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CASE
STUDY

YORK AND DISTRICT CO-OPERATIVE LTD – PROUDLY SERVING THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1917



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INTRODUCTION

The York and District Co-operative Ltd., known as The Co-op York (ABN 90 863 219 125), is a consumer co-operative located in the picturesque historic town of York, Western Australia (WA). York is the oldest inland town in WA and is situated on the banks of the Avon River, 97 kilometres east of the State capital of Perth.



Established in 1917, the York and District Co-operative Ltd. currently operates supermarket, hardware, building and garden supplies businesses at two sites within the town. It owns four sites containing these and other buildings. The first, 138 Avon Terrace, is a heritage-listed building, housing the IGA Supermarket operated by the Co-op. The second, at 142 Avon Terrace, is situated adjacent to the Supermarket. It previously housed the Co-operative's Mitre 10 Hardware store and at time of writing was vacant and being considered for re-development. The third building, located at 50 Avon Terrace, houses the Mitre 10 Hardware store, and the York Building Supplies and Garden Centre. The fourth building, at 46 Avon Terrace, is located next door to the third property, and at time of writing was leased to Nutrien Ag Solutions.

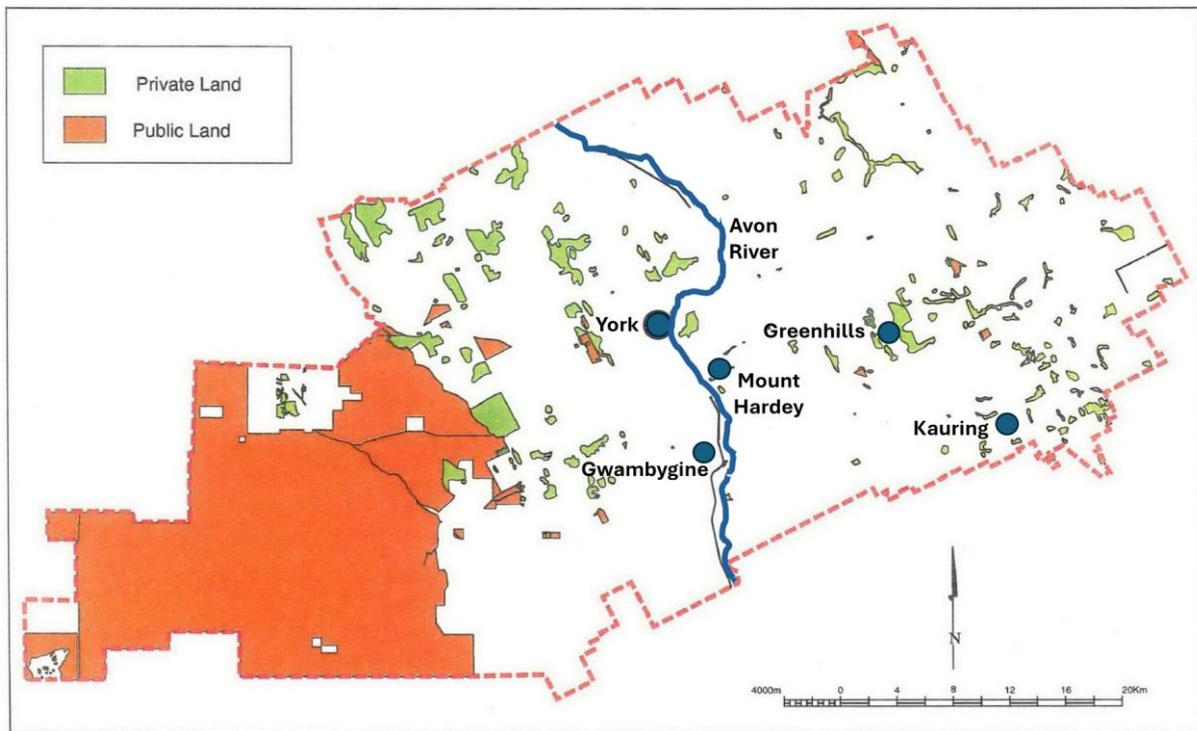
With a combined annual turnover of more than \$15 million, The Co-op York, employs about 74 people (Co-op York, 2021). It provides valuable services to the local population of 3,459 living in the Shire of York (ABS, 2022a), plus the many thousands of tourists who visit the historic town each year. As outlined in The Co-op York's Annual Report of 2021,

"The Co-operative has had 7 Chairpersons and 13 General Manager/CEO's in its 104-year history and currently employs 74 staff, providing much needed local employment and opportunity to the youth of the town. In operating to provide services to the local community, the Co-operative also assists in supporting locally based groups, clubs, and associations. As a Co-operative the returned benefits to people living in the district is larger than an owner operated business which would not be able to make the same size returns to the community. This is also important when looking at the people employed by the Co-operative when compared to a private employer and the significant money the Co-operative puts into the local economy" (Co-op York, 2021, p. 1).

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SHIRE OF YORK

The Shire of York encompasses an area of 214,963 hectares (2,149 km²) and is divided by the Avon River Valley that runs north-south approximately mid-way between its western and eastern boundaries. As shown in Figure 1, the public land on the western side comprises State forests and occupies around a quarter of the Shire (Weaving, 1994). This area includes sections of the hilly areas of the Darling Ranges, which form the escarpment of the Western Plateau, covering two thirds of the Australian continent (2.7 million km²) stretching from the Swan Coastal Plain across to South Australia and into the Northern Territory. The State forests on the western side of the Shire include the Mundaring State Forest, and the Wandoo National Park. The town of York lies in the centre along the Avon River and is the administrative seat of the Shire Council, with four other townships of Greenhills, Kauring, Mount Hardey and Gwambygine located to the east and south.

Figure 1: Shire of York existing vegetation on public and private land



Source: Adapted from Weaving (1994, figure 6).

The forested areas on the western side of the Shire are covered in jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), marri (*Corymbia calophylla*), wandoo (*Eucalyptus wandoo*), blackbutt (*Eucalyptus patens*), and bull banksia (*Banksia grandis*) trees, with an understorey or grasstrees (*Xanthorrhoea preissii*), bushy snail hakea (*Hakea cristata*), parrot bush (*Dryandra sessilis*), and other species, particularly many wildflowers such as sky-blue lechenaultia (*Lechenaultia biloba*) (Weaving, 1994).

In the centre of the District is the Avon River Valley, which is home to flooded gum (*Eucalyptus rudis*) and paperbarks, while further east, where most of the original vegetation has been cleared, some remnants of York gum (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*), bushy jam (*Acacia acuminata*), and wandoo can be found. Granite outcrops are common in the area, and the red alluvial soils along the slopes and valleys, have been largely cleared for agriculture (Weaving, 1994).

Much of the remaining land area is allocated to farming that includes grains (e.g., wheat, oats, barley), as well as pastoral activities (e.g., sheep, lambs, cattle), plus some pig farming. Of the 481 businesses within the Shire of York, 38% are agricultural businesses. Dryland agriculture occupies 153,447.5 hectares (approx. 71.4%) of the total land area and provides employment for about 16% of the 1,408-person workforce in the district (ABS, 2022a/b).



Figure 2: Shire of York within Wheatbelt region of Western Australia



Source: Shire of York (2018).

Figure 2 shows the location of the Shire of York within the context of the Wheatbelt region of the State of WA. It is near the Perth metropolitan area, making it an attractive destination for day trippers wishing to visit its historic commercial township, associated nature trails, and scenic routes along the Avon Valley (Shire of York, 2018). While the Shire of York is one of the Wheatbelt’s major grain growing areas, it is also an important tourist destination with an annual average of 172,505 visitors, mostly “day trippers” from Perth (Shire of York, 2024).

The Shire's climate is Mediterranean, consisting of dry hot summers with an average temperature ranging from a maximum of 34.3°C to a minimum of 16.8°C in January, and cool wet winters with an average temperature ranging from a maximum of 15.6°C to a minimum of 5.3°C in July, with frosts a common feature of winter (Weaving, 1994).

In 2021 the Shire of York had a population of 3,459 divided equally between males and females (ABS, 2022a). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprised 4.2% (n = 144) of the total (ABS, 2022c). The population has remained stable over time. For example, in 2006 the Shire had a population of 3,116, which rose to 3,396 by 2011, then to 3,604 by 2016, only to fall back to its current level (ABS, 2022d).

According to the Shire of York's *Strategic Community Plan* (Shire of York, 2018), modest growth in the population is anticipated with a target of 4,260 people by 2026, with most of the increases within the town of York. However, at time of writing the population was aging, with the median age rising from 47 years in 2011, to 56 years in 2021 (ABS, 2022d).

As discussed above, agriculture and tourism are major sectors within the Shire of York's economy. The latter is supported by the proximity of York to the Perth CBD, and the significant cultural and heritage assets found within the town of York and surrounding District. These include a range of significant Aboriginal heritage sites, and the many historic buildings found within the town.

CHAPTER 1: A HISTORY OF THE YORK DISTRICT TO FEDERATION

This section provides brief history of the Shire of York from pre-colonisation in the 1830s, through to the Federation of Australia in 1901. It provides a context for the process of European settlement during the nineteenth century, its impact on the Noongar Ballardong people, the traditional owners of the land upon which the York District is located. It is provided for historical accuracy and recognition of the Noongar as the traditional landowners, and as a background to the social and economic forces that led to the foundation of The Co-op York.

THE NOONGAR BALLARDONG, TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE YORK DISTRICT

The original inhabitants of the York 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). It is unclear how many Ballardong were living around the Avon River at the time of European settlement. However, the diary of Ensign Robert Dale of the 63rd Regiment of Foot, a British Army regiment sent to protect and help establish the colony, who conducted several surveys of the land and river systems within the Darling Ranges during the first years of European settlement, reported frequently seeing quite large numbers of Aboriginal hunting parties often numbering more than 30 men at a time (Hallam, 1998).

The Ballardong are one of 14 distinct cultural groups within the Noongar communities that make up the traditional owners of the southwestern region of Western Australia. Noongar land extends from the coastal town of Leeman, 300 km north of Perth in the north-west facing the Indian Ocean, to beyond Cape Arid, 731 km to the southeast of Perth on the Great Australian Bight in the Southern Ocean (SWALSC, 2024).

At time of European settlement, the Whadjuk, Pindarup, Minang and Ballardong were living around the Swan, Canning, Murray, and Avon Rivers, the Peel Estuary, and King George's Sound. As a result, they were the most impacted by the arrival of British settlers during the 1820s and 1830s. Although relations between the Noongar and the European settlers was initially amicable, it soon became confrontational as the settlement spread into Aboriginal traditional lands (Martens, 2022).

The cause of this confrontation was a lack of understanding between the Noongar and the settlers. The Aboriginal community was willing to share its land with the new commers, but there was an expectation that ownership would be common to all (Hallam, 1998). Instead, the country was divided amongst the settlers and occupied as bounded private land, a 'revolutionary concept' of absolute and exclusive property rights familiar to the settlers, but alien to the Noongar (Reynolds, 1987, p. 190).

As settlement spread in search of farming and pastoral land, the Europeans were often guided by the Noongar to the best water sources, and open savannah where kangaroo and emu were commonly found. The settlers duly claimed ownership, cleared the land, constructed fences, and refused access to the Noongar. They also competed with the Noongar for native wildlife, not wanting to slaughter their valuable livestock brought from the United Kingdom (UK) (Statham Drew & Clack, 2018).

Violent confrontations erupted between the British colonists and the Noongar Whadjuk, living around the Swan and Canning Rivers. Among the Noongar leaders were Tribal Elder Midegooroo and his son Yagan, who were outlawed and eventually killed. The former by firing squad following a summary military court, and the latter by a young settler who Yagan had befriended, but who murdered him for the bounty that had been placed on Yagan's head (Mossenson, 1967).

These confrontations were usually caused by the Noongar stealing vegetables and grain from the settler's gardens or killing their domestic farm animals. This type of engagement often resulted in direct violence from both sides, and the imposition of harsh British justice. Many Noongar initiated killings of settlers were believed to be pay back for earlier violence inflicted by the British on the Noongar. This pattern of Noongar resistance to European settlement continued throughout the 1830s and 1840s (Martens, 2022).

British settlement and the subsequent expansion of the wheatbelt during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, led to the dispossession of the Noongar peoples' traditional hunting lands, which were claimed by the settlers and cleared for agricultural and pastoral use. However, because of the *Noongar Recognition Act 2016* (WA), the Ballardong and other Noongar had their traditional ownership of the land recognised. 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.

Despite the official recognition of the Noongar People Native Title Rights, legal disputes between the Noongar and the WA State Government over these ILUAs continued until 2020 when the matter was referred to the High Court. The court's ruling cleared the way for the ILUAs to be implemented resulting in Native Land Title recognition. Financial compensation for land now in private hands commenced in 2021-2022. The full Native Title Rights of the Noongar covers an area of approximately 200,000 km² across the southwest of WA. The land area claimed by the Ballardong stretches from Dalwallinu in the north, to Wagin and Newdegate in the south. A Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation was established to administer the ILUA encompassing the Shires of York, Northam, Hyden and Kondinin (BAC, 2024).

EARLY BRITISH SETTLEMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

British occupation of Western Australia commenced in 1826 with the establishment of a penal settlement at King George's Sound on the southern coastline where the City of Albany is now located. This initial settlement was led by Major Edmund Lockyer, who sailed from Sydney with a party of convicts and a small contingent of soldiers aboard the brig *Amity* to establish an isolated garrison and penal outpost of the convict establishment in New South Wales (Green, 1981; Young, 2020).

The settlement, originally called Frederick's Town, and later renamed Albany, was formally proclaimed a British territory by Lockyer on 27 January 1827 (Morgan, 2016; Young, 2020). The area around King George's Sound are the traditional lands of the Minang people. It has been reported that relations between the early settlement at Albany the Aboriginal community was amicable (Green, 1981; Menck, 2022). However, in 1829 the large-scale occupation by British colonists commenced, with the claiming of the western third of the continent in the name of the

British Crown, and foundation of the Swan River Colony under the leadership of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir James Stirling. As noted above, the relations between the British settlers and the Noongar from the Whadjuk, Gnaala Karla Boodja, and Ballardong communities living around the Swan, Canning, Avon, and Murray Rivers were less peaceful.

James Stirling (1791-1865), born in Drumpellier, Scotland, joined the Royal Navy at age 12 and commanded his first ship by 21 years of age. During his career, he explored the Swan and Canning River basins in 1827, leading to his appointment as the first Governor of Western Australia on 30 December 1828. Initially arriving as Lieutenant Governor, he was promoted to Governor in 1831, knighthood followed in 1832. Stirling resigned in 1837 and returned to the UK in 1839. He continued his naval service, becoming Commander in Chief in China and the East Indies (1854-1856), Vice Admiral (1857), and full Admiral (1862). He passed away in Guildford, England, on 22 April 1865 (Government House WA, 2024; Crowley, 1967).

