seen from the historical record that despite the Great Depression, the QFCC performed well, operating two general stores and a wide range of agencies, including a Ford dealership and bakery.

RESIGNATION OF WILLIAM E. WISHART

A further matter of importance for the decade was the resignation of QFCC Manager William E. Wishart. He had joined the Co-operative in March 1922 as company secretary replacing Mr. P. A. Moore and served in that role until 1924. In June 1925 he was appointed as Manager, replacing Mr. E. J. Hadlow, and served in that position until July 1935. At that time, he was seconded to work with The Co-operative Federation of WA as a nominee director, providing advice to other co-operatives across the State (York Chronicle, 1938).

His resignation from the QFCC was the consequence of having accepted the appointment as Manager of the Mt Barker Co-operative Ltd. In describing the contribution made to the QFCC by William Wishart, the *York Chronicle* stated that,

“During his term with the local company, he directed the business from a humble to a very strong concern. He was very well respected whilst in Quairading and his many friends wish him the best of luck in his new position. Mr. Blackwell, who has been acting manager, has been officially appointed manager and Mr. E. E. Dovey, secretary” (York Chronicle, 1938, p. 4).

As noted above, William Wishart was replaced by William “Bill” Blackwell who served as manager from 1935 to 1948.

THE JOINT VENTURE BAKERY IS ESTABLISHED

In 1937 it was decided that a triparty joint-venture bakery be established involving the QFCC, the Dangin and South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd. (DSCCS), and the Balkuling Co-operative Society Ltd. (BCS). This bakery was to be housed within the DSCCS's premises. To establish the bakery, the DSCCS invested in substantial renovations of its premises, which were described the local media as follows,

“The plans include the continuation of the building to a further depth of 24 feet at the rear of the existing premises. The ceiling, fixtures, counters, shop front, and flooring are all to be renovated. The existing offices will be demolished and a new suite placed in the centre of the completed edifice. Excavations are finished and the new walls will very shortly be in course of erection.”

“It is also the intention of the Society to commence shortly running a Co-operative Bakery in conjunction with the Quairading Co-operative Society Ltd., and the Balkuling Co-operative Society Ltd. It will be situated in Dangin and under the administration of the local Society” (York Leader, 1937, p. 4).

This joint venture bakery commenced operating in 1938 and continued in operation until at least 1951. The first two-years were largely involved in undertaking the renovations of the existing bakery located within the DSCCS premises in Dangin. The first meeting of what was to be called the Balkuling, Dangin, Quairading (BDQ) Bakery, was held on 13 October 1938. Mr. E. W. Richards from DSCCS was Chair, and the QFCC was represented by the directors Messrs E. W. Shenton, the QFCC Chair, S. C. Dall, and A. Wilson, and the manager Mr. W. Blackwell (BDQ Bakery, 1938a).

During the meeting Messrs. Dall and Wilson moved a motion that a shelter needed to be erected on the east side of the bakery, and that electric lighting should be installed. They also requested that quotations be secured for the building work, both in cut brick, and cement brick, construction to the existing bakery walls. This motion was carried (BDQ Bakery, 1938a).

They also moved a motion that an amount of £120/8s/6d (approx. \$13,277 in 2024 dollars), which represented 50 per cent of the first year's profits, be distributed to the partners,

"... on the basis of as scheduled, when approved of by the respective boards, and that no rebate to customers on a per-loaf basis be made by any of the partners without the approval of a full joint meeting of the respective board of management" (BDQ Bakery, 1938a, p. 2).

This motion was also carried. Consideration was also given to the removal of wood chips from the bakery to minimize the risk of fire (BDQ Bakery, 1938a).

At a follow-up meeting held on 1 December 1938, the BDQ Bakery Committee discussed various tenders that had been received from builders. Mr. S. C. Dall suggested that a full meeting of the three Co-operative boards be held to review the total costs of the bakery renovations, with this meeting taking place no later than January 1939. The meeting also agreed to distribute profits from the bakery to the three joint venture partners, and to prepare an article on the bakery for publication in the local "Gazette" newsletter.

On 5 January 1939 the full boards of the three joint-venture partners met to discuss the cost of the bakery renovations. Mr. S. C. Dall explained that the QFCC was heavily committed financially and was not prepared to approve any additional expenditure on the renovations. He suggested that any additional costs be borne by the DSCCS, with the QFCC being willing to meet additional charges on a "per-loaf" basis, e.g., "on capital outlay and depreciation as provided for in the original agreement" (BDQ Bakery, 1939, p. 6).

The DSCCS Chair Mr. Richards, supported the position taken by Mr. Dall and the QFCC board. He explained that the board of the DSCCS had already decided to proceed with the renovations at their own cost. They noted that the DSCCS would proceed immediately with the upgrading of the DSCCS Bakery (BDQ Bakery, 1939).

SUMMING UP THE QFCC IN THE 1930S

As noted at the start of this chapter, the decade of the 1930s opened with the onslaught of the Great Depression and ended with the outbreak of the Second World War. It was a period of both challenge and change, with the transition to bulk handling of grain with the establishment of CBH as a major co-operative business providing support to grain producers across the WA Wheatbelt. The farmers continued to seek export market opportunities even as the war clouds began to form on the horizon during later years of the decade.

For example, at a meeting of the Wheat Growers Union (WGU) of WA held on 15 August 1936, growers were outraged by the decision of the Australian Government to close the export of wheat and wool to Japan in response to Japanese military aggression against China, which commenced in 1931 and escalated over the remainder of the decade. Regardless of the global political issues,

the farmers declared that the WGU of WA President, Mr. Powell, should formally protest to the Government in the following terms,

“This branch of Wheatgrowers’ Union of WA views with astonishment your Government action in closing Australia’s wheat and wool markets in the Japanese Empire, action which will result in the loss of millions of pounds annually to Australian farmers. This Union enters emphatic protest against this action taken by your Government which will reduce farmers income, raise farm living costs and will endanger peace and urges that immediate action be taken to resume normal trade relations with Japan” (York Leader, 1936, p. 3).

This reaction by the WA wheat growers, the majority of whom were shareholders in QFCC, were clearly more interested in their economic welfare than the plight of the Chinese people. Nevertheless, the action by the WGU reflects the reality of a community that had been battling economic hardship and fluctuating commodity prices within the volatile conditions created by the depression.

Against this background the performance of the QFCC was generally one of calm growth and focused development. As shown in the data listed in Table 2, the Co-operative managed its finances well over the course of the 1930s. It had successfully operated two general stores and launched the joint venture bakery with neighbouring co-operatives in Danging and Balkuling. An analysis of the QFCC’s financial records shows that during the 1930s the Co-operative distributed an average dividend of 6 per cent on paid-up capital plus at least \$279,797 in 2023 dollars equivalent cash trading rebates, while still being able to transfer a minimum of \$1,224,573 in 2023 dollars equivalent to its general reserve fund.

The presentation delivered by Thomas Bath to the 1937 AGM provides a clear assessment of the way in which the Co-operative had been transformed from a debt-laden business in 1929-1930, to a financially stable and secure company by 1937. This assessment was supported by the comments made in 1935 by Mr. Arnott from The Co-operative Federation of WA, which declared that while many co-operatives had failed over the period from 1922 to that year, the QFCC had demonstrated that it had both the board and the management capable of effectively governing the company.

CHAPTER 6: FROM WAR TO PEACE, 1940-1949

The start of World War II in 1939 hurt Australia's economy, especially Western Australia's. The gold mining sector had grown in the 1930s due to rising prices, boosting the State's economy. However, the war caused gold prices to drop, costs to rise, and labour shortages, leading to reduced operations or closures of gold mines (Wilson, Layman & Christmas, 2004).

The 1940s brought World War II to Australia's shores. German raiders mined shipping routes, leading to a deadly battle between HMAS *Sydney* and the German cruiser *Kormoran* in 1941 off the WA coast. In 1942, Japanese air raids targeted Darwin, Broome, Port Headland, Exmouth, Townsville, and Mossman. The same year, a published Japanese invasion plan outlined an amphibious assault on Fremantle and Perth via the Swan River (Baskerville, Mazzarol & van Aurich, 2023 citing Gōshū shashinchō, 1942).

During the war, communities faced rationing, restrictions, and an influx of Dutch refugees and American servicemen. Labour shortages arose as many men enlisted or were conscripted (Menck, 2022). The Federal Government also increased its control over the economy, implementing price controls and centralising production, supply, and sea transportation (Snooks, 1974).

THE QFCC DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

As noted in the previous chapter, the QFCC successfully navigated through the challenges of the 1930s Great Depression and emerged as a business with two general stores in Quairading and Yoting, a joint venture bakery with the co-operatives at Danging and Balkuling, and a strong position as an agent for Wesfarmers and several other organisations. As shown in Figure 17, the Co-operative acted as an agent for Wesfarmers in the sale of prime livestock, specifically sheep and pigs.

Wartime rationing and labour shortages posed problems for the Co-operative. However, the BDQ Bakery launched in 1937 continued to operate. As shown in the minutes of the management committee of the BDQ Bakery, the business operated successfully throughout the war years, with regular profit distributions to the joint venture partners from Danging, Balkuling, and Quairading, and Christmas Boxes issued each year to the bakery staff (BDQ Bakery, 1940-1945).

In 1940, a special rubber stamp titled, "The Danging Co-operative Bakery" was purchased for use in the labelling of bread made in the BDQ Bakery (BDQ Bakery, 1940). Later, there was a request by the Balkuling Co-operative Society (BCS) for the issuing of purchase dockets for each delivery of bread to customers in order to facilitate checking for the completion of these deliveries (BDQ Bakery, 1945a). By 4 September 1945 the management committee of the BDQ Bakery were discussing the post-war outlook,

"Mr Richards in opening the meeting instanced the desirability of tightening up the business functions as it was very apparent that now the war was over and won, the opposition would be most keen. Also, the areas of such tightening up could be affected more adequately, jointly. Stock business and the relative activities and oil and petrol representation were more particularly stressed" (BDQ, Bakery, 1945a, p.13).



Figure 17: Wesfarmers advertising livestock and farm machinery with QFCC as agent

AUCTIONS

QUAIRADING
Fourth Annual Sale of "Dallveen"
Studs

186 BRITISH BREED AND CORRIEDALE RAMS 186

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1940
AT NOON

The Westralian Farmers
LIMITED

Have received instructions from S. C. DALL, Esq., "Dallveen," Quairading, to sell by PUBLIC AUCTION on his property close to Quairading as under:—

ROMNEY MARSH RAMS:
43 Rams, 1 year old.
32 Rams, 2 years old.

SOUTHDOWN RAMS:
26 Rams, 1 year old.
34 Rams, 2 years old.

CORRIEDALE RAMS:
35 Rams, 1 year old.
10 Rams, 2 years old.

DORSET HORN RAM LAMBS:
5 Ram Lambs.

PIGS

Pedigreed Canadian Berkshires:
6 Boars, approximately six months old.

Terms at Sale — Luncheon Provided
NOTE.—Clients requiring Terms, must make arrangements with the Selling Agents before the sale.
Further particulars from:—
THE WESTRALIAN FARMERS LIMITED, Perth, or QUIRADING FARMERS' CO-OPERATIVE CO., LTD., Quairading.

QUAIRADING
SIXTH ANNUAL SALE OF
"DALLVEEN" STUD.
MONDAY, 5th OCTOBER
at 1 p.m.

184 MERINO, BRITISH BREED AND CORRIEDALE RAMS 184

The Westralian Farmers
LIMITED

have received instructions from MR. S. C. DALL, "Dallveen," to sell by Public Auction on his property close to Quairading as under:—

CORRIEDALES:
23 Rams, Stud and Specially Selected, 1941 drop.
20 Rams, Selected 1941 drop.

SOUTHDOWN:
21 Rams, 1941 drop.

ROMNEY MARSH:
25 Rams, 1941 drop.

DORSET HORN:
10 Rams, 1941 drop.
6 Rams, 1940 drop.

MERINOS:
79 Rams, 1940 and 1941 drop.

TERMS AT SALE.
Luncheon Provided.

NOTE: Clients requiring Terms must make arrangements with **THE WESTRALIAN FARMERS LIMITED** prior to the sale.

Further particulars from the Westralian Farmers Limited, Perth, or Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd., Quairading.

Sources: Northam Advertiser (1940); Wheatbelt Tribune and Koorda Record (1942).

The formula for the Annual General Meetings (AGM) held by the QFCC during the 1940s consisted of an AGM held in the Quairading Hall on a Saturday. The AGM was usually advertised in the local newspapers and commenced around 2:30 pm and ran until about 4 pm. Apart from the QFCC directors, manager, secretary and staff, and the shareholders, one or two special guests were usually also present. These were senior representatives from the Westralian Farmers Ltd. (Wesfarmers), or The Co-operative Federation of WA, as well as local State Politicians. Their role was that of a keynote speaker, who talked about the co-operative movement, or other matters.

Following the adjournment of the AGM, a supper was served, after which the keynote speaker would deliver their address. This was usually followed by entertainment in the form of musical recitals by local musicians, or sometimes guests from Perth. After that a social dance would be held. It provided a valuable opportunity for the Co-operative to strengthen the social capital within its membership and allowed the shareholders to speak to the visiting representatives from key organisations such as Wesfarmers and The Co-operative Federation of WA.

The impact of the war on the QFCC is illustrated in the comments made by the Chair, Mr. S. C. Dall at the AGM of 1944. In his opening address to the shareholders he said,

“The year has been a difficult one, with so many changes in staff and the continual increase of work necessitated by rationing and dealing out quotas of goods in short supply. The company has done its utmost to satisfy all customers, and we feel sure the majority of clients have appreciated the efforts made in that direction” (York Chronicle, 1944b).

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND DISTRIBUTIONS, 1940S

Against this background the financial performance of the QFCC during the 1940s was actually quite good. Table 3 lists the financial distributions made by the Co-operative in the decade. Data for the years 1940 to 1942 could not be found. However, it can be seen that for the other years, the QFCC was able to issue dividends of 5 per cent on paid-up capital, along with cash bonuses associated with store and agency trading.

The 1943 AGM of the QFCC took place on 1 May under the leadership of Mr. A. Wilson (Chair). Mr. W. Blackwell, manager of the Co-operative, presented the company reports showing that the annual turnover was £39,000 (approx. \$3,405,771 in 2024 dollars) and net profit of £1,800 (approx. \$157,189 in 2024 dollars). It was noted that the QFCC had invited the WA Consul for China, Mr. Tsao, to speak to the meeting due to his role as a leading cooperator. However, he was not able to do so due to his heavy work pressure (York Chronicle, 1943).

In 1944, the AGM of the QFCC was held in the Quairading Hall on 9 September and Chaired by Mr. S. C. Dall. The annual turnover for the year was £34,276 (approx. \$3,023,169 in 2024 dollars), with a net profit of £1,960 (approx. \$172,873 in 2024 dollars). This was attributed to significant increases in sales within the grocery and drapery departments of the Co-operative’s stores, with more than half of the net profit coming from the general stores, and the balance from agencies and income from investments (York Chronicle, 1944).

In his address, Mr. Dall said,

“The directors seek to maintain the policy of selling goods as cheaply as possible, in order to avoid large profits and taxation, and wherever possible further reductions will be made. However, it is well to remember that the proportion of profits not required by the directors for the successful conduct of the company will be returned as a bonus on trading” (York Chronicle, 1944, p. 4).

The 1945 AGM of the QFCC was held on 7 July, again with Mr. S. C. Dall as Chair, and around forty shareholders present. Mr. Dall reported that the Co-operative had achieved a turnover of £37,000 (approx. \$3,263,428 in 2024 dollars), and net profit of £2,000 (approx. \$176,401 in 2024 dollars).

This was viewed as a very good outcome for the year. He also stated that since the foundation of QFCC in 1917 the Co-operative had returned around £20,475 (approx. \$2,407,880 in 2024 dollars) (York Chronicle, 1945a).

The 1946 AGM of the QFCC took place on 20 July in the Quairading Hall. It was well attended and Chaired by Mr. S. C. Dall. He reported that the Co-operative had achieved a turnover of £36,633 (approx. \$3,167,704 in 2024 dollars), with a net profit of £2,412 (approx. \$208,569 in 2024 dollars). This was considered satisfactory due to the company operating under restrictions that were carried over from the wartime conditions (York Chronicle, 1946).

Table 3: Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Financial Distributions 1940-1949

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1940	Distributions unknown.
1941	Distributions unknown.
1942	Distributions unknown.
1943	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and cash bonus of £1,195 (approx. \$104,356 in 2024 dollars), with the balance of profits transferred to the general reserve fund. Directors to be paid a sum of £2/2s (approx. \$183.39 in 2024 dollars) per sitting.
1944	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and cash bonus of £1,225 (approx. \$108,046 in 2024 dollars), with the balance of profits transferred to the general reserve fund.
1945	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and cash bonus of £1,390 (approx. \$122,599 in 2024 dollars), with the balance of profits transferred to the general reserve fund.
1946	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and cash bonus of £1,486/3/5 (approx. \$128,511 in 2024 dollars), with the balance of profits transferred to the general reserve fund.
1947	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and cash bonus of £1,143/5/5 (approx. \$95,130 in 2024 dollars) on trading, but that a bonus debenture carrying a bank rate of interest be issued for all amounts exceeding £3 (approx. \$249.62 in 2024 dollars), with the balance of profits after taxation transferred to the general reserve fund.
1948	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and a bonus of £1,517 (approx. \$114,359 in 2024 dollars) on trading be paid as debentures instead of cash. A sum of £500 (approx. \$37,693 in 2024 dollars) be paid to the building fund, and the balance of profits after taxation transferred to the general reserve fund.
1949	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and a bonus of £2,200 (approx. \$151,595 in 2024 dollars) but that a bonus debenture carrying a bank rate of interest be issued for all amounts exceeding £3 (approx. \$206.72 in 2024 dollars), £500 (approx. \$34,453) place in the building fund, with the balance of profits after taxation transferred to the general reserve fund.

Sources: QFCC Annual Reports (1940 to 1949); York Chronicle (1942-1948).

The QFCC held its 1949 AGM on 16 July at the Quairading Hall. It was chaired by Mr. A. Wilson and had between 30 and 40 shareholders attending. Also attending, were Mr. H. J. McCann, the assistant general manager of the Westralian Farmers Ltd. The QFCC manager Mr. Walter “Wally” Knox delivered the annual report stating that the company had a record year with an annual turnover of £49,143 (approx. \$3,386,288 in 2024 dollars), and a net profit of £3,393 (approx. \$233,801 in 2024 dollars). However, the auditor’s report had raised attention to the overall lack of the capital held by the company. They warned that the QFCC needed to retain in the business the surplus earned during the year, rather than distributing to the shareholders (York Chronicle, 1949).

Responding to the Manager’s report, the Chair, Mr. Wilson, stressed the need for further capital to be retained in the company in order to enhance future trading, and for the building of housing for staff. He stated that it would be impossible for the Co-operative to pay out the year’s profit in cash bonuses without increasing the bank overdraft. In saying this, he added that it was now Government policy for any increase in capital to be raised from shareholders not by borrowing from banks (York Chronicle, 1949).

He proposed that the company redeem bonus debentures worth £930 (approx. \$64,083 in 2024 dollars) issued in 1947, to pay a 5 per cent dividend on paid-up shares, and a bonus on trading of £2,200 (approx. \$151,595 in 2024 dollars), with all amounts exceeding £3 (approx. \$206.72 in 2024 dollars) to be paid in debentures. A balance of £500 (approx. \$36,537) would be transferred to the building fund and the balance transferred into the general reserve (York Chronicle, 1949).

Mr. Wilson also spoke of the loss the QFCC had experienced with the resignation of the former manager Mr. W. Blackwell, but he acknowledged the new manager, Wally Knox, noting that the latter had carried out his duties in a most able manner. When asked to address the meeting, Mr. McCann from Wesfarmers,

“Pointed out that while ordinary trading companies could go on the open market for new capital, Co-operative Companies could not and had to conserve the required capital for development out of profits. He thought the assets of the company were conservatively valued. As shown, the £1 shares were worth about £4, but on present day market values would be 50 per cent higher.”

The AGM was closed, and the attendees enjoyed a supper followed by a musical concert and social dance (York Chronicle, 1949).

THE OPERATION OF THE BDQ BAKERY

The BDQ Bakery joint venture traded throughout the war years. In 1948 it was able to report total revenue of £4,254/12s/3d (approx. \$320,735 in 2024 dollars), with a gross profit of £745/2s/10d (approx. \$56,173 in 2024 dollars) (BDQ Bakery, 1948). The following year the bakery reported revenue of £4,689/11s/11d (approx. \$323,145 in 2024 dollars), with a gross profit of £1,085/9s/9d (approx. \$74,797 in 2024 dollars) (BDQ Bakery, 1949).



Apart from staff requests for an increase in wages, the BDQ Bakery continued to deliver its daily bread, create employment for the local community, and deliver regular profit distributions to the three joint venture partners.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BDQ ENGINEERING WORKS

As discussed previously, the setting up of the BDQ Bakery joint venture in the late 1930s proved a success, and this laid the foundation for the establishment of a related business, which focused on automotive engineering and servicing.

At the 1944 AGM the QFCC Chair Mr. S. C. Dall, in his address to the shareholders, noted that the Co-operative had undertaken numerous extensions and renovations to the company's premises in order to facilitate the efficient working of the business. This had been received positively by the staff and also made a substantial contribution to reducing the amount of waste and protecting the store against vermin (York Chronicle, 1944).

However, he also introduced the proposal for the QFCC to establish an automotive engineering works, stating,

"So far as the future of the company is concerned, it appears as if we will have to carry on for some time under present difficulties, with perhaps a gradual increase in the number of goods in short supply."

"Having in mind the re-establishing of returned men and women who have given so much for the welfare of the country, the directors think that the company should adopt a progressive policy and as soon as possible expand in other fields of co-operative services. It is proposed to give consideration to establishing a co-operative engineering works, which should give greater satisfaction and facilities to the company's shareholders, as well as assisting the Government in their post-war task of reinstalling men and women in sound and good positions in keeping with what they are justly entitled to."

"A capable and well-equipped works would involve a substantial amount of capital, necessitating the retention of a substantial part of future profits, and while we therefore suggest that shareholders should look for smaller returns for the immediate future, greater benefits will ultimately accrue"

"The company is also working for the appraisalment of meat on hooks at fixed seasonable rates. This is in keeping with the policy of other primary producers' organisers and is calculated to be of benefit to both the producer and the consumer" (York Chronicle, 1944, p. 4).

At a meeting of the combined leadership of the joint venture partners of the BDQ Bakery, held in Dangan on 8 October 1945, Mr. S. C. Dall as QFCC Chair spoke at length about the establishment of a joint venture business focused on an automotive engineering workshop. As recorded in the minutes of that meeting, he outlined several points. These were that the co-operative movement generally traded with the United Kingdom, although the United States was an important source of motor vehicles. Furthermore, a business of this type could generate sizable earnings. However, there were issues associated with the acquisition of the necessary machinery and machine tools required. There was also an opportunity to create employment for men who were returning from

military service. In general, the servicing and repair of tractors and other motor vehicles was much better conducted within a well-equipped garage. Finally, the new joint venture should cover the Quairading, Balkuling, and Dangin districts (BDQ Engineering Works, 1945a).

Mr. Dall was accompanied by the QFCC manager Mr. W. Blackwell who reported that land had already been purchased in Quairading on the corner opposite the Show Ground gates on one side, and opposite the Vacuum Oil Co. depot on the other side. He explained that a Mr. Cyril Minchin had been approached about assuming the role of workshop manager, and that he had responded to this offer positively (BDQ Engineering Works, 1945a).

Mr. Blackwell also pointed out that the main workshop would be located in Quairading, with a service station (garage) located at Dangin. He also explained that a total of approximately £5,000 (approx. \$441,004 in 2024 dollars) would be required to fund the project. Additionally, the QFCC had successfully secured the franchise dealership for the Ford Corporation (BDQ Engineering Works, 1945b).

Figure 18: BDQ Engineering Work, Quairading 1953



Source: State Library of WA (1953).

The BDQ Engineering Works was officially opened on the afternoon of Saturday, 3 July 1948 the same day as the AGM that took place that afternoon and evening. In attendance were Mr. Charles Walter Harper, Chair of The Co-operative Federation of WA, who presided over the opening of the new garage and service station. Also present was Mr. E. W. Richards, the Chair of the BDQ Company overseeing both the bakery and the workshop. In his speech opening the new venture, Mr. Harper made reference to the many difficulties that had to be overcome in getting the business established. These included lack of manpower and materials. Nevertheless, he complimented the workshop manager, Mr. Cyril Minchin, and the QFCC manager, Mr. Blackwell, for the work that they had both put into the project to overcome these challenges (York Chronicle, 1948a),

Mr. Harper reportedly expressed great pleasure at being able to open what he described as a fine workshop. He then spoke of Quairading as, “an excellent example of the Co-operative movement” (York Chronicle, 1948a, p. 6). Also attending the opening ceremony were representatives from the Ford Motor Company, Messrs. Stark and Steedman, and Mr. Anketell from the Vacuum Oil Company.

The two managers from Ford,

“... paid high tribute to the layout and equipment and looked on the place as one of the best service stations in the state” (York Chronicle, 1948a, p. 6).

Mr. Anketell also expressed his opinion that,

“... there was no better Lubritorium in any country district” (York Chronicle, 1948a, p. 6).

The decision to grow the business through opening an automotive engineering workshop was considered by QFCC over several years during the 1940s. As discussed previously, the Co-operative already had a dealership with the Chrysler Corporation and Fargo Motor Car Company from the United States by the start of the 1930s. Fargo, which was founded in 1913 and acquired in 1922 by the Chrysler Corporation, was well known for its trucks and utilities. Figure 19 shows a Fargo Coupe Utility distributed in Australia in the early 1940s.

The financing of the BDQ Engineering Works was discussed during 1945 and it was agreed that the three partners should have motor vehicle servicing garages located within each of their respective towns. The value of these were estimated at £1,000 (approx. \$88,201 in 2024 dollars) for both Dangin and Quairading, and £500 (approx. \$44,100 in 2024 dollars) for Balkuling. This represented £2,500, or 50 per cent of the total £5,000 required for the new engineering works. The remaining £2,500 (approx. \$220,502 in 2024 dollars), was to be used to construct and equip the new workshop at Quairading (BDQ Engineering Works, 1945b).



Figure 19: Australian Fargo Coupe Utility advertisement circa. 1940

CHRYSLER AUSTRALIA
LIMITED

COMBINES
2 VEHICLES
IN ONE

WITH THIS NEW
AUSTRALIAN

FARGO
DE LUXE
UTILITY

COMFORT AND STYLE FOR WEEK-END PLEASURE
POWER, STRENGTH, AND CAPACITY FOR
WEEK-DAY WORK

The Coupe cab has passenger car type seating, steering wheel location and appointments. This Fargo handles beautifully, rides smoothly and carries 15 cwt. loads with surprisingly low running costs. We will be glad to give you full details of this fine, new model.

Source: Open source (1940).

Throughout 1945 to 1948 considerable work was undertaken to raise the necessary financial capital, acquire the equipment and machinery, and recruit the workforce for the BDQ Engineering Works. The initial staffing of the workshop comprised Mr. Cyril Minchin, manager, a senior mechanic, and a junior. In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, it was difficult to obtain the necessary machinery, tools, and associated equipment for the workshop. Skilled labour was also challenging, particularly due to the absence of suitable housing accommodation in the town. The new workshop required a substantial amount of additional building, and progress on this was slow due to labour shortages.

Additionally, attempts to have the BDQ Engineering Works registered as a co-operative had been rejected by the Supreme Court. The only option was for the venture to be registered as a separate company, but with an Articles of Association drafted as compliant with the *Co-operative Companies Act*. Furthermore, legal advice had suggested that the co-operatives in Quairading and Balkuling should either alter their existing Articles of Association, or transfer to the *Friendly Societies Act*. (BDQ Engineering Works, 1946a).

At the meeting of the BDQ Engineering Works directors held at Dangin on 2 September 1946, Mr. Minchin delivered the following report,

“Mr. Minchin reported that the garage work was continuing to make fair progress and thought it would be possible to increase the output of work during fine weather. He was a little disappointed with the lack of effort and co-operation from the rest of the staff, especially when he was called away on outside work. Due to the small, anticipated output from a petrol bowser he was not prepared to recommend putting any one in action for the time being and thought this could conveniently be left to the local co-op to handle. Equipment and spare parts were still very hard to obtain, and no satisfactory information could be obtained especially regarding the delivery of equipment. He proposed to attend, if possible, the school arranged by the Ford Motor Works” (BDQ Engineering Works, 1946b, p. 17).

In addition to the Ford Motors dealership and the Vacuum Oil Company, QFCC had a long-term distributor contract with Caltex (Texaco) for fuels and lubricants.

In December 1946 an issue arose when an inspection of the site in Balkuling identified that the existing buildings there were unsuitable for the erection of a garage. This caused dismay within the Balkuling Co-operative Society (BCS) management who were in urgent need of a garage and service station. It was considered that the BCS might withdraw from the joint venture and set up their own garage (BDQ Engineering Works, 1946c).

The BCS board was given time to consider their involvement in the venture, and legal advice was sought from Wesfarmers and Parker and Parker Solicitors. At a subsequent meeting on 23 December 1946, the Chair of the BCS formally withdrew from the joint venture (BDQ Engineering Works, 1946d).

However, at a meeting held on 11 July 1947, the Chair of BCS withdrew their intention to leave the BDQ Engineering Works joint venture. A resolution at that meeting stated,

“That it be the sincere wish of this meeting that Balkuling still retain an active interest in the BDQ enterprise and give support to it whenever possible, so that they may participate in any proportionate benefits, and that they may have every success in the establishment of their own garage” (BDQ Engineering Works, 1947a).

At the same meeting Mr. Cyril Minchin delivered a detailed manager’s report. He noted that he had managed to procure a quantity of hand tools and an engine stand during a recent visit to Perth, although the supply of such equipment was limited. The same was found for spare parts, which were in short supply, although there was easing in relation to sourcing vehicle batteries. Progress was being made in the construction of the workshop building, although shortages of both cement and skilled labour were causing problems. Discussions had taken place with the Vacuum Oil Company in relation to the general layout of the workshop. The locations for service pit and vehicle hoist had been determined, although the equipment for these areas was not yet available (BDQ Engineering Works, 1947a).



Figure 20: Caltex oil advertisement for QFCC, 1946



"I've proved it again!"

".. it pays to farm with CALTEX!"

"I've got a lot of machinery and I work it hard, but I've never had a breakdown due to lubrication failure. My machines stand up because I lubricate regularly with the particular CALTEX oil or grease my equipment needs. I use CALTEX products because, no matter what kind of lubrication job, there's a CALTEX quality product that will do that job better. I'm sticking to CALTEX again this harvest."

- ★ CALTEX MARFAK for bearings.
- ★ CALTEX THUBAN for gears.
- ★ CALTEX 747 HARVESTER OIL.
- ★ CALTEX R.P.M. MOTOR OIL.
- ★ CALTEX RUSTPROOF COMPOUND.



CALTEX

Source: York Leader (1946c).



The workshop staff were doing well but had experienced short-staffing due to the absence of the Senior Mechanic Mr. Watson, who had time off due to an injured leg. He also stressed that it was necessary for serious consideration to be given to the workshop acquiring its own electricity generation plant, which, he said, would be more profitable than having to pay the high rates charged by the local town supplier. He also made recommendations for overhead cranes able to deal with various heavy and light engines, plus the need for a portable welding unit to be acquired. The meeting approved the purchase of the welding plant, and authorized Mr. Minchin to prepare a business case for the workshop having its own electricity generator, compared to using the town supply (BDQ Engineering Works, 1947a).

By September 1947 the Ford Motor Company dealership agreement had been secured, and it would take effect as soon as the new engineering works was completed. Mr. Minchin had also reviewed the cost effectiveness of the workshop having its own electricity supply. Discussions with the local town electricity supplier had resulted in the town supply being considered a better option, particularly if they established the alternating current (AC) system that was being rolled out across the State at that time (BDQ Engineering Works, 1947b).

When the new BDQ Engineering Works was formally opened in July 1948 it was staffed by two senior mechanics, an administrative assistant to the manager Mr. Cyril Minchin, and there was an identified need for another mechanic. The business was headquartered in Quairading but supported the garages in Dangin and Balkuling. It had contracts with the Vacuum Oil Company, and Ford Motors, as well as having a sub-agency for Fordson Tractors. In addition, it was in discussions with the Royal Automobile Club of WA (RACWA), to be appointed as an RAC service agency in Quairading (BDQ Engineering Works, 1948),

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CO-OPERATIVE FEDERATION OF WA

A feature of the 1940s was the close engagement between the QFCC and The Co-operative Federation of WA. The QFCC was part of the Eastern Districts Council of the Federation, which managed a network of regional councils across the State. This relationship involved a significant amount of business and advocacy work by the Federation. In addition, the keynote speakers for the Co-operative's AGMs were usually either prominent members of the Federation or from Wesfarmers.

For example, at the AGM held on 7 July 1945, discussions took place during the meeting over several subjects. The first was the BDQ Engineering Works project. It was explained that due to war restrictions progress was not possible. However, with the war over, the plan was for the business and services to be expanded. A second item discussed was the issue of selling livestock through the Midland Junction saleyards and abattoir, in outer metropolitan Perth, with current arrangements viewed as unsatisfactory. A resolution was passed that read,

"The Co-operative Federation of WA to seek for the establishment of increased storage facilities at Midland Junction and that they consider making an extensive campaign through the Westralian Farmers Ltd., 'News', the local Press, the 'Primary Producer' and the wheat growers' newspapers, inviting wheat growers to transfer their Bulk Handling debentures as a preliminary security to finance this scheme" (York Chronicle, 1945, p. 4).

Mr. C. W. Fraser suggested that there was lack of a co-operative representative for stock. In response, Mr. Dall replied that while the directors recognised this as a problem, it was not at the time possible to allocate the required resources due to the wartime restrictions that impacted access to petrol and manpower. The meeting ended with a supper supplied by the Red Cross, and a musical recital followed by a dance. However, there was no keynote speaker due to the unavailability of The Co-operative Federation WA representatives (York Chronicle, 1945).

The following year, the Eastern Districts Council of The Co-operative Federation of WA held a meeting on 6 February 1946 at Bruce Rock. This meeting was chaired by Mr. A. Wilson and had twenty-one delegates from the co-operative companies of Dangin and South Caroling, Quairading, Bruce Rock, Kellerberrin, Totadgin, Shackleton, and Balkuling. Among the issues discussed was the way in which wheat receivals were being documented by CBH. The Council had discussed the issue for several months, but no progress was made. It was decided that an invitation be sent to Mr. Walter James Russell, a director of CBH who replaced The Hon. Thomas Henry Bath MLA as Chair in 1947, to attend the next meeting of the Council and talk to the delegates (York Leader, 1946a).

Also discussed was the sale of meat on a weight or grade basis. A delegate stated that he had followed Midland operations closely for a long time and was convinced that the law of supply and demand did not work under the price fixing regulations that were in place, which did not determine the return for the producer. He pointed to a South Australian report that suggested the better option would be State Government controlled abattoirs and slaughtermen (York Leader, 1946a).

This led to a delegate proposing that it might be better for the producers to own and control their own abattoirs and employ their own workers, much along the lines of the CBH in relation to bulk grain handling and storage. A resolution was then moved and carried that stated,

“That the subject of the sale of meat on the hook on a weight and grade basis be submitted to the conference for further consideration” (York Leader, 1946, p. 8).

The meeting also called upon the Westralian Farmers Ltd., to introduce its own insurance scheme, independent of the Underwriters’ Association, the aim of which would be to reduce insurance premiums, particularly in relation to crop insurance. It was noted that lower insurance premiums were being charged by other associations. In response, Mr. Fletcher, speaking on behalf of Wesfarmers, said that the company had built up a strong reputation and loyalty among the farmers. He stated that when the company’s financial position was sufficiently strong, it would aim to become independent of the Underwriters’ Association (York Leader, 1946).

CHANGES TO THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION AND FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT

Compared with the 1930s, the decade of the 1940s saw less frequent changes to the QFCC’s Articles of Association. However, at the AGM held in the Quairading Hall on 24 June 1944 amendments were made to some sections of the QFCC’s Articles of Association (York Chronicle, 1944b).

At the 1946 AGM held on 20 July, discussions focused on the Co-operative transferring its legal registration from the *Companies Act* to the *Friendly Societies Act*. In his address to the meeting, the Chair, Mr. S. C. Dall stated that,

“The directors were giving serious consideration to the recommendation to transfer from the Companies Act to the Friendly Societies Act and the shareholders would also be asked to express opinions on the establishment of a staff savings scheme and Saturday closing” (York Chronicle, 1946, p. 4).

Following considerable further discussion, the decision was made for the QFCC to transfer its registration from the *Companies Act* to the *Friendly Societies Act*. The AGM was then closed, and the participants enjoyed a supper followed by a program of musical performances, magic tricks, a ventriloquist, and dancing (York Chronicle, 1946).

However, at the 1947 AGM of the QFCC which took place on 19 July in the Quairading Hall, Mr. S. C. Dall was Chair with directors, manager, secretary and twenty-eight shareholders in attendance. Manager, Mr. W. Blackwell, explained that the board had deferred consideration of the creation of a staff savings scheme, due to having discovered certain irregularities in The Co-operative Federation of WA scheme. It was thought that the company would be better not to commit to the scheme until a more uniform system could be found (QFCC, 1947).

In discussing the previous year’s decision for the QFCC to transfer from the *Companies Act* to the *Friendly Societies Act*, Mr. S. C. Dall, as Chair, explained that the transfer would not be proceeding due to conditions imposed by the State Registrar. He stated,

“It has also been found necessary to defer consideration for this item as the present Registrar of Friendly Societies had imposed conditions governing the rule of Co-operative Societies that would in several ways cramp activities of the company. Until some modification of the registrar’s rulings could be obtained it was proposed to take no action” (QFCC, 1947, p. 1).

Mr. Dall also spoke about the wheat stabilisation scheme. He stated that it was most important to get back to normal production. Rural production during the war had declined considerably, although this decline had been offset, as far as Australian finances were concerned, by the massive spending that had been made by United States military forces who were based in Australia. He suggested that American banks had assessed that the expenditure made by the US Military in Australia during the war was equal to the Australian wool clip. He stated that,

“During the war essential rural requirements had risen in price from 15 to 132 per cent, and if the 40-hour week became a reality, which seemed certain, the cost of rural products must rise at least another 10 or 15 per cent. He would support any stabilisation scheme having as its basis that laid down in the Commonwealth Constitution of a just price, to be arrived at by a court established for that purpose, covering production costs, plus a reasonable working margin” (York Chronicle, 1946, p. 4).

The meeting also saw a considerable discussion over the closing of the Co-operative’s stores at midday on Saturdays, and it was decided that the matter be put to a ballot among the shareholders of the company. In relation to the establishing a staff savings scheme, Mr. Dall said that it would cost the Co-operative £175 (approx. \$15,132 in 2024 dollars).

In addressing the issue, Mr. Dall,

“... argued that an efficient and contented staff meant continuity of service of the best sort”
(York Chronicle, 1946, p. 4).

In addition to the distribution of dividends and bonuses, and the election of directors, the only other matter discussed was in relation to building alterations,

“Mr. H. Parker wrote asking the reason why all building work done and being done for the company had been given to one man, and that the three other building contractors in the town had not been approached for prices” (QFCC, 1947, p. 2).

A motion was put forward, and approved, that tenders be called for all future work exceeding in value the sum of £20 (approx. \$1,664 in 2024 dollars).

The 1948 AGM of the QFCC was held on 3 July in the Quairading Hall, with forty-five shareholders attending and Mr. S. C. Dall in the Chair. Also in attendance was Mr. Charles Walter Harper, the Chair of The Co-operative Federation of WA, and Mr. E. C. Barnett from the Westralian Farmers Ltd., plus the manager, Mr. William “Bill” Blackwell and secretary, Mr. Charles Farncombe Lindorff of the QFCC, and other staff (York Chronicle, 1948b).

The meeting also agreed that the Articles of Association be changed to allow for seven directors to be elected to the board. The resignation of Mr. Blackwell was also announced at the AGM with Wally Knox replacing him as manager (York Chronicle, 1948c). It was also the last year of Mr. Dall’s time as Chair, being replaced by Mr. A. Wilson (York Chronicle, 1948b).

After the AGM had ended the attendees enjoyed a supper and were addressed by Mr. Harper who spoke at length about co-operatives and told the audience that in his opinion prices had reached their peak and that it would be wise for farmers to “consolidate their position” (York Chronicle, 1948, p. 6). The event then moved to a musical concert, and Mr. Harper engaged some of the local golfing enthusiasts about how to improve their games.

THE RESIGNATION OF MR. WILLIAM “BILL” BLACKWELL

At the 1948 AGM of the QFCC the Manager of the Co-operative, Mr. William “Bill” Blackwell announced his resignation. His decision was motivated in part by his ill-health, which had led him to take several months of sick leave during the previous year. However, he had also accepted the position of Secretary of The Co-operative Federation of WA and would be moving from Quairading to Perth (York Chronicle, 1948a).

Born in England, Mr. Blackwell had migrated to Australia in 1928 to join the WA Co-operative movement and build on his experience with co-operatives from the United Kingdom. His first position was with the Bruce Rock District Farmers’ Co-operative for two and half years before moving to Quairading to assume the role of company secretary from 1931 to 1935, after which he replaced Mr. William E. Wishart as Manager.



In describing Mr. Blackwell's time with the QFCC the *York Chronicle* reported,

"During that time, he has seen much development. The Yoting branch was opened and under his guidance the Post Office was opened, a fuel depot established, and a house built for the local manager. Apart from the new store at the rear of the shop the main addition to the activities of the movement has been the BDQ Garage, which was formally opened on Saturday."

"Apart from his business activities Mr. Blackwell has always played a very keen part in the life of the town. He has been a J.P. for some years and secretary and chairman in turn of most of the Clubs and organisations. As secretary, captain and president of the Tennis Club he has helped much to promote the game."

He also took an interest in golf and bowls. Ever since his arrival he has been connected with the Hospital, first as secretary, then as a member of the Board. Including a term as chairman. He was also for a time chairman of the Parents & Citizens' Association and for two years a member of the Road Board. Needless to say, one who was willing to give so much of his time to the public service will be greatly missed and there will be universal regret at his departure" (York Chronicle, 1948a, p. 1).

HOUSING FOR THE MANAGER AND SECRETARY

A challenge facing the QFCC during the 1940s was the ability to find suitable housing accommodation within the town for managerial staff. For example, in his address to the shareholders at the 1948 AGM, Mr. Dall, as Chair, explained that the Co-operative had experienced difficulties with limited capital and staff. The latter issue, being caused primarily from a lack of suitable housing accommodation in the town. It was suggested that these financial problems could be alleviated if bonus debentures were issued, based upon a significant proportion of the profits. However, the motion was not supported by the majority who wished to continue with the usual payment of bonuses to shareholders (York Chronicle, 1948b).

The issue of housing for the manager and secretary was discussed during the Co-operative's board meetings within the context of upgrading the company's store. For example, at a board meeting held on 7 July 1948 extensions to the rear of the general store in Quairading were discussed. In this discussion it was noted that an application for the construction of a residence for the manager had been refused, but a further application had been lodged (QFCC, 1948b).

Following the resignation of Mr. Blackwell, the board sought a replacement, initially offering the position to a Mr. Partridge. However, he declined the offer and the appointment was given to Mr. Knox who had served as company secretary from 1939 to 1948. His role was then taken by Mr. Charles Farncombe Lindorff, who served as secretary from 1948 to 1956, before becoming manager of the Co-operative from 1956 to 1987.

However, at a special meeting of the board held on 13 August 1948, Chaired by Mr. A. Wilson,

"The Manager [Mr. Knox] explained that Mr. C. F. Lindorff who had accepted the position of Secretary was a married man with one child and that the question had arisen regarding accommodation. As the company would not require the Manager's residence for a further six months, it was decided upon the motion of C. W. Heal, seconded by W. T. Stone, that Mr.



Lindorff be given the residence on the understanding that he may have to vacate it in six months' time. The Manager was instructed to inform Mr. Lindorff accordingly" (QFCC, 1948c, p. 27).

Mr. Lindorff agreed to the six months temporary occupancy of the manager's residence. This was only available because Mr. Knox, who had been occupying another residence not owned by the Co-operative, would move into the manager's residence after completing a six-month trial in the role of manager. Nevertheless, there was a general shortage of accommodation within the town, which made it difficult to attract employees to work for the Co-operative. Discussions took place during 1948 and the Secretary of The Co-operative Federation of WA requested that QFCC submit a formal request for staff accommodation, a topic that was discussed at the Federation Managers' Conference in August of that year under the title "Housing Problems". This suggested that QFCC was not the only regional co-operative facing a housing shortage at that time (QFCC, 1948d).

In October 1948, the manager Mr. Knox reported to the board that the State Housing Commission had granted the QFCC a permit to build a house on Quairading Town Lot 204 in Jennaberring Road. The board approved the issuing of a call for tenders to construct the house (QFCC, 1948e). The building was to have cement brick walls, a tiled roof, rather than asbestos, and a garage. It was also planned to obtain sufficient cement bricks to build a second house on a further block in Jennaberring Road. However, housing accommodation was not just a problem for the manager and secretary, it also applied to general staff. For example, the QFCC manager, Mr. Knox, was tasked by the board to obtain information from the State Housing Commission to issue to the staff should any of them wish to buy, rent, or build a house (QFCC, 1948g).

The issue of housing for staff was illustrated when the manager of the Grocery Department, Mr. A. Briggs, resigned and left the district due to him being unable to find suitable accommodation. Apparently, Mr. Briggs had made an application to the State Housing Commission for a permit to build a house, which he would fund at his own expense, but the Housing Commissioner had rejected his application on the grounds that Mr. Briggs had not first secured the land upon which the house was to be built (QFCC, 1948f).

In November 1949, plans were underway for the construction of a second house and the manager, Mr. Knox reported that tenders for the building had been issued and quotes received from builders. The minutes of the meeting read,

"The Manager reported having received a quote for the making of the bricks, laying foundations, and the erection of the walls of the proposed new house. The price being approximately £500 (approx. \$34,453 in 2024 dollars). Mr Stacey moved that as soon as the permit is granted, we call tenders for the completed house in accordance with the plans submitted by the Board, and alternatively call tenders for the foundations, making of the bricks, and complete erection of the walls. Should the tenders be called before the next Directors' Meeting, the Chairman and Manager have the power to accept at their discretion. This was seconded by Mr. McRae, and carried" (QFCC, 1949, p. 51).



Memories of Wally Knox – Don J. Handscombe

Don Handscombe was a director of the QFCC from 1967 to 1989. Born in Quairading in 1940, he was raised on the family farm, which his parents had settled on 1,500 acres in 1923 after migrating from Britain. He recalls that the original QFCC store consisted of only two tin sheds, and that the groceries from the Dangin and South Caroling Co-operative Society were considered to be better quality than those from Quairading.

He remembers Wally Knox, who served as Secretary from 1939 to 1948, before becoming Manager from 1948 to 1956. According to Don Handscombe, *“Well, he was very low profile when he was in the role of Secretary. Wally Knox was a very abrupt bugger; I can tell you. However, he left the Co-op and went to Wesfarmers where he became the trouble shooter for the state. He went around all the co-ops and sorted out their problems.”*

Don Handscombe recalls Wally Knox as a very serious person who rarely smiled and could be abrupt at times. However, as Don noted, *“After he retired, I met up with him in a caravan park in Walpole, and we got to talking. Wally said, ‘Don, if I was a happy person I wouldn’t have taken that job.’”*

Source: Handscombe (2023).

SUMMING UP THE QFCC IN THE 1940S

The decade of the 1940s was dominated by the Second World War. As discussed in this chapter, the impact of the war on the QFCC was similar to most other businesses in Australia. Price controls imposed by the Federal Government impacted the farmers, and both rationing and conscription impacted supplies, pricing, and labour shortages. Nevertheless, the QFCC continued to operate successfully, and to expand its range of goods and services. By the end of the decade the QFCC offered a drapery, hardware, newsagency, grocery, butcher, bread shop, Caltex fuel depot, garage and service station, farm supplies, stock and station agency, insurance agency, plus a dealership for Fordson Tractors and Fargo trucks and potential Ford dealership.

The continuous upgrading of the company stores, the need to find housing for staff, and the cooperation between the QFCC and its neighbouring co-operatives in Dangin and Balkuling via the BDQ Bakery and the BDQ Engineering Works, all demonstrated an entrepreneurial spirit, and ability to manage significant, and complex operations. A feature of the decade was the ability of the board and management to accept the challenges of rationing, and the shortages that this led to across a range of areas. The directors and shareholders remained committed to the company and the co-operative spirit and demonstrated optimism for a brighter future.

Another theme that emerges from the 1940s was the close relationship between the QFCC and The Co-operative Federation of WA. While the relationship between the QFCC and Wesfarmers was largely commercial in nature, the relationship with the Federation was founded more on a common acceptance of being part of the co-operative movement. Regular visits by such stalwart

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co-operators as Charles Walter Harper and The Hon. Thomas Henry Bath, who spoke at the AGMs, helped to maintain this focus on co-operative principles, and the benefits of the co-operative business model. Participation in the Federation Conferences and regional district councils also served to enhance the QFCC's engagement with the co-operative spirit.

As Mr. H. J. McCann, Assistant General Manager of Wesfarmers explained at the 1949 AGM of the QFCC when delivering the keynote address, the business model of a co-operative is different to that of an investor-owned firm, or what he referred to as an "ordinary trading company". While the publicly listed company can go onto the stock market and raise capital, the co-operative company cannot. Its only options were to conserve its profits from trading or seek additional investment from its shareholders. He observed that the shares of the QFCC were showing their par value of £1 to be worth £4, this was an undervaluation. In his view were they to be traded publicly they would be worth at least 50 per cent more (York Chronicle, 1949).

The QFCC financial records show that during the 1940s the Co-operative generated a total turnover of \$15.75 million in 2023 dollars equivalent, with an annual average turnover of more than \$3.15 million in 2023 dollars equivalent. Additionally, it achieved a total net profit after tax (NPAT) of \$919,755 in 2023 dollars equivalent, with an annual average NPAT of \$183,951 in 2023 dollars equivalent. It also issued a 5 per cent dividend on paid-up capital, while distributing cash rebates of at least \$807,114 in 2023 dollars equivalent to shareholders. They were also able to pay a minimum of \$73,074 in 2023 dollars equivalent into their building fund for the upgrading of their stores and other facilities.

The point being made by Mr. McCann is that the value of a co-operative company is not reflected in its published financial statements. Because it is owned in mutual by its shareholders, who get value from the business through trading rather than investment, the true value of a co-operative is measured less by its balance sheet, and more by the willingness of its member-shareholders to support it, trade with it, and purchase additional shares or debentures in order to enable it to raise the necessary capital required to deliver the services that create value for the members. This is major point of differentiation between the co-operative company and the ordinary trading company.

CHAPTER 7: THE FIFTIES WERE FABULOUS, 1950-1959

The decades that followed the Second World War were a period of economic growth for the WA economy. Over the period from 1945 to 1965 the State's population grew by an average of 2.8 per cent per annum, which compares to an annual growth rate of 1.9 per cent for the rest of Australia. The mining sector also grew, expanding from gold to a range of other minerals. Manufacturing industries in WA also began to grow during the decade. This was driven by minerals processing and involved the development of the Kwinana Industrial Area south of Fremantle, which covered an area of 120 square kilometres, and incorporated the British Petroleum (BP) oil refinery that started production in 1954, and the Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP) steel rolling mill that opened in 1956 (Wilson, Layman & Christmas, 2004).

International wool prices increased during the 1950s triggered by the Korean War (1950-1953), and wheat prices were also on the rise. Asia was also becoming a primary export market for wheat. This created a buoyant economic situation within the WA Wheatbelt, and many farmers achieved financial stability or prosperity in a way that had been more difficult during earlier decades. However, railway transportation was facing growing competition from road haulage, with some regional railway lines facing pressure and closure. Farm machinery was also becoming increasingly more sophisticated and capable, which led to a steady reduction in the rural workforce resulting in a population decline and shrinking settlements (Menck, 2022).

Although the Second World War had proven a major test for Australia, the 1950s was a decade of a Cold War that saw the world divided into a two nuclear armed camps that either fought, or played a role, in a series of regional wars that were mostly triggered by anti-colonialism, or unresolved ethnic and political issues. These included the Korea War, the Suez Crisis (1956), the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya (1952-1960), and the French Indochina War (1946-1954). While Australia became involved in several of these conflicts, their impact on the Australian population was minor, and largely reflected in the rising and falling of commodity prices such as wool, wheat, and oil. For example, the rising tensions in the Middle East in the early 1950s was a major impetus for the establishment of the BP oil refinery at Kwinana (Wilson et al., 2004).

It was within this national and international context that the QFCC operated during the 1950s, which proved to be a decade of change and expansion. This required good financial management.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND DISTRIBUTIONS, 1950S

For the QFCC the 1950s was a decade of good sales turnover and steady growth combined with a general optimism about the future outlook for the company. At the AGM held on 1 July 1950 in the Quairading Hall, the Chair, Mr. A. Wilson, was able to report a record net profit of £5,012 (approx. \$307,995 in 2023 dollars), and the accumulation of £8,000 (approx. \$507,154 in 2024 dollars) in the Co-operative's reserve fund. This led a shareholder, Mr. Burrow, to propose that the money in the reserve fund should be distributed to the shareholders. In response, the Secretary of The Co-operative Federation of WA, and former QFCC Manager, Bill Blackwell and the Secretary of the Westralian Farmers' Co-operative Ltd., Mr. J. H. Worthington, who had

attended the AGM, explained at length the importance of the reserve fund to the future development of the company (York Chronicle, 1950).

The AGM had attracted twenty-eight shareholders and was also attended by the directors, the QFCC Manager, Mr. W. Knox, and the Secretary Mr. Charles F. Lindorff, plus, as noted above, Messrs. Blackwell and Worthington. In his address the shareholders, Mr. Wilson proposed to the meeting the following motion,

“That any substantial increase in Assets, or Cash distribution of Profits will necessitate Bank Overdrafts. The Company is in such a position that the Capital could be increased with safety, if such a course were desired” (QFCC, 1950a, p. 65).

This motion was seconded by Mr. J. M. Livingston, but contested by a shareholder Mr. Parker who,

“... considered that the Company had sufficient capital for efficient working. In his opinion the Balance Sheet as submitted to the Shareholders gave no information at all. He remarked on the ‘scandalous waste’ occurrences in the Company’s premises. He moved an amendment that the Balance Sheet be referred back to the Directors for further consideration, also that this meeting instruct the Directors to pay the bonus in cash instead of issuing Debentures, as the Shareholders could do far better with the cash than the Company” (QFCC, 1950a, p. 65).

Although Mr. Parker’s motion was seconded by Mr. E. W. Shenton, it was not carried by the meeting. Instead, the Chair’s original motion was carried. Further matters discussed were the appointment of shareholder representatives from Yoting to the QFCC board, and an increase in the permanent capital of the company. In relation to the first issue, Mr. L. G. Caporn, a shareholder from Yoting moved a motion, which was seconded by Mr. A. J. Brown, that the QFCC board have a representative from Yoting elected as a director. This motion was defeated. However, a second motion, moved by Mr. J. A. Brown, seconded by Mr. B. H. Dall, that the capital base of the company be increased from £4,000 (approx. \$253,577 in 2024 dollars), to £6,000 (approx. \$380,366 in 2024 dollars), was carried (QFCC, 1950a).

As shown in Table 4, the Co-operative was able to issue dividends of 5 per cent per year on paid-up capital, and also trading bonuses, which were initially paid as debentures for amounts that exceeded £3 (approx. \$190.18 in 2024 dollars). This continued from 1950 to 1952, then from 1953 onwards, the trading bonus was paid as a 4 per cent debenture instead of cash. The 1953 AGM of the QFCC was held in the Quairading Hall on 4 July, with Mr. A. Wilson as Chair, Mr. Knox as Manager, Mr. Lindorff as Secretary, plus the directors, twenty-nine shareholders, and the Secretary of the Westralian Farmers’ Co-operative Ltd, Mr. Worthington also present. In his address to the shareholders, Mr. Wilson reported that the Co-operative had experienced an annual turnover of £109,487 (approx. \$4,744,722 in 2024 dollars) and generated a net profit of £7,854 (approx. \$340,360 in 2024 dollars). Another issue addressed at the AGM was the decision to write to all non-trading shareholders in regard to purchasing back their shares (QFCC, 1953).

The following year, the AGM was held on 28 August 1954, also in the Quairading Hall. It was now Chaired by Mr. D. McRae with the directors, manager, secretary, and thirty shareholders attending. Mr. McRae reported that the annual turnover was £104,310 (approx. \$4,450,827 in 2024 dollars), and the net profit was £6,559 (approx. \$279,867 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1954a).

Table 4: Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Financial Distributions 1950-1959

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1950	Dividend of 5% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £3,350 (approx. \$221,371 in 2024 dollars) paid as debentures for all amounts exceeding £3. A sum of £500 (approx. \$47,546 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund, the balance after taxation paid to general reserve fund.
1951	Dividend of 5% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £5,728 (approx. \$304,051 in 2024 dollars) paid as debentures for all amounts exceeding £3. A sum of £750 (approx. \$39,811 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund, the balance after taxation transferred to general reserve fund.
1952	Dividend of 5% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £3,400 (approx. \$153,958 in 2024 dollars) paid as debentures for all amounts exceeding £3. A sum of £150 (approx. \$6,792 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund, the balance after taxation of £1,682 (approx. \$76,164 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the general reserve fund.
1953	Dividend of 5% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £5,522/16s/6d (approx. \$239,337 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash. A sum of £750 (approx. \$32,501 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund, the balance after taxation of £1,189/1s/6d (approx. \$51,530 in 2024 dollars), was transferred to the general reserve fund.
1954	Dividend of 5% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £4,300/6s/11d (approx. \$183,491 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash. A sum of £1,000 (approx. \$42,669 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund, the balance after taxation of £866 (approx. \$36,951 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the general reserve fund.
1955	Dividend of 5% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £3,682 (approx. \$154,728 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash. A sum of £500 (approx. \$21,011 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the general reserve, after taxation of £706 (approx. \$29,668 in 2024 dollars)
1956	Dividend of 5% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £5,556 (approx. \$220,926 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash. A sum of £500 (approx. \$19,882 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the general reserve, after taxation of £706 (approx. \$28,073 in 2024 dollars).
1957	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and a bonus on trading of £5,492 (approx. \$212,293 in 2024 dollars) be paid as 4% debentures instead of cash. A sum of £500 (approx. \$19,327 in 2024 dollars) be transferred to the general reserve, after taxation of £1,387 (approx. \$53,615 in 2024 dollars).
1958	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and a bonus on trading of £5,396 (approx. \$207,139 in 2024 dollars) be paid as 4% debentures instead of cash. A sum of £500 (approx. \$19,194 in 2024 dollars) be transferred to the general reserve, after taxation of £1,387 (approx. \$53,243 in 2024 dollars).
1959	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% on paid-up-capital and a bonus on trading of £5,013 (approx. \$188,523 in 2024 dollars) be paid as 4% debentures instead of cash. A sum of £1,000 (approx. \$37,607 in 2024 dollars) be transferred to the general reserve, after taxation of £1,200 (approx. \$45,128 in 2024 dollars).

Sources: QFCC Annual Reports (1950 to 1959).

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A similar pattern emerged at the 1955 AGM held on 16 July, with Mr. McRae as Chair, along with his fellow directors, the Manager Mr. Knox, Secretary Mr. Lindorff and thirty shareholders. They were again joined by Mr. Worthington from Wesfarmers. Mr. McRae delivered his report, stating that the Co-operative had achieved an annual turnover of £113,637 (approx. \$4,775,337 in 2024 dollars), and a net profit of £5,284 (approx. \$222,048 in 2024 dollars). At the meeting a request was made that the board provide a detailed profit and loss statement for the BDQ Bakery and BDQ Engineering Works. However, despite being put to a motion it was not carried (QFCC, 1955a).

The 1956 AGM of the QFCC was again held in the Quairading Hall on 16 June, with Mr. D. McRae as Chair. He was joined by the directors, the manager, Mr. W. Knox, and the secretary Mr. C. F. Lindorff, plus twenty-four shareholders. Also attending was Mr. Irwin Hunter, Superintendent of Livestock at Wesfarmers and Bill Blackwell, Secretary of The Co-operative Federation of WA. In his report to the shareholders, Mr. McRae stated that the annual turnover of the Co-operative had been £135,930 (approx. \$5,405,045 in 2024 dollars), with a net profit of £7,678 (approx. \$305,304 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1956).

During the AGM the QFCC board announced that it would redeem £4,999 (approx. \$198,777 in 2024 dollars) bonus debentures issued in 1953 and one third of the £1,469 (approx. \$58,412 in 2024 dollars) bonus debentures issued by the Danging and South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd., which had been acquired by QFCC on 1 July 1955. Directors' fees were set at £2/12s/6d (approx. \$104.38 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1956). A feature of the 1956 AGM was the keynote addresses by Messrs. Blackwell and Hunter described in the AGM minutes as follows,

“Mr. Blackwell, Secretary Co-operative Federation of WA gave a very interesting report on Co-operative matters relating to Co-operatives in England and the Scandinavian countries. Mr. Irwin Hunter, Superintendent of the Livestock Department gave an informative report on matters pertaining to his recent trip to the far East and Stock and Wool matters in general. Mr. Hunter expressed his appreciation of the services rendered by Mr. S. O. Holding and requested that an entry to this effect be made in the minutes” (QFCC, 1956, p. 156).

The 1957 AGM of the QFCC, was, as usual, held in the Quairading Hall on 13 July. Once again Mr. D. McRae was in the Chair. The meeting was attended by his fellow directors, the Manager, who was now Mr. Charles F. Lindorff, with Mr. P. E. Glover as Secretary, plus fourteen shareholders. They were joined again by Mr. Worthington, Secretary, Westralian Farmers' Co-operative Ltd. Mr. McRae reported that the QFCC had achieved an annual turnover of £145,450 (approx. \$5,622,377 in 2024 dollars), and a net profit of £8,008 (approx. \$309,550 in 2024 dollars). The board redeemed £4,023 (approx. \$155,509 in 2024 dollars) bonus debentures issued in 1954 and one third of the bonus debentures issued by the Danging and South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd. (QFCC, 1957). Mr. Worthington addressed the meeting. His speech was reported as follows,

“Mr. Worthington, Secretary of Westralian Farmers' Co-operative Limited gave a very interesting address on Co-operation, congratulating Quairading for the very good balance sheet presented. Making reference to the visit to the Eudunda Co-op (South Australia) where the one Unit buys for all Branches. Also, speaking on the amalgamation of the smaller Co-ops to come under the direction of the larger businesses, so as to avoid the vacuum that could develop so far as agencies are concerned” (QFCC, 1957, p. 172).

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Figure 21: Sir Ernest Thorley Loton (left) and William “Bill” Blackwell (right)



Sources: E. T. Loton (RASWA 1958); W. Blackwell (Stanford, 1955).

On 26 July 1958, the QFCC AGM was once again held in the Quairading Hall. Mr. D. McRae was Chair and he was joined by fellow directors, the Manager, Mr. Lindorff, Secretary, Mr. Glover, seventeen shareholders, plus Ernest Thorley Loton, Chairman of the Westralian Farmers’ Co-operative Ltd. and Bill Blackwell from The Co-operative Federation of WA. In his address to the shareholders, Mr. McRae stated that the QFCC had achieved an annual turnover of £145,255 (approx. \$5,575,983 in 2024 dollars), and a net profit of £8,420 (approx. \$323,223 in 2024 dollars). The company had placed £1,000 (approx. \$38,387 in 2024 dollars) into reserve. In addition, the board had redeemed £3,480 (approx. \$133,589 in 2024 dollars) bonus debentures issued in 1955, and one third of the bonus debentures issued by the Dangin and South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd. (QFCC, 1958). It was noted in the minutes that,

“Mr. Loton, Chairman, board of directors of Westralian Farmers’ Co-operative Ltd., gave a very interesting address to the meeting, which was followed by a talk by Mr. Blackwell, Secretary of The Co-operative Federation of WA” (QFCC, 1958, p. 187).

The final AGM for the decade was held, once again in the Quairading Hall, on 8 August 1959. The Chair of the meeting was Mr. D. McRae, who was joined by fellow directors, the Manager Mr. Lindorff, Secretary, Mr. Glover, plus thirteen shareholders. Mr. McRae addressed the meeting stating that the Co-operative had secured an annual turnover of £144,522 (approx. \$5,435,007 in 2024 dollars), and net profit of £7,839 (approx. \$294,800 in 2024 dollars). The decline in net profit was attributed to a decrease in wool commissions caused by falling commodity prices. He suggested that any decline in overall financial performance was not due to the Co-operative, but

the market (QFCC, 1959). The board redeemed £5,325 (approx. \$200,256 in 2024 dollars) bonus debentures issued in 1956 (QFCC, 1959).

CHANGES TO THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

As with previous decades, the QFCC continued to make amendments to the Co-operative's Articles of Association. These amendments were usually associated with the share capital of the company. For example, at the AGM was held at the Quairading Hall on 21 July 1951. The meeting was chaired by Mr. C. R. Dall and attended by the directors, the manager and secretary, eighteen shareholders, plus Mr. Bill Blackwell, Secretary of The Co-operative Federation of WA. The meeting involved changes to the Co-operative's Articles of Association. An initial alteration was moved by QFCC Director Mr. D. McRae, and seconded by Mr. R. G. Harvey, a shareholder. It was also supported by Mr. Blackwell who spoke of the financial difficulties that many co-operatives in the State were facing due to rising costs. The motion, which was carried unanimously, read,

"That the Nominal Capital of the Company be increased from £4,000 to £8,000 by the issue of a further £4,000 in £1 shares" (QFCC, 1951a, p. 78).

This was followed by a series of motions for additional alterations to the Articles of Association. They related to the treatment of share capital within the company encompassing increasing the minimum and maximum number of shares that could be held by individual shareholders. Despite a lively discussion the motion that was finally carried, was the one originally moved by Mr. D. McRae, and seconded by Mr. A. F. Dall, which read,

"That Article No. 4 be amended to increase the Minimum and Maximum holding of Shares to 5 and 200 respectively" (QFCC, 1951a, p. 78).

Later, at the 1953 AGM, a motion, moved by Mr. L. J. Stacey and seconded by Mr. J. R. Keast, which was carried unanimously, amended the Articles of Association as follows,

"That Article No. 4 be amended by deleting from the first paragraph the words:

"Where however in the opinion of the Board it is necessary or desirable to do so for the purpose of carrying out any purchase of property and or assets or of carrying out any amalgamation the preceding restrictions may be waived by the Board."

"and by adding at the end the Article a new paragraph as follows, namely:"

"The quotation of any shares in the capital of the Company for sale or purchase at any stock exchange or in any other public manner whatever is hereby prohibited" (QFCC, 1953, p. 114).

THE BDQ BAKERY AND BDQ ENGINEERING WORKS

Despite the enthusiasm surrounding the joint ventures of the BDQ Bakery and BDQ Engineering Works espoused during the 1940s, the situation facing these ventures became problematic for the Dangan and South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd. (DSCCS) and the Balkuling Co-operative Society Ltd. In August 1951 the QFCC board discussed the DSCCS selling their interest in the BDQ Engineering Works for £1,500 (approx. \$79,622 in 2024 dollars). The amount would be paid in three annual instalments of £500 (approx. \$26,541 in 2024 dollars), with provision that the

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DSCCS leave enough capital in the joint venture to allow the BDQ name to be retained, thereby enabling the enterprise to keep the Vacuum Oil agency in Quairading (QFCC, 1951c).

There were also issues with the BDQ Bakery. For example, during the QFCC board meeting held on 12 March 1952, the manager Mr. W. Knox, reported to the board that a Mr. A. Ward of Dangin had lodge a formal complaint to the WA Health Department in relation to him finding a cigarette butt in a loaf of bread from the BDQ Bakery. The Health Department had responded via the District Health Inspector that the Department would not take any action at this time, but should a similar complaint be made again it would be necessary to dismiss the employee responsible. The board moved to inform the Dangin Co-operative (DSCSS) that the action taken by Mr. Ward was in their opinion quite unnecessary and uncooperative in nature, and that no good would come from it (QFCC, 1952a).

Although this was a matter of concern, the issue of the future direction of the BDQ Bakery was a more significant one that saw the QFCC planning to take control of the enterprise. It was discussed at the QFCC AGM held in the Quairading Hall on 2 August 1952. Mr. C. R. Dall was Chair, along with the directors, Manager, Mr. W. Knox, and Secretary, Mr. C. F. Lindorff plus eighteen shareholders. Mr. Dall, provided a detailed report on the state of the BDQ Co-operative Bakery, outlining the board's ideas for the sale and leasing of the bakery. The meeting moved a motion expressing every confidence by the shareholders in the board's ability to deal with the bakery problem (QFCC, 1952a).

ACQUISITION OF THE DANGIN CO-OPERATIVE

What was motivating the QFCC board to consider the acquisition of both the BDQ Bakery and the BDQ Engineering Works from the DSCCS was the slow but steady decline of the co-operative in Dangin. Founded in 1916, the DSCCS was registered under the *Co-operatives and Provident Societies Act 1903*, separately from the approaches being made by representatives from the Westralian Farmers' Co-operative Ltd. (Wesfarmers), who helped to establish the Wheatbelt co-operatives such as QFCC. It was the first farmer co-operative to operate within the Wheatbelt, and the only one to remain registered under the 1903 legislation (Baskerville, 2019). The inclusion of "Society" in its name rather than "Company" being a reflection of this.

The DSCCS opened is co-operative general store in 1918 and initially generated good turnover and profits from participating in the wheat handling under a contract with Wesfarmers. This work, plus the store income and agency business revenues (e.g., post office, caretaking of the Dangin railway siding), helped maintain the Co-operative's profitability. However, the impact of the Great Depression on the Co-operative was significant, and the loss of the wheat handling after the establishment of CBH in 1933 saw profitability fall (Baskerville, 2019).

In 1940 the Dangin co-operative store was contributing around 65 per cent of the company's profits, but this declined to 16 per cent and back to 40 per cent by 1951. Unfortunately, by the early 1950s the viability of the store was looking unsustainable. A general meeting of the DSCCS shareholders in 1953 discussed the option of merging with the QFCC. This was rejected by the meeting on the grounds that the members should shop locally rather than driving into Quairading

to do their shopping, and that customer service, if improved, might make a difference. However, the store continued to decline (Baskerville, 2019).

Memories of the Dangin & South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd. – Shirley Stacey

Shirley Stacey is a QFCC shareholder and member of the Stacey family who was born in Dangin and was a member of the Dangin & South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd. (DSCCS), which during its heyday, provided a range of goods and services. She recalls that the town of Dangin had almost everything that a community needed, but it might have declined due to the absence of a liquor licence for the hotel.

As she explained, “All the shops that were needed were in Dangin. There was a hospital, bank, a hall, a church, the Co-op, an undertaker, a blacksmith, a school, really everything that a settlement needed. If only it could have got a licence for the hotel things would have been a lot different.”

Shirley Stacey lived in Dangin until the early 1950s and worked for a time at the Co-operative there. Her family lived on a farm south of the town, and she boarded in Dangin during the week, working as an office clerk at the DSCCS. In 1956 she married into the Stacey family, who developed the Stacey Lamb export business discussed later. She describes the DSCCS as she remembered it in the 1950s,

“It had a double front and housed a complete drapery section, a hardware and grocery. There was a fuel bowser out the front, and attached to the northern end was a post office, and that was the extent of the Dangin Co-op. However, out the back it had a bakery that was semi-detached from the Co-op. It had its own baker, and I think that he was self-employed, but I don’t know for sure. He lived on site at the bake house.”

She noted that there was also a house across the road from the former Co-operative that was the Manager’s house, and which is still in the town. When Shirley married into the Stacey family in 1956, she moved to Quairading and from that time onwards focused on that town, becoming a member of the QFCC.

Source: (Stacey, 2023).

Against this background, a decision was made at the QFCC board meeting on 29 December 1954 for the QFCC to take over the Dangin and South Caroling Co-operative Company Ltd. as a going concern. The motion read,

“This board agrees to take over the Dangin Co-operative as a going concern. We do not agree to the allocation of positions being made vacant on the board for the Dangin members. Those desiring a position on the board could nominate in the usual manner. It is our intention to maintain the service at the Dangin store. On the completion of the valuation of stocks and all other assets, shares to be issued on the same basis as the Quairading Co-operative Shareholders. Reserves to be treated the same as Quairading and not circulating or redeemable” (QFCC, 1954b, p. 134).

The following year, at the 1955 AGM a Special Resolution was proposed by Mr. N. A. Fraser, and seconded by Mr. C. Minchin, for the QFCC board to amalgamate with the DSCCS. The motion, which was passed unanimously, read as follows,

“That the Directors be and are hereby authorised to arrange and carry into effect an amalgamation with this Company of the Dangin and South Caroling Co-operative Society Limited, on the basis of this Company acquiring the undertaking and all assets of the Society (including distribution to members of any current profits) and allotting and issuing to the Society and or its nominees fully paid ordinary shares in the capital of this Company as the purchase consideration” (QFCC, 1955, p. 143-144).

This “amalgamation” was essentially an acquisition of the DSCCS by the QFCC. There was some call for the QFCC board to make provision for at least one director from Dangin and South Caroling, but this was rejected with the view that if shareholders from that district wished to nominate for a position on the QFCC board they were free to do so (QFCC, 1955). The acquisition of the DSCCS by the QFCC also impacted the BDQ Bakery and BDQ Engineering Works. The bakery was still operating in 1951, but the engineering works, as a joint venture partnership, was in jeopardy by 1950. For example, at a meeting of the BDQ Engineering Works Management Committee on 10 August 1950 the Dangin partner declared a formal request to terminate the partnership. This statement read,

“The Dangin unit had given notice requesting the Meeting to discuss the dissolution of the partnership. Mr. Lohoar stated that as all efforts to engage a man for the Dangin Garage had failed, and the improbability of getting someone there, his Unit thought it best if they could withdraw from the partnership. The financial return from the undertaking was quite good, but their Shareholders required the service at Dangin which appeared now impossible to give. Mr. Lohoar informed the Meeting that Dangin only required the amount of capital they had subscribed – namely £1,500” (BDQ Engineering Works, 1950, p. 43).

The decision was left to the QFCC board to decide what action would be taken. As discussed in the previous section, the decision was made to buy out the share capital of DSCCS over three separate tranches and retain sufficient residual capital to enable QFCC to negotiate contracts with the Vacuum Oil Company. The acquisition of the DSCCS by the QFCC led to the closure of the Dangin general store in 1955 and the finally winding up of the co-operative in 1958 (Baskerville, 2019).

FORD MOTOR DEALERSHIP

Another business activity launched by the QFCC was the securing of a Ford Motor Dealership. This was discussed during the QFCC board meeting held on 28 December 1950. It was decided to accept a full franchise dealership covering motor vehicles, tractors and agricultural machinery when available for sale and distribution within the Quairading district (QFCC, 1950b). As discussed in the previous chapter, the QFCC had held a dealership with Chrysler, that included the Fargo trucks. However, the Ford Motor franchise was viewed as a good opportunity. Unfortunately, things did not initially go smoothly. In 1951, the board discussed the Ford dealership at their meeting on 27 August. The manager Mr. Knox reported that the delivery of Ford products at that time was poor and their system of allocating vehicles was not good enough. The manager and the Chair, Mr. C. R. Dall agreed to arrange an interview with the Ford Company manager to discuss the problem of getting an allocation of Ford vehicles (1951b).

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative Co. Ltd. – Cornerstone of our community



Figure 22: Ford V8 Customline advertisement for QFCC, 1958

In the car with the big, better difference—



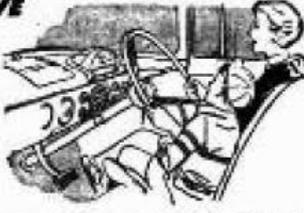
**FORD V8
CUSTOMLINE—**

**you can have these world-proven
advances in easier, smoother, safer driving . . .**

1 Fordomatic DRIVE

Finest, most versatile automatic drive ever built!

In Customline, you can have fully automatic transmission so smooth and efficient that the automatic change of gears is almost imperceptible. Fordomatic Drive, in addition to automatic gears, incorporates a remarkable torque converter. And the Ford O.J.E.V. V8 engine, because of its more smoothly "flowing" power and big reserves, teams up with automatic transmission more efficiently than can normal engines. Whether in acceleration, cruise or climb, Fordomatic action is silent-smooth.



2 FORD POWER BRAKES

—that need only one third of normal effort!

Just a touch on the pedal, and Customline's optional power brake equipment handles all the effort for you. With up to one third of the normal pressure on the pedal you have an instant smooth braking control which makes driving in traffic or highway, easier and more relaxing.



3 FORD POWER STEERING

—bringing an entirely new ease of control!

Here's power to do up to 75% of your parking and assist you in all your driving. You can actually turn the wheel with one finger when the car is being parked . . . and on the road, shocks are absorbed before they reach the steering wheel, yet you retain the "feel of the wheel" in all driving conditions.




No other car gives you — • Customline's fashion-leading styling • Customline's living room on wheels • Customline's "Lifeguard" steering wheel and door-locks • Customline's "performance-combination" of overhead valve V8 engine, ball-joint suspension and heavy K-bar chassis

YOUR FORD DEALER INVITES YOU TO TEST-DRIVE CUSTOMLINE'S BIG, BETTER DIFFERENCE

Butler Motors, Bruce Rock • Dorsett Motors Pty. Ltd., Bunbury • George Smeek, Carnarvon • A. Spooner, Corrigin • Farber Motors, Cunderdin • Hayes's Garage, Dalwallina • E. B. Motors, Geonalling • Libbena Motors, Harvey • Westland Auto Pty. Ltd., Kalbarrie • Green's Motors, Kellerberrin • Muir's Garage & Service Station, Manjivog • Dehler's Motors Pty. Ltd., Merredin • H.B.M. Trading Co. Pty. Ltd., Mingenew • Barrett & Badley Pty. Ltd., Meers • S. Barnes, Mount Barker • Brea's Pty. Ltd., Northam • The Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd., Quairading • McCafferty Motors, Waagan Hills • District Motors, Wyalkatchem • Eastern Districts Trading Company Limited, York.

FORD MOTOR COMPANY OF AUSTRALIA PTY. LTD.
COME IN AND SEE HOW GOOD A DEAL WE'LL MAKE WITH YOU.

Source: Beverley Times (1958).



Figure 23: Range of Ford cars sold by QFCC advertisement, 1960

Whichever Ford you choose — you buy the most car in its class!

FORD V8 THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFULLY PROPORTIONED CARS



Ford Custom 300 (illustrated) or Fairlane Sedans — and Ford Ranch Wagon with the amazing bigness that allows over 94" of enclosed sleeping space.

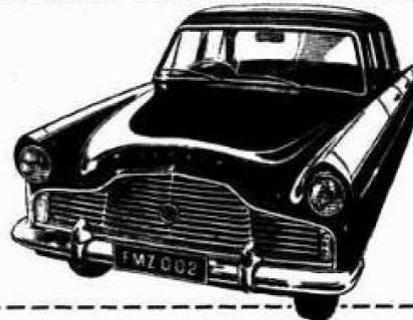
The sculptured-steel lines of the Ford V8's are the most beautiful of all — they won the World's award for beauty at the Brussels World's Fair. And most brilliant of all are the performances of these Fords — with 204 horsepower and choice of conventional transmission or the fabulously smooth Fordomatic drive.



Zephyr-Six

More of the design features that matter most — that's what puts the sleek and smoothly styled Zephyr Sedan and Zephyr Station Wagon so far ahead. More power — 86 b.h.p. . . . longer wheelbase — 104" . . . bigger brakes — 147

sq. ins. of braking area . . . more enclosed sleeping length in the Station Wagon — 85" of it . . . And, in both models, choice of fully automatic drive, overdrive or conventional transmission.



FORD MOTOR COMPANY OF AUSTRALIA PTY. LTD.

CONSUL STATION WAGON

Companion model to the Consul 6-seater Sedan, this is the Station Wagon with the biggest comfort-space and easiest performance ever allied with 4 cylinder economy. It is so versatile . . . sedan comfort . . . big, practical load-space for all purposes . . . 85" of enclosed sleeping space for camping. High compression engine design steps up performance and every feature makes better the unlimited use to which a Station Wagon can be put.

Source: Beverley Times (1960a).

overcome the tariffs. Over time, the Federal Government imposed additional tariffs on different components in order to boost national revenues, but also to promote the development of a local manufacturing sector in the 1920s and 1930s (Sturgeon & Florida, 1999).

This local manufacturing evolved into the design and production of Australian variants of US and UK vehicles, and the supply problems that beset the QFCC in the late 1940s and early 1950s dissipated as the decade progressed.

As illustrated in Figure 24, by the end of the 1950s the QFCC was not only operating general stores in Quairading and Yoting but also serving as an agency for the Ford Motor Company, Wesfarmers, Caltex Oil (Aust) Pty Ltd., Southern Cross Windmills and National Mutual Life Assurance.

SUMMING UP THE QFCC IN THE 1950S

As outlined in this chapter, the 1950s was a prosperous time for the WA Wheatbelt, which also benefited the QFCC. It was able to provide leadership and subsequently assistance to the BDQ joint ventures in relation to the Danging-based bakery and the Quairading-based engineering works. The financial collapse of the DSCCS was mitigated to some extent by the QFCC's ability to bring the neighbouring co-operative under its ownership, protecting the financial interests and service needs of the DSCCS shareholders.

The close working relationship between the three joint venture partners in the BDQ projects was justifiably lauded by the likes of Charles Walter Harper at the launch of the BDQ Engineering Works in 1948, and these collaborations remain a testimony to the co-operative spirit of the QFCC board and shareholders. Their response when their partner co-operatives experienced problems that made them incapable of fully supporting the ventures, was one of pragmatic empathy, which saw the QFCC picking up the load, but also finding ways to keep their partners engaged.

It can be seen from the financial reporting and distributions (see Table 4) that the QFCC was able to issue regular annual dividends and trading bonuses. The dividends were issued at an interest rate of 5 per cent on paid-up capital, and the trading bonuses, from 1953 onwards, as debentures carrying an interest rate of 4 per cent per annum. The QFCC financial records show that during the 1950s the Co-operative generated total revenues of more than \$32.9 million in 2023 dollars equivalent, or an annual average of \$4.7 million. Additionally, it returned to its shareholders, via cash rebates and debentures, a total of more than \$2 million in 2023 dollars equivalent, while also paying just over \$1.08 million in 2023 dollars equivalent to the general reserve fund, and at least \$148,769 in 2023 dollars equivalent to the building fund.

Overall, the Co-operative traded well during the 1950s and demonstrated it had a substantial entrepreneurial flair via its joint ventures and range of agencies such as the Ford dealership. In addition, the close association between the QFCC and both the Westralian Farmers' Co-operative Ltd., and Co-operative Federation of WA, was demonstrated by the appointment of William "Bill" Blackwell as Secretary of the Federation, and the regular participation by Mr. Blackwell, and Mr. Loton from Wesfarmers.



CHAPTER 8: SWINGING THROUGH THE SIXTIES, 1960-1969

The steady growth experienced by the QFCC during the 1950s continued during the decade of the 1960s. Although the WA mining industry grew during the 1950s, it expanded significantly after 1960 when the Federal Government lifted an export ban on iron ore shipments to Japan. During the early 1930s the Japanese had had invested in an iron ore mine at Yampi Sound in the Kimberley Region. However, the export ban was imposed in 1938 in response to Japanese military aggression against China (Menck, 2022). By the 1960s the Japanese were no longer viewed as an enemy and that nation was commencing a period of industrialisation that would make it one of Australia's most important trading partners.

Of importance were the massive iron ore deposits located in WA, particularly in the Pilbara Region. The demand from Japan for iron ore encouraged investment not only from the Japanese, but also the British and Americans, which flowed into the State's mining sector (Wilson et al., 2004). Iron ore mining was open cut, and took place on a grand scale, not only creating jobs, but also raising concern over environmental damage to the natural environment. Along with the development of these mines were the establishment and/or expansion of new towns in the Pilbara, along with road, rail, sea, and air transport infrastructure (Menck, 2022).

The impact of this new mining boom was important to WA from both an economic and social perspective. For example, in 1960-1961, the constant-price per-capital household income in the State was generally the same as it had been in 1948-1949. However, as result of the mining boom, by 1973-1974 per capita income in WA had more than doubled (Ghosh, 1981). Furthermore, as noted by Wilson, Layman and Christmas (2004),

"Importantly, while iron ore was (and remains) a significant component of the mining industry, one important aspect of the resources boom in the 1960s that set it apart from the gold rush, was the diversity of commodities being mined. There were major discoveries of nickel, petroleum, bauxite and alumina, which all developed into significant industries in the 1960s and 1970s" (Wilson et al, 2004, p. 22).

QUAIRADING IN THE 1960S

Although the mining boom was attracting the attention of investors and those seeking work within the mining industry, the WA rural sector, and the Wheatbelt in particular, were optimistic. For example, at the annual Wesfarmers ram sale held on 20 September 1962, the prices for British breed, Poll Dorset, South Suffolk, and Corriedale rams were higher than had been seen in previous years (Beverley Times, 1962a).

Later that year, a survey of farmers across the Wheatbelt, reported that growers were highly optimistic about the 1962 harvest. This applied to wheat, barley, and oats in a broadly uniform manner across the Wheatbelt (Beverley Times, 1962b). The view from Quairading was reported as follows,

"Gordon McRae of Quairading said that the crops were about on par with last year in the Quairading district, and last year's harvest was generally excellent" (Beverley Times, 1962b, p. 11).

The following year, 1963 saw a similar level of optimism across the Avon Valley with a record harvest forecast by the farmers, and the dealers and agents anticipating a record trading year for farm machinery and motor vehicles. There was a positive outlook for the area due to the State Government of Premier Sir David Brand KCMG⁵ announcing plans for the Avon Valley to receive more housing, water reticulation, and road upgrades. Machinery agents for farming equipment were reporting lengthy waiting lists, the first they had seen for many years (Beverley Times, 1963a).

According to the *Beverley Times* (1963a), report,

“They say that the new Australia-China wheat deal completed this week against fierce international competition has been welcomed throughout the area, it will mean continued prosperity” (Beverley Times, 1963a, p. 1).

The same report described an electrical goods retailer declaring,

“We have never had it so good; this will be a year to remember” (Beverley Times, 1963a, p. 1).

While an agricultural agent said,

“We are going up and up; and our sales charts are going through the roof” (Beverley Times, 1963a, p. 1).

Another stated,

“Boy, this is what we have been waiting for; let us take advantage of the future today” (Beverley Times, 1963a, p. 1).

The QFCC was also benefiting from the buoyant economic situation within the district. For example, in January 1963, the Manager, Charles “Charley” Lindorff announced that the company had sold two new Ford Thames Trader diesel trucks to the Quairading Shire Council for a total of £5,000 (approx. \$176,656 in 2024 dollars) (Beverley Times, 1963b).

However, things were not entirely rosy for the community of the Quairading district. For example, in December 1962 during a visit to Quairading by the State Minister for Works and Water Supplies, The Hon. Gerald Percy Wild MLA, and the Member for Avon, Harry Walter “Mick” Gayfer MLA, the Quairading Shire Council expressed serious concerns over delays to the extension of the water supply to the town and district from the Modified Comprehensive Water Supply Scheme at Cunderdin. The Minister explained that funding had been tight but recent decisions by the State Treasurer would enable some Local Authorities to get the water supply connected (Beverley Times, 1962c).

“Mr. Wild expressed a hope that the Cunderdin-Quairading link in the Modified Comprehensive Water Scheme could be commenced a little earlier than anticipated at present, which was December 1964” (Beverley Times, 1962c).

⁵ David Brand received his knighthood in June 1969.



In 1962 there was also a problem with outbreaks of noxious weeds such as Cape Tulip and Paterson's Curse that are poisonous to farm animals. This required spraying by the State Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the Quairading Shire Council (Beverley Times, 1962d). The following year, heavy rains and flooding within the Avon River Valley led to the loss of crops and damage to the York to Quairading road (Beverley Times, 1963c).

Figure 25: Farm damage caused by flooding, Quairading, 1963



Source: Canberra Times (1963).

As illustrated in Figure 25, the heavy rains and flooding also impacted many farmers, such as Mr. Bruce Dale from Quairading, who estimated that he had lost half his sown wheat crop after getting over 10 inches (254 mm) of rain as compared to the average June rainfall of 3 inches (76.2 mm) (Canberra Times, 1963). In relation to the road damage, the Quairading Shire Clerk Mr. L. Commins stated that,

“Roads in the northern half of the Shire are worst affected. Approaches to many farms were badly damaged. The Main Roads Department engineer has inspected part of the damage, but no estimate is available as yet as to the cost of repairs” (Beverley Times, 1963c, p. 2).

Despite these setbacks the farming community of Quairading persevered and in 1966-1967 reported, along with their counterparts in Beverley, Pingelly, York and Brookton, the state of their land, stock and machinery assets, and their overall production for those years. This data is listed in Table 5 where it can be seen that Quairading had significant production in wheat (Beverley Times, 1968a).

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND DISTRIBUTIONS, 1960s

The QFCC started the decade with a strong financial performance. The 1960 AGM which was held on 20 August in the Quairading Road Board Hall, was overseen by Mr. D. McRae as Chair, and included his fellow directors, the Manager, Charles Lindorff, Secretary Mr. P. E. Glover, and thirteen shareholders. Also present was Walter “Wally” Knox, Secretary of Westralian Farmers’ Co-operative Ltd. (Wesfarmers), who had been the QFCC Secretary from 1939 to 1948, and Manager from 1948 to 1956 (QFCC, 1960).

Mr. McRae reported to the shareholders that the Co-operative had an annual turnover of £159,715 (approx. \$5,790,452 in 2024 dollars), a record, which was £15,193 (approx. \$550,821 in 2024 dollars) more than the turnover from 1959. The net profit was £9,700 (approx. \$351,672 in 2024 dollars), which was £1,861 (approx. \$67,470 in 2024 dollars) more than the previous year, and the highest profit the company had achieved to that date. He noted that the total expenditure had increased by £2,026 (approx. \$73,452 in 2024 dollars). However, this had been offset by an increased gross profit from trading and other income from agency commissions (QFCC, 1960).

This enabled the Co-operative to transfer £1,000 (approx. \$36,255 in 2024 dollars) to the building fund, and a further £1,000 to the general reserve, after provisioning £1,271/9s/8d (approx. \$46,097 in 2024 dollars) for taxation. This enabled the board to issue a dividend and trading bonus debentures (see Table 6). The board would also redeem the £5,326 (approx. \$193,094 in 2024 dollars) issued in 1957 (QFCC, 1960).

Mr. McRae explained that the financial figures he had reported did not encompass the full extent of the Co-operative’s trading activities. He noted that the value of commissions earned from livestock, wool, insurance, fuels, bakery and garage trading, vehicle sales, superphosphate and farm machinery sales would total around £750,000 (approx. \$27,191,176 in 2024 dollars). He stated that this amount was shown in the Profit and Loss Statement as “Commission earnings”. The meeting also approved a per-meeting fee for all directors of £2/12s/6d (approx. \$95.17 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1960).

Table 5: Quairading and adjacent farming districts status, 1966-1967

<i>Item</i>	<i>Beverley</i>	<i>Pingelly</i>	<i>York</i>	<i>Brookton</i>	<i>Quairading</i>	
Active rural holdings	208	153	198	145	149	
Land used for crops	86,211	62,303	71,820	71,279	137,992	Acres
Land under pasture	253,486	185,184	201,708	195,182	216,874	Acres
Other cleared land	32,897	24,037	48,007	34,988	87,253	Acres
Uncleared land	51,366	34,634	50,364	34,105	37,909	Acres
Total area rural holdings	423,960	306,158	371,899	335,554	480,028	Acres
<i>Wheat for grain:</i>						
Area	39,398	35,389	34,064	39,289	107,476	Acres
Production	711,940	596,245	651,590	785,144	2,063,888	Bushels
Ave. yield per acre	18.1	16.8	19.1	20.0	19.2	Bushels
<i>Barley for grain:</i>						
Area	9,101	4,221	6,050	2,734	8,539	Acres
Production	210,380	90,885	131,872	65,466	148,254	Bushels
Ave. yield per acre	23.1	21.5	21.8	24.0	17.4	Bushels
<i>Livestock on 31st March:</i>						
Sheep	430,074	324,209	375,457	337,484	308,988	
Cattle	4,877	2,032	2,326	2,176	711	
Pigs	2,606	2,349	2,469	1,095	2,057	
Sheep and lambs shorn	465,280	341,557	407,278	477,713	347,567	
Woolclip	4,342,226	3,238,516	3,689,524	3,444,552	3,046,380	lb.
Ave. weight per fleece	9.3	9.5	9.1	9.1	8.8	lb.
Number of tractors	378	268	368	310	367	

Source: Beverley Times (1968).

Table 6: Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Financial Distributions 1960-1969

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1960	Dividend of 5% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £5,809 (approx. \$210,605 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash, and £1,000 (approx. \$36,255 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund and a similar amount paid to the reserve fund.
1961	No available data.
1962	Dividend of 5% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £5,873 (approx. \$208,830 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash, and £1,000 (approx. \$35,558 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund and a similar amount paid to the reserve fund.
1963	Dividend of 6% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £5,999 (approx. \$205,456 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash, and £1,000 (approx. \$34,248 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund and a similar amount transferred to the reserve fund.
1964	Dividend of 6% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £6,505 (approx. \$223,426 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash, and £1,000 (approx. \$34,347 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund and a similar amount transferred to the reserve fund.
1965	Dividend of 6% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of £6,527 (approx. \$216,798 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash, and £1,000 (approx. \$33,216 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund and a similar amount divided between the reserve fund and the bad and doubtful debtors' fund.
1966	Dividend of 6% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$15,307 (approx. \$246,110 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash, and \$2,000 (approx. \$32,156 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund and a similar amount paid to the reserve fund.
1967	Dividend of 6% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$21,115 (approx. \$328,081 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash, and \$2,000 (approx. \$31,076 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund and \$3,000 (approx. \$46,613 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1968	Dividend of 6% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$21,944 (approx. \$322,577 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash, and \$2,000 (approx. \$30,311 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund and \$4,000 (approx. \$60,623 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1969	Dividend of 6% on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$21,098 (approx. \$309,605 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures instead of cash, and \$2,000 (approx. \$29,349 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund and \$4,000 (approx. \$58,698 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.

Sources: QFCC Annual Reports (1960 to 1969).