Stirling's high hopes for the Swan River Colony after his 1827 survey quickly faded after the 1829 settlement. The plan was for settlers to buy passage, bring capital (farming equipment, seeds, animals, materials, and servants), and receive land accordingly (Martens, 2022). Over 1,100 immigrants came from England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and other countries (Mazzarol, 1978), but primarily from southeast England (Cameron, 1981). They were joined by a Company of the 63rd Regiment of Foot led by Major Irwin (Oldman, 2022).

Major Frederick Chidley Irwin (Stirling's cousin) managed the colony during his absence until 1834. Irwin led the colonial military forces in its early years. He served in the Napoleonic Wars from 1809 to 1814 in Portugal and Spain, as well as in South Africa and Ceylon from 1823 to 1828. He was an Anglican officer who arrived in the Swan River Colony as a Captain. After marrying in Britain in 1834, he returned to Western Australia in 1837, was promoted to Major, and became Lieutenant Colonel in 1846. Irwin had seven sons and five daughters with his second wife, Elizabeth Courthope, and often acted as Governor. He retired in 1856, moved to England in 1858, and died in Cheltenham on 31 March 1860 (Mossenson, 1967).

British troops were tasked with defending the colony and engaged in early conflicts due to Noongar resistance. Among them was 19-year-old Ensign Robert Dale of the 63rd Regiment. Born in Winchester, England in 1810, he was the son of Major Thurston Dale and Helen Matthews. With assistance from his great uncle General William Dyott, he became an Ensign on 25 October 1827 (Statham Drew & Clack, 2018).

In 1829, he was sent to the Swan River Colony where he worked as an assistant to Surveyor General John Septimus Roe (George, 2001; Kerr, 1992). The two met on their journey aboard the *Parmelia* and its escort HMS *Sulphur* (Oldman, 2022). During his four years in the colony, Dale surveyed areas like the Swan Coastal Plain, Darling Ranges, Avon Valley, and King George's Sound. His sketches and diaries are valuable records of the early colony. He returned to England in 1833, left the Army, joined his family's timber company, and promoted jarrah. He died of tuberculosis in 1853 at age 43 (Statham Drew & Clack, 2018).

Figure 3: Governor Sir James Stirling (left) and Lt. Col. Frederick Chidley Irwin (right)



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

Dale's appointment as assistant to the Surveyor General proved fortuitous for both the young Ensign, and the colony. In addition to Aboriginal–Settler relations, the colony during the 1830s and 1840s was struggling economically due to a shortage of labour, crop failures, and a lack of capital investment (Spillman, 1995). Legal disputes were common between the landowners 'masters' and their indentured 'servants,' who complained about breaches of contract. These agreements had been drawn up along the lines commonly used within England for farm labourers. Contracts were for periods of up to seven years, and specified the food, drink, clothing, and other provisions the master would be required to provide to their indentured servant in return for their service. However, in early colonial WA such provisions were usually impossible to guarantee, and the indentured servants were frequently supplied with local game such as kangaroo, emu, or black swan (Mazzarol, 1978).

Although Stirling had surveyed the WA southwest coastal areas during 1827, including incursions up the Swan and Canning Rivers, his optimistic forecasts over the fertility of the soils in the Swan Coastal Plain, were soon shown to be unfounded and the small colony was forced to disperse up the Swan, Canning, Avon, and Murray Rivers in search of arable land (Spillman, 1995). The colony struggled economically and Stirling's resignation and return to Britain was motivated by his

concern over the lack of financial support he was receiving from the British government, which was reinforced during his visit to Britain during 1832-1834. The poor quality of the soils, lack of labour, and paucity of inbound investment capital made the Swan River Colony a commercial and agricultural failure (Crowley, 1967).

As explained by Crowley (1967), Stirling tried to do too much, and often did it badly. His approach to land distribution was unwise and saw overly large allocations given to people who were more interested in land speculation than agricultural or pastoral development. He also allowed his 'robust and somewhat irrational enthusiasm ... to influence his official judgment'. His own selection of land allocation totalling 100,000 acres (40,469 hectares), which was frequently changed, demonstrated 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).

The Swan Coastal Plain which contains the Swan and Canning River systems covers an area of 15,280 km² and is a 30 km wide strip running north-south between the Darling Scarp and the Indian Ocean. The soils in the Swan Coastal Plain are mostly unsuitable for agriculture, being either sandy or gravel in nature. For the early settlers, the main limitations to the development of farming and grazing were finding arable soils and sources of potable water (Burvill, 1979).

At time of European settlement, the area was marked by wetland swamps that provided the Noongar with both a fresh water source and a source of food and timber. The capital city of Perth was built amid wetlands and many of these lakes and swamps were drained and reclaimed for farming (WWF, 2014). However, with the increasing arrival of new settlers Governor Stirling and Surveyor General Septimus Roe were under increasing pressure to find suitable land to accommodate the new arrivals. A search beyond the Darling scarp was needed.

EXPLORATION OF THE AVON RIVER VALLEY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF YORK

As shown in Figure 2, the Shire of York is geographically close to the Perth greater metropolitan area and the Avon River is a major tributary into the Swan River that runs down through the City of Perth and on to the port City of Fremantle. It should come as no surprise that as the search for farming and grazing land moved inland, the explorers followed the river systems including the Avon River. This exploration commenced in 1830 and was led by Ensign Robert Dale just newly appointed as the assistant to the Surveyor General Roe.

Dale proved to be an intrepid explorer, leading nine expeditions throughout the colony, including the first surveys over the Darling Ranges in 1830. His first expedition in September 1829 was led by Lieutenant William Preston from the 63rd Regiment, who was not impressed with the country

they found in the Darling Ranges. However, Dale persevered and made the first journey over the escarpment followed by explorations of the Avon River and the land found around modern-day York (Oldman, 2022).

In October 1830, Dale led a party of dignitaries including Governor Stirling, plus settlers, servants, their horses and dogs, back to the land around the current town of York. The quality of the land in this area impressed Stirling and the area was gazetted for settlement on 11 November 1830. From December 1830 to January 1831, a total of 330,000 acres (133,546 hectares) of land within the Avon Valley had been allocated for settlement, with a further 6,030 acres (2,440 hectares) of land released in the area by the end of 1831 (Oldman, 2022).

The party led by Dale in October 1830 comprised not only Governor Stirling, but also the young Ensign's loyal batman Private Sheridan, described as 'a jovial Irishman', two other soldiers, and a party of sixteen settlers. These included John Wall Hardey, Henry Camfield, Michael Clarkson, George Fletcher Moore, the Colonial Chaplain, the Reverend John Burdett Wittenoom, Revett Henry Bland, and William Stirling, the Governor's cousin. John Hardey was a farmer from Yorkshire, England, and a staunch Methodist. He had migrated along with his brother James and their wives, children, servants, and friends on the ship *Tranby* in February 1830. The rolling grassy plains of the Avon Valley were likened to the countryside found in Yorkshire, and it is reportedly the reason that the new settlement was named York (Ashbolt, 1961; Statham Drew & Clack, 2018).

European settlement commenced from 1831, with a focus on sheep grazing, although wheat and barley were sown. However, by 1837 the total land area under cultivation was only 136 hectares, with 8,740 sheep and 263 cattle retained for grazing. Settlement was constrained by a shortage of labour, flooding, bushfires, droughts, and poisonous native vegetation (e.g., *Gastrolobium calycinum* commonly known as York Road poison, a flowering plant in the family Fabaceae), and raids by the local Noongar Ballardong people (Ashbolt, 1961; Cameron, 1981; Martens, 2022).

Initially, a detachment of troops from the 63rd Regiment provided protection for the settlers, also assisting with the construction of homesteads and other buildings. From 1833, a detachment of soldiers from the 21st North British Fusiliers were stationed in York and faced some significant opposition from the Ballardong resulting in deaths on both sides. They were replaced by troops from the 51st Regiment in 1840, who maintained a squad of six to eight soldiers in the town until 1847 when they were replaced by troops from the 96th Regiment, remaining there until 1849 (Oldman, 2022).

EARLY YEARS OF GROWTH

During the 1840s the town of York began to grow. It was driven by the arrival of more settlers seeking land as the population of the Swan River Colony grew from 2,150 settlers in 1839, to 3,649 by 1842, and then 4,500 by 1845 (EDC, 1915; Burvill, 1979). Both private and public buildings were built in the town of York, along with churches and schools. In 1843 a Road Board was established, which was the forerunner of subsequent local government (Ashbolt, 1961).

The Western Australian Agricultural Society, now the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia (RASWA), was formed in 1831 with a foundation membership of 20 farmers. The

Governor become the Patron of the Society, which stated its aims as: the collection and sharing of information, the giving of prizes to promote greater efficiency in farming, enhanced animal husbandry, and 'as far as possible to cultivate a friendly intercourse with the natives' (Statham-Drew and Clack, 2018, p. 33).

As the agricultural industry expanded so too did the membership of the RASWA. However, many of the smaller farmers located inland within the York district found the cost of travel to Perth and associated accommodation too expensive. This led to the decision to establish a local Society. At a meeting held at 'Monger's Hotel', York on 3 August 1840 the York Agricultural Association 'Society' (YAS) was established. Its aims were publicly stated as follows,

"That an Association be formed of an in-definite number of Members to be called the York Agricultural Association, in connection with the Western Australian Agricultural Association; to hold an annual, and three quarterly meetings, having for its object to establish a Fair for the sale and show of stock and wool, — to encourage improvement in the breed of sheep and other stock by public rewards for, and testimony to, superior skill and general good conduct in shepherds and other servants; also for the destruction of native dogs" (Inquirer, 1840)..

Although it declared itself to be an independent organisation, the YAS aimed to work closely with the RASWA exchanging reports and seeking the Governor of WA for its Patron. Other provisions outlined by the YAS were annual member subscriptions of £1/10s., and the payment of a 10-shilling bounty for every native dog (dingo) killed (Inquirer, 1840).

In addition, the YAS was to keep a Journal recording all the livestock and overall description of the state of health of the livestock, as well as the general condition of the farming land and crops. A Secretary, Treasurer, and six-person Management Committee were to be appointed. They were to meet on a quarterly basis at Monger's Hotel, and be provided with dinner (but not beer, wine or spirits) from the Society's funds. The inaugural Committee was comprised of Messrs Bland (Chair), S. Burges, T. Carter, M. Onslow, and F. Smith (Inquirer, 1840).

The first Secretary and Treasurer was Peter Barrow, who arrived in the colony aboard the ship *Westmoreland* in January 1840. He settled in York and was appointed as the temporary Protector of Aborigines, In addition to his role as Secretary and Treasurer of the YAS. However, he did not stay long resigning from these positions in 1841, leasing his cottage in York for £50 a year, and leaving aboard the ship *Advocate* for Singapore never to return (Statham-Drew and Clack, 2018).

Barrow's position of Protector of Aborigines was created by the new Governor John Hutt, who replaced Stirling in 1839, serving until 1846. A political liberal, and advocate of the Wakefield system of colonisation as found in South Australia, Governor Hutt took a strong line of reconciliation with the Noongar, and a reallocation of land rights within the colony. These actions did not make him popular, but they proved effective, and were requirements he had carried from England (Staples, 1966).

In 1842 a courthouse was erected, comprising two-rooms and constructed from rammed earth and local timbers. It provided housing for John Nicol Drummond, the Inspector of Native Police. Born in County Cork, Ireland in 1816, Drummond, migrated to the WA colony in 1829 aged 13

along with his parents and brothers James and Johnston. The family took up residence on a property near Toodyay, a town located 62 kilometres north of York in the Avon River Valley, and approximately 85 kilometres northeast of Perth (Pashley, 2002).

Figure 4: John Nicol Drummond and Richard Goldsmith Meares later in life



Sources: Drummond (1880, Public Domain); Meares (1860, Geni.com)

Following an outbreak of violence between the Ballardong Noongar and British settlers in 1839, in which a settler woman and her baby were murdered, Governor Hutt, established a special Native Police Force comprising Aboriginal constables. Drummond had demonstrated an ability to communicate with and gain the trust of the Noongar and was appointed to the role of first Inspector of Native Police for the Swan River Colony at York in 1840 (Pashley, 2002).

He held this position until 1857, although he fell out of favour with Governor Hutt over his response to the murder of his brother Johnston by Noongar warrior Kabinger in 1845. Securing a court warrant for Kabinger's arrest, Drummond tracked the warrior down and when the latter resisted arrest, shot and killed him in what he reported as an 'execution of his duty while enforcing a warrant of arrest' (Inquirer, 1845, p. 4). The Governor, who disliked Drummond's cavalier attitude towards policing, suspended him from the police force. However, when Governor Hutt returned to the UK at the end of the year Drummond was reappointed to the police, as he was viewed favourably by the population of York, but at a lower rank (Pashley, 2002).

In 1843 the York Courthouse also housed Captain Richard Goldsmith Meares, a veteran of the Battle of Waterloo, who migrated to the colony aboard the ship *Gilmour* in 1829 and settled in the Murray River district near the present City of Mandurah. He was appointed District Superintendent of Police and Justice of the Peace, also participating in the “Battle of Pinjarra”, aka “Pinjarra Massacre” alongside Governor Stirling in 1834 (Conole, 2013). The Governor appointed him to York where he served until 1859. He died in 1862 and is buried at York in the old graveyard site of the first St John’s Church (MUP, 1967).

Another role played by Superintendent Meares was the foundation of the York Race Club (YRC). During 1843, Meares, and fellow settlers Revett Henry Bland, and William Brockman formed the YRC to provide ‘pleasure and family entertainment’ for the York community (Statham-Drew and Clack, 2018, p. 45). A racetrack was selected on the left bank of the Avon River facing the York Hotel and circling around the base of Mount Bakewell. Races were held regularly which were advertised in the local newspaper *The Inquirer* with imported and local horses competing for attractive purses, and the crowd enjoying a good view of the entire track. The racehorses were owned by the more affluent settlers who included the Governor (James, 2013). Both the YAS and YRC were still in operation in 2024.

Describing the YRC or “York Jockey Club” in 1961, the York Town Clerk Mr. C. J. Ashbolt wrote,

“The ‘Sport of Kings’ is controlled locally by the York Jockey Club, which held its first meeting in October 1843, during the week when the annual fair was held. The track was then situated almost in the centre of the town. The club has continued to function down through the years and is now recognised as one of the leading country clubs. The present course is situated under the shadow of Mt. Bakewell and meetings are conducted monthly during winter and spring, when the surrounding countryside presents a most beautiful picture” (Ashbolt, 1961, p.4).