Memories of the QFCC in the 1960s – Maggie Hadlow

Maggie Hadlow served as a director of QFCC from 1978 to 1986 and was the first female director of the Co-operative. Born in Corrigin, where her parents had the family farm, Maggie studied as a teacher in Perth. On her graduation she decided to seek an appointment in the Wheatbelt where she would be closer to her parents. She arrived in Quairading in 1960 and taught Year 1 students and found that she had 58 pupils. Fortunately for her, the District Superintendent paid a visit and informed the Principal that she was not to teach a class of that size. The 10 oldest children were moved into the Year 2 class, leaving a class of 48. After three years in Quairading, she moved to Bridgetown teaching art, and then to New South Wales teaching at Murwillumbah and Cooma, before returning to Quairading in 1966 where she married a farmer.

She recalls that it wasn't necessary to travel to Perth or outside the district to shop, because almost everything that was required could be purchased from the Co-operative. Maggie described the way the Co-operative looked and what it sold back in the 1960s saying,

“So, the building had three main doors that opened from the street. Starting on the right-hand side as you looked at the Co-op building, the first doors opened into a newsagency, which also sold toys, men’s clothing, including workwear and boots. Then in from the second door you had women’s clothes and shoes, fabrics and sewing equipment, wool and knitting supplies, paper bags and a big roll of brown paper staff used to wrap up your purchases. That was the haberdashery. On entering the third door. There were two tills and iron entry and exit gates. The area behind displayed white goods, hardware, small electrical goods, garden supplies, paint that could be mixed, and a key cutting service. At the back of the Hardware area was the fruit and vegetables supplies. It wasn’t refrigerated as it is today, and the supplies were stored in their original boxes. As a shopper you had to weigh your own purchases. The metal scales hung near the fruit and vegetables, and as a shopper you took a paper bag, added your choice—say the apples—and after weighing them wrote the weight on the bag to be priced at the checkout. To the left of the Hardware through four arches was the large grocery section with the usual aisles of shelved goods, and at the rear were the fridges. The Quairading Co-operative was very much a General Store.”

Source: Hadlow (2023b).

At the 1962 AGM, held at the CWA Rooms on 17 August, Mr. D. McRae, as Chair, was joined by his fellow directors, the Manager, Charles Lindorff, and a new Secretary Mr. G. W. Matthews, plus shareholders. He presented the annual financial report which recorded another successful year of trading by the Co-operative. Annual turnover was higher than the previous year at £177,933 (approx. \$6,326,887 in 2024 dollars), with net profit of £10,098 (approx. \$359,062 in 2024 dollars), which was also higher than the preceding year and along with the annual turnover, a record for the company. Expenses had also increased slightly, but they were once again offset by the higher gross profit and commission earnings (QFCC, 1962). He also stated that,

“The RESULTS for the period under review have not, in our opinion, been affected by any items of an abnormal character” (QFCC, 1962, p. 230).

The company provisioned £1,606 (approx. \$57,106 in 2024 dollars) for taxation and transferred £1,000 (approx. \$35,558 in 2024 dollars) into the building fund, and further £1,000 into the general reserve fund while also distributing a dividend and bonus debentures against trading. The directors planned to redeem £4,711 (approx. \$167,512 in 2024 dollars) bonus debentures issued in 1959. The AGM also discussed the use of road transportation for fruit and vegetables, the intention of constructing a new building for the general store, and commissions for the Yoting and Dangin branches (QFCC, 1962).

At the 1963 AGM, which was held at the CWA Rooms on 16 August, the role of Chair had passed to Mr. Peter D. Wills, who had replaced Mr. Gordon McRae in 1962, and who then served in the role until 1981. He was joined by his fellow directors, the Manager, Charles Lindorff, Secretary Mr. G. W. Matthews, and a quorum of shareholders. Mr Wills presented the annual report along with the issue of a dividend, and distribution of bonus debentures on trading. The annual turnover and net profit results were not recorded in the AGM minutes, but £1,565 (approx. \$55,293 in 2024 dollars) was provisioned for taxation, and £1,000 (approx. \$35,331 in 2024 dollars) was transferred to both the building fund and general reserve. The directors proposed to redeem £5,194 (approx. \$183,519 in 2024 dollars) bonus debentures issued in 1960. Additionally, the meeting made special mention of the Co-operative's recent acquisition of Hewitt's Grocery stock, plus alterations to the general store. This latter issue being designed to modernise the premises and ensure that a self-service grocery store was created to enhance the convenience of the customers. Also discussed within general business, was the closure of the Dangin store. This was left to the board's discretion to address as required (QFCC, 1963).

The 1964 AGM was held on 4 September, again at the CWA Rooms, with Peter Wills as Chair. He was joined by his fellow directors, the Manager Charles Lindorff, and twenty shareholders. In his address, Mr. Wills announced that the Co-operative had achieved annual sales of £203,087 (approx. \$6,975,378 in 2024 dollars), which was a significant increase over the previous year. This had generated a net profit of £10,830 (approx. \$371,975 in 2024 dollars). A 6 per cent dividend was issued on paid up capital, along with distribution of bonus debentures, at 4 per cent, against store and agency trading by the shareholders (see Table 6). An income tax provision of £1,575/9s/6d (approx. \$54,112 in 2024 dollars) was set aside before transferring £1,000 into both the building and general reserve funds. Other matters discussed at the AGM were the completion of a new store at a cost of £9,000 (approx. \$309,121 in 2024 dollars), and the renovation of the Garage housing the Ford Motor dealership. There was also a motion put for the 4 per cent debenture interest rate to be raised to 6 per cent. However, the motion was rejected when put to the vote (QFCC, 1964).

In 1965 the AGM was held on 17 September, again at the CWA Rooms. Peter Wills was still the Chair, and he was joined by his fellow directors, the Manager Charles Lindorff, the new Secretary Edgar Zalauskalns (who served in that role from 1965 to 1987), and twenty shareholders. In his report to the shareholders, Mr. Wills declared another record annual turnover of £207,636 (approx. \$6,896,748 in 2024 dollars), which was accompanied by a net profit of £11,272 (approx. \$374,406 in 2024 dollars). After provisioning £2,000 (approx. \$66,431 in 2024 dollars) for taxation, the board declared a dividend of 6 per cent would be issued on paid-up shares, and significant bonus debenture paid with a 4 per cent interest rate, on store and agency trading. The

board redeemed £5,581 (approx. \$185,376 in 2024 dollars) bonus debentures issued in 1962 (QFCC, 1965).

By 1966 Australia had adopted the decimal system for its currency, replacing the pound with the dollar.⁶ The 1966 AGM of the QFCC, was held at the CWA Rooms on 16 September. The Chair, Mr. Wills was absent, so he was replaced by Vice Chair, Mr. A. A. Simpson. Also present were the board of directors, the Manager Charles Lindorff, the Secretary Edgar Zalaikalns, and twenty shareholders. Mr. Simpson reported that the Co-operative had enjoyed another record annual turnover of \$465,141 (approx. \$7,478,658 in 2024 dollars). Net profit was \$25,286 (approx. \$406,555 in 2024 dollars). After provisioning \$4,500 (approx. \$72,352 in 2024 dollars) for taxation, the board was able to issue a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital, and bonus debentures with an interest rate of 4 per cent (see Table 6). The board also redeemed \$11,610 (approx. \$186,669 in 2024 dollars) in bonus debentures issued in 1963, transferred \$2,000 (approx. \$32,157 in 2024 dollars) into the building fund and the same amount into general reserve (QFCC, 1966).

The 1967 AGM took place on 15 September in the CWA Rooms. Peter Wills was back in the Chair, and was joined by his fellow directors, the Manager, Charles Lindorff, Secretary Edgar Zalaikalns, and twenty shareholders. As in previous years, the Co-operative had enjoyed another record annual turnover of \$551,468 (approx. \$8,568,608 in 2024 dollars), with a net profit of \$32,627 (approx. \$506,952 in 2024 dollars). A dividend of 6 per cent on paid up capital was issued along with a generous trading bonus debenture with 4 per cent interest rate. A sum of \$5,000 (approx. \$77,689 in 2024 dollars) was set aside for taxation, \$2,000 (approx. \$31,076 in 2024 dollars) was transferred to the building fund, and \$3,000 (approx. \$46,613 in 2024 dollars) was placed in general reserve. The directors also redeemed bonus debentures worth \$11,412 (approx. \$177,318 in 2024 dollars) issued in 1964, and a further \$12,500 (approx. \$194,223 in 2024 dollars) issued in 1965. Mr. Wills also noted that during the year there had been numerous improvements and alterations to the Co-operative's buildings and facilities. A motion was also put forward and carried, for the company to issue shareholders with order delivery boxes for grocery deliveries after hours (QFCC, 1967).

On 20 September 1968 the AGM, as usual, was held in the CWA Rooms, with Peter Wills in the Chair. Also present were the directors, the Manager Charles Lindorff, Secretary Edgar Zalaikalns, and fourteen shareholders. Mr. Wills reported an annual sales turnover of \$592,726 (approx. \$8,983,200 in 2024 dollars), which was another record year. The net profit was \$35,569 (approx. \$539,074 in 2024 dollars). A dividend of 6 per cent on paid-up capital was issued along with a distribution of \$21,944 (approx. \$332,577 in 2024 dollars) via bonus debentures for store and agency trading carrying a 4 per cent interest rate. A sum of \$6,100 (approx. \$92,450 in 2024 dollars) was set aside for taxation, with \$2,000 (approx. \$30,311 in 2024 dollars) placed in the building fund and \$4,000 (approx. \$60,623 in 2024 dollars) into the reserve fund. The directors also redeemed \$14,710 (approx. \$216,108) in bonus debentures issued in 1966. Other issues

⁶ Australia's currency was decimalised on 14 February 1966.



addressed at the AGM were the purchase of new residences for staff housing, and plant equipment for the bakery (QFCC, 1968).

The final AGM for the decade was held on 19 September 1969, again at the CWA Rooms with Peter Wills in the Chair. His fellow directors, the Manager Charles Lindorff, Secretary Edgar Zalaiskalns, and fourteen shareholders were also in attendance. Mr. Wills reported an annual turnover of \$628,934 (approx. \$9,229,357 in 2024 dollars), and a net profit of \$36,030 (approx. \$528,726 in 2024 dollars). From this profit the board issued a dividend of 6 per cent on paid-up capital, and a distribution of \$21,098 (approx. \$309,605 in 2024 dollars) paid via bonus debentures on trading carrying a 4 per cent interest rate. The board also redeemed bonus debentures worth \$20,838 (approx. \$305,789 in 2024 dollars) that had been issued in 1967. A sum of \$7,388 (approx. \$108,416 in 2024 dollars) was preserved for taxation, while a sum of \$2,000 (approx. \$29,349 in 2024 dollars) was transferred into the building fund, and \$4,000 (approx. \$58,698 in 2024 dollars) into the general reserve fund (QFCC, 1969).

As can be seen from the annual reports, the 1960s was a prosperous decade for the QFCC. Annual turnover grew steadily year on year, with net profits also rising. This not only enabled the board to issue regular 6 per cent dividends on paid-up capital, but also generous bonus debentures on store and agency trading, which carried a 4 per cent annual interest rate. This came at a time when the neighbouring Dangin and South Caroling Co-operative Society (DSCCS) had ceased trading, eventually being shut down in February 1965, as noted in a report published in the *Beverley Times*,

"Directors of the Quairading Farmers' Co-op., of which the Dangin Co-op is a subsidiary, have decided to close the Dangin Co-op store. This decision has been reluctantly made by the board of management following unsatisfactory trading figures in recent years at the Dangin store. Added to this, the board has faced staff difficulties, in addition to substantial repairs to the Dangin shop building requiring attention.

This has been an inevitable step, and the management and staff of the Quairading Co-op hope that the changeover to Quairading trading by Dangin folk will be smooth and satisfactory to all concerned. The Dangin store has operated for more than 50 years. At this stage, it is not known if the post office section will be closed, but this is thought to be profitable, and the section transferred to the Quairading post office" (Beverley Times, 1965, p. 4).

FORD MOTOR DEALERSHIP

As noted in the previous chapter, the QFCC secured a Ford Motor dealership in the late 1950s enabling it to distribute a range of Ford cars, trucks and farm machinery imported from the United States and Britain or manufactured in Australia. An example is that of the Ford Anglia (see Figure 27, which was a small, light car, designed and built in the United Kingdom from 1939 to 1967, and Australia from 1946 to 1967. It was one of the most successful cars of its era (Ballard, 2003).

Although the QFCC had operated the BDQ Engineering Workshop since the 1940s, by the 1960s the joint venture had dissolved and it was decided to develop the original workshop located on the corner of McLennon and Parker Streets in Quairading into a new car showroom. During the 1965 AGM the QFCC Chair, Peter Wills described the improvements that had been made to the Hardware sheds and the new second hand vehicle shed at the garage. He also described and

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discussed the construction of a new vehicle showroom that would be added to the garage. This would be designed to house new Ford vehicles (QFCC, 1965). At the 1966 AGM a special note was made by the Chair that new motor vehicles showroom at the garage had been completed at a cost of \$6,000 (approx. \$96,470 in 2024 dollars). Also, the opening of new storeroom buildings at the Heal Street store (QFCC, 1966). Figure 26 shows the Ford dealership showroom and garage as it appeared in 2024. By that stage it had been sold by the QFCC and had been used as a smash repairs workshop, although it still carried the Ford logo on the side of the building.

Figure 26: Former QFCC Ford Dealership showroom corner McLennon and Parker Streets



Source: Tim Mazzarol (2024).

Memories of the QFCC and Ford dealership – Vincent Hadlow

Vincent Hadlow (aka 'Bullet'), also remembers the QFCC from the 1960s onwards:

"During the late 1960s and into the 1970s the Co-operative had a drapery, car and farm machinery dealership, and was almost a source of everything except a butcher's shop, because there was already one operating in Quairading." He recalls buying his first car, an XA Falcon from the QFCC Ford dealership in the 1970s. As he remembers, *"They used to sell everything. Old Barry 'Chook' Robinson and Dave Hancock, they were the two salesmen who ran the Ford dealership. They sold cars, trucks, and tractors."*

During the 1980s and 1990s, things changed with many farmers leaving the land, and droughts impacting farming. Despite these trends, the QFCC, had survived and was now a significant employer and major service provider in Quairading. He acknowledged that many people still drove to Northam for shopping, but this had improved greatly over the preceding decade, with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic bringing many people back to the Co-operative to shop.

Source: Hadlow (2023a).



Figure 27: Ford Anglia advertisement for QFCC, 1960

Here now! THE WORLD'S MOST EXCITING LIGHT CAR!

Totally new! Way ahead of its class in every aspect of automotive engineering and design, plus over 40 miles per gallon economy. Excitingly priced at only £955* tax paid.

- Revolutionary new overhead-valve engine with 'oversquare' design.
- New high in performance — 0-50 m.p.h. in 16.7 seconds; higher, sustained cruising speeds.
- 4-speed sports-type gearbox, synchro-silent and clash-proof.
- Savings in every mile with over 40 miles per gallon.
- Totally new aerodynamic styling.



*F.O.B. Ford Plants

On display now and ready
for you to 'Test-Drive' ...

THE ENTIRELY NEW Anglia BY FORD

Dorsett Motors Holdings Pty. Ltd., Bunbury • George Snook and Son, Carnarvon • Forbes Motors, Cunderdin • Flynn's Garage and Agency, Dalwallinu • Radio Motors Pty. Ltd., Geraldton • R.B. Motors, Goomalling • Westland Autos Pty. Ltd., Kalgoorlie • Green's Motors Pty. Ltd., Kellerberrin • Ochiltree Motors Pty. Ltd., Merredin • Barrett & Radley Pty. Ltd., Moora • S. Reeves, Mount Barker • Central Districts Motors Pty. Ltd., Northam • The Quairading Farmer's Co-operative Co. Ltd., Quairading • McCafferty Motors, Wongan Hills • District Motors,

Source: Beverley Times (1960b).



Memories of the QFCC in the 1960s – Don J. Handscombe

Don Handscombe who served as a director from 1967 to 1989 recalls how he got onto the QFCC board. By the time he considered becoming a director, the QFCC board was structured around representatives from different parts of the Quairading district and even sat at specific seats in the boardroom. This was strictly enforced. In 1966, while shearing, he was approached by Henry Hall, one of the QFCC directors (who served from 1955 to 1978), who asked him if he was interested in becoming a director to replace Mr. D. McRae, who had served from 1946 but was retiring the next year.

Don recalls saying to Henry Hall, *“Bloody hell, what’s a director do?”* He remembers that Mr. Hall gave him a lot of papers to read and he admitted that he had no idea what he was being shown, with words like *“Mercery”* (e.g. drapery), that he had not previously heard of. Henry Hall left Don with the papers and asked him to read them and that he would come back to discuss the opportunity.

As Don recalled, this meeting took place in August 1966 and he left the papers, which he didn’t really understand, and two months later, Henry Hall returned to talk to him about becoming a director. When they met up again Don remembers the conversation as follows,

“He said, ‘well what do you think?’ and I said, jeez, to tell you the truth, I don’t know what to do. So, he said, ‘well, it’s an experience and a half to be a director of a company like the co-op’. I said, OK, but what is it going to do for me? So, Henry said, ‘well, it is about doing something for the district’. And that was what it was, you put yourself out for the benefit of the district.”

He then spoke to his wife about the directorship but was still unsure. When Henry returned to talk to him again, he said that he was still unsure. *“I said, well Henry, I’m not sure, one part of me tells me to look the other way and the other part of me tells me to go with you.”* In response Henry Hall said that he could arrange for Don to sit in on a board meeting and observe. However, before that happened, Don called Henry to say that he would accept the chance to join the QFCC board. He described his first board meeting as, *“the best day of my life”*.

The first twelve months were something of a shock for Don Handscombe. Having spent his life running a family farm, he found the size and scale of the Co-operative business a bit overwhelming. Just the size of the monthly financial turnover was much greater than what he had experienced on a yearly basis in running his farm. The board meeting took place every two months and lasted from 2:30 pm to 5 pm, with each director getting paid three dollars for each meeting.

Don Handscombe explained that he was co-opted onto the board due to the resignation of Mr. McRae and served for two years before having to be formally elected at an AGM. This meant that it took about six months before anyone knew that he was on the board. However, once this became known, he was approached by people who voiced complaints and he would go directly to the Co-operative’s Manager to see if he could resolve the problem and do so prior to going to the board meetings.

He felt that this helped to reduce the length of the board meeting, *“That cut out the length of the meeting, because you weren’t arguing about what I knew, and what five other blokes didn’t know, you didn’t have to discuss with them what the matter was because the issue had already been sorted.”*



Having resolved issues quickly with the Manager, things got done promptly rather than having to wait two months before the problem was discussed at the next board meeting. Don Handscombe also remembered the Ford dealership during that 1960s. As he explained, *“There were six mechanics, two panel beaters, a spare parts person, and a manager.”*

According to Don, at that time the QFCC had a total of 45 people working for it, making it one of the biggest employers in the district. The QFCC also had a transport department with two heavy haulage trucks that were used to bring goods such as fuel and freight in from Perth and Fremantle. These trucks were on the road virtually every day.

Source: Handscombe (2023).

SUMMING UP THE QFCC IN THE 1960S

While the 1950s was a period of prosperity and growth for the QFCC, the decade of the 1960s was even better. The optimism shown by the farmers, retailers, sales agents, and other members of the community across the Wheatbelt in the early 1960s was indeed justified. As the financial records show, the Co-operative enjoyed continuous growth in annual turnover, that was an average of \$7.3 million in 2023 dollars equivalent, amounting to a total of over \$58.4 million in 2023 dollars equivalent. It also generated healthy net profits that totalled more than \$3.3 million in 2023 dollars equivalent. This enabled the board to issue regular dividends of 6 per cent on paid-up capital, plus bonus debentures based on trading of more than \$2.2 million in 2023 dollars equivalent with a 4 per cent per annum interest rate.

Despite these returns to the shareholders, the Co-operative was also able to pay over \$288,479 in 2023 dollars equivalent into the building fund, and \$361,372 in 2023 dollars equivalent to the general reserve fund. These contributions were subsequently invested into the renovation, expansion and upgrading of the Co-operative’s general store in Heal Street, and the Ford dealership and garage on the corner of McLennan and Parker Streets. Even with the amalgamation of the QFCC with the DSCCS in the late 1950s, the situation facing the general store in Dangin was unsustainable, forcing the QFCC board to close down the store. The decision was clearly not taken lightly, and the historical record shows that the QFCC did its best to keep the store operating. A similar fate befell the Balkuling District Farmers’ Co-operative, which saw the town slowly decline and then faced the closure of the railway siding during the 1970s (Beverley Times, 1976a). This reflected the changes taking place within the WA Wheatbelt that would become a more significant trend during the coming decades as the population shrank as a result of farms becoming larger and more capital intensive, leading to a decline in the size of the rural workforce.

A notable change between the 1950s and 1960s was the format of the Co-operative’s AGMs. The 1950s saw these meetings taking place on a Saturday afternoons at the Quairading Hall, followed by supper, a keynote address by a representative from Wesfarmers and/or The Co-operative Federation of WA, and then a music recital and dance. During the 1960s, the AGMs were being held on Friday afternoons at the CWA Rooms with just the QFCC board, management team and shareholders. The social functions were now abandoned for a strictly business-focused event that attracted modest shareholder attendance and devoted most of the time to financial reporting and the distribution of dividends and bonus debentures.

Despite this departure of the representatives from Wesfarmers and The Co-operative Federation of WA, the QFCC remained connected to both organisations. Wesfarmers, via the numerous agencies that the Co-operative represented the larger company within its district, and the Federation via the regional conferences that the QFCC sent delegates to. For example, in May 1966 a three-day conference for Wesfarmers Store and Management Co-operatives was held in Beverley, which discussed “all aspects of management and conduct of the co-operatives concerned” (Beverley Times, 1966, p. 9).

The conference attracted representatives from regional co-operatives, and was chaired by Mr. Wally Knox, Managing Director of Wesfarmers, and former Manager of the QFCC (Beverley Times, 1966). In August 1968 meeting of the Central Zone of Co-operatives was held in Beverley, attended by representatives from co-operatives in Pingelly, Aldersyde, York, Quairading, Shackelton, Brookton, Bruce Rock, and Beverley. It was also attended by Wally Knox from Wesfarmers, and Mr. Rawlinson, Secretary of The Co-operatives Federation of WA. This meeting focused on the proposal to integrate all the Co-operatives under a single central management (Beverley Times, 1968b). As reported by the Beverley Times,

“This subject is always a difficult one as Co-operatives that are trading well were inclined to vote against it whilst smaller Co-operatives would possibly welcome the move. Another point against the suggestion was that towns could lose their local autonomy” (Beverley Times, 1968b, p. 1).

Overall, the 1960s was a positive decade for the QFCC not only because of its financial performance, but also the stabilisation of its management team and Chairperson. The arrival of Charles Lindorff, who served as Manager from 1956 to 1987, and Mr. E. Zalauskalns, who served from 1965 to 1987 provided a level of stability that had not been seen for some time. This was accompanied by the long-term of service of Peter Wills as Chair from 1962 to 1981. Keeping the same Chair, Manager and Secretary in place for this length of time proved important for the Co-operative to navigate the decades of the 1970s and 1980s which saw significant economic and demographic changes to the Wheatbelt.

CHAPTER 9: NAVIGATING THE “ME” DECADE, 1970-1979

The 1970s, popularly known as the “Me” decade, saw the end of the Vietnam War, which had involved Australia from 1962 to 1973, and which ended with large street protest “moratorium” marches in many cities from 1970 until the troop withdrawal in 1973. The voting age was lowered from 21 years to 18 years, and equal minimum wage payments were introduced for both men and women doing similar work (Menck, 2022).

Within the farming community there was the emergence of concern over environmental degradation of the farmland across the WA Wheatbelt. Deforestation had become a feature of the development of the Wheatbelt from the 1840s, and the impact that this had upon the soils, particularly the rise of salinity, was known by at least 1910 (Gaynor, 2002).

However, it was not until the 1970s that the matter was finally taken seriously. The State Government began to restrict the release of Crown Land for new agricultural areas, although land clearing was permitted on privately owned land. Nevertheless, land clearing was increasingly reduced across the Wheatbelt (Menck, 2022).

Another feature of the 1970s was the end of the gold standard in 1971 and the rise of inflation triggered by the OPEC Oil Crisis in 1973-1974 caused by the Arab members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) imposing an embargo on oil exports to the United States, Britain, and other nations supporting Israel during the Yom Kippur War (Kilian, 2009). This oil price shock, which commenced in 1973-1974, accompanied by stagflation, significantly impacted WA. Inflation that had been negligible during the 1960s reached 18 per cent by 1974-1975 and persisted through to the economic recession of 1990-1991. This led to growing unemployment, which rose from 1.2 per cent in 1970, to 4 per cent by 1979 (Wilson, Layman & Christmas, 2004).

From a social perspective the 1970s saw the recognition of Aboriginal communities through their inclusion in the 1971 census, which recorded 21,093 people of Aboriginal descent, comprising around 2 per cent of the State’s population. In addition, the mining boom that had commenced in the 1960s led to an increase in immigration from the eastern states, and overseas, with the WA population passing the one million in the early 1970s. The second stage of the Ord River Scheme was completed in 1973 with the opening of the main barrier dam and creation of Lake Argyle. At the same time, the rural population was beginning to shrink, particularly across the Wheatbelt, where broadacre cropping was growing enabled by larger farm machinery, increasing farm size, and the emergence of corporate farming rather than family-owned farms (Menck, 2022).

QUAIRADING IN THE 1970S

In December 1975 Quairading boasted a number of retailing, service, and community-focused organisations within the town’s commercial centre. This included branches of the Bank of New South Wales (Westpac Bank) and Commonwealth Bank of Australia, the Ampol fuel and lubricants depot operated by Dixie and Erma Betts, the Beaufort tyre shop, and the fertiliser and farm supplies business W. G. Kevill & Co. Also present were farm machinery, truck and motor car agents Slater, Shenton & Co., and the agency of G. W. Ettridge & Son., the Quairading Service Contractors, and the Quairading Pharmacy (Beverley Times, 1975a).

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For meals and refreshments there was the Quairading Hotel, the Quairading Club Inc., Fishers' Roadhouse, and Jerry's Tearooms, which were operated by G. J. Gielingh & Co. For general supermarket, groceries, hardware and agencies for Caltex fuels and oils, Kleenheat gas, Ford motors, insurance and rural supplies there was the QFCC. This was supplemented by a butcher's shop operated by W. E. Edwards & Co. Accommodation was available at the Quairading hotel and the Quairading Motel. Finally, there was the Quairading Shire Council and its associated offices (Beverley Times, 1975a). Quairading also boasted a Speedway, which, in 1976 commenced its racing season in April. Its President was Mr. Len Cowcill (Beverley Times, 1976b).

THE SITUATION FACING FARMERS

Grain production across the Wheatbelt grew steadily during the 1960s and had reached an annual average of just over 2.26 million tonnes. Despite the wheat quotas in the early years, this would increase to an annual average of more than 3.55 million tonnes during the 1970s (CBH, 1984; 1999; 2020). This led to the need for the construction of emergency grain storage within the regional centres. During 1969, CBH built around 35 million bushels (approx. 952,536 tonnes) of emergency storage across the Wheatbelt (Beverley Times, 1970).

Six major depots were built across five different towns able to carry a total capacity of 24.5 million bushels (approx. 665,959 tonnes) and nineteen other country receival points with a total capacity of 10.44 million bushels (approx. 284,155 tonnes). Quairading was one of these emergency storage sites and had a silo with a capacity of 758,000 bushels (approx. 20,357 tonnes). It was constructed out of Lysaght custom orb steel sheeting and Lysaght Zed steek purlins providing weatherproof grain storage (Beverley Times, 1970).

Weather conditions deteriorated during the 1970s with drought becoming a serious risk to crops and stock feed. During 1972, the failure of winter rains across the central Wheatbelt, combined with high temperatures, led to crop failures, impacting York, Northam and Quairading. The Shire Council of Quairading applied to the Farm Water Supply Committee to have the Southeast and Southwest Wards declared water deficient areas. As noted in the media report of the time,

"Although the last season was a reasonably productive one for grain in the Quairading Shire, the past three seasons have been grim as far as runoff to farm dams has been concerned. The cyclone in February last year filled most farm dams, but this year most are dry or nearing that stage. Unless good falls of rain are experienced in the near future, the position will be grave as far as crops and stock are concerned" (Beverley Times, 1972, p. 3).

THE STACEY LAMB TRAIN

On a more positive note, during the Elders-GM livestock sales that took place in November 1973, sheep prices were excellent (Beverley Times, 1973a). This was reflected in the "Stacey Special Lamb Train", which ran from Quairading to Robbs Jetty abattoir, Fremantle in October that same year. It carried a total of 7,700 lambs, 500 more than the previous year. This "Stacey Lamb Train" was the 32nd Annual train, with the first having run in 1941 with a load of 3,100 lambs, with 1971 being a record year that saw 10,028 lambs sent to Fremantle for the export market via the State Government Railway system (Beverley Times, 1973b). Figure 28 shows the front page of *The Countryman* newspaper from 1957 featuring Les Stacey.



Figure 28: Les Stacey and the Stacey Lamb Train, 1957



Source: Charlesworth (1993) from The Countryman (1957).

The origins of the Lamb Train can be traced back to 1905 when James Stacey, through the Conditional Purchase Scheme, secured 405 hectares of land 18 kilometres from Quairading, which he named “Sunnyvale”. Here he established a pastoral property with his wife Alice and six children. More land was acquired in 1910, and when James died in 1932, the management of the property was taken on by his son Leslie “Les”, who focused on producing fat lambs from cross-bred ewes. With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, Leslie Stacey decided to start exporting, which commenced in 1930. He also invested time in improving the crossbreeding program, which was found to produce the best fat lambs (Charlesworth, 1993).

Memories of the Stacey Lamb and Quairading – Shirley Stacey

After marrying into the Stacey family in 1956, Shirley Stacey relocated from Danging to Quairading. She remembers that at time the main street had the Hotel and a privately-owned, high-quality drapery store, side by side with a grocery store. These were the Hewitt’s Stores, and the Co-operative joined onto these stores but there was another smaller store between the two that was vacant a lot of the time but eventually became a TAB office. As she recalled the QFCC at that time,

“Joined to these shops was the Co-op, which was a triple fronted building design. First, we had the grocery, hardware, drapery and newsagency. It was really quite an outstanding shop for our town, and it served its purpose beautifully. Having everything in one place you rarely needed to go anywhere else.”

In addition to these features, the QFCC store also had fuel bowsers out the front of the building. She recalls that there was one out the front of the main store, with a second further down the street out the front of the café. These were the Caltex fuel supply operated by the Co-operative.

In relation to the Stacey Lamb train, Shirley recalls that the main challenge facing the export of lambs was securing reliable and cost-efficient transportation of the stock to the abattoirs at Robbs Jetty. As she recalled, *“So, Les Stacey contacted the stock agents Elders to see what could be done to move the lambs by rail to Robbs Jetty. This led to Elders and the State Railways working together to set up the special Lamb trains.”*

As she recalled, *“They loaded them all out at Badjalang, which was the rail siding closest to our farm. There were great stockyards out there because people had always been sending stock on the train. It took a whole day to load them onto the train. They were all drafted from their mothers on the morning of the loading, so that they had the maximum weight on the body. They took a day to get down to Robbs Jetty and by nighttime the next day they had all been processed ready for export. So, it was imperative that they were all in good condition.”*

The changes to the marketing arrangements ended the lamb transport by rail and moved the business to a road transport model with lambs sold on demand by weight. However, during the period from 1942 to 1972, the Stacey Lamb train moved livestock successfully each year, and there was a formal dinner held in Fremantle to which all the people engaged in the lamb train operation, plus various dignitaries, came to celebrate the successful export of the Stacey lambs.

Source: (Stacey, 2023).

The export meat trade to the United Kingdom (UK) proved successful but required the transport of the lambs from Quairading to the abattoir at Robbs Jetty, south of Fremantle, and then onto the Port of Fremantle for loading as “boxed lamb”. During World War Two this was undertaken using road transport. However, petrol and tyres were rationed, and labour shortages also created problems. This led to discussions with the Western Australia Government Railways (WAGR) over their ability to provide a special train. Initially, Stacey was seeking to move 1,800 lambs, but the WAGR explained that if he could supply a slightly larger number, they would be able to justify putting on a special train (Charlesworth, 1993).

Commencing in October 1942, the first special “Stacey Lamb Train” was run from Badjaling siding to Robbs Jetty carrying 3,136 fat lambs over the 235-kilometre distance. The export program went forward each year with the WAGR providing the special trains, and Elders-GM acting as the sole agent for the lambs. Les Stacey and his sons Bryant and Peter, worked on the property raising the lambs, and during the 32 years to November 1973, they shipped over 183,635 fat lambs without a single loss. It became a prominent enterprise, which reached a peak in 1971 requiring a total of 88 railway wagons (Charlesworth, 1993).

Despite the success of the Les Stacey’s lamb train export business, things did not go well during the 1970s following the establishment of the WA Lamb Marketing Board in December 1972. The new authority required that all lambs be acquired by the Board upon arrival at the abattoir then sold onto wholesalers and exporters on a weight and grade basis using a preset schedule of prices. This change to marketing arrangements and the impact of the UK joining the European Economic Community in January 1973, led to the end of the Stacey Lamb Trains. The final train was run on 15 October 1973 with over 7,500 lambs onboard. The Stacey family continued to export fat lambs but moved them by road in batches of 300 animals (Charlesworth, 1993).

THE QUAIRADING SHIRE COUNCIL IN THE 1970S

Another development in Quairading during 1973 was the revelation in May, that the Shire Council had an operating deficit of \$1,359 (approx. \$15,705 in 2024 dollars) for the preceding 1972 year. The Shire President Mr. Kelly explained that the financial year had twenty-seven pay periods, and that the cost of materials, wages and salaries had risen to the point where they could not be totally absorbed. However, he noted that the Council had opened the financial year with a small cash balance of \$498 (approx. \$5,755 in 2024 dollars (Beverley Times, 1973c). Despite this ‘financial crisis’ the Shire Council survived and continued to provide a key leadership role during the 1970s.

Throughout the decade the Quairading Shire Council made significant investments in road and other publicly owned infrastructure. For example, during 1975, the Council laid new drainage pipes along the Jennaberring Road providing effective run-off into the Sports Ground dam. Additionally, the roads were widened and sealed with bitumen. Upgrades were also made to Murphy, Reid, McLennon Streets, and Cubbine Road, with coin operated gas barbeques installed close to the entrance to the Quairading Swimming Pool. The Council also ordered 2,000 trees and shrubs for planting around the town and along roadside verges to enhance the public amenity, with surplus plants available to local landowners to provide wind breaks and help reduce salinity (Beverley Times, 1975f).

Later in November 1975 the Quairading Shire Council made representations to the State Minister for Works, The Hon. Desmond Henry O’Neil MLA, seeking permission for the Council to take control over the Railway Dam, and use it for recreation purposes. However, the Minister rejected their request stating that he planned to incorporate the dam into the town’s domestic water supply scheme. He suggested that the Council lease bores to the east of Quairading, which could supplement existing supplies of water for recreation purposes (e.g., swimming pool, maintenance of the sports oval). In response, the Councillors explained that use of bores would risk increasing the level of salt on the oval, and that previous tests had found the Railway Dam water supply to be affected by contamination in its catchment area. Despite this, the Minister refused their submission forcing the Council to look at bore water instead (Beverley Times, 1975g).

Water supply for the town of Quairading had been an issue for many years. The State Government had promised to extend the Comprehensive Water Supply scheme to include Quairading, and other towns, but little progress had been made by the end of 1975. The threat of drought was making the issue of water supply a matter of serious concern (Beverley Times, 1975h). The supply of water for recreation use was resolved by November 1975, with the Department of Public Works offering the Quairading Shire Council access to ground water from bores owned by the State Government. The Council agreed to upgrade electrical pumps and storage at the bores, plus adding better drainage to the sports oval to help alleviate the risk of salinity (Beverley Times, 1975i, p. 1). The issue of the extension of the Comprehensive Water Supply scheme continued to be a matter of frustration for the Quairading Shire Council in 1976 (Beverley Times, 1976c).

VANDALISM AND A LACK OF HOUSING

In May 1975, vandals smashed the plate glass windows of G. W. Ettridge & Son’s shopfront in Quairading using large stones. Police from both Quairading and Beverley investigated the incident, which caused around \$1,000 (approx. \$8,694 in 2024 dollars) in damage (Beverley Times, 1975b). By July that year the police arrested the vandals who had carried out the attack on the shopfront plus a spate of attacks on other business premises in Quairading including the breaking and entering of the Beaurepaires tyre shop (Beverley Times, 1975c). They were two young men and a youth, who faced court. The men were fined \$100 (approx. \$869 in 2024 dollars) and the youth \$50 (approx. \$435 in 2024 dollars), and all three were required to make restitution of \$460 (approx. \$3999 in 2024 dollars) to the owners of the damaged property (Beverley Times, 1975d).

Another issue confronting the Quairading community was a lack of housing, which was impacting businesses, farmers, and trades people. At a meeting held in the Quairading Shire Hall in June 1975 attended by businesspeople, farmers, and Councillors from the Shire Council, the lack of accommodation was discussed. Many firms urgently needed tradespeople and other skilled workers but could not attract or retain them due to a lack of housing. It was recognised that if the town was to attract workers and tradespeople it was necessary to build more housing. An agreement was reached that a committee comprising three representatives from the Shire Council and two local businesspeople would make a deputation to the State Housing Commission. The Councillors explained that the Shire Council had made numerous representations to the Commission in order to link housing with employment creation in the town, unfortunately these approaches had not succeeded in getting the Minister to act (Beverley Times, 1975e).

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NEW COMMUNITY CENTRES AND A CARAVAN PARK

1975 was also a year in which Quairading acquired several additional community assets. For example, in August a new Methodist Church was completed at a cost of \$35,000 (approx. \$304,302 in 2024 dollars) (Beverley Times, 1975j). In September, a new Pre-school Centre was opened, with an expectation that it would accommodate up to 70 children aged 5 years. This new centre replaced an existing kindergarten that had operated since 1964 (Beverley Times, 1975k). In October the construction of a retirement village comprising eight self-contained home units commenced. The facility faced onto both Jennaberring Road and Hurley Street (Beverley Times, 1975l). This retirement village was completed in June 1976 (Beverley Times, 1976d).

In December of 1975 the WA Department of Tourism approved funding to enable the Quairading Shire Council to construct a new caravan park on a 1.5-acre (approx. 0.6 hectares) site adjacent to the Quairading Swimming Pool and parkland. The caravan park was to accommodate twenty caravans with sufficient ablution block facilities, electricity and water supply for the sites. An initial twelve sites would be provided in the first stage. The Council had been seeking support for this since 1962, with its own investment in recreation areas, public barbeque and rest areas, plus a tourism centre and road signage. It was therefore pleased to see the State Government agreeing to the funding support (Beverley Times, 1975m). The following year, the Council was given a sum of \$12,500 (approx. \$95,902 in 2024 dollars) from the State Minister for Tourism to assist with the construction of the caravan park (Beverley Times, 1976e). In 1977, the Shire Council received a further \$4,250 (approx. \$29,033 in 2024 dollars) from the State Government for the development of the caravan park (Beverley Times, 1977).

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND DISTRIBUTIONS, 1970S

As discussed in previous chapters, the decades of the 1950s and 1960s were generally periods of economic growth and expansion within the WA Wheatbelt. This had a positive impact on the QFCC, which benefitted from the prosperity of its shareholders who were predominately local farmers. By contrast the 1970s was a period of high inflation, rising unemployment, and drought caused by a steady drying across the Wheatbelt and Southwestern WA (Morgan, 2015). Further, in 1969, as a result of a global oversupply of wheat, the Federal Government introduced quotas on wheat production, resulting in one-third less grain than previously (Morgan, 2011). Despite initial concerns the QFCC navigated the decade successfully, making record profits.

A DIFFICULT START – 1970 TO 1975

Throughout the decade the QFCC held its annual general meetings (AGMs) during September and did so at the CWA Rooms. The Chair during the 1970s was Peter Wills, who served in the role of Chair from 1962 to 1981. There was also continuity in the executive team, with Charles Lindorff serving as Manager throughout the decade, along with Edgar Zalauskas as Secretary.

The 1970 AGM took place on 18 September, with the Chair, board, manager, secretary and fifteen shareholders present. Mr. Wills reported that the Co-operative had generated a total turnover during the previous year of \$641,106 (approx. \$9,095,179 in 2024 dollars), with a net profit of \$33,735 (approx. \$478,588 in 2024 dollars). A dividend of 6 per cent on paid-up capital and bonus debentures of 4 per cent on trading were issued. After setting aside \$6,041 (approx. \$85,702 in 2024 dollars) for taxation, funds were transferred to the building and general reserve funds (see

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Table 6). The directors redeemed \$21,425 (approx. \$303,950 in 2024 dollars) in bonus debentures issued in 1968. He also reported on the purchase of a house and upgrades to the QFCC's buildings, noting that profits were down and the economic outlook was not good, calling on the shareholders to support the Co-operative during this difficult period (QFCC, 1970).

Table 6: Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Financial Distributions 1970-1979

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1970	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$21,655 (approx. \$307,213 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures, and \$1,000 (approx. \$14,187 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the building fund and \$3,500 (approx. \$49,653 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1971	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$19,417 (approx. \$259,533 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures, and \$3,500 (approx. \$46,781 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1972	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$20,864 (approx. \$263,029 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures, and \$5,000 (approx. \$63,034 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1973	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$24,912 (approx. \$287,889 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures, and \$5,000 (approx. \$57,781 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1974	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$35,236 (approx. \$352,805 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures, and \$9,500 (approx. \$95,120 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1975	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$35,457 (approx. \$308,276 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures, and \$6,215 (approx. \$54,035 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1976	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$47,029 (approx. \$360,816 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures, and \$12,500 (approx. \$95,902 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1977	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$54,522 (approx. \$372,455 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures, and \$9,647 (approx. \$65,901 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1978	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$48,777 (approx. \$308,513 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures, and \$8,000 (approx. \$50,600 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1979	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$51,859 (approx. \$300,587 in 2024 dollars) paid as 4% debentures, and \$8,000 (approx. \$46,370 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.

Sources: QFCC Annual Reports (1970 to 1979).

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At the AGM of 1971, held on 17 September, the Chair Mr. Wills, reported on falling sales revenue and lower profits. In addition to the directors, manager and secretary there were twelve shareholders present. Mr. Wills reported an annual turnover of \$609,023 (approx. \$8,140,363 in 2024 dollars), which was below the previous year's level, and a reduced net profit of \$29,504 (approx. \$394,358 in 2024 dollars). After setting aside \$5,070 (approx. \$67,767 in 2024 dollars) for taxation, the board issued a dividend of 6 per cent on paid-up capital and a trading bonus in the form of bonus debentures (see Table 6). The remaining funds were transferred to the general reserve, after redeeming \$20,413 (approx. \$272,846 in 2024 dollars) on bonus debentures issued in 1969 (QFCC, 1971).

The financial situation facing the Co-operative was raised by Mr. Wills, who described the rising costs of running the business as "alarming" and called upon the shareholders to give their full support to the company. He expressed his appreciation for the past support that the members had given and stated that cash cheques from a total pool of more than \$24,000 (approx. \$320,790 in 2024 dollars) would be paid to shareholders encompassing the bonus debentures issued in 1969, plus the 4 per cent interest on these, and the 6 per cent interest on the dividend. The only other matters discussed were in general business where issues of the quality of the bread from the bakery, supply of vegetables from the grocery, establishment of a garden centre within the hardware, and the employment of teenagers were raised and addressed (QFCC, 1971).

On 15 September 1972, the AGM attracted only six shareholders. Mr. Wills, in his address to the meeting, declared that the Co-operative had turned over \$632,487 (approx. \$7,973,649 in 2024 dollars). It was accompanied by a net profit of \$34,688 (approx. \$437,305 in 2024 dollars), which was an improvement over the preceding year. After provisioning \$7,274 (approx. \$91,702 in 2024 dollars) for taxation, issuing a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital, and 4 per cent bonus debentures on store and agency trading, the balance was transferred into the reserve fund (see Table 6). The directors also redeemed \$21,246 (approx. \$267,845 in 2024 dollars) in bonus debentures that had been issued in 1970 (QFCC, 1972).

Mr. Wills also reported on the capital expenditure that the Co-operative had made during the year, and the immediate future plans of the company. He thanked the shareholders and noted that cheques from a total pool of \$25,000 (approx. \$315,170 in 2024 dollars) would be distributed to them as payment for the bonus debentures issued in 1970, including the debenture interest and dividend on their paid-up share capital. Once again there were some issues associated with the quality of the bread from the bakery, security of the self-service grocery, and the public relations goodwill generated by the Manager, Charles Lindorff's visits to farms (QFCC, 1972).

In 1973 the AGM took place on 14 September with the Chair, board, manager, secretary and sixteen shareholders present. In his role as Chair, Mr. Wills reported that the annual turnover for the year had reached \$694,677 (approx. \$8,062,530 in 2024 dollars), and the net profit was \$39,499 (approx. \$446,460 in 2024 dollars). After setting aside \$8,039 (approx. \$92,901 in 2024 dollars) for taxation, distributing a dividend and bonus debentures on trading, the balance was transferred to the general reserve fund (see Table 6) (QFCC, 1973).

Mr. Wills also declared that the board would redeem \$18,728 (approx. \$216,425 in 2024 dollars) in bonus debentures issued in 1971. He stated that a sum of \$22,000 (approx. \$254,237 in 2024 dollars) would soon be issued to shareholders as cheques covering their bonus debentures plus the 4 per cent interest, and the 6 per cent dividend on their paid-up capital. He also spoke about the capital expenditure made by the Co-operative during the previous twelve months and thanked the shareholders for their support (QFCC, 1973).

In general business, a Mr. T. E. Richards requested that an employee of the Co-operative be trained to carry out Kleenheat Gas appliance repairs. There were also questions and discussions relating to the sale of small goods, the pricing of groceries, the quality of the bread from the bakery, and warranty work for Ford vehicles. In addition, an amendment to the Articles of Association was proposed by Mr. F. C. Simpson and seconded by Mr. T. E. Richards, which read,

“Delete that last paragraph of Article 34 and substitute the following:

When a casual vacancy occurs on the board, nominations shall be called in the normal way. In the event of two or more nominees, a ballot shall be held for the position and that the notices be sent out 28 days prior to the closing of the nominations” (QFCC, 1973, p. 5).

The motion was put and carried.

By the time the 1974 AGM was held on 20 September the financial outlook for the Co-operative was looking much better. The Chair, directors, manager and secretary were joined by fourteen shareholders. Mr. Wills reported that the annual turnover for the QFCC had reached \$804,384 (approx. \$8,054,004 in 2024 dollars), which was an improvement over the previous year. The net profit was \$57,782 (approx. \$578,550 in 2024 dollars). A sum of \$11,494 (approx. \$115,085 in 2024 dollars) was set aside for taxation, before a dividend of 6 per cent on paid-up capital, and a bonus debenture on trading carrying a 4 per cent interest rate were declared and remaining funds transferred to the reserve fund (see Table 6). The board also decided to redeem \$20,098 (approx. \$201,234 in 2024 dollars) of bonus debentures issued in 1972 (QFCC, 1974).

In his address to shareholders Mr. Wills also spoke of the increasing costs associated with running the business and said that he anticipated there might be a decrease in the financial surplus for the current year. Nevertheless, he expressed his appreciation of the support that the shareholders had given to the company and noted that cheques totalling \$24,000 (approx. \$240,303 in 2024 dollars) would soon be paid to them covering the bonus debentures issued in 1972, plus the 4 per cent interest paid in them, and the 6 per cent interest from their paid-up capital (QFCC, 1974).

During the AGM the amendment to the Articles of Association passed in the 1973 AGM was revisited to read,

“Delete the last paragraph of Article 34 and substitute the following:

When a casual vacancy occurs on the Board nominations shall be called in the normal way, in the event of two or more nominees a ballot shall be held for the position” (QFCC, 1974, p. 7).

Additional issues discussed within the general business session of the AGM were the need to provide shareholders with copies of the company's trading accounts on request, the re-printing of the Articles of Association, the dispatch of goods, the entrance to the grocery store, afterhours services, and the employment of single persons. The latter became a motion moved by Mrs. J. Priestman, and seconded by Mrs. L. J. Swithenbank, which stated that board should consider employing single persons. It was voted on and duly carried (QFCC, 1974).

THE GOOD TIMES CONTINUE – 1975 TO 1979

The 1975 AGM of the QFCC took place on 19 September, once again with Mr. Wills as Chair, along with the board, manager, secretary and eleven shareholders present. Mr. Wills reported that the annual sales revenue for the Co-operative was \$897,838 (approx. \$7,806,124 in 2024 dollars), resulting in a net profit of \$51,714 (approx. \$449,620 in 2024 dollars). After provisioning \$8,494 (approx. \$73,850 in 2024 dollars), a dividend of 6 per cent and bonus debentures on trading with 4 per cent interest were issued. The directors also redeemed bonus debentures issued in 1973 amounting to \$23,607 (approx. \$205,248 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1975).

In his address to shareholders, Mr. Wills also spoke about what he described as a successful year of trading for the Co-operative, which had generated a reasonable net profit for the period. He reported that the QFCC had purchased another two houses and was in the process of building a second-hand car and merchandise yard within the Ford dealership garage and showroom. He noted that the Co-operative Wholesale Services supplier had ceased to operate requiring the company to source its grocery lines from Foodland Associated Ltd. (QFCC, 1975).

He thanked the shareholders for their loyalty and announced that cheques totalling \$29,000 (approx. \$252,136 in 2024 dollars) would soon be distributed to redeem the bonus debentures issued in 1973, along with the 4 per cent interest they paid, and the 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital. After a general business discussion focusing on the wrapping and storage of bread in the bakery, the price of merchandise sold in the general store, the circulation of copies of the AGM minutes, and financial statements, the meeting drew to an end (QFCC, 1975).

On 17 September 1976 the AGM included the Chair, his fellow directors, the manager and secretary, plus twenty-three shareholders. Mr. Wills reported that the annual turnover for the previous year had exceeded the one million mark, at \$1,233,685 (approx. \$9,465,077 in 2024 dollars), and the net profit was \$74,923 (approx. \$574,824 in 2024 dollars). After setting aside \$13,848 (approx. \$106,245 in 2024 dollars) for taxation, the board issued a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital, a bonus debenture on trading, and the balance transferred to the general reserve (see Table 6). The board redeemed \$33,175 (approx. \$254,525 in 2024 dollars) of bonus debentures issued in 1974 (QFCC, 1976).

Mr. Wills explained to the meeting that the 1975-1976 trading year had been very successful and had generated the highest revenues the Co-operative had achieved to that time. He noted that construction of the second-hand vehicle yard had been completed and additional extensions were in progress on the garage buildings. He thanked the shareholders and announced that cheques totalling of \$39,000 (approx. \$299,216 in 2024 dollars) representing the redemption of the 1974

bonus debentures, plus the 4 per cent interest on the debentures, and the 6 per cent dividend on the paid-up capital would soon be distributed (QFCC, 1976).

Another aspect of the 1976 AGM was the retirement of Mr. C. R. Dall who had become a director in 1944 and was stepping down after 32 years. From 1950 to 1952 he served as Chair of the QFCC. In his retirement speech he declared that his time with the Co-operative had been a happy experience and very informative. He also said that during his time he had found the various managers very efficient making the board's work easier (QFCC, 1976).

At the 1977 AGM, held on 16 September, which included the Chair, directors, manager, secretary and twenty-five shareholders, Mr. Wills, reported another successful trading year. He explained that the total revenue for the 1976-1977 year was \$1,468,711 (approx. \$10,033,177 in 2024 dollars), with a net profit of \$81,496 (approx. \$556,722 in 2024 dollars). This, he declared, was a good outcome, and after setting aside \$15,793 (approx. \$107,886 in 2024 dollars) for taxation the board distributed a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital, bonus debentures with a 4 per cent interest rate on trading, and the balance transferred to the general reserve (see Table 6) (QFCC, 1977).

Mr. Wills explained that the financial performance of the Co-operative had been positive and that the board would be distributing \$40,000 (approx. \$273,251 in 2024 dollars) in cheques to redeem \$34,154 (approx. \$233,316 in 2024 dollars) in bonus debentures issued in 1975 plus the 4 per cent interest on the debentures and pay the 6 per cent dividend. He also stated that some of the company's houses were being sold to the staff who were living in them, and that Hewitt's Store had been purchased by the QFCC. In general business the meeting also discussed the need to report the number of board meetings and the attendance of the directors within the AGM materials. Also discussed was the need for staff training as employees moved into senior positions (QFCC, 1977).

The 1978 AGM was held on 15 September attended by fourteen shareholders plus the Chair, board, manager and secretary. Mr. Wills declared another successful trading year with an annual turnover of \$1,515,292 (approx. \$9,584,179 in 2024 dollars), and a net profit of \$73,916 (approx. \$467,517 in 2024 dollars). This performance enabled the board to distribute a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital, and bonus debentures with a 4 per cent rate of interest as a reward for trading. After provisioning \$15,644 (approx. \$98,948 in 2024 dollars) for taxation the board transferred the remaining funds into the general reserve (QFCC, 1978).

In his address Mr. Wills reiterated the success of the financial year and his appreciation of the shareholders' support for the Co-operative. He explained that cheques totalling over \$50,000 (approx. \$316,249 in 2024 dollars) would soon be distributed redeeming \$45,117 (approx. \$285,364 in 2024 dollars) bonus debentures issued in 1976 plus the 4 per cent interest on these debentures and the 6 per cent dividend (QFCC, 1978).

His address also encompassed details of the grocery section within the new store opening in the near future. During the general business session, questions were raised over the collection of groceries from the rear of the shop, and the increasing of the rent on the housing provided to

employees so that they might be encouraged to buy their own homes and retire in the district (QFCC, 1978).

At the 1979 AGM held on 21 September the Chair, directors, manager, secretary and thirteen shareholders attended. In his final address for the decade, Mr. Wills reported an annual revenue of \$1,583,684 (approx. \$9,179,410 in 2024 dollars), with a net profit of \$74,869 (approx. \$433,959 in 2024 dollars). After setting aside \$13,494 (approx. \$78,214 in 2024 dollars) for taxation the board issued a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital with trading bonus debentures carrying a 4 per cent interest, and the remaining balance transferred to the general reserve. Mr. Wills explained that the shareholders would soon be receiving cheques totalling more than \$57,000 (approx. \$330,386 in 2024 dollars) as rebates on store and agency trading. He also explained that the Co-operative store was experiencing increasing sales due to the opening of the new sections and that more upgrades would soon be rolled out (QFCC, 1979).

SUMMING UP THE QFCC IN THE 1970S

The 1970s was a period of high inflation, rising unemployment, and changing, political, economic, social, technological, and demographic characteristics of society in WA and Australia more broadly. International events such as the OPEC Oil Crisis, and the drought that impacted the WA Wheatbelt in the early years of the decade (Morgan, 2011), impacted the QFCC and resulted in the frustrated declarations by Chairman Wills warning the shareholders of the likely impacts on the financial performance of the Co-operative.

However, the presence of a long-term Chairperson, plus a Manager such as Charles Lindorff, and their workforce, ensured that the QFCC was able to manage successfully through these challenges. As the financial records of the Co-operative show, throughout the decade the QFCC turned over an annual average of around \$8.39 million in 2023 dollars equivalent, receiving a total inflow of more than \$83.9 million in 2023 dollars equivalent and generating an annual average net profit of \$484,206 in 2023 dollars equivalent. It also distributed over \$3 million in 2023 dollars equivalent to shareholders and transferred \$606,019 in 2023 dollars equivalent into the general reserve fund. By any account this was a satisfactory financial performance for the Co-operative during what were challenging times for many businesses.

By the end of the decade, the QFCC had matured into a successful retailing and services agency, with a diversified portfolio of business units. The Co-operative operated a grocery store, drapery, newsagency, hardware, Caltex fuel and lubricants depot, bakery, motor vehicle service and repairs garage, and a Ford motors dealership. It had upgraded its retail and service facilities and acquired residential properties within the town to house its staff. Although the decade had brought numerous changes within the farming community of the Wheatbelt, with more to come during the following decade, the QFCC had once again demonstrated its resilience and delivered value to its shareholders and the wider community.

CHAPTER 10: MANAGING THE DECADENT DECADE, 1980-1989

The heavy metal band Mötley Crüe, when producing a compilation album of their work over the period from 1981 to 1991, gave the album the title “decade of decadence”, which has been widely adopted as the epitaph for the 1980s. Also described as the “greed decade”, this was a period that saw a rise in neoliberal economics, the deregulation of markets, privatisation of public assets, and the rapid expansion of personal computers. At a geopolitical level, it was the decade that saw the economic rise of China, and collapse of the Soviet Union.

Within WA the 1980s saw a significant revival of gold mining, which was a response to the ending of the Gold Standard in 1971. The revival was caused by new technologies for extracting and processing of the precious mineral, and the risk caused to bank savings by inflation during the 1970s. Unemployment, which started rising in the 1970s, reached 10 per cent in June 1984 and continued to grow to more than 11 per cent by the early 1990s. The decade was also marked by the deregulation of the Australian financial sector, which involved floating the Australian dollar in December 1983. For the WA economy, this served to depreciate the value of the Australian Dollar from US\$1.15 in the period 1980-1982, to between US\$0.49 to US\$0.88 in the years that followed. This had a negative impact on Australians travelling overseas but significantly enhanced the global competitiveness of WA exporters (Wilson, Layman & Christmas, 2004).

In the rural areas, the 1980s saw the emergence of Landcare groups concerned about salinity, soil degradation, and loss of native flora and fauna. The release of new agricultural land all but ceased in the early 1980s, with increased use of larger farm machinery, and a transition from mixed farming to continuous broadacre cropping. This led to a decline in demand for rural labour across the Wheatbelt. The problems of salinity and soil erosion became more concerning, made worse by drought. Many farmers sold up and left the land, and those that remained invested heavily in the use of technology to compensate for human labour. A number of farmers in the higher rainfall areas either leased or sold their land to Managed Investment Scheme tree farming companies, who planted mainly Tasmanian blue gums (Menck, 2022).

The 1980s was also a “decade of decadence” within WA as it spawned a number of prominent business entrepreneurs, who built commercial empires, then high rise office towers in the Perth CBD, while engaging in extravagant lifestyles and conspicuous consumption (Menck, 2022). Alan Bond was one of the more high-profile business owners. He grew Bond Corporation into a major enterprise and funded a successful campaign to win the America’s Cup in 1983, only to see it lost to the Americans in the unsuccessful defence held in Fremantle in 1987 (Herreshoff Maritime Museum, 2023). Although the cup was not retained, and Bond’s business empire subsequently collapsed, a legacy of the America’s Cup win and defence was the transformation of the Port of Fremantle. The City of Perth was also uplifted, with the opening of the Burswood Casino Resort in 1985, and the redevelopment of Northbridge into a restaurant and nightlife centre that attracted locals and tourists alike (Menck, 2022).

Numerous legislative reforms were introduced by the Federal Government and mirrored by the WA State Government. These covered compulsory superannuation in 1984, along with the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1984*. The first windfarm in Australia commenced operation in Esperance in 1987 (Menck, 2022).

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative Co. Ltd. – Cornerstone of our community



QUAIRADING IN THE 1980S

In 1980 Quairading started its journey through the 1980s by winning the statewide Tidy Town Contest for the best town south of the 26th parallel and receiving a \$400 (approx. \$2,105 in 2024 dollars) cash prize, plaques and reproductions (Hamersley News, 1980). The same year, local Quairading artist sculptor Ian Wills gained wide public acclaim for his wood sculptures using locally sourced dried and seasoned timber. His approach involved using material that already possessed natural curves and shapes, which he then carved into birds, animals and other forms. Originally a farmer, Ian discovered his artistic side while clearing bushland from his property alongside his brother. As he explained,

“We were clearing wood from the farm, carting it away on a truck. I picked up a piece with a particularly interesting shape. I could see all sorts of potential in it. It became my first sculpture and my inspiration” (PNG Post-Courier, 1980, p. 18).

This led Ian on a journey of artistic self-discovery quitting farming and setting up an art studio and gallery that allowed him the opportunity to create unique wooden sculptures from the local native timber. According to Ian,

“From that point on I found myself looking closely at every piece of wood I picked up. I became so involved that six months later I decided to give up farming and devote myself full-time to natural wood sculpture. There are beautiful natural wood shapes all around us. People just don’t notice them. They burn them in fires. It is a matter of becoming aware of these shapes and appreciating what nature has to offer” (PNG Post-Courier, 1980, p. 18).

Figure 29: Ian Wills working on a tree root resembling a Swan, 1980



Source: PNG Post-Courier (1980).

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Other artistic and creative works emerged from Quairading in the 1988 and 1989 in the form of Terry Maybury's nearly hour-long documentary film "Sky's Witness". This covered the history of Quairading, from its colonisation in the 1840s to its status in the 1980s. It was shot in both Super 8 film and Betacam video (Filmnews, 1988). A media summary of the film stated,

"Sky's Witness (Terry Maybury) – a forty-seven-minute documentary tracing the land use at Quairading in the WA Wheatbelt, from before white settlement until the current decline in the agricultural sector. The finished documentary will include Super 8 source material and other archive resources, present day footage and interviews. Maybury shot fifty rolls of Super 8 and transferred it to Betacam along with the archive footage. This supported his CDF application which was successful" (Filmnews, 1989, p. 7).

Concern over salinity and soil degradation led to the establishment of the Whittington Interceptor Salt Affected Land Treatment Society (WISALTS) in 1978 and pioneered by Brookton farmer Harry Whittington. The controversial system involved creating land interceptor banks that served as barriers to salt encroachment by retaining rainwater where it falls. The banks stop the water running off to lower ground where salt, fertilisers, and natural minerals leached from the soil could accumulate and destroy the land beneath. By 1981 the WISALTS team had recruited over 1,000 members and undertaken multiple land surveys and constructed interceptor barriers across the Wheatbelt. They were promoting the WISALTS model in South Australia around the Eyre Peninsula. The Treasurer of the WISALTS team was Quairading farmer Mrs. Barbara Jamieson (Port Lincoln Times, 1981). According to Mrs. Jamieson,

"The organisation now has 1,000 farmer members and 6,000 kilometres of interceptor banks have been constructed in WA. The Society conducts schools to teach the surveying skills needed for implementing the system" (Port Lincoln Times, 1981, p. 14).

An interesting event that occurred in Quairading during 1982 was the dispute over the ownership of a cache of old £5 and £10 notes estimated to be worth around \$20,000. It was found under the Quairading Shire Hall by Mr. Basil Winmar, three years earlier. However, his claim to the money was contested by Mr. Pat Barker, aged 83 years, who had operated a movie theatre in the hall for many years and was known in Quairading as "the Picture Show man". According to Mr. Barker, he took cash payment for his films, and rather than place them in a bank, hid the money in various places around the hall. This included two pipes. However, when he came to recover some of the money, he found that the dance floor had been extended, preventing access to the pipes. Following a court settlement, Mr. Barker was granted half the money, Mr. Winmar received 15 per cent, and the Quairading Shire Council received 35 per cent.

Mr. Barker, who remained philosophical but annoyed, said,

"I never smoked, or drank, or gambled, and I put aside £3 or £4 per week, to keep privately. I'm very disappointed actually. Good luck to the bloke who found the money, he deserves his bit, but there's no doubt it's my money. I object to the imposition of the council. I used their hall for well over 50 years, and that's the thanks you get" (Canberra Times, 1982, p. 20).

These are just a few snapshots of the activities taking place in Quairading during the 1980s. One of the legacies of the era that is still in operation is the Vintage Club.

THE VINTAGE CLUB

During the 1980s a group of farmers and locals from the Quairading district formed a club to collect, restore, and display vintage farm machinery including tractors, trucks, and engines. Located on Parker Street, behind the Quairading Railway Station, the Vintage Club in 2024 had a collection of vintage stationary engines, working farm machinery and motor vehicles. One of its more popular exhibits is a scale model of a Ford LTL 9000 prime mover and trailers large enough to seat adults and children for joy rides. Figure 30 shows the truck named “Lil Louie” at a recent club event. Lil Louie was designed and built in 1989 by Chris Laycock with permission from Ford. The vehicle took 400 hours to complete at an estimated cost of \$250,000 (approx. \$647,711 in 2024 dollars) (Shire of Quairading, 2023).

Figure 30: Lil Louie Ford LTL 9000 scale model operated by the Vintage Club



Source: Shire of Quairading (2023).

THE BADJALING MISSION

Another significant event in Quairading during the 1980s was the return to the Badjaling Mission reserve by the Balardong Noongar people in 1980. Established in 1933, the Badjaling Mission was created for the United Aborigines Mission. Between 1887 and 1954 the mission comprised a camping ground and home for around thirty Balardong Noongar families. Prior to settlement by the British, the camping ground was a traditional site with several fresh water sources, and saw traditional hunting, food collecting, and community meetings (Badjaling SB, 2008).

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In January 1930, two Irish Catholic Missionaries, Miss Mary Belshaw and Miss May McRidge opened a school for the Balardong children in a paddock east of Badjaling, close to a fresh water source. The school building was constructed out of bush wood, wheat sacks and flattened kerosene tins. Furniture consisted of old petrol drums, kerosene tins, and kerosene boxes. The first teacher suffered from 'sandy blight' (trachoma, a bacterial infection in the eyes that can lead to blindness), and the school was moved to Quairading. The original building fell into disrepair and was replaced with a more robust structure, which doubled as a church. A new teacher was appointed in 1939, who arrived with second-hand books and bags of second-hand clothing. The school had thirty-eight children enrolled (Badjaling SB, 2008).

By 1954 the Badjaling Mission was closed and the Balardong community moved to the Quairading Reserve. However, in 1980 the community formally moved back to the Badjaling Mission reserve. The site was returned to the Balardong people in 1991 under a 99-year lease. Housing was finally constructed on the reserve for the community with the housing completed by 1998 (Badjaling SB, 2008).

THE QFCC IN THE 1980S AND THE LINDORFF RURAL CENTRE

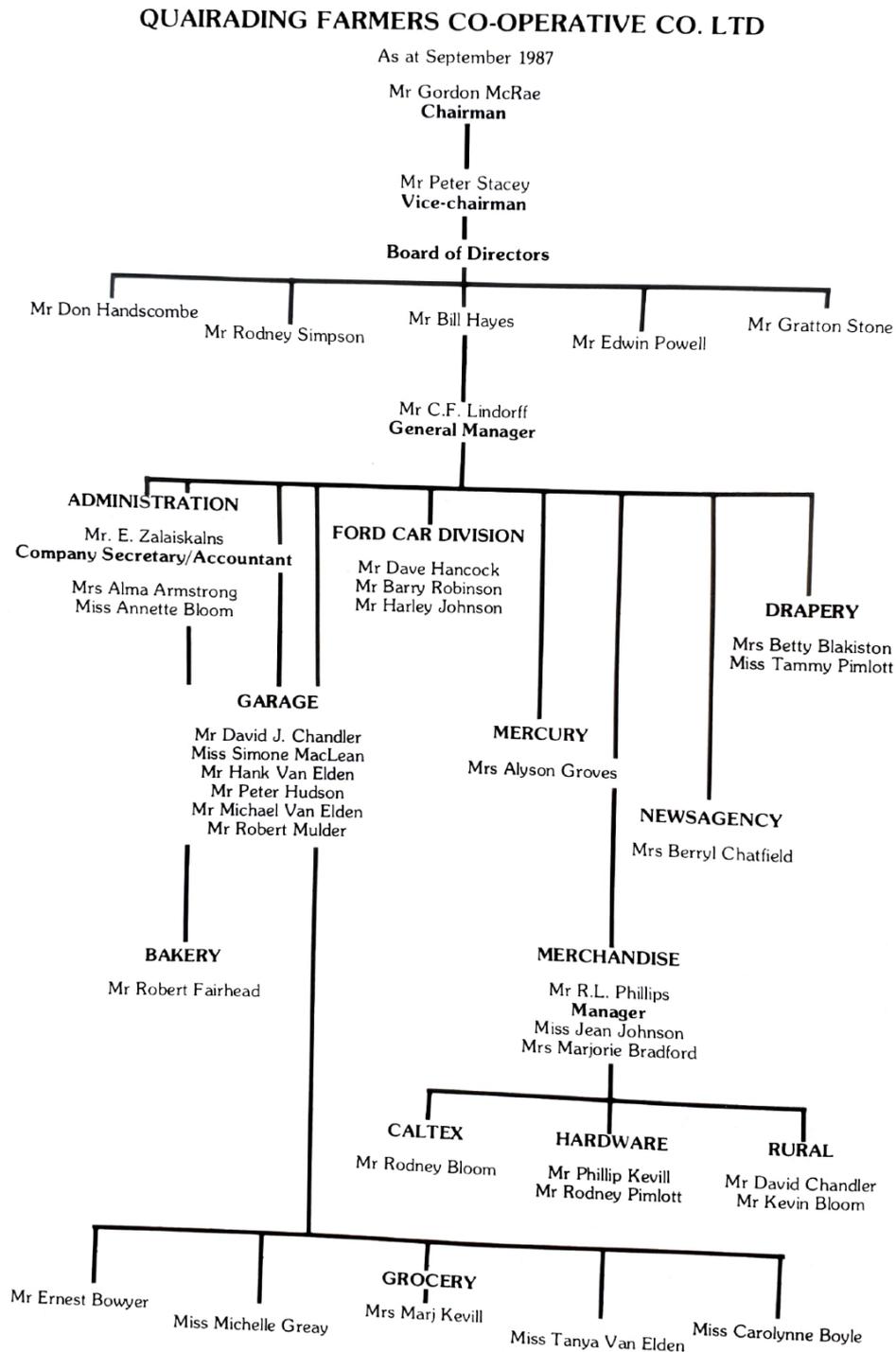
During the 1980s the QFCC had a business comprising the structure shown in Figure 31. As can be seen the Co-operative had a board comprising seven directors, including the Chair and Vice Chair, supported by a General Manager, Company Secretary/Accountant and an administrative team of two-people. The service delivery was provided in the form of a bakery, motor vehicle service garage, Ford car division, drapery, newsagency, mercery (not "mercury") also known as a haberdashery, grocery, and merchandise store comprising the Caltex fuel depot, hardware, and rural supplies. Among the long-term contractual relationships held by the QFCC were its relationship with Wesfarmers from 1922, the Caltex Oil Company from 1932, and the Ford Motor Corporation from 1942. Total employment was thirty-one including both management and general staff (QFCC, 1987a).

The economic performance of the QFCC was positive during the 1980s and saw the Co-operative expand its facilities in Heal Street. with the planning, development, and final opening of the Charles Farncombe Lindorff Rural Centre. The planning for the new centre commenced in 1984 and recognised the need for more storage and retail space. Opened on 18 September 1987, the new centre comprised a floor area of just over 260 square metres, which added to the existing Heal Street store created a total floor area of 2,787 square metres, making it one of the largest rural stores in WA at that time (QFCC, 1987a).

As discussed in earlier chapters, the original QFCC store was built in 1919. Major renovations and upgrades were undertaken in 1954, with further extensions completed in 1963 and 1978. These building programs were made possible by the increasing annual turnover and profitability that the Co-operative experienced during the decades of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The new centre was testimony to the QFCC Manager Charles Lindorff who retired in 1987 after thirty-nine years working for the Co-operative (QFCC, 1987a).



Figure 31: QFCC Organisation Chart 1987



Source: QFCC (1987a).



Figure 32: Charles Farncombe Lindorff QFCC Secretary & Manager 1948-1987



Source: QFCC (1987a).

In the commemoration to Mr. Lindorff the following was stated,

“With an increased turnover in the last seven years of 262 per cent in rural and general merchandise, the completion of this rural centre will leave an indelible mark in the history of the Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative for Mr. Charles Farncombe Lindorff.”

“Mr. Lindorff arrived in Quairading from Perth after leaving the air force at the end of World War II, drawn to the town by his brother-in-law, Claude Carter, who at the time was the merchandise manager. Mr. Lindorff became the accountant in 1948 and was promoted to manager in 1956.”



“Mr. Charles Lindorff has been responsible for the completion of many works’ programmes in the co-operative and also for saving the co-operative millions of dollars in expenses by co-ordinating most of these programmes himself. In 1983 the Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative Co. Ltd., was the first co-op or private agent to exceed one million dollars in merchandise purchases from Wesfarmers in any, one trading year.”

“The rapport that the Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative has achieved with suppliers, has mainly been due to the unselfish effort put in by Mr. Charles Farncombe Lindorff himself” (QFCC, 1987a, p. 4).

Memories of Charlie Lindorff – Don J. Handscombe

As a director of QFCC from 1967 to 1989 Don Handscombe worked closely with Charles “Charlie” Lindorff during most of his tenure as General Manager of the QFCC. He remembered Mr. Lindorff most favourably,

“Gordon McRae, he was the chairman at that time, kept saying to Charlie Lindorff, ‘we want to know twelve months in advance when you want to retire’. He kept on about this retirement, and Charlie was saying, ‘I don’t know when I want to retire’. But what I would say is that Charlie Lindorff was a great bloke, and a hell of a worker. For example, when we rebuilt the Co-op store, Charlie would be there on the weekends, pulling down old parts of the original buildings and helping put up new buildings, all the while running the Co-op successfully. He was one in a million I reckon.”

According to Don Handscombe when Charlie Lindorff took over from Wally Knox, the staff found the difference between the two quite significant. While Wally Knox had been a hardnosed and sometime abrupt manager, Charlie Lindorff was highly sociable and viewed by many as being, *“Soft as butter”*. However, as Don Handscombe explained, this was a misunderstanding, because in reality Charlie Lindorff, *“had his head screwed on the right way and he listened to everybody. He was a member of the bowls club, and he sorted the Quairading Club out, which had been in difficulties, he knew about money, what you could or couldn’t do, and if you had a problem, well, he could fix it.”*

As Manager, Charlie Lindorff was highly active in supporting the local sporting clubs and community associations, providing generous sponsorships and donations. At the same time, he ran the Co-op very successfully. From the shareholders’ perspective, Charlie Lindorff’s time was also notable because the Co-operative was regularly paying out dividends and trading rebates or bonuses usually worth around \$800 each year via a cheque in the post.

Don Handscombe also pointed out that when Charlie Lindorff retired, the dividend payments also ceased. Although the money earned on the dividends was much less than the trading bonuses, the overall distributions to the shareholders came to an end. He felt that many of the decisions made by the QFCC after the retirement of Charlie Lindorff were, in his view, *“Shockers”*. This included selling the Wesfarmers and Foodland shares, which had been a valuable source of dividend revenue for the co-op.

Source: Handscombe (2023).



FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND DISTRIBUTIONS, 1980S

From a financial perspective the QFCC enjoyed a steady growth in the size of its annual sales turnover during the 1980s, and relatively steady growth in net profit. Financial details for the years 1988 and 1989 were unavailable, but the sales for the decade were over \$12.16 million (in 2023 dollars). However, net profitability during the period declined steadily to around \$293,439 (in 2023 dollars), compared with \$464,206 (in 2023 dollars) achieved during the 1970s. Table 7 lists the financial distributions made during the decade. Financial reporting in the AGM minutes disappeared from 1987, which may reflect a change of Company management that is discussed further below. However, although 6 per cent dividends on paid-up capital were issued regularly, cash rebates seem to have ceased for the years 1988 and 1989. As with the 1970s, all AGMs were held in the CWA Rooms and usually took place in September.

The 1980 AGM of the QFCC was held on 19 September with Peter Wills as Chair. He was joined by his fellow directors, the Manager, Charles Lindorff, the Secretary Edgar Zalauskalns and eight shareholders. In his address to the meeting Mr. Wills reported that the annual turnover of the Co-operative for the previous trading year had been \$1,883,312 (approx. \$9,911,510 in 2024 dollars), with a net profit of \$95,839 (approx. \$504,382 in 2024 dollars). A 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital was issued along with a cash rebate on store and agency trading (QFCC, 1980a).

He announced that a sum of \$60,000 (approx. \$315,768 in 2024 dollars) would be distributed via cheques to the shareholders for dividends and cash rebates. Mr. Wills explained that the Co-operative had enjoyed a successful trading year during 1979-1980 with increased sales from the Grocery and Hardware departments, and the Caltex fuel and oil depot. He also stated that the renovations to the store were progressing well and should be completed before Christmas. In outlining the substantial dividends and cash rebates being paid, he thanked the shareholders for their support of the Co-operative (QFCC, 1980a).

In his address to the 1980 AGM, Mr. Wills also paid tribute to Mr. C. R. Dall, who had recently passed away. Mr. Dall had been a director of QFCC for thirty-two years from 1944 to 1976, serving as Chair from 1950 to 1952. During general business, several speakers expressed their approval of the renovations being undertaken to the building. They also suggested that seating should be provided in the new renovation program along with the installation of an auxiliary power plant (QFCC, 1980a).

At the AGM held on 25 September 1981, the Chair, Peter Wills was absent, so the Vice Chair, Mr. Gordon C. McRae assumed the position of Chair. Also attending were the board directors, manager, secretary and ten shareholders. Mr. McRae announced that the Co-operative had achieved an annual turnover for the previous trading year of \$1,972,546 (approx. \$9,481,553 in 2024 dollars), and a net profit of \$76,640 (approx. \$368,390 in 2024 dollars). After provisioning for taxation, a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital and a generous cash rebate on store and agency trading was paid, with cheques worth a total of nearly \$55,000 (approx. \$264,372 in 2024 dollars) distributed to pay the dividends and cash rebates (QFCC, 1981a).

Table 7: Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Financial Distributions 1980-1989

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1980	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$58,378 (approx. \$307,232 in 2024 dollars) paid as cash, with \$21,921 (approx. \$115,366 in 2024 dollars) provisioned for tax, and \$9,000 (approx. \$47,365 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1981	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$49,526 (approx. \$238,060 in 2024 dollars) paid as cash, with \$17,500 (approx. \$81,118 in 2024 dollars) provisioned for tax, and \$8,086 (approx. \$38,867 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1982	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$80,000 (approx. \$345,338 in 2024 dollars) paid as cash, with \$18,100 (approx. \$78,133 in 2024 dollars) provisioned for tax, and \$9,195 (approx. \$39,692 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1983	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$92,407 (approx. \$362,505 in 2024 dollars) paid as cash, with \$25,000 (approx. \$98,073 in 2024 dollars) provisioned for tax, and \$15,000 (approx. \$58,844 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1984	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$70,000 (approx. \$264,143 in 2024 dollars) paid as cash, with \$20,100 (approx. \$75,847 in 2024 dollars) provisioned for tax, and \$33,444 (approx. \$126,200 in 2024 dollars) transferred to the reserve fund.
1985	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$69,534 (approx. \$245,829 in 2024 dollars) paid as cash, with provisions for taxation, and the balance transferred to the reserve fund.
1986	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$49,924 (approx. \$161,852 in 2024 dollars) paid as cash, with provisions for taxation, and the balance transferred to the reserve fund.
1987	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital plus trading bonus of \$50,765 (approx. \$151,639 in 2024 dollars) paid as cash, with provisions for taxation, and the balance transferred to the reserve fund.
1988	Dividend of issued 6% on paid-up-capital, with provisions for taxation, and the balance transferred to the reserve fund.
1989	Dividend of 6% issued on paid-up-capital, with provisions for taxation, and the balance transferred to the reserve fund.

Sources: QFCC Annual Reports (1980 to 1989).

In his address to the shareholders Gordon McRae explained that the successful trading year was due to all departments across the Co-operative having performed well and having their sales increase. He also suggested that the renovations to the store had played a role in boosting sales and thanked the shareholders for their loyalty (QFCC, 1981a).

Several items were discussed during the general business section of the meeting. These included a question as to why special discounts were being offered to some customers in the Hardware department. A second question inquired as to why there had been an increase in pricing of machinery parts from \$13 to \$19 when the stock was twelve months old. Also related to the Hardware department was a question about whether communication with staff could be arranged afterhours for farmers requiring chemicals. In addition, there were concerns raised about a shortage of machinery spare parts, and the possible hiring of a respirator for a silo seal. The Co-operative also confirmed that as of 31 March 1981 it had a total of 585 registered shareholders (QFCC, 1981a).

In 1982, during the AGM held on 24 September, Mr. McRae assumed the role of Chair from Peter Wills, who retired from the role after nineteen years as Chair (1962-1981), but who remained on the board until 1984 completing thirty-nine years as a director having joined the board in 1945. The meeting was attended by the board, the manager and secretary, and thirteen shareholders. In his address, Mr. McRae announced that the Co-operative had achieved an annual turnover of \$2,645,653 (approx. \$11,420,574 in 2024 dollars), which was a substantial increase over the previous year. Net profit was \$108,805 (approx. \$469,682 in 2024 dollars), and after making provision for taxation, the board was able to pay a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital, and a generous cash rebate on store and agency trading (see, Table 7) (QFCC, 1982a).

In general business a Mr. E. J. Caporn asked if the number of *West Australian* newspapers ordered could be increased to avoid shortages. He also proposed that the term of office on the board should be limited to 14 years (7 terms), and that a period of two years (1 term) should elapse before they would be eligible to renominate. A Mr. A. W. Mills asked if the yard in the new rural centre would be gravel or sealed, and he proposed that “no smoking” signage be erected in the Hardware department (the motion was carried) (QFCC, 1982a).

The following year, the 1983 AGM, held on 23 September saw Gordon McRae, directors, manager, secretary, and nine shareholders in attendance. Also present were Messrs. Mick Evans, the Development Manager for Wesfarmers, and Darryl Rowland, Wesfarmers Northern Region Manager. Mr. McRae announced another successful trading year, with all departments showing increased sales. The Co-operative had reached an annual turnover of \$3,255,111 (approx. \$12,769,520 in 2024 dollars). A net profit of \$41,510 (approx. \$162,840 in 2024 dollars) was declared. After making provision for taxation, the board issued a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital, and a substantial cash bonus on store and agency trading, paying the balance into the general reserve (see Table 7) (QFCC, 1983).

During the General Business section of the meeting Mick Evans spoke to the audience, stating that the QFCC had been in operation nearly as long as Wesfarmers. He congratulated the board and the management of the Co-operative in having the Hardware department exceed one million dollars in sales in a single year. He presented a plaque to the Manager Charles Lindorff, who promptly passed it onto the Hardware manager Mr. Robert “Bob” Leslie Phillips. After this presentation, the meeting discussed issues such as a shortage of wholemeal bread and the pricing of electrical goods in the Co-operative’s Retravisson store, which were around \$60 more than their equivalent in Retravisson stores in Perth (QFCC, 1983).



The Chair was also asked whether the Co-operative had a long-term plan of 50 years. He responded that the Co-operative's planning horizon was around five years, and the with Charles Lindorff as Manager and a six million dollar turnover possible, there was no cause for concern. This planning horizon was supported by Darryl Rowland, who noted that Wesfarmers Rural Division used a three-year plan rather than a five-year plan (QFCC, 1983).

At the 1984 AGM held on 21 September, there were twenty-seven shareholders present along with the Chair, Gordon McRae, the board, and the manager and secretary. In his report to the shareholders, Mr. McRae announced that the annual turnover of the Co-operative had reached \$3,442,619 (approx. \$12,990,617 in 2024 dollars), and that a net profit of \$55,074 (approx. \$207,820 in 2024 dollars) had been achieved. He also explained that after provisioning for taxation, the board would be distributing a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital and a cash rebate on trading. A key focus for the AGM was the retirement of Peter Wills as a director. His 39 years on the board from 1945, which included nineteen years as Chair, was celebrated as a record-breaking term. During this time tremendous changes had been experienced by both the Co-operative and the district. He was presented with a barometer as a parting gift (QFCC, 1984).

Memories of Peter D. Wills – Rod T. Simpson

Rod Simpson served as a director of QFCC from 1978 to 1991. Born in Quairading in 1952, he runs the family farm and has been active in a range of community organisations such as the tennis club, and the Secretary and Treasurer of the Land Conservation District Committee, Chair of the Grounds Committee at the Quairading School, and the QFCC. His father, also served on the board, but died at the relatively young age of 52 years, and he recalls being approached to consider joining the board.

At that time Peter Wills Snr., was the Chair, and Rod Simpson remembers him as being quietly spoken, and very knowledgeable. According to Rod, Peter Wills as Chair, and Charlie Lindorff as Manager, were effectively running the Co-operative. When attending the board meetings, all the decisions seem to have already been made, and the board was being asked to endorse the recommendations issued by the Manager and the Chair. It was something of a rubber stamp board.

Rod Simpson recalled his reaction to the first board meeting, *"I remember that I went outside the board to Gordon McRae who was the Vice Chair, outside the Post Office and asking him, 'what the hell am I doing on the board when it is all signed, sealed and delivered?'"*

According to Rod Simpson, Gordon McRae agreed with him and when Mr. McRae took over the role of Chair from Peter Wills in 1981, things began to change. Despite this, he acknowledged that during the years of Charlie Lindorff as Manager, the QFCC operated successfully and was rated as one of the best of the regional co-operatives in WA. In his view, the 1980s was a "Golden Era" for the QFCC.

Source: Simpson (2023).



Figure 33: QFCC Heal Street Store 1987



Source: QFCC (1987a).

The remainder of the meeting was consumed by discussions over shareholder concerns relating to the decision to no-longer issue credit at the Grocery department. A shareholder, Mr. T. E. Richards submitted a written statement outlining the difficulties this would have for many customers. He suggested that if shareholders wished to continue with store credit, they might deposit an amount of cash equal to their average monthly grocery purchasing and then draw down on this during the following months. This was met with mixed support for and against. Mr. McRae assured the meeting that there were no plans to introduce cash only across the other departments of the Co-operative. It was agreed that time was required to phase in the cash-only system (QFCC, 1984).

A year later, at the AGM of the QFCC was held on 20 September 1985, present were the Chair, Mr. McRae, his fellow directors, the manager, the secretary, and thirteen shareholders. In his address to the meeting Mr. McRae reported that the Co-operative had achieved annual sales of \$4,061,847 (approx. \$14,360,144 in 2024 dollars), with a net profit of \$69,529 (approx. \$245,811 in 2024 dollars). Noted that seasonal conditions had impacted the sales generated in the previous year. Mr. A. F. Dall asked if the trading bonus would be paid to partnerships. In response Mr. McRae explained that partnerships were identified as shareholders and would have any trading bonuses credited to their accounts (QFCC, 1985).



With respect to the previous year's AGM, the issue of shareholder pre-paying their accounts to address the removal of store credit within the Grocery department was discussed. Mrs. D. Treloar asked if all the Grocery deposits had been paid. She was answered by Edgar Zalaikalns, Secretary, that all but two customers had paid their deposits, comprising 104 people and almost \$25,000 (approx. \$88,384 in 2024 dollars) in deposits. There was also a motion put by Mr. E. J. Caporn, seconded by Mr. E. W. Shenton, and carried upon vote, that the Directors should encourage younger people to study for positions of management. Mr. Shenton also suggested that the tyres of second-hand farm machinery held by the Co-operative should be kept inflated, and that weeds in the vehicle yard should be kept down (QFCC, 1985).

Mr. E. J. Caporn also moved a motion that a director's term of office on the board should be limited to 14 years (7 two-year terms), and that a period of two years (1 term) should elapse before they could be eligible to renominate. This motion, seconded by Mr. J. Haythornthwaite, was discussed at length with a strong division emerging. The Chair, Mr. McRae stressed to the meeting that it took time for a director to learn the business and that longer terms of directorship provided for continuity. Mr. Caporn expressed the view that there were many young and capable people in the district with new ideas who could take a place on the Board. The motion was put to a vote and lost six to nine (QFCC, 1985).

On 19 September 1986 the QFCC held a further AGM, with Gordon McRae as Chair, the directors, manager, secretary, and nine shareholders present. In his report Mr. McRae reported annual sales of \$3,548,129 (approx. \$11,502,906 in 2024 dollars), which was substantially down on the 1985 trading year. After a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital and a trading cash rebate of \$49,924 (approx. \$161,852 in 2024 dollars), and provisions for taxation, the net profit was \$48,384 (approx. \$156,859 in 2024 dollars). According to Mr. McRae, the decline in sales was primarily due to a fall off of chemical sales. This trend had now begun to reverse and chemical sales were steadily rising again. He noted that with the new Combined Rural Traders business and furniture on display, sales would begin to grow. He expressed his gratitude to the shareholders in their support for the Co-operative, and thanked the management and staff for their dedication, hard work and enthusiasm. Apart from the retirement of Mr. M. H. Hadlow from the board after eight years (1978-1986), the meeting focused on accommodation for one of the managers during the renovation of his house (QFCC, 1986).

The 1987 AGM was held on 18 September with Mr. McRae as Chair, the directors, manager, secretary and sixty-two shareholders present plus Mr. Harry Perkins, Chair of Wesfarmers, and Mr. K. G. Manning, a director of Wesfarmers. In his address to the shareholders Mr. McRae declared an annual turnover of \$6,000,000 (approx. \$17,922,456 in 2024 dollars), with a net profit of \$102,423 (approx. \$305,945 in 2024 dollars), which allowed the board to distribute cash rebates worth a total of \$50,765 (approx. \$151,639 in 2024 dollars) to shareholders along with a dividend of 6 per cent on paid-up capital (QFCC, 1987e).

Mr. McRae also announced the retirement of Charles Lindorff as manager after service to the QFCC spanning 39 years, 31 of which when he was Manager. He praised Mr. Lindorff's contribution to the Co-operative and the progress that had been achieved during his time as Manager. This was followed by a declaration that two Managers would be appointed to replace

Mr. Lindorff. These were Manager of Finance, Mr. E. Zalaikalns, who had been serving as the Secretary and Accountant, and Mr. Bob Phillips, who had been the Manager of Merchandise, to be the Store Manager (QFCC, 1987e).

These revelations were followed by a keynote address by Mr. Perkins, who provided an overview of the Co-operative Movement and numerous new projects being undertaken by the Westralian Farmers' Co-operative Ltd. He concluded his speech by presenting Mr. Lindorff with a gift that recognised his long service to the Co-operative. After this, the meeting discussed General Business, which focused on the downturn in bakery sales, and complaints about the quality and price of vegetables in the Grocery department. In response, Mr. McRae stated that the customers had a choice of where they went to buy their bread, and that it was not the Co-operative's policy to undercut prices. He added that the bakery products were made fresh and locally and did not contain the preservatives found in the alternatives. In relation to the vegetables, the Manager, Mr. Lindorff stated that the vegetables were sourced from the Hilltop Fruit and Vegie Suppliers, a place from which almost all other retailers in the district sourced their supplies (QFCC, 1987e).

The 1988 AGM took place on 23 September. It was chaired by Gordon McRae who was joined by fellow directors, the two managers, Edgar Zalaikalns and Robert "Bob" Phillips, plus thirteen shareholders. In his address as Chair, Mr. McRae outlined the changes taking place in the staffing of the Co-operative's Bakery. He commended Mr. Zalaikalns for the successful preparation of the financial reports, and Mr. Phillips for his management of the store. A dividend of 6 per cent on paid-up capital was announced. However, no rebates were paid. In the General Business section there was a question about the Bakery, and also a complaint about the quality of service at the spare parts department of the Garage. In addition, there was a suggestion that the fuel depot should begin to supply auto LPG gas, and a request that local young people should be trained up for jobs within the Co-operative, in particular Aboriginal youth. Finally, there was a call from Mr. E. W. Shenton, for the Co-operative to provide a donation to assist with creation of a local vehicle museum (see, the Vintage Club above) (1988k).

The final AGM for the decade took place on 22 September 1989. Present were the Chair Gordon McRae, his fellow directors, the two managers, and twenty-three shareholders. In his address Mr. McRae announced that the Bakery, due to continuous losses, would close at the end of June. He also announced a 6 per cent dividend on paid-up capital. Directors' sitting fees were raised from \$50 to \$60 per meeting (approx. \$155.45 in 2024 dollars), and \$75 per month (approx. \$194.31 in 2024 dollars) for the Chair. In General Business the meeting involved a proposal for the Co-operative's garage to include a tyre service, a complaint over the quality and pricing of vegetables, and a call for local young people to be given training within the QFCC's business operations. Mrs Treloar also complained about the transfer of staff from one department to another. Finally, a motion was put that all voting ballot paper should be destroyed, which was carried (QFCC, 1989).

AMENDMENTS TO ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

The QFCC amended its Articles of Association twice during the decade. At the AGM held in 1982, a motion was moved by QFCC director Mr. Don J. Handscombe (who served on the board from 1967 to 1989) and seconded by fellow director Mr. Peter W. Stacey (who served on the board from 1976 to 1994). The amendment, which was carried by the meeting, read,

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd. – Cornerstone of our community



“That the Memorandum of Association of the Company be amended by increasing the nominal capital of the Company by the addition thereto of the sum of \$104,000 divided into 52,000 shares of \$2.00 each beyond the current registered capital of \$26,000 each.”

“That the Articles of the Association of the Company be amended to increase the minimum shareholding to 5 shares and the maximum shareholding to 1,000 shares” (QFCC, 1982a).

Seven years later, at the AGM held in 1989 another motion was moved by a director of the QFCC Mr. E. J. Powell (who served from 1984 to 1989), that Article 15 of the Articles of Association be amended by adding the following,

“The Company may purchase out of its reserve funds any shares of a member of the Company, but the shares so purchased and not sold or disposed of shall not at any times exceed one-twentieth part of the paid-up Capital of the Company. Any shares purchased by the Company shall not be deemed to be cancelled nor to be a reduction of Capital but may be sold or disposed of by the Company in accordance with the provisions of its articles.”

“The Company may by letter addressed to the last known address of an inactive Shareholder, advise that Shareholder of the Company’s intention to repurchase his shares at a price not exceeding the paid-up value of those shares and not less than 80% of the paid-up value of the Share. The shareholder shall forthwith surrender his share certificates in exchange for the payment of amount offered by the Company.”

“If the shareholder does not surrender his share certificates within a period of 21 days as required by this Article, then the Company may dispatch a cheque to the shareholder at his last known address in full payment for the shares and if such a shareholder having become bound as aforesaid makes default in transferring his shares, the Secretary of the Company shall sign the necessary instrument of transfer of the said shares as attorney for an on behalf of such shareholder and the said instrument of transfer shall be registered in the register of shareholders. In this Article an inactive shareholder is a shareholder in the Company who has not bought goods from the Company within the period of three (3) years immediately preceding the proposed purchase of that Shareholder’s shares in the Company” (QFCC, 1989, pp. 63-64).

This motion was seconded by another QFCC director Mr. C. V. Hayes (who served from 1977 to 1990). However, it received opposition in the form of a letter from Mr. J. M. McRae, which was read at the meeting, plus Mr. T. E. Richards, and Mrs Treloar, who both spoke against the motion. However, the Manager, Bob Phillips spoke in favour of the motion, and the Chair, Mr. G. C. McRae, explained that the motion was designed to bring the Articles of Association of the QFCC into alignment with The Co-operative Federation of WA and would not be enforced in the near future. The motion was put to a vote and carried (QFCC, 1989).