Throughout the 1840s labour shortages remained a constraint on the development of the agricultural sector in the York district, with this particularly noticeable around harvest time. Sandalwood cutting became a key export product from the Colony during the 1840s. Commercial harvesting and export of sandalwood commenced from 1844, when a trial shipment aboard the colonial schooner *Champion* demonstrated that the wood could return greater value than whale oil and bone. For example, sandalwood was worth £10 per ton compared to £4/10s. for whale oil and bone (Statham-Drew and Clack, 2018).

There were also serious floods caused by the Avon River bursting its banks, which was a regular feature of the Swan and Avon River system. The river system is of variable flow, drying out in summer to form disconnected tree-lined pools, and flooding during the winter. The 1847 flood was the first experienced by the settlers. On 10 August 1857 the Swan River rose more than 22 ft 5 inches (6.83 metres) above its average summer level. The Perth Jetty was fully submerged, and the situation in the Avon Valley around York was devastating. Serious floods also occurred in 1859; and 1862 (Hansen, 1986).

THE CONVICT ERA

Despite the economic relief accruing from the export of sandalwood, the shortage of labour remained a significant constraint. This triggered a call from within the settler community for WA to become a reception location for convicts. It was a time when the convict system was being ended elsewhere in Australia (Roe, 1974). However, the view from WA was very different. For example, at a special meeting of the YAS on 5 June 1847, which was reportedly ‘uncommonly well attended’, a resolution was passed to request the WA Legislative Council, to write to the British Secretary of State for the Colonies to send convicts to WA (Inquirer, 1847, p.2).

Initial proposals were made to seek convicts from Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania), or from Singapore. However, these were rejected in favour of a direct relationship between the colony in WA and the United Kingdom. Even those settlers who had been strident opponents of convicts became advocates, due to their desperate need for labour (Inquirer, 1847). With similar calls from the RASWA and other groups across the colony, an agreement was reached for WA to become a destination for convicts in 1849 with the first batch of convicts arriving aboard the ship *Scindian* in 1850. The convict transportation system commenced in 1850 and lasted 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 had a major impact on WA during the 1850s and 1860s with the total non-indigenous population rising from 7,186 in 1851 to 15,346 in 1860 (Cotter, 1967). To avoid social problems and enhance the skilled workforce, the selection of convicts for WA was based on their good behaviour and skills. Many were skilled tradesmen commonly referred to as ‘mechanics’ and had received parole (known as a ticket-of-leave) upon arrival in Fremantle. This allowed them to work for an employer or become self-employed (Gregory & Marshall, 2020).

Convict transportation also brought with it financing from the British Imperial authorities in London, which provided the funding to support the convicts, their guards, and administrators, as well as the construction of numerous public buildings and roads in Perth, Fremantle and elsewhere in the colony. Many of these ticket-of-leave convicts were brought to York by the YAS to alleviate the urgent shortage of skilled labour. As in Perth and Fremantle, they were employed in the construction of buildings and public works (FHWA, 2023).

In 1851 the first convicts and their military Pensioner Guards arrived in York. The guards were known as the Enrolled Pensioner Force WA, as they were soldiers who had been discharged from the British Army, Royal Marines, or East India Company Army and awarded a pension, plus free passage for themselves and their families, free accommodation, and a land grant to settle in the colony after 10-years’ service. A total of 1,248 Pensioner Guards arrived in WA between 1850 and 1874 (FHWA, 2023).

Land was allocated within the townsite of York for the construction of a Convict Depot, which was a hiring station for ticket-of-leavers. Other such depots were built at Toodyay and Guildford. During 1853 and 1854 these facilities were built from locally made clay brick and rammed earth. Housing for the Pensioner Guards in the form of barracks and married accommodation was also

built along with a hospital, guard house, officers' quarters, commissariat stables, sappers' quarters, engineer's store, blacksmith's forge, and a wash house (Shire of York, 2019a).

PROGRESS TO FEDERATION

The establishment of a P&O steamship coaling station at the Port of Albany in 1852 provided a regular direct mail service between WA, Victoria and the UK (Baskerville et al., 2022). In 1871 the York Road Board was established to develop the road between York and other centres providing easier access to Perth (Ashbolt, 1961).

By 1877 the installation of a telegraph line linking London, Perth, Adelaide, and Darwin had also connected York to this telecommunications network as the line ran through the town (Menck, 2022). This communications infrastructure was further enhanced in 1885 with the laying of a railway line connecting York to Perth and Fremantle via Chidlow (Mouritz, 1965).

York benefitted from the changes in rural land ownership that took place in 1887 when leasehold pastoral land was replaced by a system focusing on freehold agricultural land (Burvill, 1979). This saw the sub-division of pastoral leases for farming, a process that had commenced during the 1850s when the pastoral leaseholds of many pioneer settlers, with some holding 90,000 acres (36,422 hectares), were sub-divided to provide for more farmland (Ashbolt, 1961).

During 1880s and 1890s the discovery of gold significantly boosted the economic fortunes of WA and with it the Shire of York. An initial discovery of gold in the Kimberley region of WA in 1885 sparked a gold rush, but this quickly petered out, to be followed in 1888 by a gold discovery at Southern Cross, in the Shire of Yilgarn, located 400 kilometres east of Perth, and subsequent major discoveries near Coolgardie in 1892 and Kalgoorlie in 1893, located 595 kilometres east of Perth (WAM, 2017).

These discoveries generated a significant gold rush and York became a major centre on the road to the goldfields. Essentially all traffic from Perth to Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie went via York. This enhanced further growth in the town, including hotels, shops, and other services. However, it did not last because the extension of the railway line to the goldfields was routed through the adjacent town of Northam, which resulted in the growth of Northam at the expense of York (Ashbolt, 1961).

The decision over whether the Eastern Railway line should be routed via York or Northam was a hotly contested issue during the 1880s. It apparently became so annoying to the parliamentary representatives in the Legislative Council that they suggested the matter be settled 'via a game of cards' (King & Parker, 2003, p. 3).

However, despite the heated debate, the decision was finally made in December 1891 for the railway line to run via Northam not York on the argument that the distance from Northam to Yilgarn (Southern Cross) was 15 miles (24 kms) shorter and would therefore save an estimated £500 (approx. \$91,000 in 2023 dollars)¹ (Garden, 1972).

¹ Reserve Bank of Australia Pre-Decimal Inflation Calculator.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Many significant historic buildings were constructed in York during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Over 200 buildings within the York township are heritage listed with sites dating from the 1830s to the 1910s. Figure 5 shows The Co-op York store, Post Office, and Courthouse buildings located on Avon Terrace. Construction of the York Courthouse commenced in 1852 during the convict era. The site housed the courthouse, prison cell block, and police quarters and stables. It was progressively added to during the 1850s and 1860s, with the courthouse doubled in size during 1874, and further renovated and upgraded in 1895.

Figure 5: The Co-op York, Post Office, and Courthouse buildings on Avon Terrace



Source: Michael Lewi (2008).

The Post Office building was constructed in 1893, but the site had been used as a post office since 1866 and was opened in response to the growing importance of York as an administrative centre. The original building was a single storey Victorian Georgian style construction with a shingle roof. Originally established in 1868 as general merchandise and produce business, The Co-op York building was owned by William Edwards, and inherited by his sons Charles and Kenneth. The store in its current location was built in 1872, and progressively upgraded through to 1888. In 1892 the two sons dissolved their partnership, but the store remained in the Edwards family's ownership until at least 1936. The building was acquired by The Co-op York in 1956 (Heritage Council, 2022).



Figure 6: the Town Hall (left) and Imperial Hotel (right) on Avon Terrace York



Source: Michael Lewi (2015).

The Imperial Hotel was constructed in 1886 and was designed by James William Wright in the Victorian 'Filigree' style. Over the years, the hotel has had numerous owners and was damaged by fire in 1894 when an adjoining group of shops caught fire. It was further damaged during the Meckering earthquake of 1968 forcing it to be closed and its veranda removed. It was left in ruin for many years until it was renovated in 2010 and subsequently reopened in 2018.

Other notable historic buildings are the Castle Hotel on the corner of Avon Terrace and South Street, constructed in 1853, and one of the oldest surviving hotels in WA, and the Palace Hotel, a Federation era building constructed in 1909 on land originally owned by local Police Sergeant Thomas Bailey in 1854. In 1871 Bailey sold the hotel to William Wigmore Hoops who built Hoops' store on the site. It remained in the Hoops family until it was sold to Matthew Ryan, a local farmer in 1907, who demolished the store and built the hotel.

In addition to many other historic hotels and commercial buildings, York also has several historic churches. Amongst these are the Holy Trinity Anglican Church located on the east side of the Avon River on the corner of Newcastle and Pool Streets. Construction took place during 1854-1855, and it was formally consecrated in 1858. Designed by Architect Richard Roach Jewell, it is built in a Norman, or Victorian Romanesque style. The roof was raised, and the bell tower, chancel and vestries added in 1893. The bell tower was seriously damaged during the Meckering earthquake.



Figure 7: the Castle Hotel (left) and the York Palace Hotel (right) on Avon Terrace York



Source: Garton Smith (2018).

Figure 8: Holy Trinity Church (left) and St Patrick's Church (right)



Sources: Jeff Crisdale (1994); Gabrielle Delhey (2006).

St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church was first constructed in 1859 in response to the need to provide a place of worship for the many Catholics, mostly Convicts, who were in York during the 1850s and 1860s. A foundation stone was laid on St Patrick's Day, 17 March 1859 and the original building was made from fired brick, rendered with a lime and sand mortar. The church opened in 1860, and the first clergyman was a Spanish Monk Fr Franciso Salvado. He was replaced by Fr

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Anselm Bourke in 1863, who was subsequently replaced by Fr Patrick Joseph Gibney who served the church from 1868 until the early 1900s (Clack, 2009).

Father Gibney oversaw the construction of the current Church, which was designed by Joseph Nunan, an architect who was one of the sixty-one Irish Fenians transported to WA aboard the last convict ship *Hougoumont* in 1868. Construction of the church commenced in 1875 and was finally completed in 1909, although it was consecrated in 1883. Many of the skilled tradesmen who worked on the church were ticket-of-leave convicts who volunteered their time (Clack, 2009). There are many other historic buildings in York, which make it a popular tourist site for visitors. However, as Tony Clack declared in relation to the Town Hall, York's apogee was during the Federation era from the 1880s to the start of World War One.

PIONEERS OF THE YORK DISTRICT

The history of the York district is populated with many prominent pioneer families who played significant roles in the area's development. While a complete record of these people is outside the scope of this history of The Co-op York, some names are worthy of recognition. These are Revett Henry Bland (1811-1894), John Henry Monger Snr (1802-1867), his son, John Henry Monger Jnr (1831-1892), William Marwick (1833-1925), and William Burges (1806-1876). Each played a significant role in the development of the York district.

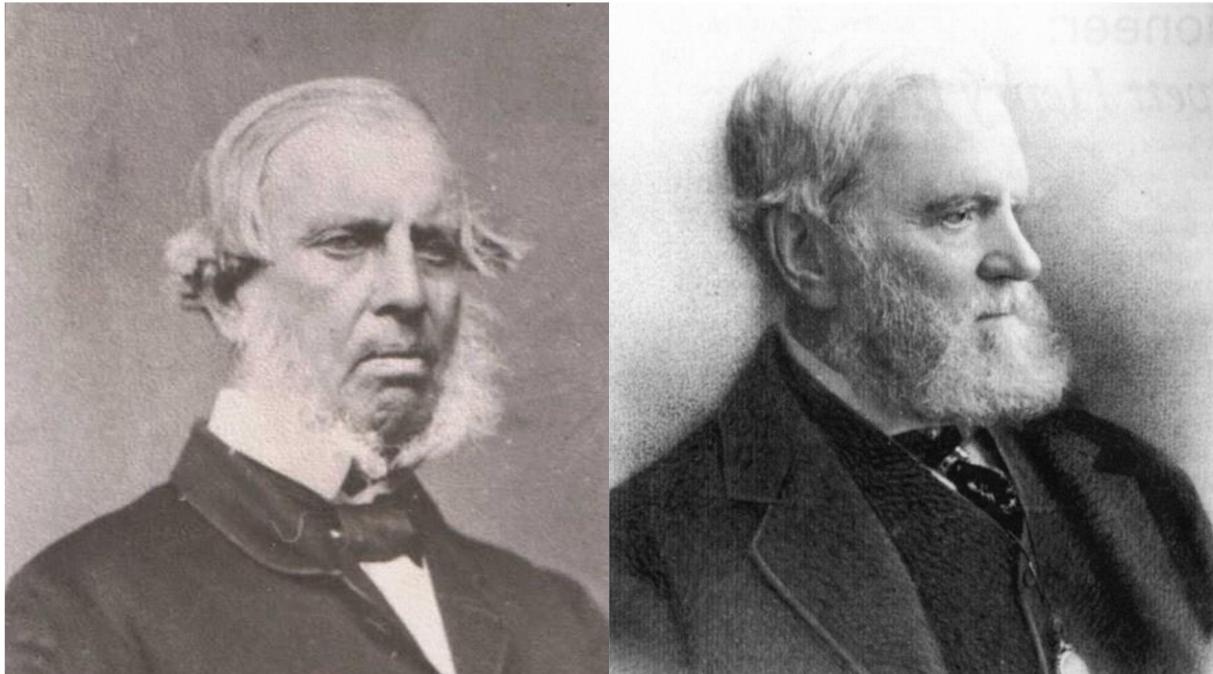
REVETT HENRY BLAND

The first of these pioneers, Revett Henry Bland was born at Newark, Nottinghamshire, England in 1811 the son of Dr Thomas Bland and his wife Emma, née Revett. Like his father, he studied as a doctor in London but migrated to WA in 1829 without completing his medical studies. He sailed aboard the *Marquis of Anglesea* arriving in the Swan River colony at the age of 18, accompanied by his manservant. Having brought a substantial amount of capital with him, Revett was able to secure 8,000 acres (3,200 hectares) on the left bank of the Swan River, some of which became the Houghton Estate winery in the Swan Valley (Daniele, 1969).

As noted earlier, Bland was among the first party of settlers to travel with Ensign Dale and Governor Stirling over the Darling Ranges to the land now comprising the Shire of York. In 1831 he was appointed by Stirling to settle the York district. He therefore moved to York where he established a government farm and formed a partnership with another settler Arthur Trimmer who had imported merino sheep to the colony. The farm proved successful, and Bland was granted land south of York which he named 'Balladong Farm' (Daniele, 1969).

In 1834 Bland was appointed as the Resident Magistrate at York and developed a portfolio of land assets which he sub-divided and either sold or leased, making him quite prosperous. The 1830s was a period of significant tensions and outbreaks of violence between the Ballardong Noongar and the settlers. Bland had numerous violent altercations with the Ballardong but was also able to develop a rapport with them. He learnt some of their language and as Magistrate, he generally dealt with them in a respectful and professional manner. This led him to be appointed as Protector of Aborigines by Governor John Hutt following the departure of Peter Barrow in 1841 (Staples, 1966).

Figure 9: John Henry Monger Snr. (left) and Revett Henry Bland (right)



Sources: Monger (York Society); Bland (Hepburn Shire Council, Victoria).

This appointment of Bland in the role of Protector of Aborigines reflected Governor Hutt's aim to reconcile with the Noongar and alleviate the violence that had been a feature of Stirling's time (Staples, 1966). Bland served in this capacity until 1843 when he returned to England to get treatment for his eyes, which had been causing him trouble for some time. He resigned his positions with the WA colonial government, and spent 18 months in Britain, returning to WA in 1845 only to suffer the loss of his wife in childbirth (Daniele, 1969).

The following year he was appointed as the Government Resident of Albany. He sold his land holdings in York during 1847 and 1848. He remarried in 1848 and after spending time undertaking land surveying in Champion Bay area of what is now the City of Geraldton, he was appointed as Acting Colonial Secretary. However, his eyes continued to cause trouble, and he was diagnosed with rheumatic ophthalmia, resulting in him losing sight in one eye (Daniele, 1969).

He resigned his position in WA and in 1851 returned to England for more medical treatment. His subsequent career involved travelling to Victoria where he was appointed as the Director of the Port Philip Colonial Gold Mining Co. in 1852. He subsequently co-founded the Clunes Quartz Mining Company in 1857, and in 1863-1865 became a Director of the National Bank. He died at Clunes, Victoria in 1894 (Daniele, 1969).

Bland's legacy for the Shire of York can be viewed in the context of his key role in helping to establish the agricultural and pastoral industries in the area, his role as an effective and diligent Magistrate, and his capacity to seek reconciliation with the Ballardong Noongar and other



Aboriginal people despite numerous encounters with them both in the York and Geraldton districts. His role in WA history as the government resident was summarised by John Deacon as follows,

“During that period, he had proved himself to be a man of sterling qualities, carrying on the onerous duties of magistrate in a pioneer settlement with distinction and success. His letters reveal that he possessed those qualities which make for leadership; while he resided in York, he had the esteem of both the settlers and the Government, and at all times he had dispensed justice with an impartial hand” (Deacon, 1947, p. 115).

JOHN HENRY MONGER SNR

John Henry Monger Snr was born in Faversham, Kent, England in 1802, and became an engineer. He was hired by Colonel Peter Latour as an indentured servant, to accompany him to the Swan River Colony where Latour had plans to develop an emigration scheme in the Leschenault area near the current City of Bunbury 175 kilometres south of Perth. Monger’s role was to be the overseer and manager of a series of sawmills Latour planned to establish (Clack & McColl, 2003).

Monger arrived aboard the ship *Lotus* in 1829 accompanied by his wife Mary and established a sawmill on a large freshwater lake north of Perth, known as Lake Monger, but at time of writing it was to be renamed Galup, which was its original Noongar name (Town of Cambridge, 2024). The area was also a meeting site for the Whadjuk Noongar people, which caused concern for Monger over the safety and security of the sawmill. At that time, the sawmill was effectively outside the protective cordon provide by the 63rd Regiment troops. Due to this lack of security, Monger moved from the lake in 1833 and acquired land on Mount Eliza where he built a house and took ownership of the Perth Hotel. However, upon hearing of the opportunities promised by the settlement of York, he relocated his business to the Avon Valley in 1837. Rather than seeking pastoral or agricultural land, Monger saw his future as a merchant operating a hotel and general store (Deacon, 1947).

Upon arrival in York, Monger purchased a plot of land from Revett Bland and Arthur Trimmer that was located near to the ford across the Avon River. There he established the York Hotel, known locally as ‘Monger’s Hotel’, the first such establishment in the town. This was a modest single storey building made from wattle and daub (Wright, 1974). The original hotel burnt down but was rebuilt into a more substantial building (see Figure 10). Securing a liquor licence in 1837 he successfully operated the York Hotel for many years, providing food, drink, and accommodation (Deacon, 1947).

His early years involved having to deal with unruly drunken soldiers stationed in the town, such as a Private John Curren from the 21st Regiment, who assaulted Monger with a bludgeon after Monger had evicted him from the Hotel. There were also confrontations between Monger and the Ballardong Noongar because of violence between the settlers and the Noongar, which took the form of spear attacks on his drays and wagons travelling from York to Guildford and Perth carrying supplies (Deacon, 1947; Swan River Guardian, 1837).



Figure 10: Ingram's York Hotel 1890s



Source: Residency Museum, York & Shire of York (2019b).

In 1840, the Colonial Government decided to extend Avon Terrace through Monger's land, and he negotiated compensation, which resulted in him being allocated Town Lot 1 as a replacement. On that site he established Monger's Stores, which included sandalwood yards. His wagons would travel regularly to Guildford or Perth to collect supplies. In 1841 he constructed a windmill on the northeast corner of the sandalwood yard. He also continued to run the York Hotel but tried to sell the business in 1844 to focus more on the merchandise business. However, he could not secure a buyer and continued to operate the hotel. He also built a blacksmith shop on the Town Lot 1 site (Deacon, 1947). With the emergence of the sandalwood export trade in the 1840s, Monger prospered by trading the valuable wood for goods at his store. He also traded wool and sold fencing wire to assist local pastoralists to enclose their fields, and reduce their need for shepherds (Deacon, 1947). In 1847 Monger secured sandalwood licences that enabled him to hire labourers to harvest the wood, which he exported to Singapore and China (Clack & McColl, 2003). This trade proved highly lucrative for Monger, as sandalwood exports rose tenfold during the last years of the 1840s (Bolton, 2008).

Figure 11: Faversham House, York



Source: Garton Smith (2018).

In 1852 Monger allowed Samuel Smale Craig to run the York Hotel, and later sold land to Craig on the corner of Avon Terrace and South Street where the Castle Hotel now stands. Monger retained the York Hotel, initially under the management of Robert Augustus Bennett, but Bennett left in 1853, and it was placed under the management of Monger's son Joseph Taylor. Located at 170 Avon Terrace, the Hotel served as a significant meeting place for the York community. It housed a workers' social club during the 1920s, and a Gentlemen's club during the 1940s. Severely damaged by the Meckering earthquake in 1968, it was repaired, but eventually demolished in 2000 (Shire of York, 2019b).

In 1853 Monger funded the construction of a bridge over the Avon River, and reopened the York Hotel following renovations in 1854, while adding a steam engine to his flour mill in 1855. The success Monger Snr had with his businesses enabled him to build Faversham House, named after his place of birth. Construction on the property commenced in the period between 1836 and 1844 but was progressively developed and upgraded during the periods 1849-1851, 1868, and 1907. The latter upgrades being undertaken by his son John Henry Monger Jnr. The house was placed on the WA State register of heritage places in 1997 (Shire of York, 2019b).

Monger died on 12 November 1867 and left behind a significant legacy. He owned 90,000 acres (36,000 hectares) of land along with numerous businesses. He was an employer of ticket-of-leave convicts, and a source of financial support to struggling pastoralists. He also provided the land for the York Town Hall. He had a large family, which included seven children comprising two daughters Ann Elizabeth (1833-1833), and Susannah (1839-1876), and five sons, John Henry Jnr

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(1831-1892), Joseph Taylor (1832-1891), Stephen (1836-1907), Herbert (1840-1920), and George (1842-1893). Following Mary's death in 1864, he married Agnes Donegan in 1866.

WILLIAM MARWICK

Among the beneficiaries of John Monger Snr's largesse was fellow settler William Marwick who was born at Emneth, England in 1833 and migrated to WA aboard the ship *Sir Walter Raleigh*. His leadership skills were recognised when he was tasked to supervise a group of 26 other young men on the ship, making sure their cabins were kept clean and tidy. Marwick had turned 18 by the time his ship arrived at Fremantle on 31 May 1852. The arrival of convicts had reduced the demand for labour, so Marwick decided to walk to York and seek his fortune. He gained work with the Burges family, becoming a sandalwood cutter. This went well during the boom of sandalwood, but in 1861 the export trade for the wood collapsed. Fortunately, he was rescued by John Monger Snr, who hired Marwick to lead teams of sandalwood cutters, and to transport the wood from York to Fremantle (Sunday Times, 1913).

Figure 12: Marwick's Shed, York, and William Marwick in old age



Sources: Marwick's shed (Garton Smith, 2012); William Marwick (Sunday Times, 1925).

Over time William Marwick became a major transport contractor for Monger and built a large transport business, with routes from York to Perth, Fremantle, and Albany. When the goldfields opened, Marwick's transport business supplied Southern Cross, Coolgardie, and Kalgoorlie (Sunday Times, 1913). He remained a close associate of the Monger family. In addition to his transportation business, he traded in livestock, horses, wagons and drays, and timber, and other building materials. One of the legacies of Marwick's work is the heritage listed Marwick's Shed located in Newcastle Street, York. It is thought to have been constructed in 1876. It was built on land owned by Samuel Evans Burges and its ownership lay with Burges until 1899 when the title was formally passed to his sons whom he had with his wife Mary Ann (Sunday Times, 1925).

WILLIAM BURGES

William Burges was born at Fethard, County Tipperary, Ireland in 1806, the second son of a medical practitioner Dr Lockier Burges and his wife Isabella. He migrated to the Swan River Colony aboard the ship *Warrior* in 1830 along with his two brothers Lockier Clere Burges and Samuel Evans Burges (Tamblyn, 1966). After initially settling in the Upper Swan region, the brothers moved to York in 1837 and established the family property known as ‘Tipperary’, which encompassed 5,600 acres (2,266 hectares), and became one of district’s finest pastoral estates with more than a thousand sheep grazing there by 1840 (Western Mail, 1931). Burges played a key role in the establishment of the York Agricultural Society (YAS) and was a prominent spokesperson for the YAS during its early years. He became an officer of the York Road Board, and in 1846 was appointed a local Magistrate for the York District Court (Tamblyn, 1966).

In 1847, as Secretary of the YAS, he drew up the petition for the establishment of the convict transportation system to WA. In 1850, along with his brother Lockier, he applied for land in the newly developing Champion Bay area, now Geraldton. Leaving the York property ‘Tipperary’ in the hands of his brother Samuel, he and Lockier relocated to Geraldton where William established ‘Bowes Station’ on the Bowes River as a sheep and cattle station, which by 1857 encompassed 93,000 acres (37,636 hectares), and Lockier established the 120,000-acre (48,500 hectares) estate ‘Irwin House’ on the Irwin River. He was appointed the Resident Magistrate in the Champion Bay district in 1851, a position he held until 1859. European settlement of the area evoked opposition from the traditional landowners, the Yamatji and Wadjari people (Tamblyn, 1966).

As the Resident Magistrate, Burges devoted a good deal of time seeking to alleviate the tensions between the settlers and the Yamatji and Wadjari (Tamblyn, 1966). He returned to Ireland in 1860 and only visited WA briefly in 1868, 1875 and 1876, passing away in Tipperary Ireland in 1905 (Western Mail, 1931). However, during his time in the colony he had helped to establish the pastoral industry in York and Geraldton, the York Agricultural Society, to demonstrate his commitment to public service through his roles as Resident Magistrate in York and Geraldton. As stated in his biography,

“Although his letters and reports do not reveal a man of great imagination or of powerful intellect, William Burges made valuable contribution to the development of early Western Australia. As a wealthy pastoralist he was open to attack by less successful settlers who resented the domination of the great landowners. Yet his vigour, initiative and tenacity were the qualities most needed in the foundation years and especially in the establishment of the pastoral industry. As a faithful public servant, his stability of character was clearly reflected in his tireless work in a remote district at a difficult period” (Tamblyn, 1966).

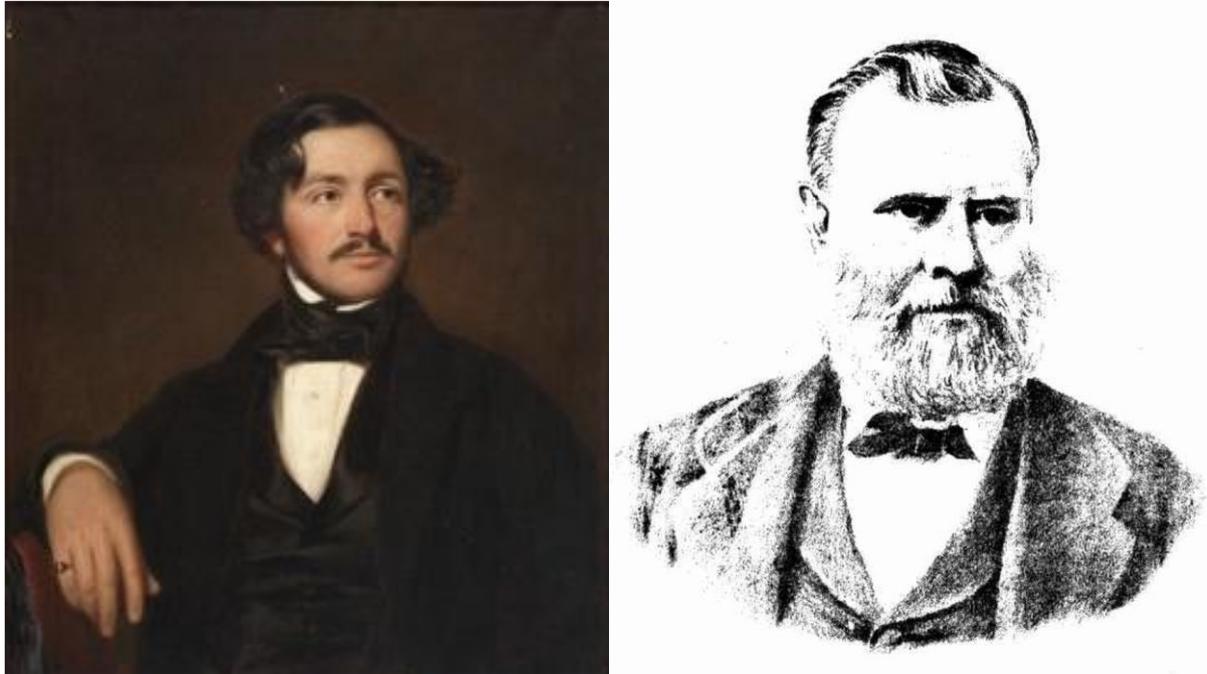
JOHN HENRY MONGER JNR

Born on 25 January 1831, John Henry Monger Jnr was among the first European children to be born in the new Swan River Colony. Educated in England, he returned to the colony in 1853, and in 1857 he married Henrietta Joaquina Manning, the daughter of a Fremantle merchant. They had four sons and four daughters. In order of birth these were Helena Aurora (1858-unknown), Francis Henry (1860-1894), Frederick Charles (1863-1919), Evelina (1865-1911), Amy Susanna



(1867-unknown), Alexander Joseph (1869-1947), Earnest Leopold Stephen (1871-1900), and Florence Azelia (1874-1933) (York Society, 2020).