MANAGING THE CO-OPERATIVE’S OPERATIONS

For most of the decade the everyday management of the Co-operative was left to the Manager Charles Lindorff, the Secretary Edgar Zalaskalns, and their staff. The general oversight was done by the Chair, at first by Peter Wills, and then by Gordon McRae. Board meetings took place on a monthly basis, but special meetings would be held as required. While the details of these meetings were often routine a few notable highlights can be mentioned, and which will provide some

insight into these board meetings. For example, at the board meeting held on 21 October 1980 Mr. Wills was reappointed as Chair, with Mr. McRae as Vice Chair. Also discussed were a planned visit to the Cunderdin Co-operative, a supply shortage of toys, the installation of seats at the front entrance of the newly renovated store, and more advertising of the Hardware needing to be undertaken (QFCC, 1980b).

The following year, at the board meeting held on 20 October 1981 the key issues discussed were the connection of a telephone to the Hardware manager's residence, and two of the issues from the AGM. The first was the request for the Co-operative to provide a respirator for hire, which was dismissed. The second, was a complaint over what was considered the excessive mark-up on the price of machinery parts that had been in stock for over twelve months. Other issues discussed were the need to dust the Hardware store shelves, the use of the Baker's spare time delivering goods in order to enhance the productivity of the Bakery, and the need for training of newly appointed shop assistants to give more attention to customers (QFCC, 1981b).

The Grocery department's conversion to cash sales only was also discussed and considered undesirable, and concern was raised over the decline in business within the garage. This led to a decision to speak to the garage manager Alan Wittorff at the next board meeting. Finally, the board decided that the spare parts division should remain open during the lunch hour and open on Saturday mornings (QFCC, 1981b).

At the following board meeting held on 17 November 1981 the garage manager Alan Wittorff attended and spoke with the directors about the status of the garage. The record of the meeting read as follows:

"The Chairman welcomed Alan Wittorff to the meeting, adding that it was a new innovation arising from the depressed attitude of staff and management at the garage. Short supply of parts was discussed at length. A. Wittorff stated that even with a bigger range of marketing products offered he felt that the 1,527 individual and 5,260 various items stocked was an adequate supply. By shifting Greg Robinson to lube and Karen Mann assisting with parts and warranty work the staff situation had improved considerably."

"The discussion continued on problems of replacing parts sold. Service staffs' attitude and back up service on new vehicles had been unsatisfactory at times to some customers. It was stressed that good before and after sales service is essential to maintain new vehicle and machinery sales. To satisfy customer requirements it was resolved to advertise in the newsletter, that the parts department will stay open during the lunch hour and Saturday mornings, May and June, and from mid-November to mid-January. The Chairman thanked Alan Wittorff for the information given and stressed that liaison between the sales staff and garage staff is essential" (QFCC, 1981c, p. 23).

DEALING WITH THE QUAIRADING CO-OPERATIVE BAKERY

The Bakery was another area of the business that took up a lot of the board's time. As discussed in Chapter 7, during the 1950s the QFCC was a co-owner of the BDQ Bakery, which was physically located in Dangan. However, after the winding-up of the Dangan and South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd. (DSCCS), the operation of a Bakery was relocated to Quairading. However, it seems that the Bakery was somewhat problematic as a business. For example, at the board meeting held

on 20 October 1981 the operating costs of the Bakery was discussed, with the suggestion that the Baker's spare time should be spent delivering goods (QFCC, 1981b). A more positive note was struck at the board meeting held on 17 November 1981, where it was reported that while the Bakery's bread sales had declined by 1,946 loaves compared with the same time in 1980, the revenue had increased by \$2,500 (approx. \$12,017 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1981b).

During the 1983 AGM questions were raised about the declining turnover of the Bakery, to which the QFCC Manager, Charles Lindorff, explained that the population within the district was declining (QFCC, 1983). This statement reflected a wider issue facing the Co-operative, which was the steady decline of both farmers and farm workers, across the WA Wheatbelt during the 1980s due to the increasing retirement of farmers, and the consolidation of smaller farms into bigger properties, operating larger machinery, and focusing more on continuous broadacre cropping than mixed grazing and cropping (Menck, 2022).

At the board meeting held on 15 December 1987 the directors discussed the feasibility of maintaining the Bakery, which had been experiencing declining sales. The discussion reviewed the Bakery's equipment and the bread baking process and was followed with a direct interview with the Baker who attended the meeting (QFCC, 1987f). This discussion continued at the next board meeting held on 12 January 1988. At that meeting the Manager, Mr. R. L. Phillips delivered a report of an interview that he had had with a Master Baker Mr. H. Van der Sluis, who was being considered as a replacement for the existing Baker, Mr. Robert Fairhead (QFCC, 1988a).

Following a lengthy discussion, it was decided that Mr. H. Van der Sluis would be appointed as the Master Baker, to replace Mr. Fairhead, and that the son of Mr. Van der Sluis should be taken on as an apprentice baker. The Manager, Mr. Phillips was tasked with advising Mr. Fairhead that his employment would be terminated (QFCC, 1988a). By 16 February 1988, the board was notified by Mr. Phillips that Mr. Van der Sluis Snr. was now fully engaged in operating the Bakery (QFCC, 1988b). In March that same year he was interviewed, and the board undertook an inspection of the Bakery (QFCC, 1988c).

However, at the board meeting held on 19 April 1988, it was reported that the Bakery was showing an operating loss of \$12,000 (approx. \$33,432 in 2024 dollars). It was resolved that the QFCC Manager, Mr. Phillips would assume control over the Bakery, including the pricing of the products, and expenditure on any capital equipment required (QFCC, 1988d). Not long thereafter the board required the Bakery be subject to a physical stocktake every second month so that regular financial reports could be provided to the directors to monitor its progress (QFCC, 1988e).

Despite this effort, by 19 July, the board was receiving reports that the Bakery had shown a loss over two months of \$7,954 (approx. \$22,160 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1988f). At the same board meeting, the inspection of the Bakery and its operations were discussed, with the board making the decision to terminate Mr. Van der Sluis as Baker, and replace him with Mr. Daryl Kaeding (QFCC, 1988g).



At a special meeting of the board held on 22 July 1988, Mr. Kaeding was interviewed for the position of baker (QFCC, 1988h). The account of the interview reads as follows,

“The Chairman opened the Meeting and introduced Daryl Kaeding who was interviewed by all present. Mr. Kaeding said that if engaged as Baker, he would accept an annual salary of \$32,000 reviewed at the end of twelve months service, superannuation after the qualifying period, rent at present \$18 per week, he also would improve the presentation and reorganise the Bakehouse by rearranging the placement of machinery and shelving, and would make his own pastry and a greater variety of small goods, bread baking, using premix, which would be a simple procedure.”

“To produce 500 loaves a day he would be prepared to work up to 12 hours a day. An apprentice would be a help in reducing his hours by half, leaving more time for pastry cooking. Products would be ready for delivery by 5:30am. His wife would help with the pastry cooking and is included in his salary. To improve efficiency, capital expenditure of up to \$3,000 would be required to purchase dough, broker and pie tins, rolling pin etc.”

“An apprentice would be working a 38-hour week, a physical stock-take every two months, with a record of deliveries kept by the Baker and finalised on the last day of the month. Purchases would be done by the Baker, capital expenditure to be authorised by the Board. Confidentiality to be observed” (QFCC, 1988h, p. 52).

The board discussed the interview with Mr. Kaeding, and the “indifferent” reaction that the incumbent Baker, Mr. Van der Sluis gave to the unfavourable report emerging from the Board’s inspection of the Bakery, and the short fall in the promised production of a variety of baked goods, it was decided to terminate Mr. Van der Sluis’s employment and employ Mr. Kaeding (QFCC, 1988h).

By 16 August 1988 Mr. Kaeding, was in the Bakery, with a report from the Health Inspector about the Bakery submitted to the Board (QFCC, 1988i). However, by 20 September the Board was hearing from the Manager of Finance, Mr. E. Zalaikalns, that the Bakery had made a loss of \$16,884 (approx. \$47,039 in 2024 dollars) for the preceding four months. Letters had also been received from the Shire, relating to repairs needed to the Bakery, and a complaint over noise from the Bakery. In addition, retention of Mr. Van der Sluis’s son as an apprentice was not supported by Mr. Kaeding as the principal baker (QFCC, 1988j).

In the General Business section of the QFCC AGM held on 23 September 1988, questions were asked about the status of the Bakery. The Chair, Mr. McRae responded that there was a change of Baker, and that two apprentices had been appointed. He noted that bread deliveries were being made to other towns in the district, but overall, the Bakery was operating at a loss. (1988k).

It was reported at the board meeting held on 22 November 1988 that the Bakery was still making a loss of \$28,940 (approx. \$80,628 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1988l; 1988m). This continuing loss, despite the appointment of a new Baker with two apprentices, led to the Bakery being closed by the end of June 1989 (QFCC, 1989).

SUMMING UP THE QFCC IN THE 1980S

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the decade of the 1980s was a period of significant change for the Western Australian economy. It saw the expansion of the mining and resources sector, and the emergence of a significant amount of urban renewal and rejuvenation. The America's Cup helped to transform the City of Fremantle, building of the Burswood Casino, development of Northbridge, and the reintroduction of suburban rail transport all played a significant role. In the case of the railway system, the 1980s saw the electrification of suburban railway lines and the reopening of the Perth to Fremantle line, and the steady expansion of the rail system throughout the decade (CFP, 2011).

Within the district of Quairading, like many other areas across the Wheatbelt, the 1980s was both a period of population decline, and of agricultural expansion. The emergence of larger farms, with larger farm machinery, reduced the need for a rural workforce, and saw many farmers retire and sell out to those seeking to remain on the land and expand their holdings. Total grain production across the Wheatbelt increased from 35.5 million tonnes throughout the 1970s, to 53.9 million tonnes during the 1980s (CBH, 1984, 1999, 2020).

For the QFCC, the 1980s was a period of growth, with rising annual sales turnover. While the average annual turnover in the 1970s was \$8.39 million (in 2023 dollars), during the 1980s it rose to \$12.16 million (in 2023 dollars). However, net profit over the same period declined from an average of \$464,206 (in 2023 dollars) in the 1970s, to \$293,439 (in 2023 dollars) in the 1980s. For the shareholders, dividends continued to be declared at a rate of 6 per cent on paid-up shares, and cash rebates were paid on store and agency trading for all but two years of the decade. A total of more than \$2 million (in 2023 dollars) was paid back to the shareholders as a reward for their loyalty to the Co-operative.

It was also a period of managerial transition, with the retirement of Charles Lindorff, and his replacement by two managers in the form of Mr. Robert "Bob" Leslie Phillips as store manager, and Mr. Edgar Zalaikalns as finance manager. This unusual management structure was to last from 1987 to 1990 when Mr. Phillips as Managing Secretary assumed both the roles. The decision to appoint two managers was taken at a Special Board Meeting held on 3 August 1987, with Mr. Phillips appointed Manager Shop and Mr. Zalaikalns, then Secretary and Accountant, appointed as Manager Finance, with both on identical salaries (QFCC, 1987b).

There is no detailed explanation within either the board or AGM meeting minutes to explain why the board felt it was necessary to adopt this management structure. However, by 1987 the Co-operative was a successful and diversified business with a significant one-stop-shop offering to the community across the district of Quairading.

It is recorded that the duties and responsibilities of the two manager roles were discussed at a further Special Board Meeting held on 12 August 1987. That meeting outlined their respective duties and responsibilities. Mr. Phillips, as the "Manager Shop", was to commence his appointment from 1 November 1987, while Mr. Zalaikalns, as "Manager Finance" was to commence his role on the same day.



The specific duties of Mr. Zalauskalns were outlined as follows,

“The requirements of the position as, ‘Manager Finance’, it was decided:

- A) The balance of the Company’s cash be the responsibility of both managers.*
- B) Stock control be the responsibility of the Manager Shop.*
- C) Salary increases for both managers to be subject to rises in the shop assistants award.*
- D) Office staff to be under the control of Manager Finance.*
- E) Yearly expense payments (paid quarterly) remain at \$500 for Manager Finance and \$1,250 for Manager Shop.*
- F) Duties of both managers to be worked out between the present Manager and the two newly appointed managers” (QFCC, 1987c, p. 35).*

This arrangement left a good deal of ambiguity between the roles of the two joint managers. For example, by 17 May 1988 at a board meeting, it was resolved that both Mr. Phillips and Mr. Zalauskalns would have the power to sign documents both jointly and separately (QFCC, 1988e). However, the efficacy of this dual manager model would be put to the test in 1990s.



CHAPTER 11: NAVIGATING GLOBALISATION, 1990-1999

The decade of the 1990s has been referred to as the ‘decade of globalisation’. This epitaph is based on the 1990s being the era in which the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 led to the end of the Cold War (1990-1991), the rise of mobile telephony and the rapid expansion of the internet. This helped to make the world more interconnected. It was also a period in which the former Soviet Bloc nations in Eastern Europe become integrated with their western counterparts, and East and West Germany were reunified (1990). Global trade increased significantly and the emergence of the European Union (EU), and the ease of communication, travel, in cross-border investment stimulated globalisation (Huwart & Verdier, 2013).

However, it was also a decade that started with a severe economic recession during 1990-1991. This impacted the United States and spread across the world to also impacted Australia. Its origins were caused by numerous factors, which included the end of the Cold War and the associated decline in defence spending. In addition, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which was followed by the US-led intervention during 1991, triggered a major spike in oil prices leading to rising inflation. The US Federal Reserve responded with a tightening of monetary policy, which caused rising unemployment and numerous failures within banks and credit unions (Walsh, 1993).

Unemployment in the United States was not as severe during the 1990-1991 recession as in it was in earlier economic downturns. However, it was mainly structural in nature, and led to long-term unemployment for many workers, particularly those in ‘blue collar’ occupations (Gardner, 1994). In Australia, unemployment rose to 11 per cent during the early 1990s and did not fall to 5 per cent until 2005 (Wilson et al., 2004). Within WA the 1990s was a period of strong growth in viticulture and wine making, with new wine producing regions opening up alongside blue gum tree farm plantations within the southwest. During the decade, global wool prices fell, which resulted in many farmers across the Wheatbelt abandoning pastoralism in favour of grain production. Others exchanged sheep for cattle in suitable areas (Menck, 2022).

Within the mining sector iron ore prices rose strongly on the back of demand from China. This helped WA’s economy grow and further developed the Pilbara region with a significant increase of 40 per cent in the population there. This helped WA become the world’s largest iron ore producing region by the end of the decade. However, in the manufacturing sector the 1990s was a decade of decline, with the closure of the Midland Railway Workshops in 1994, the BHP steel rolling plant at Kwinana in 1995, and the Albany Woolen Mills in 1996 (Menck, 2022). In summing up the 1990s, Menck (2022) states,

“Western Australia became part of global culture, economy and social movements. Environmental concern became global and alarm at human-induced climate change rose. Fear of global terrorism influenced politics, popular culture and an increasing suspicion of outsiders. Cheap air travel facilitated greater overseas travel, encouraged by the internet, and also brought more touring arts and culture to the State” (Menck, 2022, p. 111).

Within this globalisation context the QFCC navigated its way through the 1990s facing both new challenges and opportunities.

**FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND DISTRIBUTIONS, 1990S**

The decade of the 1990s was a challenging period for the QFCC. As shown in Table 8, the company continued issuing fully franked dividends of 6 per cent on paid-up capital from 1990 to 1993, but unlike previous decades, it did not concurrently reward patronage via cash rebates, debentures paying a 4 per cent interest, or bonus shares. During the years 1994 to 1996 the Co-operative issued unfranked dividends, thereby passing the tax liability to the shareholders, and for the final two years lowered the dividend to 3 per cent. For the last three years (e.g., 1997 to 1999) the board made the decision not issue any dividends, reflecting the financial challenges facing the QFCC at this time.

Table 8: Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Financial Distributions 1990-1999

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1990	Fully franked dividend of 6% was paid on paid-up-capital absorbing \$1,541.28 (approx. \$3,720 in 2024 dollars).
1991	Fully franked dividend of 6% was paid on paid-up-capital absorbing \$6,866.40 (approx. \$16,064 in 2024 dollars).
1992	Fully franked dividend of 6% was paid on paid-up-capital absorbing \$6,900 (approx. \$15,981 in 2024 dollars).
1993	Fully franked dividend of 6% was paid on paid-up-capital.
1994	Unfranked dividend of 6% was paid on paid-up-capital.
1995	Unfranked dividend of 3% was paid on paid-up-capital.
1996	Unfranked dividend of 3% was paid on paid-up-capital.
1997	No dividend issued.
1998	No dividend issued.
1999	No dividend issued.

Sources: QFCC Annual Reports (1990 to 1999).

This problematic financial performance began to emerge as early as 1990. For example, at the board meeting held on 19 June 1990, Bob Phillips, who by that time was both the General Manager and Company Secretary at the QFCC, reported that sales for the month of April were down in comparison with the previous year by \$73,472 (approx. \$177,349 in 2024 dollars). He also reported that the Hardware business was showing signs of the economic downturn then impacting the industry. In addition, he estimated that stocks were up by \$8,176 (approx. \$19,735 in 2024 dollars), debtors for the month were \$885,069 (approx. \$2,136,413 in 2024 dollars), and the cash at bank was \$100,848 (approx. \$243,431 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1990b).



Concerns about the financial status of the Co-operative emerged during the AGM held at the Quairading Community Centre on 21 September 1990, which saw a total of eighty shareholders present. This large turnout by the shareholders probably reflects the concerns they held about the Co-operative. During general business, Mr. V. F. O'Shea moved a motion calling for the appointment of a fully qualified Accountant to be appointed "forthwith", which was seconded by Mrs. Val Hayes, and spoken in support of by Mr. C. V. Hayes, who was a QFCC director from 1977 to 1990. Responding to the motion, the Chair, Mr. Peter Stacey advised the meeting that any such motion could only be viewed as a recommendation to the board. Others spoke in favour of the motion, although the discussion became focused on Bob Phillips, as the Manager, with suggestions that he was either overworked and under strain, or in need of having a second person to,

"Check the honesty of the Manager" (QFCC, 1990c, p. 258).

As noted above, during the period 1990-1993, Bob Phillips held the positions of General Manager and Secretary, a legacy of the unsuccessful dual manager model that existed from 1987 to 1990, increasing his authority and workload. The general business session ended with a statement from Mr. Roy Carter who advised the board that,

"Many shareholders were concerned in relation to the Co-operative business" (QFCC, 1990c, p.259).

At the board meeting held on 19 February 1991, Bob Phillips, in his manager's report, explained that compared with the previous year, sales for the month of December 1990 were down by \$1,923 (approx. \$4,499 in 2024 dollars), stock was down by \$86,963 (approx. \$203,452 in 2024 dollars), but there was cash at bank of \$34,692 (approx. \$81,163 in 2024 dollars). He stated that the financial results showed that by the end of January 1991, the Co-operative would have generated an operating loss of \$124,177 (approx. \$290,514 in 2024 dollars), which following the contribution of abnormal profits estimated to be \$74,810 (approx. \$175,019 in 2024 dollars) would result in a loss of \$49,367 (approx. \$115,495 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1991a).

On 28 February 1991, the board met with Mr. Greg Wyllie, an Auditor, who had reviewed the financial status of the Co-operative. In his report he noted that despite the need for a few minor adjustments, the bookkeeping undertaken within the company was fine. He stated that the key to getting reliable financial data for management of the QFCC it was necessary to complete good and timely stocktakes. He also made it clear that debtor control (e.g., recovery of monies owed to the business) needed to be strictly controlled. In essence, the two priority areas were stock control (inventory turnover) and debtor control (cashflow) (QFCC, 1991b).

The priority was maintaining liquidity (e.g., available cash) of the business, because at that time the QFCC was unable to pay its creditors (e.g., suppliers and others owed money) within a 30-day payment cycle. In order to gain control over this, there must be reliable and timely monthly sales data, disciplined restocking, and stronger debtor control. When asked about the impact of the revaluation of housing and other assets owned by the Co-operative, Mr. Wyllie explained that the revaluation of assets was not the key issue, of importance was the availability of cash, not asset value (QFCC, 1991b).

Mr. Wyllie also recommended that the Co-operative set a budget based on conservative sales figures plus stock and expenses figures compared to actual figures. He also noted that the setting up of a computer to manage the financials was going well, and that bank cheques would soon be managed via the computer (QFCC, 1991b).

The problem of falling sales and stocks continued into 1991, and this was reported at the board meeting held on 19 March of that year, leaving \$58,909 (approx. \$137,819 in 2024 dollars) cash at bank (QFCC, 1991c). In delivering his report, Bob Phillips is recorded as making the following comments,

“The Manager advised the Board that the downturn in Australia’s economy is now affecting our immediate area and that all expenses had to be cut and monitored more stringently. It was now evident that the high number of staff may have to be reduced to curb inflation of expenses” (QFCC, 1991c, p. 270).

During the meeting Mr. Phillips also made the point that he had previously discussed the issue of staff terminations with the board. He stated that the management of the Co-operative had no alternative but to reduce the expenses, and that reducing the staff who were surplus to requirements was essential. He also pointed out that that he would be considering these layoffs as he prepared the 1991-1992 budget (QFCC, 1991c).

The financial difficulties facing the Co-operative appear to have triggered some leaking from the board. This was met by Peter Stacey, in his role as Chair, who spoke to the board about a lack of security being shown by the directors within the boardroom. He impressed upon the board the need to show absolute integrity at all times and pointed to their responsibilities under the Articles of Association as directors to do so. Stating in conclusion,

“A lack of security is the foundation for Shareholders and Non-Shareholders to share a lack of support in the Management and Staff of our Co-operative” (QFCC, 1991c, p. 272).

Although the context in which this statement was made is unclear, it seems to be related to leaking or commentary by some directors outside the boardroom about the state of the Co-operative from both a financial and managerial perspective. It would become a significant issue in relation to the future of Bob Phillips as General Manager and Secretary.

By the time of the next board meeting held on 16 April 1991, the financial situation had not improved. Both sales and stock were significantly down, and the cash at bank was \$44,412 (approx. \$103,903 in 2024 dollars). Bob Phillips, in delivering his report, again stated that these financials were the result of the economic downturn facing the industry, and that staff reductions and cuts in expenditure was becoming essential and this applied to all staff (QFCC, 1991c).

At the board meeting held on 21 May 1991, Bob Phillips again reported that sales were down compared to the year ended March 1990. However, gross profit was up at \$770,493 (approx. \$1,802,583 in 2024 dollars) allowing the Co-operative to pay shareholders a dividend, and that a sum of \$67,690 (approx. \$158,362 in 2024 dollars) had been put aside for this purpose. However, there was still \$461,966 (approx. \$1,080,778 in 2024 dollars) in outstanding debtors, with cash at bank of only \$22,624 (approx. \$52,929 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1991d).



During the meeting there was a claim that a sum of \$9,000 (approx. \$21,056 in 2024 dollars) to be paid to AGC Finance to cover the cost of the company owned car leased to Mr. Phillips. Although this was agreed, it appears to have triggered a reaction from Bob Phillips, as he is reported to have reacted in relation to this matter as follows,

“Mr. Phillips explained at length the need for professionalism and loyalty from Directors for all staff. In this time of emotional views antagonism is being presented to all, it’s not the right approach” (QFCC, 1991d, p. 275).

His statement to the board prompted a motion, moved by Mr. G. C. McRae, and seconded by Mr. P. C. Langsford, and carried on vote, that the Co-operative should clear the manager’s car account (QFCC, 1991d).

Reports to board meetings that followed on 18 June, 25 July, 20 August, 17 September and 17 December of 1991 continued to show declining sales, fluctuating stock, and declining cash at bank for the QFCC. From June 1990 to December 1991, the Co-operative experienced a sales decline of \$174,224 over 18 months (approx. \$407,600 in 2024 dollars), and an average decline in stock of \$6,582 (approx. \$15,399 in 2024 dollars). Cash at bank had declined from \$100,848 (approx. \$235,936 in 2024 dollars) in June 1990 to \$21,852 (approx. \$51,123 in 2024 dollars) by December 1991 (QFCC, 1991e, f, g, h, i).

This financial malaise impacting the Co-operative was a background against which the reputation of Bob Phillips as the combined General Manager and Secretary was assessed. The specific details relating to the termination of employment of Mr. Phillips in 1993 is described in the following section. It is unclear how much the financial status of the Co-operative impacted the decision to replace Bob Phillips. However, it is unlikely that it was irrelevant to the decision.

At the AGM of the QFCC held on 23 September 1994, it was observed by a shareholder Mr. L. Strickland, that the annual turnover for the 1993/1994 period was high, but that the profitability of the Co-operative was the lowest it had been since 1982 (QFCC, 1994a). In response to his question, the Chair, Peter Stacey responded that,

“When looking at the figures in the Progress Report, note should be made that prior to 1992 turnover figures were only shown for the store trading whilst profit figures are for the whole company. The 1994 net profit is very good at \$119,309, considering how the rural sector is trading. Profit levels that were achievable in the 1980s are not available in the 1990s as most farmers will be aware. This is one of the reasons why we are expanding into other areas” (QFCC, 1994a, p. 38),

This response from Peter Stacey reflects the decision, taken by the board of the QFCC at that time, to expand outside the Quairading district, specifically Kellerberrin, Corrigin, and Merredin, in order to increase the volume of sales it was able to generate. These decisions are discussed in later sections of this chapter. By 8 October 1996, during the board meeting held on that date, with Charles William “Bill” Wallwork in the Chair, the QFCC directors had brought in a consultant, Jeff Freeman, to assist with the development of a business plan designed to help turnaround the fortunes of the Co-operative (QFCC, 1996a).

In his report to the board, Mr. Freeman made three specific recommendations. First, it was critical that the Co-operative identified divisions within the company structure that were not profitable and act immediately to correct them. Second, that the company increase its working capital by issuing a new tranche of shares. Third, it was essential that the Co-operative secure short-term funding to solve its immediate cash flow problem. It was decided that the Co-operative needed to,

“... get back to our core business and attend to the need of the Local Community” (QFCC, 1996a, p. 49).

The emphasis for the QFCC board as a result of Mr. Freeman’s business plan, was to raise capital and draw up a budget and cashflow forecast for the next twelve months. Discussions would need to take place with the bank to secure short term credit. A set of procedures manuals were to be written for all departments within the Co-operative and distributed to all staff. Further, a sub-committee consisting of one or two directors was to be formed to work with the Manager (who at that stage was Mr. Barry R. Kirk) across all areas of the business (QFCC, 1996a).

At the AGM held on 19 September 1997, during general business, a shareholder, Mr. E. Powell, asked what the board expected the financial status of the Co-operative would be in the next financial year? The Vice Chair, Mr. I. R. Banfield, responded that provided the problem areas within the business could be dealt with, it was anticipated that the company could achieve breakeven. This was followed by a request from Mr. R. Lamplugh for the financial reports to be issued with specific break downs of sales and profit from the various departments and the investments being made into each. In response, the Manager, Barry Kirk, stated that the 1998 financial year report would contain graphs and more information (QFCC, 1997a).

During the AGM held on 18 September 1998, with Bill Wallwork in the Chair, the directors, Managing Secretary Barry Kirk, and forty-three shareholders, the new financial reporting was discussed. Among the numerous questions asked, Mr. J. Haythornthwaite raise the issue of the debt levels showing in the balance sheet and whether they would be reduced. The Vice Chair, Mr. Banfield responded by saying that assets within the company had been significantly increased and that liabilities had been contained and lowered (QFCC, 1998a).

At the final AGM for the decade, held on 17 September 1999, with Bill Wallwork in the Chair, plus the directors, the new General Manager Mr. Gary Duperouzel, and thirty-two shareholders, the financial crisis facing the Co-operative seems to have abated. Following the delivery of the financial report there were no questions (QFCC, 1999a).

Despite the optimism of the board the outlook for the QFCC as it entered a new millennium was one of downsizing, strategic readjustment, further changes of management, and financial belt tightening. After eight decades of successful trading, business growth, and generous distributions of dividends, rebates and bonus debentures, the Co-operative was now experiencing the need for austerity. How much of the responsibility for this can be placed on the QFCC management and board, and how much was the work of the changes taking place within the local community, in particular the farming community, of the Quairading district, is difficult to ascertain. However, the 1990s was a turbulent period for management within the Co-operative as will be examined in the following sections.

MANAGERIAL AND FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

As discussed in Chapter 10, the decision taken by the QFCC board in 1987 to replace Charles Lindorff as General Manager with a management team comprising Robert “Bob” Phillips as Manager Store, and Edgar Zalaikalns as Manager Finance, created an unusual management structure. However, it appears to have proven both cumbersome and unsustainable, coming to an end in 1990.

At a Special Meeting of Directors held on 2 February 1990, the Chair, Peter W. Stacey led the discussion that focused on the need to resolve the problems of having dual managers. The unusual arrangement of having Bob Phillips as “Manager Store” and Edgar Zalaikalns as “Manager Finance” was found to be unworkable. Mr. Stacey, opened the meeting by declaring that the reason for it having been called was,

“A lack of cooperation between the managers of the company in pursuit of their duty” (QFCC, 1990a).

After significant discussion, it was decided that a “General Manager” of the Co-operative would be appointed, along with a “General Secretary”. Bob Phillips was appointed as General Manager, and Edgar Zalaikalns as General Secretary. All employees were to come under the control of the General Manager. By contrast, the duties of the General Secretary were to revert to those that Mr. Zalaikalns had held prior to the 1987 decision to create the dual management arrangement (QFCC, 1990a). The two managers were invited into the boardroom and were informed of the board’s decision. Mr. Phillips accepted his role. However, Mr. Zalaikalns requested time to consider his appointment. Mr. Stacey asked Mr. Zalaikalns to make his decision known by the next board meeting scheduled for later in the month (QFCC, 1990a). Although the minutes of that meeting could not be found, it seems that Mr. Zalaikalns decided not to accept the board’s new management arrangements. Consequently, the positions of Manager and Secretary were held concurrently by Mr. Phillips from 1990 to 1993.

The reason Mr. Zalaikalns did not accept the new arrangement remains unclear, although it is likely that he saw it as a demotion. There is a record of QFCC shares owned by Mr. Zalaikalns being repurchased by the Co-operative in November 1991 (QFCC, 1991j), which suggests that he left the district. This decision left Mr. Phillips with the responsibility of Managing Secretary at a time when the Co-operative was experiencing some significant financial challenges.

Stock control became an issue of concern for the board. For example, at the board meeting held on 19 June 1990, Mr. C. V. Hayes (who served on the board from 1977-1990) raised questions about the distribution of fuel from the Caltex depot operated by the QFCC, and Mr. Phillips called in the Hardware store manager, Mr. Bradely Chatfield, who was responsible for the fuel depot, to answer questions. Following detailed questioning the board requested a close monitoring of the Hardware department (QFCC, 1990b).

The 1990 AGM of the QFCC was held in the Quairading Community Centre on 21 September. It was chaired by Peter Stacey, who was joined by the board, Managing Secretary Bob Phillips, and eighty shareholders. As outlined in the previous section, the financial situation facing the QFCC was causing concern to the shareholders. This might explain the unusually large shareholder

attendance. During the general business section of the meeting Mrs. P. Wells asked if there was any provision to appoint a person to take over from Mr. Phillips if he became ill or took leave. In response to her question, Peter Stacey stated that it was a very good question that would be noted for future action (QFCC, 1990c). Further questions and comments came from the shareholders, which were both for and against Mr. Phillips in relation to his role as Managing Secretary (QFCC, 1990c).

This public discussion by shareholders at the AGM, demonstrating divided opinions about Bob Phillips, prompted further considerations by the board regarding Mr. Phillips. On 2 November 1990, a Special Meeting of Directors discussed Mr. Phillips' employment contract. Changes allowed him to be a director at any QFCC-approved company with no extra pay from the Co-operative, extended wage reviews from six to twelve months, and increased his salary to \$45,000 (approx. \$108,623 in 2024) (QFCC, 1990d). The reasons for these amendments are unclear.

By 19 February 1991, facing mounting financial issues, the Co-operative's board discussed "Manager's Responsibilities." At the meeting Mr. Phillips stated that he would personally oversee store administration, staff, and stock control. He also offered, contrary to his employment contract, to reduce his salary by \$5,000 and to forego pay increases for a period of time (QFCC, 1991a). Bob Phillips' decision to reduce his salary is not clarified in historical records. It likely indicates he aimed to show his commitment to cost-cutting amid QFCC's financial challenges.

On 17 September 1991, during a QFCC board meeting, directors Mr. D. C. Richards and Mr. P. C. Langsford raised questions about Mr. Phillips and his private dealings with the Quairading post office which they felt could represent an undisclosed conflict of interest with his QFCC duties. However, after Mr. Phillips explained the matter, providing evidence, the board agreed that all was in order and that it had support for the Manager (QFCC, 1991h). At the AGM on 20 September 1991, Mr. Phillips proposed amending the Articles of Association to issue new shares and strengthen the company's equity base. During this meeting, some questions were raised by the shareholders about the way that Mr. Phillips was running the business (QFCC, 1991k). Mr. Phillips who was present during these meetings could not have been unaffected by such comments.

It seems that a level of mistrust had emerged between Mr. Phillips and some of the directors, who were reporting comments put them by shareholders. At the board meetings held on 5 November and 12 December 1991, questions were raised about the Manager's contract of employment, which was met with evidence by two directors who had received advice from solicitors in Perth, to be valid. This led Mr. Phillips to defend himself against what he described as a "personal attack", and a questioning of his integrity. He declared that he would not resign and requested that the board either support him or dismiss him (QFCC, 1991j; 1991m).

A Special Shareholders' Meeting was held on 20 December 1991 to hear a report by Mr. Trevor Gorey, an Independent Chartered Accountant, who had reviewed the Co-operative's financial situation. This was part of a strategy to increase the size of the authorised capital base of the QFCC in order to enable it to improve its financial sustainability. Mr. Gorey reported that the QFCC was financially sound, well-managed, and governed by a prudent board. However, the balance sheet did not show the true net worth due to some investments and buildings needing revaluation.

Additionally, the annual reports required alignment with the Companies legislation (QFCC, 1991k).

The Special Shareholders' Meeting attracted ninety shareholders and Mr. Gorey's report evoked a substantial discussion. This included comments about a lack of planning by the QFCC's board and management over previous years, and whether the financial report issued at the 1991 AGM had correctly valued the stock. Trevor Gorey responded that the most important thing to focus on was profitability, and the return generated from every square metre of the available floor space in the store. He also stated that Mr. Phillips welcomed this input and that he felt the QFCC had the ability to generate sufficient working capital internally (e.g., not requiring further debt) (QFCC, 1991k).

Questions and comments from the shareholders continued, with concerns raised about whether the store was carrying too much excess stock, while others claimed that stock levels were lower than they had previously been. This led to other shareholders calling for an end to "back biting and bitching" by a minority, and instead to focus on supporting the Co-operative. Despite these calls, one shareholder continued to ask Mr. Phillips pejorative questions, leading Peter Stacey, as Chair, to rule the question out of order, and state that any further questioning of the Manager was not appropriate. Despite this ruling by the Chair, further questions and comments about Mr. Phillips continued, some of which were asked of Mr. Gorey, but clearly directed at the Manager (QFCC, 1991k). After the altercation, the meeting ended without resolving the issue. The hostility towards Bob Phillips as General Manager from some shareholders did not help. This occurred alongside plans to increase the company's share capital to address working capital shortages, impacting the necessary financial commitment for recapitalisation. Bob Phillips' managerial issues persisted into 1992 (QFCC, 1992).

By March 1993 the pressure on Mr. Phillips appears to have reached tipping point. On 26 March 1993 an altercation between the Manager and staff of the Co-operative occurred that involved an investigation by the Chair, Bill Wallwork and Vice Chair, Mr. I. R. Banfield. At an informal special meeting of directors held on 31 March 1993, Mr. Phillips met with the board and the matter was discussed and he admitted his behaviour was inappropriate for a manager (QFCC, 1993a). This led to the termination of his employment at the following board meeting held on 1 April 1993 (QFCC, 1993b). The career of Bob Phillips as Managing Secretary continues to evoke discussion amongst some of the former directors of the QFCC. He faced significant pressure from financial difficulties and his dual roles as Manager and Secretary. Many spoke positively of him, others did not, few recognised the challenges he managed during one of QFCC's most difficult periods.

AMENDMENTS TO THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

A major area of focus for the QFCC board during the 1990s was the need to change the Articles of Association of the company to allow the level of authorised capital to be increased in order to provide the Co-operative with sufficient working capital. At the board meeting held on 20 August 1991, the external auditor Mr. Greg Wyllie from Munro & Whyllie, explained to the board the need to amend the Articles of Association to allow for the authorised capital to be increased from \$130,000 (approx. \$304,137 in 2024 dollars) to \$500,000 (approx. \$1,169,759 in 2024 dollars).

This generated a Special Resolution for the amendments, which Mr. Wyllie helped the board to draft (QFCC, 1991g).

At the AGM held on 20 September 1991 the proposed changes to the Articles of Association were proposed and discussed. This evoked a significant discussion, with Mr. Wyllie present, showing that many shareholders were not familiar with the financial structure of the Co-operative. Mr. Wyllie fielded numerous questions, explaining what a balance sheet was, and what was meant by “general reserves” and “authorised capital”. He also explained that for shareholders, such as farmers, any purchase of shares to help the recapitalisation of the Co-operative could have tax benefits as they would be deductions. However, rebates on purchases at the store might be taxable. The intricacies of how a Co-operative’s share capital is dealt with by the Australian Taxation Office also took up part of the discussion. This part of the meeting ended with the Special Resolution being put but not voted on by the shareholders. Instead, it was agreed that these amendments would be tabled for the next AGM scheduled for 1992 (QFCC, 1991k).

The AGM of the QFCC, which took place on 18 September 1992 at the Quairading Town Hall was Chaired by Mr. Peter Stacey, and attracted 108 shareholders, plus the board of directors, and the General Manager Secretary Mr. Phillips. The meeting involved a substantial discussion over the proposed amendments to the Articles of Association. This saw the proposed amendments debated and only partially approved. Three resolutions were put. The first, which was moved by Mr. G. Attwood and seconded by Mr. R. J. Comley, and carried (207 for v. 41 against), read,

“The Authorised Capital of the Company be increased from \$130,000 to \$500,000, and the additional capital be divided into 185,000 Shares as \$2.00 each” (QFCC, 1992c, p. 20).

A second resolution, moved by Mr. R. Rogers, and seconded by Mrs. T. Johnston, and carried (182 for v. 19 against) read,

“That Article 4 be amended to increase the maximum holding of shares from 1,000 to 2,000” (QFCC, 1992c, p. 21).

Despite the strong support for this amendment, there was a following debate for this amendment to be revised to remove a requirement for shareholders engaged in primary production to transact the majority of their business with the Co-operative. The Chair, Peter Stacey, explained that recent changes to the Articles of Association of a Co-operative had seen this provision removed thereby not requiring the amendment. It was noted that an updated copy of these Articles of Association had been distributed at the 1991 AGM (QFCC, 1992c).

A third resolution was moved by Mr. E. J. Caporn and seconded by Mr. R. Rogers. This read,

“That Article 34 be amended to read, That he/she not be a person in direct conflict with the Co-operative” (QFCC, 1992c, p. 21).

This motion evoked a negative response from some shareholders who questioned why it was being debated at that time. It was eventually put to a vote and the motion was lost 108 to 34.

At the AGM held on 24 September 1993 a new set of Articles of Association were tabled and proposed for adoption by Mr. G. E. Anderson, seconded by Mr. N. Shenton. Although there was a



dispute between the Chair, Bill Wallwork and some of the shareholders in relation to the Chair holding 50 proxy votes (when the shareholders who attended the meeting only numbered 32), the motion was carried a majority of 75 per cent (QFCC, 1993e).

FINDING A NEW GENERAL MANAGER

With the departure of Bob Phillips, the Co-operative immediately began a search for a replacement General Manager. At a Special Meeting of Directors held on 2 April 1993 the board discussed the appointment of Mr. Ian V. Klopper. The decision was taken to offer Mr. Klopper the job, with an annual salary of \$45,000 (approx. \$102,427 in 2024 dollars), plus a car allowance, housing rental subsidy, and the reimbursement of expenses incurred while on company business. The term of his employment contract was to be five years (QFCC, 1993f).

Mr. Klopper accepted the position and served as both General Manager and Secretary from 1993 until 1995, when he announced his decision to leave the Co-operative, but agreed to remain in place in order to complete a handover to his successor (QFCC, 1994b). Ian Klopper appears to have been well regarded during his time with the company. His departure came as both a surprise and disappointment for the board. However, he was replaced by Mr. Barry R. Kirk, who commenced work on 6 February 1995 (QFCC, 1994c). Like Bob Phillips and Ian Klopper, Barry Kirk served as both General Manager and Secretary and did so from 1995 to 1999.

Barry Kirk appears to have served successfully in his role. For example, at the AGM held in the CWA Rooms on 22 September 1995 the Vice Chair, Mr. I. R. Banfield congratulated Mr. Kirk, and another employee of the Co-operative, Mr. B. Francis,

"... on their tolerance shown in working with the personnel from the tax department" (QFCC, 1995).

During the same meeting, at the conclusion of proceedings, Mr. G. J. Stone thanked the QFCC board and management stating,

"It hasn't been an easy year with the tax audit and the choice of Barry Kirk as Manager was a very good selection. He was very quick to pick up on the idiosyncrasies in dealing with staff problems and quickly resolving such situations. I believe there is a need for another Director with the expansion of our business. Keep up the good work and I ask for the appreciation of the shareholders present" (QFCC, 1995, p. 45).

The Chair, Bill Wallwork thanked Mr. Stone for his comments and the Vice Chair, Mr. Banfield asked that if any shareholders had suggestions for the Co-operative or improvements to the store, they should let the board and management know (QFCC, 1995).

CAR DEALERSHIP EXPANSION INTO KELLERBERRIN, CORRIGIN, AND MERREDIN

As discussed earlier, during the 1990s the QFCC embarked on an expansion program that included acquiring investments and operations in adjacent districts, specifically Kellerberrin, Corrigin, and Merredin, for motor vehicle distributor branches.

This process commenced in 1994 when the board were presented with a proposal from Mr. Kevin Johnson of Kellerberrin Sales & Service to acquire the business. A Special Directors Meeting was

held on 9 May 1994 to discuss the acquisition proposal. The meeting was chaired by Bill Wallwork and attended by the board, and the General Manager Ian Klopper. The proposal put forward by Mr. Johnson claimed that Kellerberrin Sales & Service (KSS) had assets of \$330,000 (approx. \$736,624 in 2024 dollars), share capital of \$133,700 (approx. \$298,444 in 2024 dollars), and debts of \$80,000 (approx. \$178,575 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 1994d).

In relation to the acquisition, Mr. Johnson had proposed three options. Option one was for the existing shareholders to be issued shares in the QFCC at the value of their KSS shares, and for the KSS loans to be paid out by the Co-operative. Option two was for the QFCC to purchase the stock, plant, and equipment of the KSS, estimated to be worth \$150,000 (approx. \$334,829 in 2024 dollars), and lease the premises. Option three was for the QFCC to make an outright cash purchase of the entire KSS business at suggested price of \$220,000 (approx. \$491,082 in 2024 dollars). The minutes of the meeting record that the board's consideration was focused on the following issues,

"The benefits to the Co-op are not in purchasing a profit-making business, although Kellerberrin Sales & Service is making a small profit, but rather that the position and structure of their operation gives the opportunity of expansion into the district. Massey Dealership is not seen as a deciding factor, but with the takeover by AGCO the opportunity of future machinery dealerships could be an added bonus" (QFCC, 1994d, p. 34).

Mr. Johnson's sales proposal also noted that the directors of KSS were keen to reach a deal with a third party in relation to the sale, and that another potential buyer, Farmpower, was understood to have made a proposal to do so. As stated in the minutes,

"After much discussion it was decided that the timing was not opportune with the expansion to Merredin and Corrigin, but the opportunity to secure entry into the area should be pursued. An offer was to be presented to Kellerberrin Sales & Service, without reference to a specific amount, suggesting a share issue from the Co-op and payout of the existing loans. An expression of real interest be conveyed with the mention that substantiation of the figures, confirmation of liabilities etc would need to be presented before a figure could be presented" (QFCC, 1994d, p. 35).

As can be seen from the previous quotation, the QFCC board was giving serious consideration to expanding beyond the district of Quairading, into adjacent districts.

The potential acquisition of KSS was discussed at a Special Shareholders Meeting held at the Lesser Hall, Quairading, on 21 July 1994. Chaired by Bill Wallwork, the meeting was attended by the board, the General Manager Ian Klopper, and eight shareholders. In his address to the meeting, Bill Wallwork explained the KSS business acquisition opportunity and stated that a major factor in considering it was the planned expansion of the Co-operative's Massey Ferguson, Ford and the pending Mitsubishi automotive dealership, which could be distributed through the Kellerberrin business as well as distribution branches in Merredin and Corrigin (QFCC, 1994e).

He explained that the QFCC was applying for a Mitsubishi dealership franchise, that this would benefit from opening a branch in Merredin. In addition, he stated that the existing Ford dealership operated by the Co-operative, had seen its sales district expanded to include Corrigin. As a result, the board planned to open a new sales yard in Corrigin. He noted that the QFCC was leasing a shed

in Corrigin and sharing the cost of its construction with the owner of the yard in return for a rent-free period. Additionally, Mr. Wallwork stated that because the Co-operative was planning to operate across various towns, it was not appropriate to trade under the Quairading name. Instead, the board intended to trade under the name “Westlink” with all these dealerships owned by the QFCC and controlled from Quairading (QFCC, 1994e).

A robust discussion followed. Mr. Jim Caporn expressed the view that it was “bad timing and the wrong idea” to progress with the board’s plan. Instead, it should focus on looking after its shareholders and diversify its range of existing services. In response, the Chair, Bill Wallwork stated that the board preferred to stay with businesses where they had some expertise. The Manager, Ian Klopper also responded,

“The Manager commented that the decision was based totally on the viability of the Co-op, and it would not be in the in the shareholders’ interests for the Co-op to confine its activities to Quairading as this was not a growing market” (QFCC, 1994e, p. 36).

There were questions asked about whether the Co-operative would need to provide housing in the adjacent towns, with the Chair responding no, the employees would need to source their own housing. The cost of building the new sales facilities in Corrigin and Merredin was also raised, with the Manager explaining that the cost would be reduced to between \$65,000 and \$70,000 (approx. \$145,093 to \$156,253 in 2024 dollars), due to the agreement over cost sharing and rent-free periods. In response to questions, it was explained that the people from Kellerberrin were in favour of the sale of KSS. It was also confirmed by the Vice Chair, Mr. Banfield, that most of the sales made via these dealerships would be motor cars and trucks, with farm machinery sold in smaller quantities. He concluded with the comment that there were significant economies of scale to be obtained by having distribution outlets in multiple locations (QFCC, 1994e).

At the AGM held on 23 September 1994 Bill Wallwork, in his role as Chair, provided an update on the expansion strategy, describing the activities taking place in Kellerberrin, Merredin and Corrigin. This led to a request and agreement that the Co-operative distribute a newsletter to all shareholders keeping them updated on these activities (QFCC, 1994a).

By 1995 the motor dealership branches in Corrigin, Merredin, and Kellerberrin were operating. At the AGM held on 22 September 1995 the financial reporting stated that there had been an increase of \$600,000 (approx. \$1,280,077 in 2024 dollars) in the Ford motor dealership floor plan credit facility. This increase was attributed to the Co-operative now operating an additional three car yards rather than just the one in Quairading. In addition, a sum of \$124,975 (approx. \$266,629 in 2024 dollars) was allocated as operating funds for the newly acquired KSS business in Kellerberrin (QFCC, 1995).