Figure 13: William Burges (left) and John Henry Monger Jnr. (right)



Sources: Burges (SLWA, 1840s); Monger (Wikimedia, 1887).

As part of his father's business, the younger John Monger established himself as a merchant with a head office in Perth and branch offices in Fremantle, York, and the goldfields. His brother, Joseph Taylor Monger, remained in York where he worked as a merchant and hotel manager within the Monger family business, as well as becoming a Member of the Legislative Council (Wright, 1974).

The Monger wholesale warehouse was in William Street, Perth, and the retail business, which opened in 1872, was in Hay Street, Perth. With the death of his father in 1861, John Monger Jnr inherited a substantial estate that provided significant capital against which he could secure credit from London banks. Although WA continued to suffer from a lack of currency and investment capital, the Monger business reputation was viewed as sound and reliable. He built on his father's foundational work and continued to upgrade the properties in York, including the development of Faversham House. An efficient and prudent manager, John Monger Jnr invested in some of the colony's richest agricultural land, as well as pastoral station property (Wright, 1974).

In 1870, John Monger Jnr was elected as the Member for York to the Legislative Council, a seat he held until 1875 when he resigned to focus his time on his business activities. He rose to become one of the largest farmers in the Eastern District. In 1890 he was nominated to return to the Legislative Council and served as the York representative until 1892. Other public duties included



Chair of the York Municipal Council, Justice of the Peace, member of the York Road Board, and active member of the YAS. A staunch Methodist, he devoted considerable time to that Church, with a particular focus on youth development. He died in the family home, Faversham, York on 23 February 1892 and was buried beside his father in the Wesleyan cemetery in Perth (Wright, 1974).

CHAPTER 2: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CO-OP YORK

York's economy in the post-federation era was strongly focused on agriculture. However, the WA agricultural sector experienced significant fluctuations. The state's agricultural sector had expanded steadily from 1903 to 1914. However, in 1914 a severe drought impacted the sector, coinciding with the start of the First World War. These factors led to a fall in grain production of around 80 per cent that year. Despite this initial setback, the agricultural sector recovered with State Government assistance and massive 90% increase in wheat prices over the period from 1914 to 1930 (Wilson, Layman & Christmas, 2004).

The optimism that saw the town of York constructing a collection of impressive public and private buildings during the goldrush and federation eras of the 1890s and 1900s came to an end with the outbreak of World War One. A total of 416,809 Australians volunteered to join the First Australian Imperial Force (1st AIF), and about 331,781 Australian soldiers served overseas during the war (Gammage, 1981; Grey, 2001).

Like most Australian towns and districts, York saw many of its young men volunteer to fight overseas. Total Australian casualties were 215,585 killed and wounded, of which 63,163 (29.3%) were killed (Gammage, 1981). The York District World War One Honour Board can be found in the York Town Hall and there is a Memorial for troops killed in that war on the corner of Railway and South Streets in the town. A list of 294 names can be found on the Honour Board in the York Town Hall (VWMA, 2024). However, the war was also a turning point for the co-operative sector in WA, marking a transition from a limited pre-war, to an expansive post-war co-operative sector, especially through the agency of the Westralian Farmers Ltd., generally known as Wesfarmers (Baskerville, 2019).

ANTECEDENTS AND KEY ACTORS IN THE FORMATION OF THE CO-OP YORK

Co-operative and mutual enterprises (CMEs) were well established in Britain and Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Mazzarol, 2024). As a result, these businesses were also brought to Australia during the colonial era as a means of addressing economic and social issues (Patmore & Balnave, 2018). The first friendly society was founded in Sydney in 1828 to provide medical and pharmaceutical services (Exley, 1936). Consumer co-operatives based on the Rochdale Society model were set up in Australia from 1859 (Balnave & Patmore, 2012).

The first co-operative established in Western Australia was the Albany Co-operative Society Ltd., which was founded in 1867 by the P&O Agent William Carmalt Clifton in response to excessive prices and store credit from local retailers (Baskerville, Mazzarol & van Aurich, 2022). At that time there was no colonial legislation specifically for co-operatives, which required the Albany Co-operative 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, and like its Albany counterpart sold general merchandise, mainly drapery and clothing (Baskerville, 2019).

A producer co-operative, the Northam Co-operative Flour Mill Co. Ltd., was established in the town of Northam near York in 1873, which operated for two years until its closure, due to a series of workplace accidents, in 1875. It was sold to a private buyer. The Perth Co-operative Society Ltd., traded successfully until 1879 when it was placed into voluntary liquidation (Baskerville,

2019). The Albany Co-operative remained in operation until 1885 when it also went into voluntary liquidation (Baskerville et al., 2022).

Despite the relative lack of success in these early attempts to establish consumer and producer co-operatives in WA, the ‘co-operative spirit’ remained strong within the community (Baskerville, 2019). A major step forward for the WA co-operative sector was the passing of the *Co-operative and Provident Societies Act 1903 (WA)*, which provided a dedicated legislative framework for the co-operative enterprises in the state and was one of the first such statutes introduced within the British Empire outside the United Kingdom. However, the legislation took from 1897 to 1903 to be realised, due to resistance from WA Parliamentarians concerned about poor management practices within friendly societies (Baskerville, 2019).

The new legislation set out the guidelines for the design, governance, operation, purpose, and regulation of co-operatives in WA. For example, it excluded co-operatives from operating banking services, specified a minimum of seven active members, outlined rules of governance, required the inclusion of the words “Society Limited” to be placed at the end of the company’s name, and established a State Registrar of Co-operative and Provident Societies to oversee these firms (Baskerville, 2019).

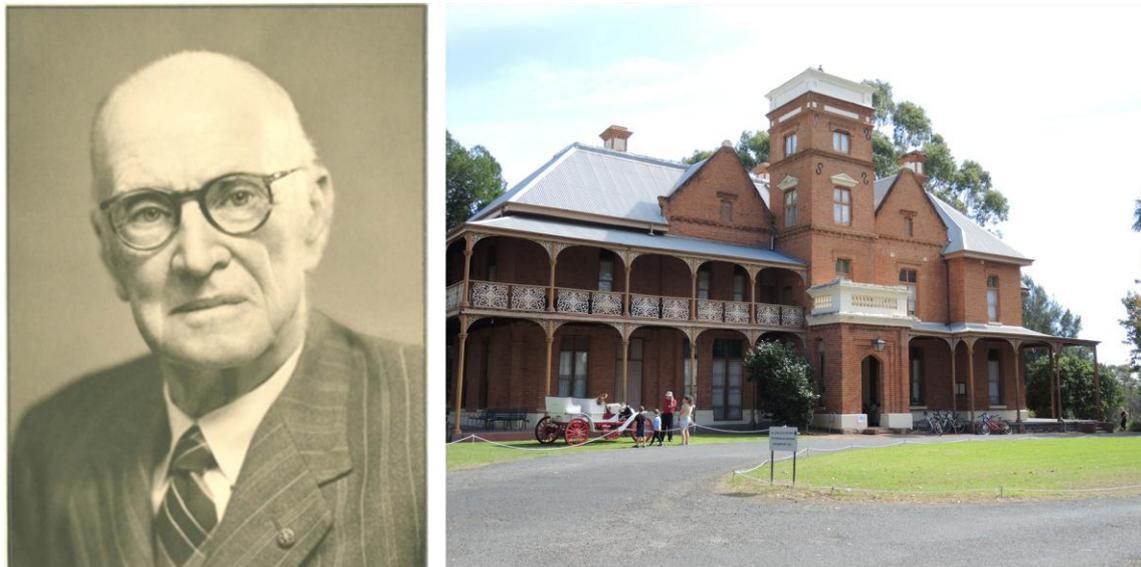
Much of the momentum in the formation of co-operatives in early twentieth century WA can be attributed to the work of a few dedicated people who were committed to the co-operative movement. They were supported by organisations such as the Farmers’ and Settlers’ Association (FSA) the predecessor of today’s Western Australian Farmers’ Federation (WAFF, 2012), and the acknowledgement within these organisations that cooperative action was a source of strength in achieving common goals. Some of the key actors involved in this movement, who played a role in the formation of The Co-op York were Charles Walter Harper and Basil Murray, as well as Alexander Monger and Warren Marwick, with their well-established York connections.

CHARLES WALTER HARPER

Charles Walter Harper (1880-1956) known as ‘Walter’, was the eldest son of settlers Charles and Fanny Harper neé Drummond. The family had settled in Guildford where they focused on viticulture, and horticulture, developing the Woodbridge Estate and building the historic Woodbridge House (see Figure 14). Walter Harper followed his father’s footsteps and became an expert in viticulture and horticulture, focusing on fruit growing. He managed the family’s estate at Woodbridge and was a pioneer of the co-operative movement in WA (Smith, 1983; Baskerville, 2021).

Walter Harper’s role in the development of the modern-day co-operative movement in WA was important. He played a pivotal role in the establishment of producer co-operatives in 1912-1913, and the highly significant Westralian Farmers’ Ltd. (Wesfarmers) in 1914 (Smith, 1983). Although the focus of the FSA was on political lobbying on behalf of the WA farmers, there was a recognition that the organisation would benefit from a co-operative enterprise structure. This emerged from a proposal submitted by Harper at the FSA meeting in March 1913 (Baskerville, 2019).

Figure 14: Charles Walter Harper and Woodbridge House



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

As a result of Harper's proposal, the FSA meeting approved the establishment of the Westralian Farmers' [Co-operative] Ltd., which today is the publicly listed company Wesfarmers Ltd. The foundation of the new co-operative occurred on 27 June 1914, and the entity was incorporated under the *Companies Act 1893 (WA)* as the Westralian Farmers' Ltd. (the title 'Co-operative' was not added until 1946) (Smith, 1983). Wesfarmers proved a successful business and quickly expanded, with a focus on promoting the creation of co-operative societies across the WA rural areas, particularly within the new wheatbelt where they could serve as retailing and service delivery agencies (Baskerville, 2019).

Serious flooding in the Swan and Avon River valleys in 1917 severely damaged the orchards at Woodbridge (Smith, 1983). The damage to the Harper family orchards provided Walter with an opportunity to devote more time to his passion for organising co-operative societies and farmer associations.

In 1918 Harper was able to attend the first Australian and New Zealand conference of producer co-operative societies, which was organised by the WA co-operative movement. This led to the forming of the Australian Producers' Wholesale Co-operative Federations Ltd., that led to the Overseas Farmers' Co-operative Federation Ltd., aiming to enhance Australian, New Zealand and South African agricultural exports to the United Kingdom, as discussed in relation to the work of Basil Murray (Smith, 1983).



He was also a foundation member and the inaugural Chair, of The Co-operative Federation of Western Australia Inc., which was established in 1919 (Baskerville, 2019). In addition, he was a Trustee of the first Co-operative Wheat Pool of Western Australia when it was established in 1922. He also served as the third Chair of Wesfarmers from 1921 to 1953, during this time he oversaw the establishment of Radio 6WF in 1924, as a way of communicating market information and prices to farmers, and the construction of WA's first pasteurised milk processing plant in 1925. He expanded Wesfarmers' range of businesses and played a key role in the establishment of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. (CBH), in 1933 (Smith, 1983).

When Walter Harper retired from his role as Chair of Wesfarmers in 1953, he left a company that had been run along frugal and 'Spartan' lines, but had demonstrated significant innovation, and the ability to attract and retain excellent employees who believed in the co-operative's purpose and carried its flag throughout the rural areas of WA. He died on 1 July 1956 and was cremated. In delivering his obituary, Sir John Teasdale, a founding Director of CBH, stated that Harper, 'more than anyone else, fostered and cared for' the Western Australian co-operative movement which would 'remain his monument' (Smith, 1983, p. 9). In summarising Harper's life, his biographer wrote,

"Harper had been a frugal, abstemious, reserved man, and a talented cricketer and golfer. He was admired for his lucid, analytical thinking, his conservatism, and his selfless service: as a director of Westralian Farmers his fees had generally been a guinea for a meeting and, for a long time, his remuneration as Chair was only £600 a year" (Smith, 1983 p. 9).

BASIL LATHROP MURRAY

Basil Lathrop Murray was born in Melbourne on 30 December 1875, was educated at a Church of England Grammar School there, and worked for the Victorian Insurance Co. for 13 years. In 1904 he moved to Perth, WA to open a branch of this insurance company, and remained connected with the insurance industry as a member of the Marine Underwriters' Association, as well as being a Chair of the Fire Underwriters' Association, and a member of the Finance Committee of the Perth City Council (Western Mail, 1925). He was a foundation member of the FSA when it was established in 1912 and played a key role in the establishment of the Westralian Farmers' Ltd. (Wesfarmers) co-operative in 1914. In 1917 he was appointed as Managing Director of Wesfarmers. As noted in his obituary,

"His magnetic personality, many-sided attainments and conspicuous ability in argument and debate meant that he was invariably called upon to take a leading part by those whom he was from time to time associated. With these qualities so pronounced and the keen foresight and business acumen he exhibited, at all times, his appointment as managing director of the Westralian Farmers' Ltd., in 1917, three years after the establishment of the firm, was not unexpected" (Western Mail, 1925, p. 16).

Basil Murray was also an active supporter of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in WA, as well as music, representing WA at the London College of Music. He also played an active role in promoting international trade from WA to the British Empire and was strongly connected with the British Board of Trade. During the 1920s he travelled to London to help establish a buying and selling floor for the Australian, New Zealand, and South African co-operative

federations, which led to the creation of the Overseas Farmers' Co-operative Federation Ltd. (Western Mail, 1925).

Figure 15: Basil Lathrop Murray, (left), Warren Marwick (centre) and Alexander Joseph Monger (right)



Sources: B. Murray (Wesfarmers, 1921); W. Marwick (RASWA); A. J. Monger (CBH, 1933).

He was also instrumental in the launch of WA's first radio broadcasting station "6WF" in June 1924, which was owned by Wesfarmers and broadcast from the Co-operative's Perth office (SLWA, 2024). He died of an unknown medical condition in Melbourne on 23 April 1925 leaving behind a widow and three daughters. His body to was returned to Perth for a funeral service on 30 April (Western Mail, 1925).

WARREN MARWICK

Born in 1869, Warren Marwick was one of several sons of pioneer settler William Marwick, who retired and returned to England in 1897 leaving Warren and his brothers to manage the family farming properties and businesses in York. With his father's focus on transport services, Warren became more engaged with agriculture and husbandry. He was recognised as one of WA's most respected breeders of horses and sheep (RASWA, 2023).

During the goldrush era of the 1890s, the Marwick family expanded their business activities into the goldfields. Warren became the first farmer to open agricultural land in the Yilgarn district surrounding Southern Cross. His success with the sowing and cultivation of wheat led to the expansion of the entire eastern wheatbelt, now amongst the best agricultural land in the state. In addition, the Marwick brothers also expanded their transportation (coaching and carrying) business, which included the operation of Cobb & Co. coaches across WA. This was undertaken in conjunction with the development of the Eastern Railway that linked Northam to the Goldfields (RASWA, 2023).

In addition to his business and farming activities, Warren Marwick was noted as a prominent member of the York community, as well as a 'leader' and 'mentor'. He became a member of the Committee and President of the York Agricultural Society, the York Municipal Council and the York Road Board. He was a founder Director of Westralian Farmers Ltd., serving on the board for 37 years during its formative period. He also ran for state parliament and served in the Legislative Council (RASWA, 2023). He died in 1955.

ALEXANDER JOSEPH MONGER

Alexander Joseph Monger, the third son of John Henry Monger Jnr. was a founder of the FSA, which was established in 1912 in response to wage rise demands from the Rural Workers' Union (RWU) of Australia the previous year (WAFF, 2012). He served as the first President of the FSA from 1912 to 1924 (Birman, 1986). Although Alexander originally worked within the Monger family business in York, both he and his father were reportedly 'volatile and impassionate', which resulted in a falling out between them. This led Alexander to join a camel train travelling to Coolgardie to seek his fortune (Birman, 1986 p.10).

After borrowing £2,000 (approx. \$335,284 in 2023 dollars) from Dalgety & Co., he established a store in Coolgardie, then opened a second in Kalgoorlie and a third in Southern Cross. His businesses did well, and in 1900 he formed a partnership with Sir Ernest Lee-Steere acquiring 30,000 acres (12,141 hectares) which they improved and resold to the State Government. In company with Lee-Steere, he also acquired Hamelin Pool station in the Gascoyne region. Later, he purchased Daliak farm in York, which was part of his father's estate. He married Florence McCracken in 1906. They had a son, Ernest Alexander (1908-1941) and lived in Faversham House from 1909 (Birman, 1986).

During his career, Alexander Monger founded the Fremantle Freezing & Meat Works and played a significant role in the foundation not only of the FSA, but also the Country Party. He held several board positions including Chair of the Mutual Life Association of Australasia, Chair of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. (from 1933 to 1944), and a founding Trustee of the Wheat Pool of Western Australia (Birman, 1986).

In addition to his work in agriculture and co-operatives, Alexander Monger was a foundation member of the WA Bush Nursing Trust in 1920, a member of the Fairbridge Farm School Committee, and a member of the Council of Church of England Schools. In 1941 he was appointed an Officer in the Order of the British Empire (OBE), and in the same year, he gave Faversham House over to the Australian Red Cross Society for use as a convalescent hospital for soldiers returning from the Second World War. He died in Perth on 3 November 1947. His biographer described him as the 'Beau Tibbs of Perth', who was 'Tall, dark and personable', and who 'moved in exclusive circles' (Birman, 1986, p. 10).

THE YORK CO-OP IS ESTABLISHED

By 1917 the First World War, at least on the western front, had turned into a stalemate involving heavily entrenched troops, and battles resulting in horrendous casualties for limited geographic gains. However, in April that year U.S. President Woodrow Wilson declared war on the German Empire, and the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was smuggled into St Petersburg



(Petrograd) from Switzerland to foment revolution after Russia withdrew from the war. On 2 November 1917 Britain issued the Balfour Declaration supporting the creation of a Jewish nation state in Ottoman Palestine, and on 7 November, Lenin took full control over the newly formed Soviet Russian state in the October Revolution (National WW1 Museum, 2024; Alpha History, 2023). These events were major turning points in the direction of the war and world history.

Meanwhile, back in WA a meeting was held in the York Town Hall supper room on the afternoon of Saturday 17 November 1917 to discuss the establishment of a co-operative (YDC, 1917). The meeting was organised by the Farmers and Settlers Association (FSA). The meeting was well attended, and among the attendees was Alexander Monger, as President of the FSA, and the representative of that organisation at the meeting. Also in attendance were Basil Lathrop Murray, Managing Director of the Westralian Farmers' Ltd. and Henry Joseph Stirling Taylor, Wesfarmers Company Secretary. The meeting was chaired by Warren Marwick, President of the York Branch of the FSA and a founding Director of Wesfarmers, and a son of York pioneer settler William Marwick (YDC, 1917).

In his role as Chair, Warren Marwick introduced Messrs Murray and Stirling emphasising their key role in getting Wesfarmers into the strong position that it had achieved since its formation. Marwick spoke of the need for farmers to take control of their future and not succumb to the power of the incumbent buyers, stating that,

"Things were getting more critical for the producer every day, and up to now it had been a case of pay what other fellow asks and smile. If the farmers can do better for themselves than the other fellow had done for them, then it was up to the farmers to move" (Avon Gazette, 1917, p.).

He noted that some within the community were critical of the formation of a co-operative on the grounds that it would drive out competition such as the established agents Darling and Dreyfus. Yet Marwick questioned whether it would really matter if this occurred. After all, these agents were not driven by the best interests of the country and had already been well paid for all their previous work. He also declared that he had been in contact with "a few producers" and had received around £1,665 (approx. \$189,804 in 2023 dollars) in subscriptions (Avon Gazette, 1917).

Marwick then called upon Murray and Taylor, who had travelled to York from Perth for the meeting, to address the audience in relation to the benefits of establishing a co-operative in York. In response, Murray spoke at length about the formation of Wesfarmers and the role that it was playing in helping the WA farming community. He pointed out that the Company had now secured the contract from the WA Government to handle the wheat harvest for the 1917-1918 growing season (Avon Gazette, 1917).

Echoing Marwick's speech, he noted the vocal opposition from those who felt that co-operatives were moving power into the hands of the farmers. However, he cited Prime Minister William "Billy" Morris Hughes, whose dictum was, "... that the producer must aim at the elimination of the middleman and so retain the whole of the profits of the producer" (Avon Gazette, 1917, p.3).

He also explained that The Co-op York would return its profits to the members in cash, have its own local board of directors, and act as a collecting and distributing agency for Wesfarmers. He concluded by saying that Wesfarmers had helped to established around sixty of these local co-operatives at a cost of about £8 (approx. \$912 in 2023 dollars) and had the support of the Federal Government to form these companies. Taylor then spoke, providing details of the method of the floatation of the Company, and explaining the draft prospectus and articles of incorporation (Avon Gazette, 1917).

Warren Marwick followed their presentations with further statement emphasising the need for the Co-operative to be established to take advantage of the wheat handling opportunities, and the importance of securing grain storage facilities at York. The State Government had proposed for such facilities to be built at Narrogin and Spencer's Brook, but these facilities would not be ready until the end of January 1918. He also flagged the discussions with Alexander Monger over the co-op's potential to acquire the storage facilities present at "Monger's Stores" and develop the site to store around 65,000 bags of wheat (Avon Gazette, 1917).

The presentations and speeches delivered at the meeting by Marwick, Murray and Taylor were well received, and there was a unanimous support for the creation of the new co-operative. As outlined in the minutes of the meeting,

"Both these gentlemen spoke at some length on the benefits to be derived from Co-operation, the growth of the Westralian Farmers' Ltd., and the Wheat Scheme. Both gentlemen strongly advised the formation of a local company and on the motion of Mr Alex Monger, seconded by J. Pinchbeck it was unanimously decided to form a local Co-operative Company on the basis set out in the prospectus. After that it be named, The York District Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd." (YDC, 1917, p. 1).

Alexander Monger then moved a motion, which was unanimously supported, for the foundation capital of the new company to be £7,000 (approx. \$797,978 in 2023 dollars), to be divided into 7,000 ordinary shares, each with a par value of £1 (approx. \$114 in 2023 dollars). These were to be payable with an initial payment of 2 shillings upon application, 2 shillings upon allotment, and the balance (16 shillings) paid in quarterly calls at a rate not exceeding 1 shilling. He also moved a further motion that a board of 'Provisional Directors' be appointed comprising, Warren Marwick, and Messrs. E. J. Whitfield, W. T. Craig, C. J. Scott, Dr. B. Davis, D. B. Lennard, and C. R. H. Clifton. In addition, Gordon Fisher was appointed as Company Secretary (YDC, 1917).

By 21 December 1917 the newly established York District Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd., was formally registered and 2,500 £1 shares had been applied for by members. The company had also appointed a General Manager Mr E. T. Hick, and a decision was made for the company to purchase, for £1,400 (approx. \$159,596 in 2023 dollars), a property owned by Alexander Monger, between Pool and Ford Streets on the eastern side of the railway line (EDC, 1917a).

OPPOSITION TO THE CO-OPERATIVE

Despite the overwhelming support for the establishment of The Co-op York at the December 1917 meeting not everyone in the local community were positive about the creation of a co-operative. For example, in a letter dated 1 December 1917, and published in the *Eastern Districts Chronicle*



on 7 December 1917, a Mr. W. G. Burges, thought to be William G. Burges Jnr from the old Burges family (Western Mail, 1931), expressed concern and opposition to the proposed co-operative, stating that,

“There is no getting away from the fact that York is on the down grade, and now we have another movement, which if it succeeds, must mean the withdrawal from the town of a number of local agents and probably some of the shops, and who are to reap the benefits?”
(Burges, 1917, p.3).

He accused the co-operative of being a business for the benefit of, “A few well to do farmers”, with the potential to see the closure of local businesses, and the creation of a monopoly. His view was that the creation of the WA Grain Pool was a “wheat monopoly” and that other farmer-owned monopolies such as Wesfarmers were threatening competition in the state. Although not mentioning names, Mr Burges used the letter to voice criticism of, “two or three St Georges’ Terrace farmers”, one of whom he suggested was not successful on their farm, and,

“... when not returned to Parliament issues circulars to find out if the farmers still require his guiding hand” (Burges, 1917, p.3).

In conclusion, Mr Burges stated,

“In a place like York it appears to me quite out of place to form a local Co-operative Company. It is entirely a different proposition to the newer settled districts” (Burges, 1917, p.3).

However, Mr Burges’ letter did not go unanswered. In the 14 December 1917 edition of the *Eastern Districts Chronicle* several letters were published, some in support of Mr Burges and some in support of the Co-operative. Many of the respondents who expressed support for Burges, or at least concern over his claims, focused on fears that the co-operative would result in the creation of a monopoly, with some suggesting it was anti-competitive and against private enterprise. Some published their letters simply as “Farmer”, or “Worried”, yet others were willing to be identified. As one correspondent who used the name “Common Sense” wrote,

“Sir, - Can anyone inform me what is the sense of forming a Co-operative Society in York. As Mr. Burges points out York is on the down grade, and we certainly don’t want to drive people out of the town by creating a monopoly. I am advised that two at least of the four big wheat firms are withdrawing from Western Australia. What difference in our methods to other countries where private enterprises, competition and capital are always welcome, Common Sense, York” (EDC, 1917b, p.3).

Among the letter writers who did so under their own names was Warren Marwick, who wrote a lengthy response, pointing out that Burges was an agent who represented the Producers Union for many years until it was absorbed into Wesfarmers, but still served as an agent for Wesfarmers during the 1915-1916 wheat season. In his letter Marwick wrote,

“I am afraid that Mr Burges is not thinking of the ‘detrimental effect’ on the town and district but of the few shillings’ commission he will lose, and which will be absorbed by the local Company. I cannot understand Mr Burges when he asserts that ‘a few well-to-do farmers’ will reap the benefit, more specifically when he told me that his objection to becoming a shareholder in the local Company was that he should have to be loyal to it and put all his

business through it. This he added would not be to his advantage, no doubt because being a 'well-to-do farmer' and agent himself, he could secure his requirements from wholesale merchants who do not operate locally" (EDC, 1917a, p. 3).

This letter exchange relating to the formation of The Co-op York was republished in other regional newspapers. For example, the *Eastern Recorder* from Kellerrerrin, in its 4 January 1918 edition, reproduced the letters from both Burges and Marwick stating,

"The following letter by Mr. W. G. Burges, a well-known farmer, which appeared in a recent issue of the 'Chronicle', created a sensation in York, for the past few weeks the journal mentioned has been deluged with letters on the question of Co-operation ... in the words of the 'Primary Producer' Mr Burges awoke to find himself famous. That one letter brought to his side an army of supporters – but not one of those who agreed with him had the temerity to sign his name" (Eastern Recorder, 1918, p. 3).

Although the opposition expressed by Burges elicited a strong reaction and a reasonable level of support, it was not organised nor pursued by Burges in any way. Nevertheless, it did highlight the misunderstanding within a broad cross-section of the community over the nature and purpose of a co-operative enterprise. The perception that co-operatives are monopolies, or antithetical to free-market competition is an issue that lingers to the present day. It is why education of what a co-operative business is, and how it works, remains an important aspect of the co-operative movement.

In the years that followed the end of the First World War the WA agricultural sector expanded again due to the construction of railways throughout the wheatbelt, and the introduction of mechanisation and bulk grain handling and storage (Wilson, Layman & Christmas, 2004). Co-operation was a central factor in the success of this expansion.

It was a positive environment into which the newly created York Co-op was to develop over the coming years. However, as the following sections will show, the Co-operative could not remain complacent or expect that it would not face challenges from both internal and external forces. As a farmer owned enterprise, its fortunes were closely entwined with those of its shareholders and the economic and social changes experienced by the District of York.

CHAPTER 3: THE FORMATIVE YEARS, 1917-1929

Following the end of the First World War Australia received its returned servicemen and sought to build a new future with an emphasis on farming. New varieties of wheat and an increased level of technology, helped to expand the Wheatbelt. This included the use of subterranean clover, tractors to replace plough horses, enhanced irrigation, and improved fertilisers. At the same time government supported group and soldier settler schemes saw many returned servicemen seeking to establish farms. These initiatives focused on dairy farming in the Southwest, broadacre farming in the Wheatbelt, vegetable (e.g., tomato) growing in Geraldton, and tropical agriculture (e.g. bananas) in Carnarvon (Menck, 2022).

Many soldier settlers found the going tough and abandoned their farms. However, overall, the price of wheat and other crops were good, and the decade of the 1920s was a generally positive one for the Wheatbelt and the York District. However, large-scale land clearing, and the risk of rising salinity in most of WA's Wheatbelt soils, imposed a long-term threat over many farms. Awareness of the risks of salinity was known from as early as 1907, but land clearing was viewed as essential to economic growth (Gaynor, 2002). Environmental issues aside, the impact of the Great Depression, which hit in 1929 and continued until 1939 was the most significant challenge.