It was noted that the sales turnover of the Co-operative had improved with Mr. G. McRae asking where the additional sales had come from. In response, the meeting was told that it was from the new Westlink motor vehicle division, which had a 6 per cent increase in sales over the previous trading period. Furthermore, it was declared that the Mitsubishi franchise had been generating improving sales, which had doubled during the previous year (QFCC, 1995).

The following year, at a Special Directors Meeting held on 8 July 1996 the “poor results” of the Westlink dealerships in Kellerberrin, Corrigin, and Merredin were discussed. This included a review of their future, and the attitude of staff employed at the three locations. As recorded in the minutes of the meeting,

“After long discussions it was agreed that budgets be completed on all three (3) car branches for three (3) months commencing July 1st and a profit share of 25% be paid to all staff on nett profit. The budget will be presented to Kellerberrin and Merredin staff tomorrow, Tuesday 9th with performances reviewed every month and a review in three (3) months to the future of each branch” (QFCC, 1996b, p. 68).

It appears that the acquisition of the Kellerberrin branch involved the buyout of KSS shareholders and their incorporation into the QFCC as shareholders. For example, at the Co-operative’s AGM held on 19 September 1997 during the general business session, several shareholders from Kellerberrin complained that they had not received the financial report for the trading year. The General Manager, Barry Kirk, explained that he had posted the report again after the shareholders’ meeting in Kellerberrin, but if they had not received the documents, he would post them again (QFCC, 1997a).

The AGM was followed on the same day by an Extraordinary General Meeting of shareholders that was called in order to discuss the future of the Westlink motor vehicle dealership network. The Chair, Bill Wallwork, announced that the board had taken a decision to privatise the Westlink business provided that an acceptable offer could be received. He explained that it was important that the existing staff working within the business be retained and that it should continue to operate (QFCC, 1997b).

Mr. Wallwork explained that the decision had been made due to the large losses made over the previous years, with the Westlink businesses not being supported by either the Co-operative’s members or the broader community. The Chair explained that the board had reached two options. First, was for new management personnel to be found. Second, was that a new owner should be found to operate the Westlink dealerships. The board had settled on option two, specifically because it was felt that finding suitable management would be difficult with it reported the board had already spoken with potential buyers (QFCC, 1997b).

A general discussion followed. Mr. Peter Stacey asked whether Ford might decide to terminate the dealership. However, the Manager, Barry Kirk, responded that current sales of Ford vehicles were slightly higher than they had been prior to the establishment of the Westlink network. This was followed by Mr. R. Lamplugh, who questioned why the board had decided to expand the motor dealership when it had been acknowledged that the profitability of the business was poor. The Vice Chair, Mr. Banfield, replied that the decision had been voted on at a General Meeting of shareholders, and that the board had acted on professional advice, but that they had simply underestimated the management skills required (QFCC, 1997b).

Mr. J. Haythornwaite asked why the Co-operative needed a Ford dealership. In reply, Bill Wallwork explained that without it the Quairading garage would not remain profitable. Mr. Lamplugh asked whether the board had considered a leasing option, to which Mr. Wallwork said

that it would depend on any prospective buyer. There were other comments and questions, which related to the view that a private owner would be more committed and resourced to making it work, and that the board could hold another Special General Meeting before a final decision was made. In relation to a second Special General Meeting, Mr. Banfield stated that was not possible due to commercial-in-confidence reasons. He explained that commercial buyers wanted to negotiate with a small group of people such as the board of directors, not the shareholders of the company. Additionally, there was a time constraint on the deal to sell the business (QFCC, 1997b).

Having the board call another shareholder meeting was put to a vote but lost. A Mr. M. Clarke expressed his view that it was a sad day because over the past fifty years he had enjoyed good service from the Co-operative's Ford dealership Service Department. Mr. T. Hardingham asked if the Westlink business sale would be publicly advertised as for sale. He was told by Mr. Wallwork that this would not be done as to do so would risk the loss of the Ford dealership (QFCC, 1997b).

By 1999 the Co-operative had sold its motor vehicle dealership network and leased the garage facilities on the corner of McLennon and Parker Streets to Hank and Michael Van Elden (QFCC, 2000). It brought to an end a five-decade long association between the Co-operative and Ford, as well as its long association with the operation of an engineering and service workshop garage in Quairading.

SUMMING UP THE QFCC IN THE 1990S

As discussed at the start of this chapter, the decade of the 1990s was a period of major change not only in Australia, but globally. The ending of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rise of China, and the rapid expansion of mobile telephony and the internet, accelerated change across the world. For the QFCC it was a period of financial challenge, with the declining base of shareholders, and general drift of population from the Wheatbelt. This impacted sales, and even the best efforts to increase the Co-operative's share capital and expand the motor vehicle distribution network into adjacent districts, did not yield the desired outcomes. As a result, the Co-operative ceased issuing regular dividends and paying rebates.

The machinations associated with the tenure of Bob Phillips as both General Manager and Secretary during the early years of the decade remain controversial. He was clearly under significant pressure due to the financial difficulties faced by the Co-operative and carrying the dual roles of both Manager and Secretary. However, he was spoken of by many in positive terms, but by others with negativity. It should be recognised that he was managing in what was one of the most challenging times in the history of the QFCC to that time.

CHAPTER 12: NEW MILLENNIUM, 2000-2009

The first decade of the twenty-first century has been labelled as the start of a new millennium and also “the noughties” to reflect the “00s” of its yearly numbering. The foundations of globalisation and also the digitisation that commenced in the 1990s accelerated during the decade. For example, the growth of the internet, which had been launched in 1991 by CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research) following its invention by British scientist Tim Berners-Lee in 1989, expanded during the decade from covering 6.7 per cent of the world’s population to 25.7 per cent (CERN, 2025).

US President George W. Bush was elected in November 2000, and in July 2001 the first artificial heart implant operation on a human being was successfully completed. Then on 11 September 2001, the Al Qaeda terrorist organisation mounted attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York City, and the Pentagon in Washington DC. Two months later US Investment Bank Goldman Sachs introduced the “BRIC” (Brazil, Russia, India, China) geopolitical and economic grouping suggesting that they would become a major global bloc during the twenty-first century. Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) emerged to transform how people received and shared information. This digital revolution also saw the rise of online business models such as Uber, which challenged the incumbent industries such as the regulated taxi industry (Blount, 2016).

The decade ended with the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), which erupted in 2007 and continued until at least 2009, with impacts on economic growth lasting much longer in many countries. This raised questions about the effectiveness of the global financial system (Birch, 2015). Australia’s financial sector was in better shape to withstand the impact of the GFC than its overseas counterparts. Banks were carrying stronger reserves, and the Federal Government provided guarantees on deposits and bonds while the Reserve Bank lowered the official cash rate (RBA, 2024).

Australia’s economy benefitted from the technological transformation that took place during the 2000s but also committed itself to joining the United States in what became a protracted “War on Terror” lasting for at least twenty-three years (i.e., 2001-2024). Within the rural sector global wool prices, which had fallen steadily during the 1990s, stabilised and the number of sheep within WA reached around 23 million, comprising 22 per cent of the total Australian sheep population. Droughts were also a feature of the decade, with rising concerns over environmental change. Government assistance for drought relief became a feature as many farmers began to realise that the drying climate was not just a seasonal or temporary event. There was also a rise in the use of renewable energy, including wind turbines, solar panels, landfill gas, and wave energy (Menck, 2022).

Although the population across the Wheatbelt continued to decline as farms became larger and more technologically intensive, the workforce also changed with a much greater inclusion of women. This was a trend found in most industries during the decade. In addition, the proportion of full-time and permanently employed people declined to 60 per cent of the WA workforce. More people either became self-employed or casually employed via what was to be called the “Gig” economy. Unionisation of the workforce also declined to less than 20 per cent (Menck, 2022).

Elsewhere the regional communities and their associated industries were changing. For example, by the 2000s around 60 per cent of Australia's fish export industry originated from WA, led largely by the Geraldton Fishermen's Co-operative. In the wine producing regions, the expansion of viticulture and wine making that had commenced in the 1990s continued with large, commercial wineries dominating, but increasingly supplemented during the decade by smaller boutique wineries (Menck, 2022).

LEADERSHIP AND FINANCIAL RECAPITALISATION OF THE QFCC

The QFCC emerged from the 1990s with new leadership of Mr. Daryl C. Richards, having replaced Mr. Charles William "Bill" Wallwork as Chair in 1999, and going on to serve in that role until 2003. He was replaced by Mr. Trevor J. Bond who was still the Chair at time of writing in 2025. This relatively stable situation within the Chairperson's position in the Co-operative contrasted with the more turbulent experience taking place within the executive management team.

General Manager and Company Secretary, Mr. Barry R. Kirk, also resigned in 1999 and was replaced by Mr. Gary Duperouzel, who filled both positions from 1999 to 2000, before being replaced by Mr. Ian J. Morgan, who served in both roles from 2000 to 2002, only to be replaced by Mrs. Glora E. F. Stone in both roles from 2002 to 2007. She was subsequently replaced by Mr. Harry Bowling as both General Manager and Secretary from 2007 to 2009, then only as Secretary from 2009 to 2011. In 2009 he was replaced as General Manager by Mrs. Laurel M. Maynard (2009 to 2012), and subsequently as Secretary until his retirement in 2011. Throughout the decade, the senior executive team was in constant change. In addition to the turnover in managers, the QFCC also faced serious financial issues.

During the AGM of the QFCC held in the Quairading Lesser Hall on 15 September 2000 the Chair, Mr. Daryl Richards, in his address to shareholders, spoke about the amalgamation of the Drapery and Newsagency, which reduced staffing levels, and helped to generate a profit across the two sections. He also referred to a Pharmacy and RSM Bird Cameron agency being established within the Co-operative's premises, with both organisations seeking long-term leasing agreements (QFCC, 2000).

Leasing of unused, or underutilised company facilities was a feature of this period. Mr. Richards also spoke of the Quairading Farmers' Lindorff Centre building being leased and its business being taken over by Ruralco-CRT, a diversified agricultural services and supply company founded in 1970 and headquartered in Sydney. It operated a number of subsidiaries, including Combined Rural Traders (CRT). In 2019, it was acquired by Canadian company Nutrien (Marshall, 2019). As explained by Daryl Richards, the Lindorff Centre was now leased and its entire business acquired by Ruralco-CRT, which Mr. Richards viewed as a positive saying,

"This move once again will benefit both the Quairading Farmers' Co-op and the whole town itself. It has been a volatile department, with margins decreasing and competition within the town increasing. Being run by CRT will see improvements in most areas and still create competition. CRT will commence their own identity on the 1st October, which is behind initial plans" (QFCC, 2000, p. 3).



Mr. Richards also spoke of the Grocery section, which had performed well and had been declared a runner-up for the best store in the Northern region of the Wheatbelt. Additionally, he noted that the former Co-operative Garage and Ford / Mitsubishi dealership site was under lease to Hank and Michael Van Elden, who, as explained in the previous chapter, had operated a motor vehicle garage from that site since 1999. The former Pharmacy store building, owned by the Co-operative, was now vacant, and was being cleaned and refurbished with the plan to lease it to another tenant. Under the lease agreement Ruralco-CRT was to take over the distribution of drum petrol and kerosene, while the Co-operative would retain the distribution of bulk fuel and gas (LPG) sales via the Hardware Department (QFCC, 2000).

The first two-years of the decade saw the Co-operative restructuring and updating its retailing operations. In July 2001 the board resolved, as shown below, that the Co-operative was a “reporting entity”, as that there were users of the QFCC financial statements, other than members, that needed a standardised format of financial reporting,

“IT WAS RESOLVED that in the opinion of the Directors the Co-operative is a reporting entity because there are likely to exist users who are unable to command the preparation of reports so as to satisfy specifically all their information needs.

Therefore, the financial statements of the Co-operative are to be prepared on the basis of the Co-operative being a ‘reporting entity’ and will therefore take the form of General-Purpose Financial Statements.

The 2001 Financial Report and 2001 Concise Financial Report of the Co-operative for the Year Ending 31 March 2001 were tabled at the meeting.

IT WAS RESOLVED that both sets of Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2001 be approved and that two Directors be authorised to sign the Directors Report and the Directors Declaration stating that in the opinion of the Directors:

1. *The financial statements and notes:*

 - a. *Comply with accounting standards and the requirements of Section 136(3) of the Companies (Co-operative) Act, 1943., of Western Australia, and*
 - b. *Give a true and fair view of the co-operative’s financial position as of 31 March 2001 and its performance for the financial year ended on that date: and.*

2. *In the Directors’ opinion there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Co-operative will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable” (QFCC, 2001a, p. 10).*

This resolution by the QFCC board was part of a process of restructuring the financial situation that the Co-operative had inherited from the previous decade. At the AGM held on 21 September 2001, Mr. Richards delivered the Chairperson’s address providing a summation of the situation facing the Co-operative at that time. It focused on the need for a further capital injection into the business to allow it to reduce its current bank debt. The issuing of non-cumulative, redeemable preference shares was being considered (QFCC, 2001b).



Given its importance, it is worthwhile stating the address in full. It provides a valuable insight into the concerns that faced the QFCC at that time, and the need for a strategic change of direction. The speech is outlined below,

“Ladies and Gentlemen, we find ourselves here today for a number of reasons, which span a number of years. The past cannot be dwelled upon, except to learn from our mistakes, and past happenings. Our most important objective at the moment, is to keep our Co-op alive and vibrant, and back to where it was, 12 years ago, in terms of being one of the best in the state.

If we take a look at our town Quairading, we see our town on the rise, with reference to progress particularly in and down the main street. Things at last are starting to look good, and some people even feel good about our town. It's all part of being a town and helping each other, particularly in tough times like we are witnessing.

I feel sure that tough times are cast upon us, to stop complacency, create unity and lateral thinking. Because nothing stays the same forever, change is inevitable. The question I ask myself is, ‘Have we adapted to change?’ My immediate answer is, ‘not very well’.

The Co-op has had several changes over the past eight years, but particularly the last four. All changes have been forced upon us, and to our existing knowledge and belief, are good changes. Our community Co-op needs your support now and, in the future, to reduce our long-term debt, which is stifling us. Those of you who read our Annual Report would have seen we are paying \$60,000 in interest and \$25,000 bank charges.

The initial \$60,000, should be payments towards expansion, and / or a dividend to shareholders not to a bank, who is only looking after its own shareholders. As we have seen in recent times in the world, one catastrophe can have snowballing effects in so many ways. We can't control that, but we can control what happens in our town to a great extent.

By keeping our businesses and people here, we keep our assets here, Doctor, Hospital, Pharmacy, Co-op, Mechanics etc, which maintains our personal asset levels e.g., value to houses, buildings, etc. By supporting your town, you are supporting yourself.

We today, as your Directors, present this proposal to you, hoping you will accept it, in some shape or form. We do require it, so please support us in our quest. Ladies and Gentlemen please understand that this is not just a Co-op issue, but a town issue as well” (QFCC, 2001b, pp. 16-17).

The financial situation facing the Co-operative was robustly discussed during the AGM, which was attended by the Chair, directors, Managing Secretary Mr. Ian Morgan, the auditors, and twenty-one shareholders. It is clear from the discussion that many shareholders were only just realising the magnitude of the Co-operative's financial situation. There were questions about selling the Co-operative to private investors, suspending debtor accounts for individuals, and rationalising the various departments. The Manager, Mr. Morgan, explained that debtors made up between 20 and 25 per cent of sales, or \$70,000 per month (approx. \$130,080 in 2024 dollars). However, only six individuals were considered to be bad and doubtful debtors, indicating that debtors were not the cause of the Co-operative's financial problems. A preference share issue of \$500 (approx. \$929 in 2024 dollars) per shareholder, was being proposed (QFCC, 2001b).



At the Special General Meeting held on 19 October 2001 the capital raising was discussed further. The Chair, Daryl Richards, board, manager, and thirty-four shareholders were present. Mr. Richards explained that the Co-operative was seeking to raise between \$50,000 to \$200,000 (approx. \$92,915 to \$371,658 in 2024 dollars). Again, there was a robust discussion with some shareholders suggesting that the Manager's house should be sold or blaming the financial problems on the writing down of stock in earlier years. Also raised was the sale of the Wesfarmers shares that the Co-operative had, like all co-operatives that were established by Wesfarmers, retained after the demutualisation of the former co-operative. Some criticised the management of the Co-operative and the board directors of previous years (QFCC, 2001c).

The Chair, Mr. Richards stated that he felt there was little value in dwelling on the past. There were many who supported the need to raise the capital. However, as one shareholder, Mr. J. Parker stated, his discussions with people around the town suggested that a minimum \$500 investment for each person was considered to be too much. There was support and interest in the purchase of preference shares in the Co-operative, but perhaps a sum of \$200 to \$250 as a minimum should be considered. He also suggested that the Co-operative might issue vouchers of \$20 to help incentivise the community to shop at the store. This led to other shareholders showing support for a \$250 minimum share purchase (QFCC, 2001c).

The Manager, Mr. Morgan explained that the capital raising was a good solution to the reduction of debt. While the banks were "understanding" the debts had to be repaid and the process of clearing the debts had been underway for some time. The Chair, Mr. Richards, added that as of 30 September 2000 the total debt owed by the Co-operative was \$644,304 (approx. \$1,197,305 in 2024 dollars), but this had fallen to \$569,519 (approx. \$1,058,332 in 2024 dollars) by September 2001. He explained that the Co-operative would issue non-cumulative redeemable preference shares, and outlined the specifics associated with how the capital would be repaid, whether dividends would be cumulative or non-cumulative, the voting rights of the shareholders, and technical issues associated with dividends and capital repayments. A motion was then put to increase the authorised capital of the Co-operative, which read,

"To recommend to Shareholders that we raise our Authorised Capital by way of Non-Cumulative Redeemable Preference Shares, to raise capital for reduction of debt only" (QFCC, 2001c, p. 20).

This motion was carried and followed by a second that read,

"The minimum entry level for the Non-Cumulative Redeemable Preference Shares will be 125 shares at \$2 each. A value of \$250" (QFCC, 2001c, p. 21).

This motion was also carried. Mr. Richards explained that the board was recommending an upper limit of Non-Cumulative Redeemable Preference Share capital at 100,000 shares at \$2 per share. A third motion was then put that read,

"The Authorised Capital by way of Non-Cumulative Redeemable Preference Shares be 100,000 maximum shares" (QFCC, 2001c, p. 21).

The motion was also carried.



By 13 September 2003, at the QFCC AGM, the capital raising was discussed and Daryl Richards, as Chair, reported that,

"... the end of year figures were not a happy report. Hopefully we can look forward to better figures next year. The survey response was overwhelming, and the feedback would be useful for future plans and trends" (QFCC, 2002, p. 3).

The retail manager Mrs Gloria Stone reported that the Supa Valu supermarket had not yet reached the 20 per cent increase in sales that was being targeted, but that sales turnover had reached 14 per cent, although the monthly sales average was 6 per cent. The Chair, Mr. Richards agreed that the Supa Valu store model had yet to reach its targets, but that it remained an important part of the Co-operative's future plans and the upgrade was necessary. When asked how long it would take for the Co-operative to pay off the debt, Mr. Richards stated that it would likely be between 4 to 5 years (QFCC, 2002).

During the 2003 AGM held on 19 September, the Chair, Daryl Richards reported that the QFCC had paid off \$263,000 (approx. \$461,957 in 2024 dollars) and that one of the loans, for Business Development, would be repaid within fourteen to fifteen months. He added that all Co-operative loans had been reduced dramatically (QFCC, 2003).

By the time the 2004 AGM was held on 17 September, with Mr. Trevor Bond now as Chair, and Mrs. Gloria Stone as Managing Secretary, it was reported by Mrs. Stone that the Business Development Loan had been reduced to \$8,800 (approx. \$15,103 in 2024 dollars) and that it would be cleared by December that year. In addition, the Investment Property Loan was down to \$82,700 (approx. \$141,936 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 2004).

She also reported that the company had \$124,700 (approx. \$214,019 in 2024 dollars) in its cheque account, and a \$10,000 (approx. \$17,163 in 2024 dollars) balance in its GST input tax credit account. In summary, the Co-operative had paid down a total of \$335,486 (approx. \$575,786 in 2024 dollars) in four years. Trevor Bond stated that he wanted to see the overdraft reduced from \$150,000 (approx. \$257,441 in 2024 dollars) to \$100,000 (approx. \$171,627 in 2024 dollars) over the same period (QFCC, 2004).

It can be seen from the above that the Co-operative was able to successfully raise new working capital from its shareholders and the local community and commence a dedicated repayment of its debts over the first four years of the decade. Unsurprisingly, the Co-operative did not issue any dividends nor rebates during the decade. Even when the QFCC had improved its financial situation the board chose not to issue dividends. The mindset of the directors was summed up by shareholder Mr. T. Richards during the 2004 AGM when, in response to questions as to whether a dividend would be issued stated,

"The Chairman advised that even with the positive figures presented a Dividend would not be declared. Mr. T. Richards stated that he preferred the service provided, not the dividend money" (QFCC, 2004, p. 13).

MAKING A SLOW BUT STEADY RECOVERY

As the decade passed the halfway mark, the financial situation facing the QFCC slowly but steadily improved. For example, at the AGM held on 17 September 2005 the Chair, Trevor Bond, announced that as of 30 July 2005, the Co-operative had achieved profitable returns across all the departments and an overall profit of \$38,000 (approx. \$63,509 in 2024 dollars) had been generated. The Manager, Gloria Stone, reported that while sales had been good, they were down in the Hardware department, even though the overall profit was up. She explained that this boost in profit was largely due to the reduction in staff within the Hardware department, which reduced the overhead costs. The Retravisation electrical goods department had remained steady (QFCC, 2005).

There was some concern expressed by the eleven shareholders present about the anticipated trade sale of Foodland Association Ltd. (FAL), which owned the Supa Valu brand of supermarkets, and was the commercial partner of the Co-operative's supermarket and grocery store. Gloria Stone responded that while FAL was being taken over, it was by Metcash, which at time of writing was Australia's largest independent wholesale distributor, and owner of the IGA supermarket brand. She did not envision any major problems for the QFCC, although she explained that the acquisition was taking time due to the need for FAL to clear some slow-moving stock, which had impacted the Co-operative's ability to secure all the items with the store stocked "as best we can" (QFCC, 2005, p. 3).

Mrs Stone also explained that a new security system had been installed. Although it had cost \$10,000 (approx. \$16,713 in 2024 dollars), it worked much better than the older system that was leased not owned. Over the longer term the up-front cost of the new system would prove a cost saving for the Co-operative (QFCC, 2005).

The following year, at the AGM held on 22 September 2006, the Chair, Trevor Bond, explained that the company's operating profit, which had been reported in the financial statements was incorrect. He passed the meeting to the auditor Mrs. Fran Arnold who explained that the operating profit was actually only \$150,820 (approx. \$243,409 in 2024 dollars) rather than the reported \$299,826 figure (approx. \$483,891 in 2024 dollars), which included an uplift of some \$146,000 (approx. \$235,631 in 2024 dollars) on the revaluation of the Co-operative's investment property. Nevertheless, it was a profit rather than a loss. Mrs. Arnold also reported that the overall annual profit for the financial year 2005/2006 was only \$53,000 (approx. \$85,537 in 2024 dollars), not \$299,826 (approx. \$483,891 in 2024 dollars) as shown in the Concise Report. This was explained as being due to the revaluation of the investment property being added to the overall profit reported in that document (QFCC, 2006).

The financial situation of the Co-operative was therefore steadily improving. At the 2007 AGM held on 21 September, with 13 shareholders, the Chair, board, and the new Managing Secretary Harry Bowling attending, the overall profit was lower than the previous year, but this was due to there being no revaluation of the investment properties, which were only undertaken every three years. However, during the general business phase of the meeting, a robust discussion took place in relation to the Hardware store and plans to open a Liquor store (QFCC, 2007).



A shareholder Mrs. Shirley Stacey asked about the financial performance of the Hardware. Trevor Bond explained that the Hardware now had competition in town, and from larger hardware chains operating in Perth. It was also difficult for the Co-operative to secure the staff for the store who had the knowledge required for all the areas operating within the store. The total staff employed were few compared to the larger stores in Perth. The Manager, Harry Bowling stated that the Hardware store was working hard to stock fast moving products. He also explained that there were plans for the Retravisation store, with more stock on the floor and a two-day order turnaround time (QFCC, 2007).

There were some complaints about the quality of some of the generic low-cost brands (e.g., Black & Gold potting mix), whether staff would be able to help customers carry heavy products to their cars, and why the Hardware no longer stocked paints. However, shareholder Mr. T. Richards summed up the feeling of the meeting by declaring that he did not want to see the hardware go because it was a much-needed service in the town (QFCC, 2007).

Also discussed was the plan to sell liquor. Trevor Bond explained the application for a liquor license had to that date cost the Co-operative around \$18,000 (approx. \$28,389 in 2024 dollars). However, he also stated that the QFCC had withdrawn its liquor license application, but the QFCC's lawyers would keep the file open for a further six months. He emphasised that it was not the aim of the Co-operative to compete with the Quairading Hotel or the Club. The store would only sell packaged liquor. He admitted that the entire matter could have been better handled, with more information provided to the local community. A shareholder, Mrs. Johnson asked what needed to be done to resurrect the plan. Mr. Bond responded that this initiative would have to come from the shareholders (QFCC, 2007).

The 2008 AGM was held on 19 September, as usual in the Lesser Hall, with the Chair, Trevor Bond, the board, Managing Secretary Harry Bowling, and eleven shareholders. Trevor Bond talked about the upgrading of the computer system used for stocktaking, and the six-monthly audits being undertaken by the IGA wholesaler (owned by Metcash), which rated the Co-operative's performance. He proudly announced that while in previous years the Supermarket had been ranked as "mid-range", that year it was given a score that put it into the top 30 stores in the State. He also reported that the board had a five-year plan for refurbishment and upgrading of the company's stores (QFCC, 2008).

Although a dividend was not declared, Trevor Bond reported that due to the improved financial performance of the Co-operative. However, it was possible to commence repayment of the preference shares purchased by fifty-nine shareholders. A total payout of \$38,500 (approx. \$58,191 in 2024 dollars) was declared for the year. He also explained that if shareholders did not want to redeem the value of the preference shares, they had the option to convert them into ordinary shares. He added that there was new legislation being introduced (i.e., the Co-operatives Act, 2009) that would require tidying up of the share register to remove shareholders no longer trading with the QFCC (QFCC, 2008).

In the general business phase of the meeting there were positive comments from shareholders that the Co-operative's stores now looked much brighter and offered a more enjoyable and better atmosphere, with the product displays looking a lot better. This was favourably received by the



Manager Harry Bowling who stated that the staff welcomed this feedback and would strive to make it even better. A shareholder, Mr. J. Wilson then declared that the Co-operative needed to project a positive image and encourage people to shop locally. In response, Mr. Bowling said,

“... that he keeps an eye on transactions per month and there has been an increase of 1,000 customers from one month last year to corresponding month this year, which has also increased sales. The Manager stated that we should be close to a \$4,000,000 turnover this year but won't rest on laurels and are part way through of what we are going to do to improve” (QFCC, 2008, p. 3).

At the AGM held on 18 September 2009, there were only six shareholders in attendance, with Trevor Bond as Chair, the directors, the new Manager Laurel Maynard, and the note taker Mrs. C. Hadlow. In his address as Chair, Trevor Bond reported that all the B-class preference shares had now been repaid, with around half the shareholders opting to convert them to A-class ordinary shares.

Mrs. Maynard, in her new role as Manager, explained that there was a problem with “keyed sales”, whereby stock items with barcodes sold without scanning, therefore not being removed from the computerised stock on hand system. This meant that over the years the stock levels had been significantly overstated. However, an independent stocktake had been conducted at the end of the financial year, and staff were being trained to ensure that the problem was not repeated (QFCC, 2009).

The lack of any further discussion regarding the financial statements at the meeting suggests that the Co-operative's financial crisis had finally been brought under control. The primary areas of discussion took place in general business, were upgrading of the store under the 5-year plan, the placement of a weather strip under the main door of the old Pharmacy building to keep leaves from blowing in, and the use of the main store window for advertising. There was also a request that a bread oven be installed in the supermarket. However, the manager explained that due to the lack of space, customers and particularly children, would be considered safe around an oven (QFCC, 2009).

SUMMING UP THE QFCC IN THE 2000S

Despite the substantial turnover of General Managers and Secretaries, the QFCC was able to bring its ballooning debt under control. The Co-operative's ability to do this, in what were difficult times for the local community comprised primarily of farmers, was due to the willingness of many of its shareholders to purchase preference shares and continue to trade loyally with the company. As stated above, recapitalisation of the Co-operative was successfully undertaken albeit by only fifty-nine of the QFCC's shareholders. To put this into context, in 2024 the QFCC had 494 shareholders, suggesting that only 12 per cent purchased the preference shares.⁷ Nevertheless, this was sufficient and within five years all preference shares had been retired.

⁷ In 2024 the QFCC had a total of 494 shareholders of whom 376 were A-Class, and 118 were B-Class shareholders.



This financial recovery placed the QFCC in a stronger position as it navigated the 2010s and prepared for the 2020s, which are discussed in the following chapter. It demonstrates that a Co-operative that enjoys the loyalty of its members, who can be called upon to invest through the purchase of shares when a recapitalisation is required, is not necessarily, as many believe, capital constrained. It supports the view proposed by Charles Gide (1922) who, in describing the role of financial capital in a co-operative wrote,

“Thus, the capital of societies is fed from three sources: (a) Shares subscribed on entrance; (b) dividends left on deposit or converted into shares; (c) loans from members. Of these three sources the first is the least important; the second brings in the most money, ... but the third is the most important” (Gide, 1922, p. 109).

In essence, Gide is stating that while the initial share capital purchased by members is provided to help establish the Co-operative, and secure membership for the shareholder, and the willingness of shareholders to forsake dividends can generate the most money, the willingness of the members to provide additional capital, is most important as it can ensure the company will always have the ability to self-finance.

CHAPTER 13: THE ‘TEENS’ AND THE ‘TWENTIES’, 2010-2024

The decades of the 2010s and 2020s have been labelled the “The Tens” or “Teens” and “The Twenties”. As with all previous decades, there were significant global and national events that provided the context and background against which the history of the QFCC can be examined.

As the 2010s commenced the impact of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) lingered on, with both low interest rates and low inflation across much of the world. Over the period 2010 to 2019 global economic recovery grew steadily, particularly during the second half of the decade. It was also a politically turbulent time, with the “Arab Spring” (2010-2011) leading to the overthrow or attempted overthrow of governments across the Arab world (History.com, 2020). This resulted in the NATO-led invasion of Libya that led to the assassination of Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi (Gaddafi) and collapse of that country into a brutal civil war (History.com, 2024).

The overthrow of the President of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich in 2014, triggered a civil war in that country, and provoked Russia to seize control over Crimea. These events laid the foundations for the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 a conflict which continued to rage into 2025. The United States continued lead counter terrorist military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya and Syria with both troop deployments and use of aerial attacks, increasingly with drones (History.com, 2023).

The expansion of information and communications technologies (ICT), and online business models was another feature of the period. Internet coverage grew globally to around 54 per cent of the population, and smartphones, tablets, and wireless, mobile and cloud-based platforms became commonplace. Social media continued to expand, as did the global population, which reached 7.7 billion by 2019 (Worldometer, 2025).

Within Australia the decade of the 2010s, opened with the impact of the GFC and the significant stimulus spending undertaken by the Federal Labor Government of Kevin Rudd. This helped to boost strong economic growth with most Australian households securing rising incomes. There was also rapid adoption of ICT systems and digital business models (e.g., Uber, Airbnb, Amazon). As with many other developed economies, attention was given to community priorities, quality of life, social inclusion, action on climate change, and concerns over rising housing costs and trust in banks (Orsmond & Maguire, 2019).

In the mining sector, gold production grew steadily during the 2010s. The gold mine located at Boddington, located 120 kilometres southeast of Perth, reopened in 2009 and expanded to be the largest gold mine in Australia. By 2016-2017 the mining sector accounted for 20 per cent of WA’s gross state product (GSP), generating a total value of \$71.8 billion, and employing around 7 per cent of the state’s workforce. This workforce included approximately 18 per cent female employees. This compared with the manufacturing sector that employed 5.6 per cent of the WA workforce and contributed less than 5 per cent to the GSP. Lithium mining also grew during the decade, and a second lithium refinery was being planned for construction in the Kwinana industrial precinct in 2018 (Menck, 2022).

The 2020s commenced with the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) declared a worldwide pandemic on 11 March 2020, leading to the closure of Australia's borders and the lockdown of states and territories and restricted movement across districts for many regional communities in Western Australia. This had significant impacts on the community, with most people having to work from home, wear masks, and undertake vaccinations and regular testing for COVID-19. It impacted the global economy and also saw economic disruption across Australia. The Federal Government of Scott Morrison introduced the JobKeeper payment scheme that provided eligible employers with money to pay employees who were unable to work. The government also provided temporary cash flow boosts to support small and medium businesses and not-for-profit (NFP) organisations during the economic downturn associated with COVID-19. There was also a widespread shortage of goods as supply chains became disrupted, with shortages of commercial goods and materials and of basic consumer goods like toilet paper, analgesics, and disinfectants.

Most of the conflicts, technological and social trends of the 2010s continued, with the emergence of greater use of what have been called Industry 4.0 systems, such as artificial intelligence (AI), artificial reality (AR), cloud computing, crypto currencies, online learning, contactless payments, and paperless business transactions. Within the Wheatbelt grain production grew from around 11.1 million tonnes in 2010, to 21.3 million tonnes in 2022, with CBH Group, forecasting annual crops of more than 30 million tonnes by the early 2030s (Mazzarol, van Aurich & Baskerville, 2024).

THE QFCC IN THE 2010S

The introduction of the *Co-operatives Act, 2009* (WA) ushered in new opportunities and also some changes to governance and financial management for Co-operatives such as the QFCC. This new legislation was also brought under the *Co-operatives National Law*, which harmonised the various co-operatives statutes across the country, doing so for all states and territories other than Queensland by 2012, and with Queensland joining in 2020. The new legislation required the adoption of new Articles of Association (co-operative rules), which differed slightly for companies that wanted to pay dividends and distribute assets (distributing co-operatives), and those that did not (non-distributing co-operatives). The new legislation also enshrined the seven Co-operative principles, which served to focus these companies on their distinctive business models. It also included the use of Co-operative Capital Units (CCUs), a new financial instrument for these firms.

In 2010 Trevor Bond continued as Chair with Harry Bowling as Secretary and Laurel Maynard as General Manager. At the AGM held on 24 September, there was no discussion of the QFCC's financial situation, instead the main issues of business were more mundane. The meeting commenced with a report on the successful placement of a weather strip along the bottom of the door to the old Pharmacy building to keep out leave litter. This was followed by positive feedback from the shareholders as to the improvements in the store layout within the supermarket and a financial donation by the Co-operative to the CWA so that they could purchase a new stove. Perhaps the most significant issue discussed was a report by the Secretary on the new *Co-operatives Act, 2000* (WA), and the impact that this would have on the Co-operative and timeframe over which these changes would need to take place (QFCC, 2010).



As similar pattern occurred at the AGM held on 23 September 2011. A survey of the QFCC employees showed that 75 per cent or more shopped at the Co-operative. There was concern expressed over the wastage of perishable stock and suggestions that it might be given to a food bank charity. Shareholders also raised concerns over the price of meat, fruit and vegetables, and the type of products sold via the Retravisation department (QFCC, 2011).

However, a major topic discussed was the impact of the new Co-operative's legislation. Two resolutions were carried. The first motion was moved by Mr. G. Anderson and seconded by Mrs. E. Johnson. It read,

"The members of the Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Ltd., hereby resolve that the company be registered as a co-operative under the Co-operatives Act, 2009 and that its existing memorandum and articles of association be altered in accordance with the attachment to this resolution to enable the company to comply with the Act" (QFCC, 2011, p. 13).

The second motion was also moved by Mr. G. Anderson, seconded by Mr. R. Rogers. This read,

"The members of Quairading Farmers Co- operative Company Ltd hereby resolve that the document titled Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Company Ltd Co-operative Rules 2011 consisting of 48 pages and dated 28/6/2011 as approved by the Registrar of Co-operatives on 12/8/2011 shall become the rules of the company from the time of its registration under the Co-operatives Act, 2009 (QFCC, 2011, p. 13).

At the AGM held on 21 September 2012, the resignation of the Manager and Secretary Laurel Maynard was acknowledged. Mrs. E. Johnson congratulated Mrs. Maynard for her efforts and noted that during the time she had been manager the Co-operative was trading profitably. This, she noted, was a difficult thing, given the history of the Co-operative, and that had been hard for the QFCC to get back into profit. The Chair, Trevor Bond, stated that the board would like to have seen the Co-operative generating more profit, but that they had tried their best for the members. He also personally thanked Laurel Maynard for her efforts and asked her to pass the thanks of the board and shareholders onto the Co-operative's employees (QFCC, 2012).

Other matters discussed were the issuing of a discount fuel card to encourage people to shop at the Co-operative rather than going out of town, and the introduction of a Shareholder Card. This card would require shareholders to spend a minimum of \$100 over a three-year period or risk being deemed "inactive". This was a response to the introduction of the new *Co-operatives Act, 2009* (WA), which contains an active membership provision requiring the board to terminate the membership of shareholders who do not meet the minimum requirements of active membership. To make the card more acceptable, it was considered to be used as a mechanism for offering loyalty reward points or discounts (QFCC, 2012).

During the 2013 AGM held on 30 September, with Trevor Bond as Chair, the board, the new General Manager Mrs. Sharon Cutts, the minute taker, Mrs. C. Hadlow, and ten shareholders, the issue of a fuel discount docket was discussed. It was not considered viable for the QFCC, and it was noted that many people went to Coles and Woolworths specifically in order to get their fuel discount vouchers (QFCC, 2013).

The following year, the AGM was held on 29 August 2014. The main issues discussed were the sudden passing of former QFCC Director Mr. Gratton Stone on 20 August aged 63 years, the need to connect electric power to the coffee shop, the installation of solar panels on the Co-operative's buildings, and the receipt of a proposal to lease the former Bird Cameron building owned by the QFCC. There was also discussion over the price and quality of the fruit and vegetables sold in the Grocery store, the establishment of a garden centre within the Hardware store, the need for price comparisons between the QFCC, Coles, and Woolworths, and the high cost of freight (QFCC, 2014).

At the AGM held on 28 August 2015, the General Manager/Secretary Sharon Cutts delivered a report on the financial performance of the Co-operative over the previous year, and the general operations of the business. It was reported that the installation of the new solar panels, while it took eighteen months to complete, had made a significant saving in the energy costs of the company. A shareholder, Mr. Hards, thanked the Mrs. Cutts for her dedication and cooperation in her role as Manager. This sentiment was echoed by the Chair, Trevor Bond who reiterated the words of Mr. Hards, and spoke of the Manager's work since she took up the position, to improve the Co-operative. Another shareholder, Mrs. Johnson, speaking on behalf of the CWA, also thanked Mrs. Cutts for the assistance she had given to that organisation, in their 90th Anniversary celebrations (QFCC, 2015).

The 2016 AGM held on 30 September, was largely uneventful. Only minor queries were raised by the shareholders. These were addressed by either the Chair, Trevor Bond, or Manager, Sharon Cutts (QFCC, 2016). There were only three shareholders present at the 2016 AGM who were not office bearers, which reflected a trend that had commenced some years earlier. For example, only five non-office bearer shareholders came to the 2012 AGM, ten attended the 2013 AGM, with five again coming to the 2014 AGM. At the 2015 AGM, other than office bearers, there were only two shareholders and one non-shareholder present, and three at both the 2016 and 2017 AGM (QFCC, 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; 2016; 2017).

At the 2017 AGM, held on 25 August, the retirement of QFCC director Mr. C. R. Langsford was announced. Mr. Langsford had joined the board of directors in 2004 and had served for thirteen years, with nine years as Vice Chair. His retirement created an opening for a new director. Mrs. Tarnya Fraser was appointed to fill the casual vacancy until the 2018 AGM. At the General Meeting held on 21 August 2018 she delivered a statement which is reproduced here in full (QFCC, 2018a),

"Who am I?

To give you a bit of background about myself, my name is Tarns Fraser- I am now a farmer but in a previous life I spent 10 years working as a Banker at NAB. In this time, I was an Agribusiness Analyst. a Business Bank Manager (where I had a portfolio of 100 small businesses across Perth) and an Investment Banker (where I managed approx. \$5.5billion in customer funds). I have bachelor's degrees in Agricultural Science (majoring in Plant Biology and Soil Science) and Commerce (majoring in Management, Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations) and a master's degree in business administration all from UWA, I'm a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and perhaps most importantly a shareholder of the Quairading Farmers' Co-operative. I want to discreetly help the Co-op in any way I can- I do not want any kind of remuneration or recognition.



Situational Analysis

I think Quairading is an amazing little town. I am excited to be part of a few projects which will see the main street reinvigorated which I believe be the biggest opportunity the Co-op has and cannot miss. The main street is in the process of being redesigned so that when tourists see the Co-op, they will have time to actually turn into a carpark to stop. This will be huge for your business, as at the moment by the time tourists know the Co-op is there, they have already missed the turn off for it.

The QTTTC are stepping up their beautification of the street, which will include (with your permission) a bright mural on the side of the Co-op Building overlooking the grassed area next to the Pub. Rainmakers are looking at a large-scale piece of artwork to be installed in the main street to further attract and entice tourists to pull over and have a look. Finally, the shire is moving forward with Rural Youth money to install a large, green playground directly across the road from your location- providing further attraction and enticement for people to come to Quairading, STOP AND GET OUT OF THEIR CARS- this will see your catchment for the first time in many years actually increase.

Proposed Strategy/Ideas.

To set the Co-op up to thrive in the coming years needs a two-pronged approach (in my opinion):

- 1. We need to appeal and entice locals and the hospital to spend their dollars at the Co-op, I believe we can do this by:*
 - a. have a dynamic website and blog which is linked to Facebook & Instagram, this Tech Strategy' will have weekly inspiration on how locals can utilise the specials to feed their families on a tight budget.*
 - b. Use our local knowledge to reach out to people when in need- i.e. offering to delivery weekly groceries to new mums (to save their Perth mother in laws arriving with the goods).*
 - c. Offer what's for dinner range' where people can nip into the store and buy a box of prepacked ingredients and recipe for a quick, cheap mid-week dinner that they prepare and cook at home.*
 - d. Preparation of 'ready to eat meals' where people can literally buy a Chinese container of food that they can reheat and eat- this service could be during expanded harvest (deliver to the trucks at CBH for an easy paddock delivery method). e Capture the dozen or so local people that support the Cunderdin Butcher by offering an ordering service for this business on the website.*
 - e. Offering a Christmas weekly budget saver like the Chrisco Hamper model.*
- 2. We need to set the Co-op up with a street appeal and store design so that tourists with no knowledge of our town are drawn to a fresh, vibrant store where the best parts of the business are at the front- i.e. the fruit and veg and café sections. The store needs to project the online personality we give it through our Tech Strategy- am thinking friendly,*



fun, fresh and savvy might be a good brand for you- and I think you need to promote the café and coffee more from the main street, not so much the local in store specials.

3. *I understand the store design will mean approximately half the existing store will become obsolete- so perhaps we need to start thinking about ideas/opportunities for the extra space given its main street frontage (automated laundry mat?) (QFCC, 2018a, p. 4).*

With this presentation Tarnya Fraser secured a position on the board, and became a key leader in the refurbishment and upgrading of the Co-operative's Heal Street store.

Figure 34: Sharon Cutts (Manager), Trevor Bond (Chair), and Tarnya Fraser (Director)



Source: QFCC (2025).

REFURBISHMENT OF THE HEAL STREET STORE

At this time, the Co-operative's main building in Heal Street was in need of substantial repairs and renovation. For example, at the Special General Meeting held on 21 August 2018 there was reporting of the state of the roofing and gutters, and the need to decommission and remove old air conditioning systems. In addition, there was need to install new flooring, plumbing, lighting, and ceiling refurbishment. Discussions were also taking place with the Quairading Shire Council over changes to the carpark layout in front of the Heal Street store. An estimated total cost of this work was given at \$290,000 (approx. \$354,949 in 2024 dollars). This was to be funded by a loan of \$300,000 (approx. \$367,189 in 2024 dollars) from the Westpac Bank (QFCC, 2018a).

During the AGM held on 28 September 2018 the general business session was dominated by questions relating to the refurbishment of the Heal Street store. The level of member interest was reflected by there being, in addition to office bearers, thirteen shareholders present. A report on the plans for the refurbishment was delivered with questions over the specifics of the work to be done, including the roof repairs, air conditioning system, and final store layout. There were also routine issues regarding the opening hours of the café, and supermarket, the newsagency, and the cessation of fresh cold meat. The latter caused by non-compliant meat scales, and the decision to move to cold meat sealed in cryovac. It was also reported that the Rural Centre in Avon Street was up for sale (QFCC, 2018b).

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd. – Cornerstone of our community

Figure 35: Refurbished Heal Street supermarket 2023



Source: Tim Mazzarol (2023).

At the 2019 AGM held on 30 August, a report was delivered on the progress of the refurbishment. It was explained that the old floor tiles had had to be removed and replaced with new tiles. Also, the planned false ceiling, designed to lower the overall ceiling height, had proven to be too costly. Instead, a batten ceiling was to be installed. With the new floors laid, the store would see the installation of new shelves and refrigeration units, plus the cash registers, including the Lotteries West till. The new LED lighting had also made a significant difference to the atmosphere in the store (QFCC, 2019a).

The Chair, Trevor Bond, gave special thanks to Tarnya Fraser for her significant work in relation to the refurbishment. This had included hours of research, costings for the stages and the new refrigeration units. He also thanked the Manager Sharon Cutts for all her extra input into the store's refurbishment and also acknowledged the additional working hours put in by the staff (QFCC, 2010a).

During the board meeting held on 8 October 2019 both Tarnya Fraser and Sharon Cutts gave a report on the decision to transition from the Metcash IGA supply relationship to Foodworks. This was motivated by the need to increase the overall profitability of the Co-operative's supermarket. Mrs. Fraser also noted that she had been in negotiations with the Westpac Bank manager over increasing the loan to enhance the working capital of the Co-operative (QFCC, 2019b). She also explained that,

“The support from the community has been amazing with moving shelves, stacking shelves, ticketing etc. and people are still coming in to offer their help. Approximately 80 community members helped over the weekend and Public Holiday” (QFCC, 2019b, p. 10).

A formal opening of the new store was scheduled for Sunday 3 November 2019 (QFCC, 2019b). As shown in Figure 36, the refurbishment created a modern, brightly lit, and well-designed layout for the supermarket, which made cost-effective use of the original building, but took up only about half of the available floor space. This provided the Co-operative with a large area at the rear of the building for allocation to other purposes.

Interview with the QFCC Chair Trevor Bond

The current Chair of the QFCC, Mr. Trevor Bond, was born and raised in Quairading, and is the fourth generation of a settler family that established the family farm in the district during 1908. The first family member, Henry Bond, arrived from South Australia in the years before World War One.

Trevor joined the board in 1998 after receiving a phone call from QFCC director, Ross Banfield, who had noted that Trevor was active in the community and thought he would make a good director. He recalls the Co-operative, as he grew up in Quairading, as, *“the centre of the town”*. According to Trevor it provided such a wide range of services, e.g., drapery, haberdashery, hardware, electrical etc., virtually everything that you might need. As he remembers,

“When I was younger, as a child, there were a number of farmers who would stop work on a Friday afternoon, come to town, effectively for a social outing, meet in the street, have a chat, go to the club, knock back a few beers, and shop at the Co-op.”

Trevor also remembers that while his parents shopped at the Co-operative, there were other stores in the town, and they would also shop around, so as to support these other merchants. There were also agencies for Elders, Wesfarmers, and Western Livestock. He admitted that the Co-operative was often a key competitor with local merchants that attempted to set up in competition. The example given was that of a small fruit and vegetable store that opened in the 1980s in competition to the Co-operative. This actually helped to improve the quality of the fruit and vegetables sold at the Co-operative, but it was not easy for the smaller vendors to compete. This led to the declaration of, *“Bloody Co-op”* within these sections of the community.

His decision to join the QFCC board in 1998 was motivated by his view that the Co-operative played a key role in the Quairading community. However, he stated that at that time the Co-operative was, *“in a bad way”*, and had he known about its financial position he might not have agreed to join the board. According to Trevor, *“We were going broke fast”*. He explained that one of the biggest problems the board had was the validity of the financial data being presented to them by the management.

Trevor recalls that George W. Anderson was also elected to the board in 1998. They were both surprised and shocked by the state of the Co-operative’s finances. The Managing Secretary at the time was Barry Kirk, who the board replaced the following year with Gary Duperouzel, although he only served until 2000, when he was replaced by Ian Morgan, who only lasted from 2000 to 2002.



Trevor recalls that the board had to terminate the tenure of Barry Kirk, and that Gary Duperouzel found the financial situation facing the business too much of a challenge. When Ian Morgan arrived, the situation had become so bad that the directors had to purchase stock that they really didn't need, in order to generate sufficient cashflow to pay the wages of the employees. Trevor considered Ian Morgan (who had been an accountant within QFCC) to have done well considering the circumstances at that time. The next manager Gloria Stone, who Trevor described as, "*a real hard worker with great management skills*", had come up from the shop floor and her partner had a finance background.

Later, when Harry Bowling took on the role of Manager between 2007 to 2009, he did not conduct a stocktake during the first two years. According to Trevor, Harry Bowling, was recruited from outside with the assistance of a consultant, Rob Hubbard who assisted other companies such as the York and District Co-operative Ltd. Mr. Bowling had a solid management background, and had operated his own TAB Agency, but he lacked the experience of operating a supermarket and hardware business. He had a vision of turning the QFCC store into a trading market space that would provide the floor area but have independent merchants operating within it. This was rejected by the board.

When Harry Bowling left, he recommended Laurel Maynard for the manager's position. However, although she served in the role from 2009 to 2012, having been promoted up from within the QFCC, the role, which included being Secretary during the final year, proved to be too demanding for her. He remembers Laurel as a "*lovely person*" who was well respected by the employees and customers, and who was dedicated. However, the complexity that was involved in balancing the budget and ensuring the payroll costs were kept within guidelines became too much of a challenge for her. In addition to the management of the payroll, there were also the pressures of inventory management and regular stocktaking, which he said, "*became a huge issue*". Even with outside assistance, the Co-operative still struggled to get on top of the stock management.

The early 2000s were also a period of increasing regulation and compliance requirements that had an impact on the Co-operative in relation to work health and safety (WHS), fuel storage, vehicle and equipment maintenance. These increased compliance costs in money terms and management time, added to the financial stress. At that time there was a change in the nature of the business operations across the Wheatbelt, with smaller operators closing down, or being acquired by larger ones.

Trevor gave the example of a fuel supplier based in Northam, who approached the QFCC to take over their fuel delivery business, and operate it over time, paying a fee to the Co-operative for this. Although this agreement worked well for the QFCC, it did result in the loss of employees, particularly the fuel truck driver, who whilst excellent at his job in many ways, was a smoker and resistant to the newly introduced WHS operating regulations which included safety clothing.

He noted that for many years the Co-operative had been in a "*survival mode*" with the board concerned over how long the company could continue to absorb the losses. There were issues with the ability of the accounting systems in the '*grocery manager*' and '*Cybus*' systems to communicate. This required manual entry where customers' accounts needed to be recorded across the two software platforms. Attempts had been made to fix the problem but the only solution was to replace the "*Grocery Manager*" system, but the cost was too high.

Since becoming Chair in 2003 Trevor has seen a high turnover of managers and also the challenge of bringing the QFCC back into financial success.



According to Trevor, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was fortuitous and coincided with both the appointment of Tarnya Fraser to the board, and the decision to renovate the Co-operative's store. This brought the overall size of the shop floor down considerably, which improved the efficiency of the business, and also ensured that the community had to shop locally, which boosted the annual turnover. The community's engagement in the store renovation helped to boost the sense of local ownership within Quairading and rebuild the image of the Co-operative that had become somewhat tarnished. He explained that since the COVID-19 pandemic and its lockdowns the community was much more committed to the Co-operative as a place to shop, and the gross profit margins had increased, which helped to improve the financial position of the QFCC.

Source: Bond (2023).

THE QFCC IN THE 2020S

With the success of the refurbishment of the Co-operative's Heal Street store, the QFCC entered the decade of the 2020s in an optimistic light. At the AGM held on 25 September 2020, and with the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated regional lockdowns in place, the mood was quite positive. The Manager, Sharon Cutts, reported that she was very pleased with the way in which the Co-operative was going, and noted that Sunday trading was "doing well". She explained that after suffering a loss of \$115,000 (approx. \$137,361 in 2024 dollars) in the previous financial year, the Co-operative had subsequently generated a profit of \$67,000 (approx. \$80,028 in 2024 dollars) (QFCC, 2020).

There was a question from the shareholders as to whether the Co-operative was on track to pay off its loan to the Westpac Bank. Mrs. Cutts responded that the QFCC was "ticking along well" and was on track to repay the loan. She explained that the COVID-19 pandemic had been good for the Co-operative because the lock downs had made it necessary for the community to shop locally, which made a significant difference. When asked if this boost in sales was due to the COVID-19 lockdowns or the refurbishment of the store, Mrs. Cutts opined that it was "a bit of both" (QFCC, 2020, p. 12).

Also discussed at the AGM was the leasing of the Avon Street building, and what to do with the back area of the refurbished store. In relation to the Avon Street store, it was explained that it had been taken off the for-sale market. Instead, the premises were to be leased by Nutrien Ag Solutions with the long-term future of the building yet to be decided. As for the rear area of the Heal Street building, it was explained that it could be leased to another business. The Co-operative would only need to retain some areas used for cool rooms and storage (QFCC, 2020).

The following year, the AGM was held on 27 August 2021. Sharon Cutts, in her Manager's report, explained that the boost in patronage by local shoppers had continued, suggesting that the QFCC had successfully retained the community's loyalty. She also noted that the solar panels had made a substantial improvement in lowering the Co-operative's power bills, as had the installation of LED lights and new refrigeration units. Additionally, the café bar located at the front of the store was doing extremely well and the staff manning the bar were very busy with coffee and take away food. When asked if it was feasible to install tables where people might sit and enjoy their coffees, a motion was made and carried for this to be investigated (QFCC, 2021).

Another matter discussed was the need for a liquor licence to operate a liquor store. The Chair, Trevor Bond, explained that he had received significant feedback from the community in relation to the service at the Quairading Hotel. He stated that it was up to the shareholders to guide the board as to what they wanted the Co-operative to do in relation to the hotel or the liquor store. A shareholder Mr. J. Hards made the comment that the Co-operative would be better to use its money to buy the café than the pub. Another shareholder, Mrs. Jo Hayes, stated that the COVID pandemic had demonstrated the value of the Co-operative to the local community. She asked if the Co-operative's board could investigate the viability of establishing a liquor store. This led to a motion, moved by Mrs. Hayes, and seconded by Mr. P. O'Hare, for the board to undertake a feasibility study on the establishment of a liquor store. The motion was carried. A Mr. R. Crombie also noted that the Corrigin IGA had opened a liquor store without any negative impact on the local hotel or club (QFCC, 2021).

The 2022 AGM was held on 23 September and attracted fourteen shareholders. In the follow up to the minutes of the previous AGM, the Chair, Trevor Bond, reported that the 38 Avon Street store had been leased by Hutton and Northey Sales, an agricultural services and supplies firm with branches in Merredin, Mukinbudin, Cunderdin, and Corrigin. He also stated that the profits of the Co-operative were looking positive and the café alone had turned over \$20,000 for the month of August. According to Mr. Bond, Sunday trading had proven successful and did not seem to have had any impact on Monday trading (QFCC, 2022).

Figure 36: Proximity of Quairading Hotel to the QFCC Supermarket



Source: Tim Mazzarol (2023).



With respect to the liquor store feasibility study, Mr. Bond explained that the Quairading Hotel had just come under the management of a new licensee. For this reason, the board had decided to put the liquor store idea on hold. As shown in Figure 37, the Quairading Hotel and the QFCC supermarket are located side-by-side on Heal Street. The issue of competing with the hotel in terms of liquor sales appears to have been a factor in determining whether the Co-operative went to the challenge of securing a liquor license (QFCC, 2022).

In 2021 the QFCC received a Recognition of Achievement Award from the Shire of Quairading acknowledging its outstanding service to the community, in particular for its response during the COVID-19 pandemic. During 2022, the QFCC was awarded the Business of the Year at the prestigious Wheatbelt Excellence Awards, run by the Wheatbelt Business Network, and in 2023, the Co-operative made the front page of the Australian Retailers Magazine (QFCC, 2023a).

By 2023, the QFCC had achieved sales of over \$4.4 million with a gross profit of more than \$1.16 million, and a net profit before tax of \$71,482 (QFCC, 2023b). In reporting to shareholders, the Chair, Trevor Bond made the following statement,

“On behalf of the directors of the Quairading Farmer's Co-operative I present the 2023 Annual Report. Revenue from ordinary activities for the year ending 31st March 2023 was \$4,439,643. Once again, an increase of 11% on last year (2022: \$3,908,412). The Board is very pleased to announce a profit of \$71,482. Whilst there was no noteworthy capital expenditure or repairs and maintenance this year, we were once again faced with significant increases in insurance, interest and wages.

On a positive note, we continue to see an increase in customer numbers and support given by our shareholders and community. In October, we were delighted to be awarded the Wheatbelt Business of the Year award. It is a great honour and recognition of everyone who has been involved with the Co-op in the past few years.

Whilst the Board and Management enjoy and appreciate our recent success, we are aware of the challenges that lie ahead of our community and co-op and have recently engaged Retail Services company to assist us with strategic planning to take us through the next decade. We will undertake an in-depth analysis of our current business and structure to see what we need to do to service the needs of our shareholders and community in years to come.

On behalf of the Directors and Shareholders I sincerely thank and congratulate the Manager/Secretary Sharon Cutts and her team for their hard work and for another outstanding year. Thank you to our loyal shareholders and shoppers for your support of our proudly community owned Quairading Farmer's Co-operative” (QFCC, 2023, p. 3).

SUMMING UP THE QFCC IN THE 2010S AND INTO THE 2020S

The decade of the 2010s and the early years of the 2020s had seen the QFCC overcome its financial stresses that had commenced in the 1990s and been a major area of concern and focus in the 2000s. During the 2010s the Co-operative had overcome its managerial challenges and found a more stable and committed management team. The short tenure of Ian Morgan gave way to the slightly longer terms held by Gloria Stone, Harry Bowling, and Laurel Maynard, before the appointment of Sharon Cutts who, at time of writing, was into her thirteenth year as the Managing Secretary of the QFCC.



While many businesses and communities around the world experienced serious economic and financial problems during the COVID-19 pandemic, for the QFCC, the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 boosted local community patronage. In turn, this enabled the Co-operative to move back into profit, and the refurbishment of the Heal Street store in 2019 came just in time to take advantage of the enhanced patronage. It also made it possible for the QFCC to repay the loans it had secured from the local Westpac Bank branch. Summing up the future outlook for the QFCC, the Chair, Trevor Bond made the following comments,

“We are well aware that we have a captive audience, and we can only rely on so much traffic passing through. Our community doesn’t look as if it going to expand. We have considered whether we might use the Co-op as a not-for-profit progress association. We need to attract new businesses here to complement what we’ve already got. We’ve just had Rob Hubbard doing a 15-year outlook for us” (Bond, 2023).

CHAPTER 14: APPLYING THE CME RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for research into co-operative enterprise is focused on understanding the business model of the co-operative and mutual enterprise (CME), and how it is influenced by, and in-turn influences, systems and member level factors (Mazzarol, et al., 2014).

At the systems level, which relates to the external environment, there are four major inputs (i.e., social cooperation, role of government, industry structure, natural environment), and two major outputs (i.e., economic, and social capital formation). These elements also interact with each other within the systems architecture. This views a social system as comprising six key elements (Luhmann, 1984; Mattheis, 2012):

1. *Communication* – all systems are social in nature and therefore it is essential that a system has communication between the actors within it, and between systems.
2. *Autopoiesis* – a Greek word for ‘self-creating’ or ‘self-making’, recognising that all systems must be able to replicate, adapt and evolve using communication to exchange knowledge and ideas, resulting in learning, amongst the actors within the system.
3. *Differentiation* – all systems are autopoietic systems (social structures) that operate within the wider environment and are differentiated and independent from each other.
4. *Operative closure* – each system can isolate (close) itself to develop its own unique systems-specific activities.
5. *Functional differentiation* – due to differentiation and operative closure, each system can evolve its own unique characteristics that can create functional and dysfunctional interactions between different systems within the environment.
6. *Structural couplings* – where two or more systems recognise the need to link together, they create inter-system relationships that open *structural holes* between them enabling an exchange of communication relaying ideas, information, and knowledge (Burt, 1992a/b).

Social systems are self-forming, complex, and dynamic. They involve interaction and behaviour at the individual, group, and organisational levels, through which change is achieved within the broader environment (De Haan, 2006). The creation of social systems is generated through both formal and informal networks of individuals and organisations that have common interests, and/or resource dependencies (Jessop, 1997; Klijin & Koppenjan, 2000).

A CME is a social system and has all six attributes outlined above. It operates within a systems level environment in which all other social systems (both formal and informal) operate. These other social systems interact with the CME, and the components of its business model (e.g., purpose, profit formula, processes, resources, share structure, and governance), which influence its ability to deliver a compelling member value proposition (MVP) to its membership. Key areas of interaction are social cooperation between individuals and organisations, government legal and regulatory systems, market competition within industry structure, and the environment.

At the member level, the framework examines the four roles or “hats” that the member wears (e.g., investor, patron, owner, member of a community of purpose) (Mamouni Limnios et al., 2018). Members loyalty and commitment to the CME is influenced by how well the enterprise addresses the needs of its members (both manifest and latent) through its ability to generate and sustain a member value proposition (MVP) (Suter & Gmür, 2013).

In the following sections the history of The Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative Ltd. (QFCC) is examined and the lessons it provides are discussed, with a summary of these issues found in the Appendix A.

ASSESSING THE CRITICAL EVENTS THAT HAVE FACED THE QFCC

This study has identified several critical events over the 109-year history of the QFCC. A critical event is defined here as a contingent event that is causally important for an outcome at a specific time that has longer-term strategic consequences. It is important to summarise these events to provide a historical context against which the QFCC can be examined using the conceptual framework. As outline in this case study the QFCC has faced five critical events that risked its future viability and required strategic and operational responses from the QFCC board and management to address.

THE FIRST CRITICAL EVENT – WHO IS A MEMBER AND WHAT IS THE PURPOSE?

The first critical event facing the QFCC were the decisions as to who should be a member of the Co-operative and what should its purpose be as a result. At the general ‘statutory’ meeting held on 17 March 1917 the articles of association were adopted, the first board was elected, and the first manager and secretary appointed. However, at that same meeting Mr. C. R. Green asked the Chair, Mr. W. Wishart whether or not it was compulsory for all shareholders to be farmers. In response Mr. Wishart stated that he personally felt it would not be advisable to issue shares to non-farmers. However, he also noted that it was up to the board to decide who could own shares.

This was a relatively small matter at the time. However, it represented a major strategic decision that would have implications for the Co-operative over the long term. One of the most important initial decisions that a co-operative or mutual enterprise should take is to ascertain who can become members. This is often defined by the purpose for which the company is established but is of strategic importance due to the fact that where there are members with quite different needs, the overall governance of the business can become more challenging.

Like many of the co-operatives established in the WA Wheatbelt during the First World War and early 1920s with the support of the Farmers and Settlers Association (FSA) and Wesfarmers, the primary focus was on farmers. This was motivated by the FSA and Wesfarmers desire to assist the farming community, and also to create a distribution network and both a buyer and supplier base across the region. With the farmers as the dominant shareholders, the products and services distributed by the QFCC were focused on satisfying the needs of the farming community within the Quairading district.

However, as time passed, and with the decline of the farming community on a per capita basis in 1970s and 1980s, the overall shareholder base decreased. Then, following the introduction of the *Co-operatives Act, 2009 (WA)*, the inactive member provisions, required many shareholders to be

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paid out, further shrinking the membership base. In its present form, the QFCC retains the word “Farmers” in its title, but has a customer base that is mainly non-shareholders, and also many shareholders who are not farmers.

As noted in Chapter 13, the QFCC has struggled to maintain its financial viability, and has shrunk its retailing operations accordingly. At time of writing, the QFCC was financially sound, but also considering what its purpose should be. It is no longer just a farmers’ co-operative, and is now beginning to consider whether its purpose might focus on the support and development of the larger Quairading district community,

THE SECOND CRITICAL EVENT – DECIDING ON THE RANGE OF SERVICES

The second critical event also took place during the 1916-1917 as the QFCC was in its formative stage. Although it had decided to focus its membership on the farming community, the range of services that it would offer had yet to be confirmed. During that time one of the founding directors, Mr. B. M. Solomon spent considerable time visiting Perth and holding negotiations with Wesfarmers, and the local representatives from a wide range of international and national firms in areas such as farm machinery, household goods, linen, clothing, and kitchenware. He also spent time investigating the opportunity of establishing a bacon factory in Quairading, corresponding with various State Ministers over the matter. Discussions were also held with Life Insurance Mutuals over the QFCC being an agent for these within the district.

During the Co-operatives’ Conference held by Wesfarmers on 27 June 1917, which was attended by the Chair, Mr. Wishart and Mr. Solomon, it became clear that the QFCC would be part of a network of regional co-operatives adhering to the seven principles of the Co-operative movement while employing a unified system of bookkeeping, dividend and bonus distribution, and working as an agent for Wesfarmers across the full-range of goods and services. This essentially limited the independence of the QFCC, while also providing it with the bargaining power of Wesfarmers in relation to negotiations with larger suppliers both domestic and international.

The strategic importance of this event was not realised until the demutualisation of Wesfarmers in 1984. This occurred at a time when the economic and social structure of the WA Wheatbelt was transformed, with farms growing larger and more capital intensive, and the rural population shrinking. The demographic changes impacted the QFCC’s business and contributed to the falling profitability and financial problems the Co-operative experienced during the 1990s. Although many other factors that impacted the fortunes of the QFCC in the 1990s and 2000s, the heavy reliance that the Co-operative had upon its relationship with Wesfarmers meant that was not as well prepared for an independent existence as it might have been.

For example, the York and District Co-operative Ltd. (YDC), changed its name from “Farmers” to “District” Co-operative as early as December 1955. This signalled the strategic shift for that firm to widen its purpose from serving the needs of the local farming community to serving the needs of the entire York district community. It coincided with the acquisition by the YDC of its current main store in Avon Terrace, York, and enabled the Co-operative to prepare itself for the changes that took place within the increasingly competitive market environment during the 1980s and 1990s (Mazzarol, van Aurich & Baskerville, 2025).

THE THIRD CRITICAL EVENT – MANAGING THE MANAGER AND FINDING A HOMEBASE

The third critical event also took place in the QFCC's formative years. During 1918 transition from the Chairmanship of Mr. W. Wishart to Mr. B. M. Solomon coincided with the need for the board to address the apparent malfeasance perpetrated by the Co-operative's Manager Mr. G. E. Cliff. This matter was dealt with rather quietly within the confines of the board room, but it set in train a process of finding a suitable manager that became a pattern for the QFCC in later years.

Following the departure of Mr. Cliff in 1918, the QFCC had a high turnover rate for managers, with Mr. W. H. Phippard (1918-1919), Mr. E. W. Woods (1919-1920), and Mr. B. M. Solomon (1920) rotating through the position until the arrival of Mr. E. J. Hadlow (1920-1925) and then the longer tenures of Mr. William E. Wishart (1925-1935), Mr. William "Bill" Blackwell (1935-1948), Mr. Walter "Wally" Knox (1948-1956), and Mr. Charles "Charlie" Lindorff (1956-1987). This high churn over within the senior management team returned in the 1990s and 2000s with negative impacts on the Co-operative's financial situation.

While the management issue was being addressed, the QFCC also faced the challenge of finding a permanent homebase for its retailing and agency operations. Although there were offers for the QFCC to lease existing sites such as "Horgan's Building", the board made the decision in February 1919 to build a new facility, which was constructed in Heal Street. This provided the Co-operative with a freehold title to the site and secure a permanent homebase for the QFCC to operate from.

THE FOURTH CRITICAL EVENT – OPENING A GENERAL STORE

The fourth critical event was the decision, taken during the 1920s, to expand the Co-operative's business operations by opening a general store. This process commenced during the time when Mr. E. J. Hadlow was the QFCC Manager. He recommended that the Co-operative move away from being just an agency for Wesfarmers and establish a general store. At that time the Co-operative was still generating good revenue from handling the annual grain harvest for Wesfarmers, but the move towards bulk grain handling and storage was already well-advanced.

Initial discussions with Mr. George Mavros over the QFCC acquiring his existing general store did not proceed due to vendor offering "unattractive" terms of sale. Instead, the QFCC decided to raise the necessary capital from its members and establish its own general store. However, despite the shareholders agreeing to this, the board deferred the process due to the striking of an agreement between The Co-operatives Federation of WA and Wesfarmers for the Federation to assume control over wholesale groceries. Nevertheless, little seems to have come from the wholesale grocery deal, and by 1929 the QFCC had established a general store offering not only groceries, but a drapery, haberdashery, hardware supplies, farming supplies (e.g., fertilisers and jute bags), motor cars and trucks, kitchen stoves and ovens, and both general and life insurance.

It was a major strategic transformation that enabled the QFCC to avoid the loss of income from the annual grain handling that effectively disappeared following establishment of CBH Ltd., in 1933. In addition, it provided the Co-operative with a wide range of goods and services, setting it up as almost a 'one-stop-shop' within the Quairading district, and across the wider community of the central Wheatbelt.

THE FIFTH CRITICAL EVENT – THE DANGIN CO-OP ACQUISITION

The fifth critical event was the decision in 1954 by the QFCC board to acquire the failing Dangin and South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd. (DSCCS), which was formally approved at the 1955 AGM. This led to the QFCC taking over the DSCCS and bringing its shareholders into the QFCC's share register. The acquisition process continued from 1955, with the closure of the Dangin general store, until 1958 when the DSCCS was finally wound-up.

This event may be viewed as an example of the QFCC actively engaging in the sixth Co-operative Principle of "Cooperation among Co-operatives". Which was well-demonstrated in the previous years, commencing in 1937 with the establishment of a joint venture bakery shared between the QFCC, DSCCS, and Balkuling Co-operative Society Ltd. (BCS), known as the BDQ Bakery.

This collaborative venture was then used as the model for the establishment of a joint venture motor engineering workshop, the BDQ Engineering Works, which was founded in 1948 after several years of collaborative negotiations between the three co-operatives. At the opening of ceremony for the BDQ Engineering Works held in Quairading on 3 July 1948, Charles Walter Harper, the Chair of The Co-operative Federation of WA, described the collaboration and the QFCC in particular as "an excellent example of the Co-operative movement" (York Chronicle, 1948a, p. 6).

These joint ventures and the subsequent acquisition of the DSCCS, were strategic decisions that carried with them a degree of financial and reputational risk. Although both the BDQ Bakery and BDQ Engineering Works were ultimately unsuccessful, they demonstrated the willingness of the QFCC and its neighbouring Co-operatives to embrace the sixth Co-operative principle and work collaboratively in order to share the financial and commercial risk of these ventures, while also providing their respective communities with products and services that might otherwise have been unavailable.

THE SIXTH CRITICAL EVENT – THE FINANCIAL AND MANAGERIAL CRISES OF THE 1990S

The sixth critical event was associated with the financial and managerial crises that impacted the QFCC during the 1990s. This included the steady decline in profitability of the Co-operative, which became apparent from the commencement of the decade. The comparatively good financial results experienced by the QFCC during the 1980s became a benchmark for the significantly poorer results of the 1990s. These financial trends were influenced by numerous factors that were associated with the social and economic transformation of the Wheatbelt during the 1980s and 1990s. However, they coincided with the retirement of the long-serving Manager Charlie Lindorff, and the appointment, in 1987, of an unusual dual manager structure with Bob Phillips as Store Manager and Edgar Zalaikalns as Finance Manager.

This bifurcated management structure quickly proved unworkable and led to Bob Phillips assuming the overall General Manager role, and then also the Secretary role following the resignation of Edgar Zalaikalns. The details of the Bob Phillips' term as Managing Secretary have been discussed in detail in Chapter 11. However, they demonstrate a critical event which saw the QFCC board, and the wider Quairading community, involved in a period of disharmony with positions for and against Mr. Phillips.

The resignation of Bob Phillips in 1993 then led to a period of relative instability with a high turnover of managers commencing with Ian Klopper (1993-1995), then Barry Kirk (1995-1999), followed by Gary Duperouzel (1999-2000), and Ian Morgan (2000-2002). To the present day, the former directors and many shareholders retain mixed memories of Bob Phillips and era of the 1990s.

Among these perspectives was the decision by the QFCC to expand the motor dealership of the Co-operative from Quairading to Corrigin, Merredin, and Kellerberrin, with these branches being operated under a subsidiary business known as “Westlink”. This business venture still raises the ire of some within the Quairading community, who feel that the QFCC wasted the financial resources of the Co-operative, particularly the Wesfarmers and Foodland shares it owned, to pursue the “Westlink” venture that offered little value and contributed little to the district and QFCC shareholders.

THE SEVENTH CRITICAL EVENT – FINANCIAL RESTRUCTURING THE CO-OP WAY

The seventh critical event occurred in the 2000s with the decision taken by the board in the period 2000-2001 to significantly restructure the QFCC’s operations in order to reduce costs and increase productivity, while concurrently approaching the shareholders to purchase redeemable preference shares in order to help recapitalise the Co-operative. This process was led by the Chair, Daryl Richards, who explained to the shareholders at the 2001 AGM the financial situation facing the Co-operative and the need for a recapitalisation of the company in order to enable it to repay its outstanding debt obligations.

In his address to the members, Daryl Richards spoke of the importance of the Co-operative to the Quairading district and its community. He spoke honestly about the management and governance of the QFCC in the previous years, accepting the mistakes made, but highlighting the need to retain the Co-operative and linking the fortunes and future of the QFCC with the town. This seems to have been favourably received by the majority of the shareholders, and during the Special General Meeting held on 19 October 2001, the air was cleared with shareholders voicing their criticism of managers and directors from the Co-operative who were no longer serving. However, it seems to have been a cathartic exercise and laid the groundwork for what was a successful resolution to issue redeemable preference shares with a par value of \$2, and minimum purchase of 125 shares designed to raise a maximum of \$100,000.

By 2004 the loans owed by the QFCC had been repaid, and the Co-operative commenced a slow but steady financial recovery. Nevertheless, the Co-operative needed to manage its operations more carefully and repay the preference shares to the fifty-nine out of 494 shareholders who had purchased the shares. It served as an illustration of the way in which a Co-operative can refinance itself by calling on the loyalty and commitment of its members to purchase shares in order to build up the working capital of the company without having to resort to further debt or place the mutuality of the Co-operative at risk.

THE EIGHTH CRITICAL EVENT – TURNING A PANDEMIC INTO AN OPPORTUNITY

The eighth critical event occurred in the years 2019-2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. As discussed in Chapter 13, the impact of the pandemic on Australia and the decision by the WA State

Government to impose regional lockdowns, created an opportunity for the QFCC to rebuild its relationship with the community and enhance their loyalty. The pandemic coincided with the decision by the board to refurbish the Heal Street store, reducing the total floor area, upgrading the shelving and refrigeration units, and fitting new lighting, ceilings and floor coverings.

These renovations took place during 2018-2019 and included the fitting of new air conditioning, roof repairs, and the installation of new cash registers. This work was completed just in time for the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the district lockdowns meant that the community were forced to shop locally, which boosted the sales turnover of the QFCC. As a result, the overall profit of the company rose significantly, and placed the QFCC into a stronger position than it had seen since the end of the 1980s.

Although the QFCC was not the only regional retail co-operative to enjoy benefits from the COVID lockdowns, its major refurbishment program, organisational restructuring, and leasing of unused properties to other businesses, all contributed to the financial turnaround.

SYSTEMS LEVEL ANALYSIS – INPUT FACTORS

As the narrative history of QFCC suggests, the foundation of the enterprise was influenced by the four input factors, which continued to play a role in shaping its fortunes throughout its life.

SOCIAL COOPERATION

The creation of CMEs requires the existence within the community that form them of a sense of common or shared goals and values, as well as a sense of community that will facilitate mutual trust and respect. Further, for successful creation of a CME, the community must possess at least three things: i) resources (e.g., time, capital, skills); ii) mobilisation (e.g., mutual needs, common goals); and iii) motivations (e.g., desire to cooperate and sustain collaborative effort) (Birchall & Simmons, 2004).

As discussed in Chapter 3, the QFCC was created as a result of the Co-operative movement that had emerged in WA during the late nineteenth century, and which had become influential within the farming communities. The foundation of the Farmers' and Settlers' Association (FSA) in 1912 led to the establishment of Westralian Farmers Ltd. (Wesfarmers) in 1914, followed in 1919 by The Co-operative Federation of WA (Co-operatives WA). These organisations were established to pursue various purposes designed to benefit the farming community. The FSA played a key role in countering the rise of the Rural Workers' Union, and their push to increase the wages of rural workers.

By contrast, the roles of Wesfarmers and Co-operatives WA, were, the case of the first, to provide the farmers with a company that could enhance their economic bargaining power via collective supply and purchasing. In the case of the second, the purpose was to provide a peak coordinating organisation for the network of regional co-operatives that were established across the state as part of the business model formulated for Wesfarmers. Key actors in this process were people like Charles Walter Harper, Alexander Joseph Monger, and Thomas Henry Bath who were the pioneers of the WA Co-operative movement.

In terms of **resources**, the foundation of the QFCC was facilitated by the local farmers ability and willingness to support the Co-operative by buying shares and trading with it. They purchased supplies from its stores and sold their grain and livestock through it when it acted as an agent for Wesfarmers. From a **mobilisation** perspective, the active engagement of the Quairading farmers in supporting the QFCC reflected their trust in the FSA, Wesfarmers and the advocates who came to their town and spoke passionately about the Co-operative movement. The later emergence of Co-operatives WA enabled the commercial and economic benefits offered by Wesfarmers, to be balanced by the social and ideological contributions of the Federation. From a **motivation's** perspective, the farmers supported the QFCC because they believed it would improve their farming businesses. It offered them better bargaining power for supplies and household products, as well as financial benefits like dividends, rebates, and discounts. Additionally, it provided them with collective ownership of the Co-operative.

From a **systems perspective**, the establishment of the QFCC created a central platform for the local farming community to network and systematically engage with larger networks facilitated by Wesfarmers, the FSA, and Co-operatives WA. These organisations provided the necessary *structural couplings* within which the QFCC could exchange information and knowledge. This process was facilitated by its community leaders to enhance its operational efficiency and commercial activities. Over time, the QFCC evolved with Wesfarmers leading its commercial operations and Co-operatives WA ensuring its effective operation. The FSA (later known as the Farmers' Union and WA Farmers' Federation) also maintained its connections to rural politics.

Loyalty to the QFCC by the Quairading community has continued, with a transition since the 1980s from a predominately farmer-centric organisation to that of a community-wide one. This transition evolved along with the social and demographic transformation of the district during the decades of economic and structural change that occurred during the 1970s. Although the QFCC remains a Co-operative owned predominately by farmers, its focus and purpose has moved to embracing the entire community of the Quairading district, and supply and distribution of a range of products and services that offer convenience and benefits to the community.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Governments play a crucial role in shaping the fate of CMEs. This can take the form of setting legal and regulatory frameworks that enable these enterprises to form, and operate with protections for their members, and benefits such as tax concessions and protected trading environments. However, they can also negatively impact CMEs by introducing market deregulation leading to increased market competition. The regulatory environment in which the QFCC was established included the *Co-operative and Provident Societies Act 1903* (WA). This statute, one of the first introduced across the British Empire and outside the United Kingdom, provided a dedicated legislative framework for Co-operatives. It outlined how the Board should operate the Co-operative and facilitated its governance. The *Wheat Pool Act 1932*, *Debts Adjustment Amendment Act 1931*, and *Bulk Handling Act 1935* in Western Australia supported the QFCC during the Great Depression. These acts provided vital assistance to grain-producing shareholders through bulk grain handling, storage benefits, and debt relief, helping maintain their economic stability and continued support for the QFCC.

Many of the regular changes to the Co-operative's Articles of Association that occurred during its history were motivated by changes to State legislation. This occurred in 1930 following changes to the *Companies Act, Amendment Act 1929* (WA). Later, in 1946, following the establishment of the BDQ Engineering Works, attempts to get the joint venture registered as a co-operative were rejected by the WA Supreme Court, and the only option was to register it as a separate company, and to have the Articles of Association of both the QFCC and the Balkuling BCS amended, or for the two co-operatives to transfer their registration to the *Friendly Societies Act*. This transfer was given serious consideration and approved in 1947, only to be stopped by the State Registrar who imposed conditions on the QFCC making it unacceptable. When the *Co-operatives Act 2009* (WA) was introduced the QFCC had to replace its entire Articles of Association with a new set of "rules" that were consistent with the new legislation and designed for a distributing co-operative. Finally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, regional lockdowns by the WA State Government led to increased local shopping. This boosted profits at the Supermarket and Hardware stores in 2020. The community continued to shop locally even after the pandemic.

INDUSTRY STRUCTURE

Industry structure is influenced by five competitive forces that shape business strategy (Porter, 2008). These forces include the level of competitive rivalry in a market, the power of buyers and suppliers, and the threats posed by substitutes and new market entrants. CMEs can use collective efforts to challenge market distortions caused by monopolies, increasing bargaining power for buyers or suppliers. This model allows small producers or individual households to pool resources, compete with monopolists, or offer substitute services.

As outlined in this historical case study the QFCC has operated across a wide range of industries during its history. These have included grain handling, livestock and rural real estate agency, insurance (both life and general), fuels and oils distribution, bottle gas, motor vehicle and farm machinery sales and support, bakery, newsagency, hardware, groceries, supermarket, electrical goods, white goods, clothing, haberdashery, drapery, and farming supplies. It became a one-stop-shop for the local community, and both competed and collaborated with privately owned firms, and other co-operatives (e.g., BDQ Bakery, and BDQ Engineering Works).

This 'jack of all trades master of none', strategy made sense for a regional co-operative that saw its purpose to be one of providing the necessary goods and services needed by its local community. Over time, as the socio-demographic character of the Quairading district changed, and competition from larger stores in Northam, Midland and greater Perth increased, the QFCC had to reduce its range of business activities and focus on providing a core retailing service comprising a supermarket, grocery and café takeaway business.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Geography significantly influences human activity and shapes business behaviour and industry operations (Banerjee, Iyer & Kashyap, 2003). The natural environment's impact on the QFCC is best understood by examining its effect on the farming community, its members. In 1914, a severe drought led to an 80 per cent reduction in grain production, coinciding with the outbreak of the First World War and demands from the RWU for higher wages. This context led to Wesfarmers' formation, which aimed to establish farmers' co-operatives across the Wheatbelt.

In the 1930s, the Great Depression severely affected wheat and sheep prices, and droughts from 1935 to 1940 worsened conditions for Quairading district farmers. Despite these challenges, the Co-operative traded successfully, issuing annual dividends and rebates for most of the decade. By the 1970s the Wheatbelt was again impacted by drought and the oversupply of wheat on global markets.

In 1972 the winter rains failed and the districts of Quairading, York, and Northam saw crop failures due to high temperatures and dry conditions. There were also concerns over the availability of farm water supplies. However, despite the difficult start to the 1970s, the QFCC was able to pay trading bonuses and issue dividends throughout the decade. During the 1980s land conservation and the need to focus on sustainable farming became a major area of focus. The QFCC enjoyed a period of growth and rising sales and profitability.

Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated State Government imposed lockdowns, proved a significant benefit to the QFCC as it required the community to shop locally. This assisted the QFCC to build up both its profits and the loyalty of the Quairading community.

ENTERPRISE LEVEL ANALYSIS – ASSESSING THE BUSINESS MODEL

The main elements of the enterprise level analysis are the purpose and member value proposition (MVP), governance, share structure, profit formula, key processes, and key resources (Mazzarol et al., 2018).

PURPOSE

The purpose of a CME is essentially its mission, defining the reasons for which it was established and the parameters of its operations. As outlined in Chapter 3, the FSA meeting held in Quairading on 22 December 1916 that led to the establishment of the QFCC was addressed by Mr. J. McGregor from Wesfarmers who spoke to the meeting about the co-operative business model and the benefits that it offered to farmers. His exact speech cannot be found, but he gave a similar speech to the farmers at Beverley when promoting the establishment of a co-operative in that district the following year.

In his speech Mr. McGregor focused on the primary purpose of co-operating was the ability for farmers to enhance their economic bargaining power, cut out the middlemen and increase their overall purchasing power. He stated that,

“... by uniting together, the farmers could obtain much better terms than buying separately as individuals. Another benefit of co-operation was that it provided protection from monopolies” (Beverley Times, 1917, p. 2).

He also stated that attempts by others to, “float co-operative companies” had failed because a few shareholders, with more capital, purchased all the shares and took a controlling interest. Yet this would not be possible due to the ‘one-member-one-vote’ governance system of the co-operative and inability of any single person taking possession of a majority of shares. He also explained the profits that newly formed co-operatives had been able to generate, citing the example of the Dangan and South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd., which in its first five months had made

significant profits. However, he pointed out that the formation of a new co-operative required the majority of farmers within the district to join.

This speech, or at least one like it, would have been a clear motivation to the Quairading farmers, who at that time had experienced the 1914 drought and the outbreak of the First World War, but could now see rising wheat prices and a more optimistic future. The existence of Wesfarmers and the FSA, as key enabling actors, plus the momentum taking place across the Wheatbelt in the foundation of regional farmers' co-operatives would have strengthened the case for the QFCC to be established.

Although the QFCC did not clearly declare its purpose, it seems reasonable to assume that it was primarily focused on the economic enhancement of the Quairading farmers using collective action and co-operative ownership. Whatever social benefits the QFCC might have offered, and there were many, was essentially secondary to the economic ones. Furthermore, it can be seen that over the decades from its foundation in 1916 to the end of the 1980s, the Co-operative issued regular annual dividends, paid out patronage rebates and debentures, and delivered cost-effective goods and services to the shareholders.

It was not until the financial challenges of the 1990s that the QFCC ceased to issue dividends and pay trading bonuses. Since that time the Co-operative has seen the original purpose outlined in 1916 fade away. As the QFCC Chair at time of writing, Trevor Bond explained, the Co-operative is now considering whether its purpose might need to be changed from that of farmer-owned company designed to provide its shareholders with economic benefits, to that of a community-owned not-for-profit (e.g., non-distribution co-operative) focused on the economic and social development and sustainability of Quairading.

MEMBER VALUE PROPOSITION

To develop an effective MVP, a Co-operative must assess how its members perceive its value and how this value is generated within the organisation, considering both economic and social benefits. When the goals of the Co-operative and its members are aligned, it operates more efficiently than an investor-owned firm (Candemir et al., 2021).

As outlined above, the purpose of the QFCC from its inception until the 1990s was primarily to enhance the economic well-being of the farming community in the district of Quairading. There is no doubt that the Co-operative also provided employment opportunities for local people and delivered a wide range of goods and services via its various businesses activities that delivered benefits to the local community whether or not they were shareholders.

The QFCC also clearly demonstrated its ability to contribute to the development of social capital. It did so via its recruitment of directors who represented the various sub-districts within the Quairading jurisdiction, which provided local representation on the board. Additionally, the regular inclusion of social gatherings such as supper, music recitals, keynote speakers, and dances following the AGMs during years prior to the 1960s helped to strengthen community networking and social capital building.

Despite these important contributions, the principle focus of the QFCC's MVP was the regular delivery of competitively priced goods and services, plus annual trading bonuses (e.g., rebates and debentures), and dividends. These economic benefits were consistently delivered by the QFCC from its establishment in 1916-1917 through to the end of the 1980s. After this the QFCC's financial situation began to deteriorate accompanied by a loss of social capital caused by the controversial tenure of the Manager Bob Phillips during the early 1990s.

The renaissance that the QFCC enjoyed following the refurbishment of the Heal Street store in 2018-2019, and the lockdowns during 2020-2022, has rebuilt community loyalty. However, the MVP shifted from the delivery of economic well-being to the farming community, to the economic and social well-being of the entire Quairading district. This had not been formally articulated at time of writing, although the statement of Trevor Bond in 2023 while being interviewed for this history suggests that it is something being considered by the QFCC board.

GOVERNANCE

The effectiveness of a CME's operations depends on the composition, quality, and character of its Board of Directors. Cornforth (2004) suggests that co-operative boards can be classified into at least six different types depending on the interrelationship between the board, the management, and the members. During the lifecycle of a Co-operative its governance can move between these six types.

The first of these types is that of “**compliance**”, where the interests of the member shareholders and the company's management are not the same. In this case the role of the board is to oversee the work of the management team to ensure that they comply with their responsibilities and duties. During its history the QFCC board has demonstrated this behaviour. For example, the termination of the Managing Secretary Mr. G. E. Cliff by the board in 1918 for alleged malfeasance was an early example of the board acting to protect the interests of the Co-operative and its shareholders. This same behavioural type emerged during the early 1990s when Bob Phillips was the Managing Secretary, and also during the years that followed his departure when there was a high turnover of managers requiring the board to become more hands on.

The second governance type proposed by Cornforth (2004) is “**partnership**” where the member shareholders and management share common goals. Here the board become actively involved in the development of the co-operative, building up their expertise, and working with the manager to improve performance. The years of management under Mr. E. J. Hadlow (1920-1925), William Wishart (1925-1935), Bill Blackwell (1935-1948), Wally Knox (1948-1956), and Charlie Lindorff (1956-1987) could be viewed as periods where the board and management developed a partnership model. This usually took the form of a shared responsibility in decision making whereby the manager provided the board with information and recommendations, and the board added value through their own perspectives and knowledge of the needs of the member shareholders.

However, although Charlie Lindorff was unquestionably an outstanding manager and member of the Quairading community, his long tenure in the role led the emergence of what Rod Simpson described as a “**rubber stamp**” board. This is the third type of governance model identified by

Cornforth (2004). It emerges when there is a powerful manager or management team, and the board's roles become largely symbolic. It should be noted that Rod Simpson stated that what was happening within the boardroom reflected the relationship between Charlie Lindorff and the Chair, Peter Wills, who seemed to have already made decisions between themselves prior to the board meetings.

The other three governance types consist of the “**democratic**”, “**stakeholder**”, and “**co-optation**” models. The first of these is where the member shareholders develop different interests, and the role of the board is to act as a mechanism for representing these different interest groups. The QFCC's board structure up until the 2000s was built around having representatives from the various sub-divisions within the district of Quairading. This created a form of “stakeholder” model, which has similarities to the “democratic” model, but is more formalised. It can lead to the board becoming political in nature as directors represent the interests of their constituents rather than the entire member shareholder community.

Finally, the “**co-optation**” model occurs when there are differences between the co-operative and outside stakeholders. This seems to have emerged during the QFCC's engagement with both Wesfarmers and Co-operatives WA over how much freedom the Co-operative would have in developing its own supply chain and agency agreements. This required the board, particularly Mr. B. M. Solomon, and the Chair, Mr. W. Wishart, to devote considerable time negotiating with these two powerful stakeholders. Later, when the QFCC opened a store in Yoting in 1928, then operated the joint ventures, BDQ Bakery and BDQ Engineering Works, during the 1930s and 1940s, followed in the 1990s by the creation of the “Westlink” motor vehicle dealership network in Kellerberrin, Merredin, and Corrigin, the stakeholder issues increased.

PROFIT FORMULA

The profit formula indicates if the CME is profit-oriented, non-profit, or distributing, and how it sets prices and issues member rebates. As a distributing co-operative, the QFCC was focused on paying its shareholders dividends and trading bonuses. It can be seen from the history of the QFCC that it was possible for the Co-operative to regularly provided dividends and trading bonuses either as cash rebates, bonus shares, or debentures. This commenced in 1918 when the QFCC board was able to allot part of the profit to the reduction of the unpaid portion of the members' shares. It continued throughout the decades from the 1920s to the end of the 1980s with variations in some years due to financial constraints.

Although no dividends or rebates were paid in 1920, regular dividends of 5 per cent to 7 per cent on paid-up capital were paid each year for the rest of the decade, along with bonus shares based on patronage for the years 1923, 1924, 1927 and 1928, plus a cash bonus in 1929. During the 1930s, dividends from 5 per cent to 7 per cent were issued for most years, with cash bonuses paid in 1933, 1934, and 1938. In the 1940s dividends of 5 per cent were issued from 1943 to 1949, along with cash bonuses for trading. This pattern of issuing 5 per cent dividends continued throughout the 1950s, and trading bonuses were paid in the form of debentures for amounts over £3 paying 4 per cent interest. A similar pattern continued during the 1960s with dividends rising from 5 per cent to 6 per cent over the decade. It was repeated throughout the 1970s and during the 1980s while the 6 per cent dividends continued, the trading bonuses were paid in cash.

The QFCC's ability to distribute dividends and pay trading bonuses was contingent on the company's profitability. As discussed in Chapters 11 and 12, the decades of the 1990s and 2000s proved to be challenging financially for the Co-operative, and this led to the cessation of dividends and rebates. It also saw the Co-operative forced to a recapitalisation of the company in 2001 with the issuance of redeemable preference shares. This was supported by a minority of shareholders but was sufficient to enable the QFCC to repay its bank debts over a period of only four-years and put the Co-operative in much better financial condition to navigate the 2010s and beyond.

No dividend or rebate distributions have been paid since the 1980s. However, should it be able to do so in the future there is no legal or taxation impediment to QFCC resuming rebates. The 80 per cent rule allows distributions to be backdated for accounting and taxation, it does not block distributions (AustLii, 2025). Dividend payments and rebates while possible, are unlikely to be reintroduced due to their relatively small value and the need for the QFCC to remain focused on the issue of building an adequate capital base for its future plans. The QFCC, should it decide to change its purpose from that of supporting the farming community in an economic sense, to providing economic and social benefits to the Quairading community, could explore what is required to qualify for charitable status under the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

RESOURCES AND PROCESSES

The resources and processes used in CMEs depend on the enterprise's nature and goals. As has been discussed above, the original purpose of the QFCC was to enhance the economic well-being of the farming community in Quairading. This saw it developing its range of business activities to focus on representing Wesfarmers as an agent in the agricultural services area, including the handling of the grain harvest during the years prior to the foundation of CBH Ltd.

In the 1920s the decision by the QFCC to open a general store not only expanded its business operations but laid the foundations of what was to become an almost full-range, one-stop-shop for the local community over time. Nevertheless, the skills and competencies required to run a bakery, supermarket, green grocery, hardware, insurance agency, drapery, haberdashery, fuel supply, electrical goods, car dealership, engineering workshop, and livestock agency are quite different. The ability of the Co-operative to adapt and learn how to operate in this diverse set of businesses is a credit to the management and employees.