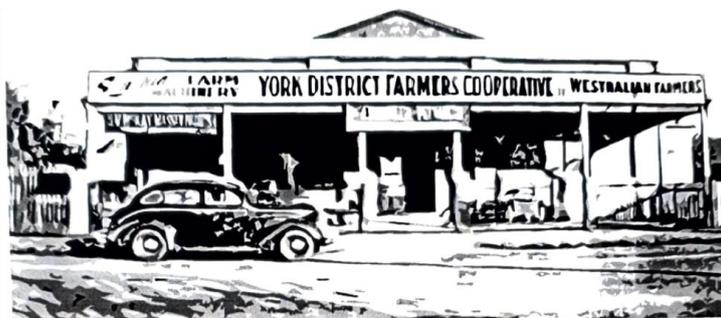
In the decade following the end of the First World War The Co-op York focused on developing its business and operating the Co-operative as efficiently as possible. The Chair, from the foundation of the Co-operative until the early 1950s, was Warren Marwick. He was assisted by Alexander J. Monger who served on the board throughout the decade and frequently stood in for Marwick when he was absent.

The general pattern of activity, as recorded in the Annual General Meeting (AGM) reports from The Co-op York, were business-like summaries of the election or re-election of directors, decisions over the distribution of rebates, dividends, and bonus shares, the appointment of the auditor, and some general business discussions. In most cases the historical record for this period does not provide either the Chair's report, Manager's report, or details of the company's financial statements. These documents were generally noted as having been reported, or not being read at the AGM, as they had already been distributed to shareholders prior to the meeting.

RECRUITING A MANAGER AND SECRETARY

At the Provisional Directors' Meeting held on 26 November 1917 a range of administrative decisions were made. The Western Australian (WA) Bank, which had a branch in York located at 117-119 Avon Terrace from 1893 to 1927, was appointed as the co-operative's bankers. Three signatories were appointed. These were W. Marwick, W. T. Craig, and the Company Secretary Gordon Fisher as a counter signatory (YDC, 1917b). Another important decision was the recruitment and appointment of a manager to operate the Company. At the meeting of 26 November, it was agreed that a manager should be recruited with a fixed salary of £150 per annum (approx. \$17,099.53 in 2023) plus a commission. It was determined that the applications for this position were to be submitted to the Chair no later than noon on 10 December 1917 (YDC, 1917b).

Figure 16: Gordon Fisher, Company Secretary & York District Farmers' Co-op Ltd store 1930s



Sources: Sunday Times (1937) and Battey Library BA853/9.

At the following Provisional Directors' Meeting held on 18 December 1917 the Directors present were Warren Marwick (Chair) and Messrs. W. T. Craig, C. R. Clifton, Dr S. B. Davies, D. B. Lennard, and C. J. Scott. Applications from three potential Managers, Messrs E. T. Hick, J. T. Clairs, and C. B. Edwards, were reviewed and selected via ballot. Mr. E. T. Hick was selected by a majority four votes to Mr Clairs, two-votes, and Mr. Edwards, nil votes. Mr Hick was appointed on a base salary of £156 per annum (approx. \$17,783.51 in 2023) plus a commission that was to be arranged with him later. A sub-committee consisting of W. Marwick (Chair), A. J. Monger, and Dr. S. B. Davies was appointed to meet with Mr. Hick and discuss his position, duties, and commission (YDC, 1917c).

In addition to the appointment of the Manager, the meeting also appointed a Secretary to undertake the record keeping. As Chair, Warren Marwick explained that under the State legislation, the Co-operative was required to keep and maintain a variety of records and that it was desirable to appoint someone to undertake this administrative work "on a proper basis". On a motion moved by Mr. C. F. Scott, and seconded by Dr. S. B. Davies, it was decided that Gordon Fisher should be appointed for this position (YDC, 1917c).

BOARD COMPOSITION

During the period 1917 to 1929, the Directors of the Company included Warren Marwick, who, elected as Chair at the Provisional Directors' Meeting on 26 November 1917, and re-elected to the inaugural board as Chair at the first general meeting on 25 January 1918, held the position until 1953 (YDC, 1918 to 1953). He was joined by Alexander J. Monger, who played a prominent role in most proceedings, and whose son Peter Monger (born 1917), eventually replaced Marwick as Chair in 1954 (YDC, 1954). There was also a cadre of fellow directors who served almost continuously throughout the first decade (YDC, 1917b).

The board was refreshed on an annual basis, but retiring directors usually stood for re-election unopposed resulting in a near continuous line of board members. These comprised, W. Marwick (Chair) plus Messrs A. J. Monger, W. G. Whitfield, W. O. Jager, C. R. Clifton, S. R. Webb, W. T. Craig, F. W. Fleay, C. Endersby, J. Pinchbeck, S. F. Morrell, N. P. Burges, C. W. Seabrook, and R. J. Wheeler (YDC, 1919 to 1929).

Initial meetings held in 1917 were described as Provisional Directors' Meetings to reflect the fact that The Co-op York was still to be formally registered, and a permanent board had not been elected. The Provisional Board comprised Warren Marwick (Chair) plus Messrs W. T. Craig, Dr S. B. Davies, C. R. Clifton, C. J. Scott, D. B. Lennard, and W. G. Whitfield. Also, part of the Co-operative's leadership team was the Manager Mr. E. T. Hick, and the Company Secretary Mr. Gordon Fisher (YDC, 1918).

The appointment of the first board took place at a shareholders general meeting on 25 January 1918. At that meeting, which was called specifically to elect the board, it was explained that the Articles of Association stated that the size of the board should not be fewer than three or more than ten directors, unless the company chose to amend this by special resolution. The Secretary explained that the board elected at the meeting, would serve until the first ordinary AGM to be held in 1919. It was then noted that,

"Therefore, in selecting these gentlemen the shareholders should have regard for their: a) business ability, b) whether they are likely to take a keen interest in the welfare of the Company" (YDC, 1918, p. 10).

It was also explained to the meeting that as a Co-operative, all shareholders had only one vote. A call was made for nominations to replace the Provisional Board. There were 12 nominations and following the vote the inaugural board comprised, Warren Marwick (Chair), Alexander J. Monger, S. R. Webb, Dr S. R. Davies, W. T. Craig, E. G. Whitfield, W. O. Jager, C. R. Clifton, F. W. Fleay, and C. J. Scott (YDC, 1918).

OPERATIONS AND SERVICES

The range of services that The Co-op York delivered during the formative years were closely related to the contracts that it could secure with Wesfarmers as an agent, supplier, or distributor. One area was the handling of wheat, and at the Provisional Directors' Meeting on 26 November 1917, Warren Marwick, as Chair, explained that the wheat scheme (e.g., handling and storage), would not be able to receive wheat until 1 January 1918. However, he noted that,

"... it would be permissible for [the Co-operative] to receive wheat and stack temporarily at the various sidings It would be a great saving to those farmers who would be ready in a few weeks to deliver their supplies" (YDC, 1917b, p. 3).

As a result, the Secretary Gordon Fisher was instructed to write to Wesfarmers asking them for their views on the matter. In addition, he was tasked to ascertain the amount of commission that Wesfarmers would generally pay to agents involved in "the sale of various lines" (YDC, 1917b).

During the Provisional Directors' Meeting that followed on 18 December 1917 a letter from Wesfarmers was read that discussed the role the Co-operative could play for the coming season.

Secretary Fisher was instructed to respond to Wesfarmers that The Co-op York had called for tenders from local 'persons willing to act at the various sidings in the York area' (YDC, 1917c, p. 5).

However, it was reported by Secretary Fisher that Wesfarmers had been urging The Co-op York to finalise their arrangements for the wheat handling scheduled for the next season. A second letter from Wesfarmers was read advising that the Gilgering Siding had already been allocated to the Beverley Farmers' Co-operative Ltd. (est. 1917) for the present season. This upset the meeting as the Gilgering Siding lay within the York District. It was recorded that,

"The Secretary stated that he had replied protesting against this allotment, and in so doing, pointed out that the majority of the farmers in the Gilgering area, were members of the York Company" (YDC, 1917c, p. 5).

The meeting instructed Secretary Fisher to write to the Beverley Co-op protesting their operating the Gilgering Siding.

THE PURCHASE OF MONGER'S STORES

Another important issue was the discussion over the purchase of "Monger's Stores". Located at 165 and 179 Avon Terrace, York, the Monger's Trading Post or "Monger's Stores" was the original site developed by John Henry Monger Snr after he acquired Suburban Lots A1 and A2 in 1841. The site was developed in the 1850s with the York Hotel, Monger's Trading Post, sandalwood yard, wagon yard, and horse stables, which were collectively referred to a "Monger's Town" (Shire of York, 2019b). See Figures 17 and 18.

The site was further developed by John Henry Monger Jnr during the 1870s and eventually inherited by Alexander Joseph Monger. Constructed from walls of faced stone, and a hipped roof of corrugated iron, the "Monger's Stores" complex continues to have significant historical value. Used as a general store, bakery, engineering workshop, woodyard, and warehouse, it is one of the only known complexes associated with the early sandalwood industry in WA that is still in existence (Shire of York, 2019b).

At the Provisional Directors' Meeting of 26 November 1917 Chair Marwick informed the meeting that Alexander Monger had offered to sell "Monger's Stores" to The Co-op York. Secretary Gordon Fisher was duly instructed to write to Mr Monger seeking information about the purchase price of the premises, the terms he would be willing to accept, whether he would be willing to lease the premises with a right of purchase, and what the annual rental charge might be on the premises. As The Co-op York was still being formally registered as a co-operative entity, the Secretary was also tasked with calling a shareholders' meeting 7 days after the formalisation of the company was completed (YDC, 1917b).

As discussed above, the sale of the "Monger's Store" site to The Co-op York was something that had been considered well-before the establishment of the Co-operative. During the town hall meeting of the FSA on 17 November 1917, Warren Marwick had raised the use of "Monger's Stores" as a storage site for wheat during the forthcoming 1918 harvest season. When the follow-up meeting of 18 December was held, Chair W. Marwick explained that a letter from Alexander



Monger had been received, which offered to sell “Monger’s Stores” to The Co-op York for a sum of £1,600 (approx. \$182,394 in 2023 dollars). However, after discussions within the board, Marwick contacted Monger, and a counteroffer was made that resulted in an agreement that both men were willing to accept (YDC, 1917c).

Figure 17: Monger’s Trading Post aka “Monger’s Store”, 165 Avon Terrace York WA



Source: York & Shire of York (2019b).

Figure 18: Monger’s Trading Post wagon yard and stables, 179 Avon Terrace York WA



Source: York & Shire of York (2019b).

Under the counteroffer the Co-operative would purchase the “Monger’s Stores” site for a total sum of £1,400 (approx. \$159,595 in 2023 dollars). However, this would be paid on the following terms. An upfront cash payment of £200 (approx. \$22,799 in 2023 dollars) would be made. This would be followed by annual instalments of £200 for the first four years, and the final balance would be paid at the end of the fifth year. The interest payable on the outstanding amounts would be 6 per cent per annum (YDC, 1917c). This was a satisfactory way for the newly established York Co-op to purchase its much-needed property assets against cashflow and Monger’s offer and agreement to such terms reflected his desire to see the Co-operative succeed.

This counteroffer was voted for unanimously by the meeting. However, Chair Marwick explained that it would be necessary to do repairs to the buildings before the Co-operative could occupy the premises and commence trading. In response, the Chair was authorised to investigate what repairs would be required, and to commence having the yards and sheds on the site cleaned up. In addition to the acquisition and renovation of the “Monger’s Stores” facilities, Marwick also told the meeting that he had been in communication with Wesfarmers over the storage of wheat by The Co-op York on the “Monger’s Stores” site, and what prices could be charged for this service (YDC, 1917c). Chair Marwick’s statement was followed by Secretary Fisher, who read several statements listing the storage charges that Wesfarmers was willing to pay. A pricing schedule was then agreed with variations depending on whether the bagged grain was kept up to 4 months, from 4 to 8 months, or from 8 to 12 months (YDC, 1917c). In reporting on the purchase of “Monger’s Stores” by The Co-op York the *Eastern Districts Chronicle* (1917a) reported the following,

“It was decided to purchase Mr. A. J. Monger’s premises situated on the eastern side of the railway line between Pool and Ford Streets, including that portion at present leased by Millar’s Company. The purchase price was £1,400 and very liberal terms have been arranged. ... The Local Company has submitted a price through the Westralian Farmers for the storage of the district’s present grain harvest, and it is anticipated that satisfactory arrangements will be completed within a few days. The shed accommodation is extensive, and the railway facilities already established in connection with the yards highly commend them for the purposes intended” (EDC, 1917a, p. 3).

In addition to “Monger’s Stores”, The Co-op York also acquired a retail premise at Greenhills, which had been owned and operated by William Whidby Chipper and H. M. Edwards in partnership. The acquisition of the store by the Co-operative occurred in March 1919 and the store was managed briefly by Frank Ashbolt until he resigned and was replaced by George H. Snowball in November of that year (EDC, 1919a; 1919b).

FINANCIAL DISTRIBUTIONS AND PERFORMANCE

Another feature of this period was the annual distribution of dividends, bonus shares and rebates to members. Over the period in question The Co-op York issued eleven dividend payments. These were paid at a rate of 7 per cent on the paid-up-capital of the Company and were settled as cash payments. In addition, there were also some payments of rebates, the issuance of bonus shares, and the transfer of funds into capital reserve or bad and doubtful debt accounts.

To get an understanding of the financial performance of The Co-op York during 1920s Table 1 provides a summary of the dividends and other payments and transactions that were reported in the Co-operative's Annual Reports. Although full financial results are not available, the annual dividends were distributed at an attractive rate of 7 per cent on paid-up-capital. In addition, the years where the sum of paid-up-capital was disclosed, the amounts, for a co-operative, seem quite good. In 1920 The Co-op York reported a net profit of £901 17s 3d (approx. \$74,861 in 2023 dollars), and a net profit of £366 6s 6d (approx. \$30,408 in 2023 dollars) at the Greenhills store after only nine months of trading (Primary Producer, 1920).