However, as the Co-operative sought to diversify, into the "Westlink" motor vehicle distribution network across Kellerberrin, Merredin, and Corrigin, the ability to attract and retain the right sales and service staff, over stretched and exposed weaknesses in the ability of the QFCC's management to coordinate and control what had become a conglomerate.

During the years since the start of the twenty-first century, the QFCC has reduced the range of its business operations, and consolidated around the Heal Street supermarket and its associated business units (e.g., café bar and take away). Although the management team is now both stable and competent, the Co-operative continues to have problems with its inventory and stock control systems providing satisfactory connectivity and timely reporting.

The need for manual intervention in the largely computerised stock reporting system continues to impact the company's productivity. Although these issues have been identified their remedy is not easily addressed due to the high cost of replacing the incumbent systems.

SYSTEMS LEVEL ANALYSIS – OUTPUT FACTORS

The two main outputs from CMEs are their ability to generate economic and social capital.

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

Mazzarol et al. (2014) state that economic capital is measured by assets, jobs, and wealth creation. Assessing the economic contribution of the QFCC remains problematic due to the paucity of data. However, the evidence from the historical record suggests that since its foundation in 1916 the QFCC has made a significant and important contribution to the economic well-being of the people in Quairading.

In addition to employing a significant number of local people, the QFCC, from the 1920s to the end of the 1980s, paid out over \$10.7 million (as measured in 2023 dollars) in cash rebates and bonus debentures to its shareholders. This represented an average distribution of around \$145,704 per year in cash rebates and \$247,914 in bonus debentures (as measured in 2023 dollars) for each decade. Combined with the convenience offered by the presence of the QFCC stores within the town, and the use of local suppliers and contractors where possible, the overall economic contribution of the QFCC to the town of Quairading and its surrounding district can be considered significant.

SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION

The measurement of a co-operative's contribution to the development of social capital is always difficult due to the indirect and informal nature of how social capital is formed. This typically involves individuals meeting and interacting within the context of shared social norms, values, beliefs, trust, friendships, obligations, networks, and memberships (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009).

Assessing the social contribution of the QFCC is more complex than evaluating its economic contribution. However, as noted above, over the course of its long history, the Co-operative has provided a networking and meeting point for the entire community of the Quairading Shire. Interviews with the current and former directors provided affirmation that the QFCC was instrumental in providing a meeting place, and a regular and reliable shopping point for the broader Quairading community.

Additionally, for many years, the AGMs provided the member shareholders and their life partners, with the opportunity to meet with each other, particularly during the decades prior to the 1960s, when the annual meeting would be held as precursor to the community engaging in a major social gathering with visiting dignitaries, live music, supper from the CWA, and dancing. Even in the faster-paced world of the 2020s, the Co-operative provides a meeting place for the community, and the café bar and take-away food service is a first point of contact for many locals heading out for a days' work, grabbing lunch, or simply taking time for a break.

The community's willingness to recapitalise the Co-operative during its financial debt crisis in the early 2000s, and then its engagement during the refurbishment of the Heal Street store in 2018-2019, also demonstrate the presence of strong social capital and associated goodwill between the QFCC and the majority of the Quairading community. If the future outlook for the QFCC is to move from a farmer-centric distributing Co-operative, towards a community-centric not-for-profit, non-distributing Co-operative dedicated to the economic and social development of Quairading, the continued enhancement of social capital will become increasingly important.

KEY LESSONS FROM QFCC CASE

The history of the QFCC provides an example of how a well-managed co-operative can deliver significant economic and social benefits to its communities. As a consumer co-operative it has provided services, employment, social connections, and local ownership and control.

In summary, the key lessons from QFCC case are:

- Co-operative and mutual enterprises (CMEs) should have a clear understanding of their purpose, including their primary economic and social objectives.
- The purpose must connect to a well-considered Member Value Proposition (MVP) that addresses both the manifest needs of members and collaborates with them to identify and address latent needs in an ever changing economic and social environment.
- The enterprise must be efficiently and prudently managed, with a board of directors possessing strategic and management skills to oversee the executive team.
- In conditions of significant environmental turbulence and market competition, CMEs should, where feasible, avoid direct competition with investor-owned firms (IOFs). Instead, they should concentrate on fulfilling their members' needs, pursuing their organisational objectives, and continuously reviewing and developing their MVP.
- The sustainability of any CME relies on the board and its executive team not only having managerial skills and competence but also possessing a profound understanding and appreciation of mutuality, cooperative principles, associationism, and the collective economy.

CMEs are distinct from IOFs, existing to solve economic and social issues unmet by IOFs and state-owned enterprises (SOEs). While competing with IOFs, CMEs have unique strategic goals. The Board and executive management should recognise these differences to guide strategic decisions effectively.

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FIGURES AND IMAGES

Figure 1: Shire of Quairading location map. Source Shire of Quairading, 2023 (public domain).

Figure 2: Governor Sir James Stirling, portrait 1933, artist unknown, sourced to Government House of WA from Mitchell State Library, Library of NSW <https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/9yM6GLV9/Gp3L86dlxV27y> out of copyright. Lt Col. F. C. Irwin portrait 1840, sourced to WA Constitution Centre, out of copyright.

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Figure 4: Frederick Sewell (left), and Charlotte Sewell (right), sourced to Sewell, B. (2021). *The Sewells of "Egoline" Northam and Mount Caroline*, Churchlands, WA., Navia Nominees Pty Ltd Kellalac Family Trust.

Figure 5: Sir John Forrest KCMG (left), sourced to National Library of Australia and Alexander Forrest (right), sourced to ACT Heritage Library (1900s), public domain.

Figure 6: Gravestones of Tommy Windich (left), and Billy Nooncale Kickett (right) sourced to Tilbrook, L. (1983). *Nyungar Tradition: Glimpses of Aborigines of South-Western Australia, 1829-1914*. Crawley WA, University of Western Australia Press.

Figure 7: Jonah Parker (left), sourced to Just Jack, 1900 (public domain), and the former Methodist Church, Dangin (right), sourced to Bahnfreund, 2018 (public domain).

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Figure 10: Quairading Hotel, sourced to Bahnfreund, 2018 (public domain).

Figure 11: Quairading Post Office, built 1927, sourced to Tim Mazzarol, 2024 (with permission).

Figure 12: Charles Walter Harper, sourced to Wesfarmers, 1921 (out of copyright), and Woodbridge House, sourced to Evad37, 2019 (public domain).

Figure 13: Co-op store Heal Street 1919 and 2024, sourced to Quairading Agricultural Society, 2021, and QFCC, 2024 (with permission).

Figure 14: Sowing wheat bags 1938, sourced to the State Library of WA (with permission).

Figure 15: The Quairading Farmers' Co-op Co. Ltd. Advertising 1930, sourced to Western Mail (1930a).

Figure 16: Alexander Joseph Monger (left) and Thomas Henry Bath (right), sourced to CBH Group Ltd., 1936 (with permission).

Figure 17: Wesfarmers advertising livestock and farm machinery with QFCC as agent, Sources: Northam Advertiser (1940); Wheatbelt Tribune and Koorda Record (1942).

Figure 18: BDQ Engineering Work, Quairading 1953. Source: State Library of WA (1953).

Figure 19: Australian Fargo Coupe Utility advertisement circa. 1940, (Open source, 1940).

Figure 20: Caltex oil advertisement for QFCC, 1946. Source: York Leader (1946c).

Figure 21: Sir Ernest Thorley Loton (left), sourced to RASWA, 1958 (creative commons), and William “Bill” Blackwell (right), sourced to Standford, 1955 (creative commons).

Figure 22: Ford V8 Customline advertisement for QFCC, 1958. Source: Beverley Times (1958).

Figure 23: Range of Ford cars sold by QFCC advertisement, 1960. Source: Beverley Times (1960a).

Figure 24: General QFCC advertisement, 1951. Source: York Chronicle (1951).

Figure 25: Farm damage caused by flooding, Quairading, 1963. Source: Canberra Times (1963).

Figure 26: Former QFCC Ford Dealership showroom corner McLennon and Parker Streets. Source: Tim Mazzarol 2024 (with permission).

Figure 27: Ford Anglia advertisement for QFCC, 1960. Source: Beverley Times (1960b).

Figure 28: Les Stacey and the Stacey Lamb Train, 1957. Source: Charlesworth (1993) from *The Countryman* (1957).

Figure 29: Ian Wills working on a tree root resembling a Swan, 1980. Source: PNG Post-Courier (1980).

Figure 30: Lil Louie Ford LTL 9000 scale model operated by the Vintage Club. Source: Shire of Quairading (2023).

Figure 31: QFCC Organisation Chart 1987. Source: QFCC (1987a).

Figure 32: Charles Farncombe Lindorff QFCC Secretary & Manager 1948-1987. Source: QFCC (1987a).

Figure 33: QFCC Heal Street Store 1987. Source: QFCC (1987a).

Figure 34: Sharon Cutts (Manager), Trevor Bond (Chair), and Tarnya Fraser (Director). Source: QFCC (2025).

Figure 35: Refurbished Heal Street supermarket 2023. Source: Tim Mazzarol, 2023 (with permission).

Figure 36: Proximity of Quairading Hotel to the QFCC Supermarket. Source: Tim Mazzarol, 2023 (with permission).

APPENDIX A: QFCC WITHIN THE CME RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Influencing Factors	Application to QFCC
<i>Systems-level inputs</i>	
Social co-operation	The spirit of co-operation was evident in the years leading up to the foundation of the QFCC in 1916. Organisations such as the Farmers' and Settlers' Association (FSA) and Wesfarmers provided social networking and key influencers from both the rural sector and Co-operatives movement. Most founding members were members of the FSA and aware of Wesfarmers.
Role of government	The WA Government provided a positive regulatory environment for the CME sector and QFCC, with the <i>Co-operative and Provident Societies Act 1903</i> (WA), the <i>Companies Act, Amendment Act 1931</i> (WA), and <i>Co-operatives Act 2009</i> (WA). The State Registrar also provided guidance, although some of it was unhelpful.
Industry structure	The QFCC operated across a wide range of industries often at the same time. This placed pressure on the company's ability to deliver the best quality of products and services, and to recruit and retain the employees with the required skills and expertise.
Natural environment	As a farmer's co-operative the QFCC experienced the impact of such natural events as droughts and storms. The need for sustainable land management impacted the farmers, which in turn affected the QFCC. This took the form of products and services supplied, and the loss of farming families as many sold out and left the land during the 1980s and 1990s. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the State Government's lockdowns during 2020-2022 boosted the sales of the Co-operative's stores.
<i>Enterprise-level factors</i>	
Purpose	The QFCC was established in 1916 as a farmer-owned Co-operative with the purpose of enhancing the shareholders' economic situation via collective action and combined bargaining power. This purpose was never formally articulated but effectively guided the QFCC in its actions for most of its history. However, during the 1990s it began to focus on business activities not directly related to the farmers (e.g., the Westlink car dealership). By the 2020s the QFCC was considering refocusing its purpose on the economic and social well-being of the overall Quairading community.



Profit formula	The QFCC remained profitable for most of its history, although it did experience periods where profits were either small or non-existent. As a distributing co-operative, the QFCC regularly issued dividends and paid trading bonuses in the form of bonus shares, cash rebates or interest-bearing debentures. However, by the 1990s the financial situation facing the QFCC made distributions impossible. Apart from raising additional working capital with the issuing of redeemable preference shares in 2001, the QFCC has not distributed profits to its shareholders, relying on the delivery of services to retain member loyalty and community support.
Processes	The QFCC has focused for most of its history on serving the needs of the Quairading farming community. This has seen it develop both service agencies (e.g., insurance, livestock and real estate), as well as retailing, fuel distribution and automotive engineering. As result the Co-operative has had to develop and constantly review and update a wide range of processes to support these business operations.
Resources	In keeping with the processes that the QFCC has had to develop, there has also been a requirement for the company to acquire a significant number of resources. These have included refrigeration and storage units, trucks for various goods, motor vehicles, fixtures and fittings for the supermarket, grocery, and hardware stores. During earlier times the QFCC operated fuel pumps, garage, engineering workshop, bakery, and agency for insurance, livestock and real estate. Also of importance was the recruitment of staff to operate and manage all these resources.
Share structure	The share structure of the QFCC followed a familiar pattern with an initial allotment of par value shares, and a minimum individual shareholding to qualify as a member, along with provisions for the board to issue dividends. Over the decades the issued share capital of the QFCC increased, and bonus shares occasionally issued. Prior to the new State co-operatives legislation in 2009, the QFCC used redeemable preference shares to raise capital and principally to pay down bank loans. Under the current legislation the QFCC has the option of using Co-operative Capital Units (CCUs) for the raising of additional capital and can issue these to both members and non-members.
Governance	Throughout the history of the QFCC the governance process has shown characteristics of all six of Cornforth's (2004) governance models. This has been shaped by the relative power and ability of the



	managers, the relative expertise of the board, or lack thereof, and the diversity of key strategic goals of both parties.
Member Value Proposition	In keeping with its purpose, the QFCC historically focused on running its business operations to provide the necessary goods and services needed by the farmers in Quairading. Additionally, the Co-operative issued dividends and paid trading bonuses either as cash payments or debentures carrying a 4 per cent interest rate. This continued until the 1990s when profitability problems led to the cessation of such distributions. Since that time the MVP broadened to include benefits such as convenience, community support, and social capital development. although these broader benefits are not exclusively member benefits, raising the spectre of the freeloader i.e. the person taking advantage of the benefits without the commitment of membership.
<i>Member-level factors</i>	
Patron	The QFCC’s initial focus on serving the needs of the Quairading farmers meant that all shareholders were farmers, and as patrons they supplied grain to the Co-operative when it managed the wheat harvest for Wesfarmers and also purchased goods and services from the QFCC. In more recent years the patronage has widened from the shareholders to non-shareholders, who may fall into the “freeloader” cohort. Further, when the new legislation was promulgated in 2009, the QFCC was required to redeem the shares of all members who were no longer active patrons.
Investor	In 2024 the share capital of the QFCC was owned by a total of 494 members, of whom 376 held A-Class and 118 held B-Class shares. While shareholders were initially rewarded for their patronage by the issuing of dividends paying between 5 and 7 per cent, and also cash trading bonuses and debentures, these financial benefits ceased during the 1990s. The consequences of this are that the investor role of the membership of the QFCC has essentially disappeared.
Owner	All active members have voting rights at the general meetings. They can influence the activities of the co-operative and nominate for a director role if desired. Although the legal ownership of the QFCC vests in the shareholders, in recent years the Co-operative is being viewed by the broader Quairading community as a valuable asset in the district. This broader sense of ownership helps to boost and maintain the patronage from both members and non-members and provides the foundation upon which new member shareholders could be won.



Community member	The sense of belonging to a community of purpose is one of the most important roles that members of a Co-operative have. Although the QFCC was traditionally focused on the Quairading farmers, who were able to identify with the Co-operative’s purpose of assisting them in the economic and social goals, this has now widened to include the non-members from across the broader community in the district. This offers the QFCC a valuable platform upon which to build a new purpose and future direction for sustainability and growth.
<i>Systems-level outputs</i>	
Economic capital	As discussed in Chapter 14 the QFCC has made a significant economic contribution to the Quairading district. Although precise financial data is unavailable, there is sufficient information to state that from the 1920s to the end of the 1980s the QFCC paid over \$10.7 million (as measured in 2023 dollars) back to its shareholders. In addition, it employed a significant workforce within the local community and in 2024 was providing employment for 35 people.
Social capital	<p>Although the measurement of social capital is challenging the history of QFCC suggests that it contributed significantly to maintaining a network of professional and social relationships between the local farming community, and from that community to other communities such as farmer-owned co-operatives in adjacent districts, and the likes of Wesfarmers and Co-operatives WA at the wider State level.</p> <p>In addition, the QFCC has provided and continues to provide a place where the local community of Quairading has the opportunity to meet, share common goals, and facilitate the development and the strengthening of social capital.</p> <p>Social capital can also morph into “social licence” and in the case of decisions around retailing liquor the QFCC board has been cognisant of the wider community views on the Co-operative applying for a liquor licence.</p>

APPENDIX B: QFCC DIRECTORS AND EXECUTIVES

QFCC Chairpersons

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>
1917-1918	Wishart, W.	1935-1937	Argus, T. H.
1918-1920	Soloman, B. M.	1937-1939	Dall, S. C.
1920-1921	Dall, S. C.	1939-1942	Baikie, L. M.
1921-1922	Simpson, H. R.	1942-1943	Wilson, A.
1922-1923	Waters, James P.	1943-1948	Dall, S. C.
1923-1925	Jaques, F. S.	1948-1950	Wilson, A.
1925-1926	Waters, James P.	1950-1952	Dall, C. R.
1926-1927	Argus, T. H.	1953-1962	McRae, D.
1927-1928	Dall, S. C.	1962-1981	Wills, Peter D.
1928-1930	Shenton, Eric W.	1981-1989	McRae, Gordon C.
1930-1931	Waters, James P.	1989-1992	Stacey, Peter W.
1931-1932	Argus, T. H.	1992-1999	Wallwork, Charles William
1932-1933	Dall, S. C.	1999-2003	Richards, Daryl C.
1933-1934	Shenton, Eric W.	2003-	Bond, Trevor J.
1934-1935	Wilson, A.		

QFCC Directors (members of the Board)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>
Wickstead, F. L.	1917-1918	Simpson, A. A.	1953-1972
Cook, W. A.	1917-1918	Hall, Henry G.	1955-1978
Wishart, W.	1917-1920	Langsford, S. H.	1957-1973
Fraser, C. W.	1917-1920	Lohoar, A.	1960-1963
Solomon, B. M.	1917-1921	Shenton, J. C.	1963-1977

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

Quairading Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd. – Cornerstone of our community



<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>
Dall, S. C.	1917-1921	Handscombe, Don J.	1967-1989
Walters, James P.	1917-1935	Heal, A. W.	1972-1978
Baxter, R. L.	1918-1919	McRae, Gordon C.	1973-1994
Simpson, H. R.	1918-1923	Stacey, Peter W.	1976-1994
Green, C. R.	1918-1923	Hayes, C. V.	1977-1990
Haythornthwaite, W. J.	1920-1923	Hadlow, M. H.	1978-1986
Heal, C. W.	1920-1924	Simpson, R. T.	1978-1991
Scott, A.	1921-1921	Powell, E. J.	1984-1989
Jaques, F. S.	1921-1925	Stone, G. J.	1986-1991
Argus, T. H.	1921-1937	Langsford, P. C.	1989-1991
Dall, S. C.	1923-1948	Anderson, G. E.	1989-1992
Stacey, J.	1924-1932	Richards, D. C.	1990-2003
Shenton, Eric W.	1925-1948	O'Shea, V. F.	1991-1998
Wilson, A.	1933-1953	Hall, E. M.	1991-1999
Parker, H.	1935-1937	Wallwork, Charles William	1991-1999
Wishart, W. E.	1935-1937	Banfield, I. Ross	1992-1998
Heal, C. W.	1937-1939	Wells, M. R.	1994-2004
Baikie, L. M.	1937-1946	Stone, S. F.	1997-2010
Parker, H.	1939-1942	Bond, T. J.	1998-
Stone, W. T.	1942-1946	Anderson, George W.	1998-2008
Stacey, L. J.	1944-1950	Elston, R. C.	1999-2004
Dall, C. R.	1944-1976	Shenton, W. E.	1999-2012
Wills, Peter D.	1945-1984	Richards, R. D.	2003-
McRae, D.	1946-1967	Richards, S. T.	2004-
Stone, W. T.	1948-1958	Langsford, C. R.	2004-2017
Heal, C. W.	1948-1960	Wilson, S. K. J.	2010-
Burrow, H. H.	1950-1953	Hall, M. R.	2010-2015
Wishart, J. H.	1953-1957	Fraser, T. M.	2018-

QFCC Executive Officers

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Job title</i>
1917-1917	White, J. S.	Manager / Secretary
1917-1918	Cliff, G. E.	Manager / Secretary
1918-1919	Phippard, W. H.	Manager
1918-1920	Dall, S. C.	Secretary
1919-1920	Woods, E. W.	Manager
1920-1920	Soloman, B. M.	Manager
1920-1921	Moore, P. A.	Secretary
1920-1925	Hadlow, E. J.	Manager
1922-1924	Wishart, William E.	Secretary
1924-1925	Truman, A.	Secretary
1925-1925	Power, A.	Secretary
1925-1931	Jacobs, G. F.	Secretary
1925-1935	Wishart, William E.	Manager
1931-1935	Blackwell, William "Bill"	Secretary
1935-1939	Dovey, E. E.	Secretary
1935-1948	Blackwell, William "Bill"	Manager
1939-1948	Knox, Walter "Wally"	Secretary
1942-1945	McCarthy, L.	Secretary
1948-1956	Knox, Walter "Wally"	Manager
1948-1956	Lindorff, Charles Farncombe	Secretary
1956-1987	Lindorff, Charles Farncombe	Manager
1957-1961	Glover, P. E.	Secretary
1962-1963	Matthews, G. W.	Secretary
1963-1964	Moore, R.	Secretary
1965-1987	Zalaiskalns, Edgar	Secretary
1987-1990	Zalaiskalns, Edgar	Manager Finance / Secretary
1987-1990	Phillips, Robert "Bob" Leslie	Manager Store
1990-1993	Phillips, Robert "Bob" Leslie	Manager / Secretary



1993-1995	Klopper, Ian V.	Manager / Secretary
1995-1999	Kirk, Barry R.	Manager / Secretary
1999-2000	Duperouzel, Gary	Manager / Secretary
2000-2002	Morgan, Ian J.	Manager / Secretary
2002-2007	Stone, Gloria E. F.	Manager / Secretary
2007-2009	Bowling, Harry	Manager
2007-2011	Bowling, Harry	Secretary
2009-2012	Maynard, Laurel M.	Manager
2011-2012	Maynard, Laurel M.	Secretary
2012-	Cutts, Sharon J.	Manager / Secretary

APPENDIX C: QFCC HISTORICAL TIMELINE 1900-2024

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
1900s	<p>1902 – Town of Dangin is gazetted.</p> <p>1903 – Passage of the <i>Co-operative and Provident Societies Act 1903 (WA)</i>.</p> <p>1905 – Jim Caldw opens a general store in the present-day site of Quairading</p> <p>1907 – Town of Quairading is formally gazetted as a town. First government school opened in Doodenanning.</p> <p>1908 – Railway is extended to Quairading via York, Greenhills, Kauring, Dulbelling, and Dangin.</p> <p>1909 – Quairading consists of a general store, blacksmiths shop, bakery, two bank branches.</p>
1910s	<p>1910 – Quairading Hotel is opened by William and James Hagerty (aka Haggerty), and Quairading Agricultural Hall built.</p> <p>1911 – Post Office and Police Station opened in Quairading.</p> <p>1912 – Establishment of the Farmers’ and Settlers’ Association (FSA).</p> <p>1913 – Railway extension links Quairading to Merredin to Narrogin Railway via Bruce Rock.</p> <p>1914 – Establishment of Quairading Agricultural Society (QAS), and Westralian Farmers’ Ltd. (Wesfarmers). First World War breaks out.</p> <p>1916 – Establishment of the Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative Co. Ltd. (22 Dec), with Mr. J. McGregor from Wesfarmers presenting to the Quairading FSA branch on the merits of the co-operative business model. Mr. J. S. White is appointed as both Manager and Secretary.</p> <p>1917 – Election of first official board of the QFCC (17 Mar) under Chair W. Wishart, who declares that it would not be advisable to allow non-farmers to become QFCC shareholders.</p> <p>QFCC commences work as agent of Wesfarmers for handling of wheat harvest in Quairading. QFCC also becomes agent for Wesfarmers, Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) and National Mutual Life Assurance Society (NML).</p> <p>Manager J. S. White resigns and is replaced by G. E. Cliff.</p> <p>1918 – Mr. B. M. Solomon becomes QFCC Chair and QFCC Manager Mr. G. E. Cliff is forced to resign and is replaced by Mr. W. H. Phippard.</p>

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	<p>The Wheat Marketing Royal Commission expresses criticism of Wesfarmers in its handling of the grain harvest. This accusation is strongly refuted by Wesfarmers Managing Secretary Henry J. S. Taylor. QFCC support Wesfarmers.</p> <p>1919 – QFCC builds and opens new store in Heal Street, Quairading. Mr. E. W. Woods replaces Mr. W. H. Phippard as QFCC Manager.</p>
1920s	<p>1920s – QFCC provides wheat handling services for Wesfarmers at Quairading, Badjaling and Yoting. QFCC commences dividend issue 1921, issues dividends of 7% 1922-1929, plus payments for store trading, grain trading, and commissions.</p> <p>1920 – Mr. S. C. Dall becomes QFCC Chair. Mr. E. J. Hadlow replaces Mr. E. W. Woods as QFCC Manager.</p> <p>1921 – Mr. H. R. Simpson becomes QFCC Chair. QFCC opens a general store.</p> <p>1922 – Mr. James P. Waters becomes QFCC Chair.</p> <p>1923 – Mr. F. S. Jaques becomes QFCC Chair.</p> <p>1925 – Mr. James P. Waters returns as QFCC Chair. Mr. William E. Wishart replaces Mr. E. J. Hadlow as QFCC Manager.</p> <p>1926 – Mr. T. H. Argus becomes QFCC Chair.</p> <p>1927 – Mr. S. C. Dall becomes QFCC Chair. Quairading Post Office built.</p> <p>1928 – Mr. E. W. Shenton becomes QFCC Chair. QFCC opens a branch store in Yoting managed by Mr. Harry Carter.</p> <p>1929 – New York Stock Market crashes triggering the Great Depression.</p>
1930s	<p>1930s – Despite the depression, QFCC issues dividends with 7% interest on paid-up capital, and cash bonuses for trading for 1930, 1933, 1934, and 1938.</p> <p>1930 – Mr. James “Jas” P. Waters becomes QFCC Chair. AGM (21 June) is attended by Charles Walter Harper, Chair of Wesfarmers, and The Hon. William Dartnell Johnson MLA, as a director of Wesfarmers who provide keynote speeches.</p> <p>1931 – Mr. T. H. Argus becomes QFCC Chair.</p> <p>1932 – Mr. S. C. Dall returns to QFCC Chair.</p> <p>1933 – Mr. E. W. Shenton returns to QFCC Chair. QFCC changes its Articles of Association to conform with <i>Companies Act, Amendment Act 1929 (WA)</i>.</p> <p>QFCC loses its role in annual wheat harvest management following establishment of CBH Ltd.</p> <p>1934 – Mr. A. Wilson becomes QFCC Chair. Further substantive changes are made to the QFCC Articles of Association dealing with the issuing of bonus</p>



	<p>shares and the eligibility requirements of shareholders for such distributions.</p> <p>1935 – Mr. T. H. Argus returns to QFCC Chair. Mr. William “Bill” Blackwell replaces Mr. William Wishart as QFCC Manager.</p> <p>Introduction of the <i>Bulk Handling Act 1935</i> (WA) grants CBH monopoly over bulk grain handling and storage across the Wheat Belt.</p> <p>QFCC makes more changes to its Articles of Association relating to the size of the board, to support the Co-operatives WA plan to create nominee directors to assist co-operatives with governance difficulties.</p> <p>Attending the AGM (16 July) was Mr. Arnott from Co-operatives WA who explained the nominee director idea and also spoke of a further Royal Commission into wheat handling and storage that was underway. He was joined by Charles Walter Harper representing Wesfarmers, who described the Wheat Pool of WA’s activities along with those of Wesfarmers.</p> <p>1936 – QFCC AGM (4 July) was again attended by Mr. Walter Harper representing Wesfarmers.</p> <p>1937 – Mr. S. C. Dall returns to QFCC Chair. QFCC changes Articles of Association in relation to minimum share purchase. BDQ Bakery joint venture is established. The AGM (3 July) was attended by Mr. Thomas H. Bath as keynote speaker who spoke about the co-operative movement, the value of a bulk grain handling scheme, and praised the QFCC for its financial success.</p> <p>1938 – the QFCC AGM (16 July) reports its largest sales turnover since foundation and has Wesfarmers director and parliamentarian The Hon. W. D. Johnson MLA as a keynote speaker, and the Wesfarmers orchestra as musical entertainment.</p> <p>1939 – Mr. L. M. Baike becomes QFCC Chair. World War Two breaks out.</p>
1940s	<p>1940s – QFCC continues to operate the BDQ Bakery. AGMs were held in the Quairading Hall, from 2:30pm to 4pm followed by supper, a keynote address by a speaker usually from Wesfarmers, Co-operatives WA, or the State Government, plus musical recitals and dancing.</p> <p>Dividends of 5% paid on paid-up capital declared from 1943 to 1949 along with cash bonuses to reward trading in 1943 and 1944 followed by payments as debentures paying bank interest rates from 1947 to 1949.</p> <p>1940 – Special rubber stamp labelled “The Danging Co-operative Bakery” is bought in order to brand the bread products being produced by the BDQ Bakery.</p> <p>1942 – Mr. A. Wilson becomes QFCC Chair.</p> <p>1943 – Mr. S. C. Dall returns to QFCC Chair.</p>



1944 – QFCC Chair Mr. S. C. Dall announces at the AGM a decision to establish a joint venture engineering works, to be known as the BDQ Engineering Works.

1945 – World War Two ends.

1945-1947 – QFCC and the Co-operatives at Dangin and Balkuling collaborate to raise the capital to build and equip the BDQ Engineering Works.

1946 – Attempts to register the BDQ Engineering Works as a co-operative are rejected by the State Supreme Court. It needed to be either a separate company or for the Dangin and Balkuling co-operatives to register under the *Friendly Societies Act*.

QFCC AGM decides to transfer its registration from the *Companies Act* to the *Friendly Societies Act*.

1947 – QFCC secures Ford dealership and the engineering workshop is connected to the town AC electricity system then being rolled out across the State.

QFCC AGM has Chair, Mr. S. C. Dall, report that the transfer from the *Companies Act* to the *Friendly Societies Act* would not proceed due to conditions imposed on the Co-operative by the State Registrar

1948 – Mr. A. Wilson returns to QFCC Chair. Mr. Walter “Wally” Knox replaces Mr. William “Bill” Blackwell as QFCC Manager. BDQ Bakery reports good profits. The BDQ Engineering Works is officially opened in Quairading. QFCC becomes an RACWA authorised service agency. Mr. Charles “Charlie” Lindorff becomes the Secretary of the QFCC.

QFCC secures permission from the State Housing Commission to acquire land in Quairading upon which to build a Managers’ house. A general housing crisis exists in Quairading with staff resigning and leaving the district due to a lack of housing.

1949 – QFCC reports a record annual turnover and net profit. However, the auditors warn that the QFCC is undercapitalised. BDQ Bakery reports good profits.

The AGM (16 July) is attended by Mr. H. J. McCann, Assistant General Manager of Wesfarmers who spoke of the special characteristics of the co-operative financial structure and operations, suggesting that share capital was usually undervalued.

Planning commences to build a second house for the QFCC staff.



1950s

1950s – QFCC enjoys good trading and issues annual dividends of 5% on paid-up capital plus trading bonuses paid as debentures carrying 4% interest instead of cash.

1950 – Korean War breaks out. QFCC commences paying a proportion of its profits into the general reserve and building funds. Some shareholder push-back on the decision to issue interest bearing debentures rather than cash bonuses as rewards for trading. Mr. C. R. Dall becomes QFCC Chair.

The BDQ Bakery and BDQ Engineering Works, as joint ventures, were in jeopardy due to the financial situation facing the Dangin and South Caroling Co-operative Society Ltd. (DSCCS).

The QFCC secures a full-franchise Ford Motor dealership encompassing motor cars, trucks, tractors and agricultural machinery. This would replace the Chrysler dealership the QFCC had held in the 1930s and 1940s. However, it took time to fully negotiate the contract.

1951 – Grower participants receive more than two shillings per bushel of oats than non-Pool selling growers who sold direct to other merchants. The QFCC was an agent for Ford V8 cars and trucks.

The QFCC amended its Articles of Association to raise the authorised capital of the company and the minimum and maximum shareholding of members.

The Dangin and Balkuling co-operatives experience difficulties in meeting their financial obligations to the BDQ Bakery and BDQ Engineering Works.

1952 – Mr. A. Wilson becomes QFCC Chair. QFCC board considers acquiring the BDQ Bakery and it is discussed at the AGM.

1953 – QFCC commences buying back shares from non-trading members. Mr. D. McRae becomes QFCC Chair.

The QFCC amended its Articles of Association in relation to the board's ability to use the capital of the company.

1954 – QFCC delivers good profits. The QFCC board decides to acquire the DSCCS as a going concern. The Ford motor dealership continued to be discussed.

1955 – QFCC delivers good profits although there is a request for detailed reports on the BDQ Bakery and BDQ Engineering Works, but motion is not carried. The DSCCS general store in Dangin is closed.

1956 – Mr. Charlie Lindorff replaces Mr. Wally Knox as QFCC Manager. Mr. Bill Blackwell, Secretary Co-operatives WA was keynote speaker at the AGM.

1957 – Mr. Worthington, Secretary Wesfarmers, was keynote speaker at the AGM.



	<p>1958 – Sir Ernest Thorley Loton, Wesfarmers’ Chair and Bill Blackwell, Secretary Co-operatives WA, were keynote speakers at the AGM. The DSCCS is wound-up. The Ford dealership was operating by this time.</p>
1960s	<p>1960s – QFCC enjoys a period of prosperity with strong financial performance. The Co-operative issued dividends of 5% on paid-up capital from 1960 to 1962, then 6% on paid-up capital from 1963 to 1969. Trading was rewarded with debentures paying 4%.</p> <p>1960 – QFCC AGM (20 August) reports a record annual turnover and net profit. Also present was former QFCC Manager Wally Knox who had become Secretary of Wesfarmers.</p> <p>1962 – Mr. Peter D. Wills becomes QFCC Chair. QFCC reports another successful financial year. The process of redeeming bonus trading debentures commences with payments made on funds issued over a rolling three-year period.</p> <p>1963 – The economic outlook within the WA Wheatbelt was positive due to the proposed Australia-China wheat export agreement. Heavy rains have a negative impact on farmers’ crops in York, Beverley and Quairading. QFCC purchases the grocery stock of Hewitt’s and commences a refurbishment and creation of a self-service grocery department.</p> <p>1964 – The refurbishment of the QFCC store is completed and a renovation of the Ford motor dealership is announced.</p> <p>1965 – Another record annual sales turnover is reported. The DSCCS in Dangin is formally wound-up.</p> <p>1966 – QFCC converts from pounds to dollars as the decimal system is rolled out.</p> <p>1967 – QFCC reports another record sales turnover and a substantial profit. The Chair, Peter Wills, also reports numerous additions and improvements to the QFCC’s buildings and facilities.</p> <p>1968 – QFCC reports another record trading year and announces the purchase of new housing for staff, plus plant and equipment for the Bakery.</p> <p>1969 – QFCC reports another successful trading year.</p>
1970s	<p>1970s – Drought conditions during the 1970s impact the farmers leading to crop failures and water shortages. The years 1970 to 1975 were difficult for the QFCC but improved by the second half of the decade. Regular dividends of 6% on paid-up capital were issued along with trading debentures carrying 4% interest.</p>



	<p>1970 – QFCC Chair Peter Wills reports at the AGM (18 September) a good trading year and net profit, although profitability was down on the previous year and the economic outlook was not good.</p> <p>1971 – Chair Peter Wills reports at the AGM (17 September) that the QFCC has experienced falling sales revenues and lower profits.</p> <p>1972 – Capital expenditures increase although net profit improves over the prior year.</p> <p>1973 – Annual turnover increases and net profit also rises. Discussions at the AGM (14 September) focused on the financials, employee training, grocery prices, bread quality from the bakery, and warranty work from the Ford dealership.</p> <p>The Articles of Association were amended to address board appointments of casual vacancies.</p> <p>1974 – The AGM (20 September) reported better financial results but also noted that costs were rising due to inflation and wage rises. The Articles of Association amendments from 1973 were modified.</p> <p>1975 – QFCC annual sales and profitability rises. Chair Peter Wills announces that the QFCC has purchased two houses for employees and was upgrading the Ford dealership garage and showroom. Also, that QFCC had switched to the Foodland Association Ltd., as a wholesale supplier of groceries.</p> <p>1976 – QFCC exceeds \$1 million in annual sales. The second-hand motor vehicle yard at the Ford dealership was completed.</p> <p>1977 – QFCC reports another successful trading year. Company owned houses were also being sold to the staff members living in them and the QFCC acquired Hewitt’s store in Heal Street.</p> <p>1978 – Another successful trading year is reported by QFCC.</p> <p>1979 – QFCC finishes the decade with annual revenue of over \$1.5 million.</p>
1980s	<p>1980s – By the 1980s the QFCC employed 32 people including management and general staff. Financial performance of the QFCC during the 1980s was good with regular 6% dividends issued on paid-up capital, plus cash trading bonuses.</p> <p>Its operations consisted of a supermarket, greengrocer, bakery, hardware, drapery, haberdashery, newsagency, garage, Caltex fuel depot, rural supplies, Ford motor dealership, and agencies for Wesfarmers.</p> <p>1980 – The QFCC announced a sales turnover of over \$1.88 million with good net profit. Chair Peter Wills also reported renovations to the main store were progressing well.</p>



1981 – Mr. Gordon C. McRae becomes QFCC Chair. QFCC’s annual turnover is more than \$1.97 million with good net profit. Mr. McRae explains that the good performance was due to all departments experiencing sales increases. In that year the QFCC had 585 registered shareholders.

1982 – QFCC Chair reports annual sales to have exceeded \$2.64 million with net profit higher than the previous year.

Amendments are made to the QFCC Articles of Association to increase the level of authorised capital within the company.

1983 – The QFCC AGM (23 September) was joined by Mick Evans, Development Manager for Wesfarmers and Darryl Rowland, Wesfarmers Northern Region Manager. Concern is expressed over the declining sales turnover within the QFCC Bakery.

However, overall sales turnover for the QFCC exceeds \$3.25 million with the hardware store contributing around \$1 million. Mr. Evans congratulated the QFCC on the success and presented a plaque to the General Manager Charlie Lindorff and the Hardware Manager Bob Phillips.

1984 – The QFCC reports annual sales turnover of more than \$3.4 million with strong net profit. Director and former Chair, Peter Wills retires.

1985 – The QFCC reports annual sales turnover of over \$4 million.

1986 – The QFCC experiences a fall in sales to just over \$3.54 million, which was attributed to declining chemical sales. However, these sales were rising again.

1987 – At the QFCC AGM (18 September) Chair Gordon McRae announces an annual sales turnover of \$6 million with a strong net profit. The AGM is also attended by Mr. Harry Perkins, Chair Wesfarmers, and Mr. K. G. Manning, a director of Wesfarmers.

Long-serving Manager Charles “Charlie” Lindorff retires. Mr. Robert “Bob” Phillips and Mr. Edgar Zalaskalns replace Charlie Lindorff as Manager, with Bob Phillips a Manager Store and Edgar Zalaskalns as Manager Finance.

Concerns are raised at the board over the financial viability of the QFCC Bakery.

1988 – The Bakery is showing significant operating losses. It is brought under the direct supervision of Bob Phillips. The Baker, Mr. Van der Sluis is replaced by Mr. Daryl Kaeding. Despite the new baker and two apprentices the Bakery is still making losses.

1989 – Mr. Peter W. Stacey becomes QFCC Chair. The QFCC Bakery, due to losses is closed. Further changes are made to the Articles of Association in



	order to bring them into alignment with the requirements of Co-operatives WA.
1990s	<p>1990s – During the 1990s the QFCC experiences financial problems. It pays a fully franked dividend of 6% on paid-up capital from 1990 to 1993, after which it pays unfranked dividends of 6% and 3% for the years 1994 to 1996, then suspends the issues of dividends.</p> <p>1990 – Difficulties of having Bob Phillips and Edgar Zalaikalns operating as dual managers leads to Mr. Phillips being given the role of General Manager while Mr. Zalaikalns is effectively returned to the role of Secretary and Accountant, leading to Edgar Zalaikalns resigning and Bob Phillips becoming General Manager and Secretary.</p> <p>The AGM (21 September) attracted 80 shareholders and focused on concerns over the financial status of the QFCC. There were questions raised over Bob Phillips as a manager. The board held several special meetings to discuss the manager’s situation and review his contract.</p> <p>1991 – Bob Phillips reports falling sales and forecast trading losses to the board. The Auditor, Greg Wyllie declares the QFCC bookkeeping to be fine, but notes the need for regular and reliable stocktakes, plus better debtor and stock control. Working capital (liquidity) was a priority for the QFCC.</p> <p>The deteriorating financial situation engenders criticism of Bob Phillips’ management from both the board and shareholders. The need for the QFCC Articles of Association be amended to allow the increase in authorised share capital needed to boost financial solvency is raised.</p> <p>1992 – Mr. Charles William Wallwork becomes QFCC Chair. Criticism of Bob Phillips’ management continues. At the AGM (18 September), the need for changes to the Articles of Association so as to raise the authorised capital is debated with some opposition from the shareholders. The motion is lost 108 to 34.</p> <p>1993 – In March, Bob Phillips is replaced as Managing Secretary by Mr. Ian V. Klopper. At the AGM (24 September) a new set of Articles of Association is tabled. Despite some opposition the amendments are approved.</p> <p>1994 – QFCC board decides to expand the Ford motor dealership outside the district of Quairading to Kellerberrin, Corrigin, and Merredin. At a Special Meeting of Shareholders (21 July) the proposal is discussed, including the acquisition of the private Kellerberrin Sales & Service (KSS) motor dealership. This raised questions and concerns from shareholders.</p> <p>At the AGM (23 September) the expansion of the Ford dealership was discussed again and appears to have finally passed. The business was named “Westlink” and established as a subsidiary company owned by QFCC.</p>



	<p>1995 – Mr. Barry R. Kirk replaces Ian Klopper as Managing Secretary. The Westlink Ford motor dealership expansion into Kellerberrin, Merredin, and Corrigin is operating.</p> <p>1996 – The Westlink Ford dealership network is performing poorly.</p> <p>1997 – At the AGM (19 September) shareholders ask the board about the financial viability of the QFCC. The Vice Chair, Mr. I. R. Banfield states that a break-even outcome was anticipated for the following year. Questions are raised over the financial status of the Westlink Ford dealership business.</p> <p>1998 – During the AGM (18 September) questions relating to the financial status of the QFCC are raised by shareholders. The Chair, Bill Wallwork states that the financial assets within the QFCC had been increased and the liabilities reduced.</p> <p>1999 – Mr. Daryl C. Richards becomes QFCC Chair. Mr. Gary Duperouzel replaces Barry Kirk as Manager/Secretary. The financial crisis facing the QFCC had been brought under control.</p> <p>However, the Westlink Ford dealership network had failed. QFCC had sold the business and leased the garage and showroom on the corner of McLennon and Parker Streets to panel beaters.</p>
2000s	<p>2000s – The Wheatbelt is transformed with larger and more capital-intensive farms and a continued decline in population. The QFCC begins to reduce its range of business areas and lease its vacant buildings and facilities to other businesses.</p> <p>2000 – Mr. Ian J. Morgan replaces Barry Kirk as Managing Secretary. The QFCC faces financial challenges due to falling sales and high costs of debt servicing.</p> <p>2001 – At the AGM (21 September) Chair Daryl Richards raises the need for the QFCC to be recapitalised in order to enable it to reduce its bank debt. The issue of redeemable preference shares for QFCC shareholders is proposed.</p> <p>The Manager, Ian Morgan explained to the shareholders the importance of raising new capital from members. He noted that while the banks were “understanding” the debt repayments were necessary. Following some changes to the minimum share purchase the proposal was approved.</p> <p>2002 – Ms. Gloria E. F. Stone replaces Ian Morgan as Managing Secretary.</p> <p>2003 – Mr. Trevor Bond becomes QFCC Chair.</p> <p>2004 – At the AGM (17 September) Gloria Stone reports that the bank loans would be repaid in full by the end of the year.</p> <p>2005 – The QFCC reports generating modest profits.</p>



	<p>2006 – The QFCC shows steady improvements in its financial status.</p> <p>2007 – Mr. Harry Bowling replaces Gloria Stone as Managing Secretary. Proposals for the QFCC to open a liquor store are raised.</p> <p>2008 – QFCC upgrades computer systems and Trevor Bond, Chair, announces that the Supermarket had been ranked in the top 30 such stores in WA. A five-year plan for the refurbishment and upgrading of the QFCC stores was announced.</p> <p>2009 – Ms. Laurel M. Maynard replaces Harry Bowling as Manager. At the AGM (18 September) Trevor Bond announces that all preference shares had been repaid, with about half converting them to A-Class ordinary shares.</p> <p>The <i>Co-operatives Act 2009</i> (WA) is passed.</p>
2010s	<p>2010s – The introduction of the <i>Co-operatives Act 2009</i> (WA) requires the QFCC to change its Articles of Association (Co-operative Rules) and redeem the shares of any inactive shareholders.</p> <p>2010 – The AGM (24 September) discusses routine matters and has shareholders expressing positive comments over the store layout. The implications of the new co-operatives' legislation are outlined.</p> <p>2011 – Ms. Laurel M. Maynard replaces Harry Bowling as Secretary. A survey of QFCC employees shows that over 75% shopped at the Co-operative. The AGM (23 September) formally adopts the new Articles of Association.</p> <p>2012 – Ms. Sharon J. Cutts replaces Laurel Maynard as Managing Secretary. The introduction of a Shareholder Card is discussed with the aim to help boost the rate of active member patronage.</p> <p>2013 – Concerns are raised over the number of people in Quairading who shop outside the district.</p> <p>2014 – The need for price comparisons between the QFCC and competitors is raised.</p> <p>2015 – Manager Sharon Cutts reports to the AGM (28 August) on the financial status of the QFCC and the installation of solar panels, which helped to lower the cost of electricity substantially.</p> <p>2016 – Small turnout of shareholders at the AGM (30 September).</p> <p>2017 – QFCC director Mr. C. R. Langsford retires opening a place for Mrs. Tarnya Fraser on the board.</p> <p>2018 – Tarnya Fraser delivers a speech to the QFCC shareholders at a General Meeting (25 August). She provides leadership over the refurbishment of the Heal Street store.</p>



	<p>2019 – Refurbishment project is completed and following community-wide working bees and in-kind contributions. Project enhances the social capital within the community and their engagement with the QFCC.</p>
2020s	<p>2020s – The COVID-19 pandemic impacts the global and national economies but also involves State Government imposed lockdowns requiring the community to shop within their local district. This, following on the recent refurbishment of the QFCC store, boosts sales turnover and reinforces loyalty.</p> <p>2020 – COVID-19 pandemic declared followed by community lockdowns. Significant increase in sales, and Sharon Cutts reports satisfaction with turnover. The loss experienced in 2019 was replaced with a profit. Sunday trading was also “doing well”. The Avon Street store is leased to Nutrien Ag Solutions.</p> <p>2021 – Sharon Cutts reports sales turnover has continued to grow, and customer loyalty appears to have been retained even without the lockdowns. Solar panels and LED lighting had saved significant power costs. Trevor Bond noted that calls for the QFCC to secure a liquor licence would depend on the guidance that the board received from the shareholders.</p> <p>2022 – Avon Street store is leased to Hutton and Northey Sales. QFCC profits were good and the café bar and take away was doing very well. The QFCC board decides not to proceed with liquor licence due to the Quairading Hotel coming under new management.</p> <p>2023 – The QFCC achieves sales of more than \$4.4 million and gross profit of over \$1.16 million.</p>



About the authors

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