Table 1: York Co-op Financial Distributions 1919-1929

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1919	1 st dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 31 st December 1918. In addition, an issue of £375 (\$35,232) in bonus shares was made.
1920	2 nd dividend paid at a rate of 7% of £2,632 12s 6d paid-up-capital (\$218,527). In addition, £500 (\$41,504) in rebates were paid to York Branch members, and a further £250 (\$20,752) rebates to Greenhills Branch members for their patronage.
1921	3 rd dividend paid at a rate of 7% of £3,717 18s 5d paid-up-capital (\$353,193). In addition, £250 (\$20,752) was transferred to the general reserve fund, and a further sum of £50 (\$4,150) was paid to bad & doubtful debts.
1922	4 th dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 31 st December 1921. In addition, £100 (\$9,827) was transferred to the general reserve fund, and £32 4s 2d (\$3,165) was paid to bad & doubtful debts.
1923	5 th dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 31 st December 1922. In addition, an issue of £500 (\$41,504) in bonus shares was made.
1924	6 th dividend paid at a rate of 7% of £5,390 16s 1d paid-up-capital (\$523,751).
1925	7 th dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 31 st December 1924.
1926	8 th dividend paid at a rate of 7% of £6,062 11s 5d paid-up-capital (\$575,928).
1927	9 th dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1927.
1928	10 th dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1928.
1929	11 th dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1929.

Sources: York Co-op Annual Reports, 1919 to 1929.

It is noteworthy that provisions for bad and doubtful debts during the period were infrequent, and there were also opportunities for the distribution of rebates and bonus shares. However, during the period there were several changes made to the Co-operative's Articles of Association in respect of the distribution of dividends and bonus shares. For example, at the AGM held on 12 April 1919 the meeting focused on the distribution of bonus shares and the need to amend the



Articles of Association to limit them to active members only. As the record of the meeting shows, Secretary Gordon Fisher and Chair Warren Marwick, had to explain to the members that such distributions could only be made to shareholders and that amendments were needed,

“The Secretary explained the method upon which the distribution of Bonus shares would be worked and presented statements showing figures in connection with the business at Greenhills, recently purchased from Edwards & Chipper. The Chair explained the procedures in connection with the alteration of the Company’s Articles. He pointed out that in his opinion it was not desirable to distribute profits in Bonus shares to other than Shareholders. The present Articles provide for distributions to all persons, whether Shareholders or Non-Shareholders, who did business with the Company. The proposed amendments, which were set out on the notice calling the Meeting, if carried would make the distributions supplied only to Shareholders” (YDC, 1919, p. 13).

The matter was understood by the Shareholders, and the amendments were approved unanimously.

According to a report published in the *Primary Producer* (1920) that described The Co-op York’s AGM of 24 April 1920,

“The company was practically out of debt. There were no debts due on the trading account, and only £800 due to Mr. Monger on account of the York premises. The amount of capital paid up was £2,000 which was very inadequate for their need and prevented the company from developing its work and aims as might be done otherwise. The combined profit of the two businesses was £1,261/8/3 after providing for Federal and State taxation. Out of this it was proposed to pay a dividend of 7 per cent, as a bonus on purchases, £500 to York and £250 to Greenhills, and to set aside the sum of £200 for a reserve fund” (Primary Producer, 1920, p. 1).

From this media report it seems that The Co-op York had progressed successfully following its launch in 1918, operating stores in both York and Greenhills, with sufficient profits to pay both a generous dividend, and rebates to shareholders trading via both branches. As evidence of the relatively sound trading performance of The Co-op York during the 1920s the Annual Report of 18 December 1926, which approved the payment of an eighth dividend on a pool of paid-up-capital worth £6,062 11s 5d (approx. \$575,928 in 2023 dollars), included a declaration of financial success in the “Other Business” section. This reads,

“Mr. J. Pinchbeck move a hearty vote of thanks to the Directors and Staff, and referred to the excellent progress the Company had made. The Chair, in replying, thanked Mr. Pinchbeck for his remarks and looked forward for even better results during the present year. Mr. Cameron briefly responded on behalf of the staff” (YDC, 1926, 28).

Furthermore, in the Annual Report for 1927 another similar vote of thanks was recorded,

“Mr. J. V. Fairhead move a hearty vote of thanks to the Directors and Staff and referred to the excellent progress the Company had made. This motion was seconded by Mr. Theo Fleay” (YDC, 1927, p. 30).

CRITICS OF THE CO-OPERATIVE CONTINUE

Despite the relative success of The Co-op York in its early years, the disquiet that W. G Burges had stirred up with his published letter lingered on for some time. This criticism was voiced in the local media, usually in the form of letters to the editor. The authors of these letters were often published under pseudonyms and appear to have reflected the opinions of those who saw The Co-op York as a monopolist enterprise, and therefore a risk to the existing merchants and rural agents operating in York.

For example, in the 11 April 1919 edition of the *Eastern District Chronicle* several letters were published from critics of the Co-operative. These letters were published under the header “York Co-operative Company”. The first letter came from someone using the name “Skeptic”,

“Dear Sir, - I am pleased to learn that his Company appears to have made at least a paper profit of £500 for the year. The £500, however, includes £450 spent on repairs etc. to buildings, and the Company is distributing £50 among its shareholders. This dividend, trifling as it is, will have to be borrowed as the Company is working on an overdraft. It appears to me that Mr Burges was quite right when he pointed out that the Company was for the benefit of two or three large shareholders, Yours ‘SKEPTIC’” (EDC, 1919c, p. 2).

In a second, and much longer letter, from a Mr. G. E. L. Wrench, the author wrote of Warren Marwick visiting the railway workers to talk about The Co-op York and the opportunity that it offered for them to join its as member shareholders. In this piece, Mr. Wrench suggested that Marwick, as the Chair of The Co-op York, had been critical of the local merchants and the ability of the Co-operative to provide much better pricing. It is not clear if Wrench was a local trader, but he was quite strong in his condemnation of Marwick’s attempts to recruit members and the risk it posed to the town’s incumbent storekeepers. As he explained,

“Now whilst in these times we all recognise that everyone is out to do the best for himself and purchase his requirements in the best possible market, if Mr. Marwick elects to make a direct attack on the traders of this town he may rest assured that they are not going to take it lying down. As Mr. Marwick says, there is no sentiment in business, and the firm which cannot stand up to competition sinks into oblivion whilst its competitors carry on in its place. The position here today is that while prices are high, yet competition is keen, and the man who cannot get satisfactory service locally has only to send to Perth to suit himself. This being the case, then what is Mr. Marwick’s objective?” (G. E. L. Wrench, EDC, 1919c, p. 2).

Mr. Wrench proceeded to state that The Co-op York’s principle income stream came from its “monopoly” over wheat handling, which he felt would potentially be lost in the coming years, and accused Marwick of seeing “disaster ahead” and having a “dread of healthy competition”, thereby seeking to recruit “all and sundry” in the town to buy shares in “his own concern with the object of eliminating private enterprises and securing a monopoly of the trade of the town and district” (EDC, 1919c).

In concluding his letter, Mr. Wrench referred to the township of Dangin (near today’s Quairading), which had been a vibrant township, with a large hotel, private hospital, numerous stores, a branch of the W.A. Bank, and a Road Board office. However, it too had established a Co-operative and now it was a ghost town with all shops closed and the property values worthless.

He added that,

“If Mr. Marwick is successful in closing up the traders in this town the example of Dangin would be quickly followed – the town would lose a hundred families and consist of a collection of empty shops and unsalable homes” (G. E. L. Wrench, EDC, 1919c, p. 2).

As with the letter exchanges that transpired during 1917 in relation to William Burges’ criticism of The Co-op York, these criticisms from the likes of Mr. Wrench evoked a strong reaction from both Warren Marwick and the Co-operative’s Manager Mr. E. T. Hick. In a long letter responding to the accusations levelled by Mr. Wrench, Marwick laid out his case. He explained that his talk to the Railway Social Club was focused on the benefits of Co-operation, refuting the claim that he was trying to recruit the railway workers, stating that under the Co-operative’s Articles of Association its membership was only open to primary producers (EDC, 1919e).

He also refuted the accusations that he had “reflected on local traders” and that the Co-operative was only remaining in business due to its “monopoly” over the wheat handling contract. In doing so he suggested that Mr. Wrench should have read The Co-op York’s financial report for the year. This would have shown him that during the first six months of trading in 1918, which included the wheat handling business, the Co-operative had generated a profit of £176 3s 9d (approx. \$16,553 in 2023 dollars), while in the second six-month period ending 21 December 1918, during which time there was no wheat handling revenue, The Co-op York generated profit of £339 3s 9d (approx. \$31,868 in 2023 dollars). He also implored Mr. Wrench to note that the profit figures cited were nett not gross (EDC, 1919e).

In addition, Warren Marwick spent time challenging Mr. Wrench’s claims that the demise of Dangin was caused by the local Co-operative. He explained that the hotel had been turned into a residence long before the Dangin Co-operative had been established, and the Road Board had been closed because the decision was taken to make Quairading the administrative centre in the Avon region not Dangin. Marwick’s response suggested that he knew Mr. Wrench and it included a retort that he had assisted returned servicemen “at least ten times more” than his accuser had done, and that the “numerous farms” he was allegedly profiting from were “worked on a Co-operative basis” and that “Mr. Wrench has had a fair share of the profits” (EDC, 1919c, p. 2).

He concluded his response letter stating that the Co-operative movement was “foremost in the minds of many leading statesmen throughout the Empire”. That it had been highly successful in many countries and was well established in Western Australia. His final comment was,

“In conclusion, I would advise Mr. Wrench in future when he wishes to attack anyone to deal with facts, and not listen to the representations received from an irresponsible person” (EDC, 1919e, p. 3).

A third letter, from an author named “Disgusted Shareholder” focused on the prices being charged by the Co-operative,

“Sir, - I hear that Mr. Warren Marwick has been sympathising with the townspeople over the prices they are charged for groceries and drapery and offering to supply them himself if they become members of his store. Now I would like to ask him if it is true that he bought the wool packs supplies from last season through the Company for himself and other Directors at 4s.

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10d and then charged us cockies 7s 6d each; also, that he bought oats from the cockies at 2s 8d a bushel and then sold them in the town at 4s 6d a bushel. Now then Mr. Marwick. Is this profiteering or is it not? Yours 'DISGUSTED SHAREHOLDER'" (EDC, 1919c, p. 2).

This letter evoked a response from the Manager Mr. Hick who explained that in any dealings with member shareholders, the Co-operative gave no preference to individuals and any orders taken are "booked at the price ruling on the day booked" (EDC, 1919a, p 3). He noted that members who purchased wool packs throughout the year were charged the prices that stood at the time of their purchase. He stated that prices had risen by 50 per cent between January and October (EDC. 1919e).

He also challenged the accusation by "Disgusted Shareholder" that Mr. Marwick had sold his main crop at 2s 6d a bushel, but had, to Hick's certain knowledge, bought and sold no other grain. This dismissed the claims against Marwick as "unaccountable insinuations". Also, within his letter, Hick responded to the claims made by "Skeptic" suggesting that the person lacked the ability to read a balance sheet and "follow the figures". He chided that,

"It would be to his material advantage to take a course of bookkeeping in our technical school" (E. T. Hick, EDC, 1991e, p. 3).

MEMBER COMPLAINTS

In addition to the issues discussed above, the other noteworthy mention is in relation to some evidence of member complaints at the AGMs over pricing and quality. These were rare, but did receive a mention in the Annual Reports from 1920 to 1923. At the AGM held on 24 April 1920, when the floor was open to "Other Business", a Mr. B. C. Carr was reported speaking at length in relation to the Greenhills Branch and the prices being charged there (YDC, 1920).

In a report on the meeting published in the *Primary Producer* (1920), it was explained that Mr. Carr complained that he could not get a quarter of what he wanted and that he felt he needed "to pull out and go where he could get served with his requirements",

"From what he could see and hear, business at Greenhills was falling away and almost at a standstill. Sugar was doled out to him a pound at a time, whilst he heard of men getting it by the bag elsewhere" (Primary Producer, 1920, p. 1).

The Chair Warren Marwick responded to Mr. Carr's complaints over sugar supplies explaining that sugar had been in short supply all over the State, but that the shortages were now over. He said that he himself was only able to purchase 2lb of sugar for his household, and that it was being "doled out in York" just the same as at Greenhills. However, he also explained that Wesfarmers was now the biggest distributor of sugar in WA and that they could be relied upon to keep the ninety Co-operative stores supplied when it was available. Nevertheless, supplies had been affected due to a shipping strike (Primary Producer, 1920).

His response to Mr. Carr was follow up by Manager Hick, who refuted the claim that the Greenhills store was "falling away". He provided figures for the store's performance over the previous four months which showed an increase in turnover from November 1919 to March 1920, with the

worst month being February 1920 due to the shipping strike, when the store's supplies were "almost exhausted" (Primary Producer, 1920).

The annual report for the AGM stated, in relation to Mr. Carr's complaints that his questions were addressed at the meeting and the matter closed (YDC, 1920). However, Manager Hick also spoke of the wider status of the Co-operative movement and how it would benefit the farmers. He claimed that had Wesfarmers not been established, the farmers throughout WA would have been in a precarious position, both in relation to superphosphate and cornsacks. Wesfarmers was in negotiation with the Co-operative Wholesale Society in England, which operated thirty factories producing a range of goods required by co-operatives worldwide. The company turned over £100 million per year (approx. \$8.3 billion in 2023 dollars) (Primary Producer, 1920).

The following year, at the AGM held on 23 April 1921, also during "Other Business", a Mr. S. B. Meares spoke at length about the prices being charged at the Greenhills Branch. As outlined in the annual report,

"M. S. B. Meares spoke at some length regarding the prices being charged for goods at the Greenhills Store. He pointed out that the price charged for oil was exorbitant. Mr. W. Gault supported Mr. Meares and also complained about the Store being closed each day between the hours of 12 and 1 o'clock. The Chair stated that the Manager would look into the prices and explained the reason for closing during the hours mentioned" (YDC, 1921, p. 17).

During the AGM held on 22 April 1922 the 'Other Business' session saw a Mr. J. C. MacLachlan questioning why the Co-operative did not purchase apples from the local Fruit Growers Association instead of buying them from the Mount Barker district and having them transported all the way to York. He also asked why the small account for the apples the Co-operative did purchase locally were not paid for.

The Chair Marwick asked the Manager Mr. Hick to respond. His response was recorded as follows,

"Mr Hick, in reply stated that in his opinion and in the opinion of his clients the apples to be purchased in York could not be compared with those that the Company had been purchasing and as he had to fill the requirements of his clients, he had no other option than to buy the apples from Mt Barker. With regard to the small account referred to by Mr MacLachlan this was placed to the credit of the York Fruit Growers' Association account and was being held in part payment of a fairly large account for fruit cases supplied to the Association and which was considerably overdue" (YDC, 1922, p. 21).

CHAPTER 4: THE DEPRESSION YEARS, 1930-1939

Following the Wall Street Stock Market Crash in 1929 a worldwide economic depression spread rapidly resulting in a massive collapse of the Australian economy. The worst year was 1932, with unemployment in WA rising to 30 per cent, with a collapse in housing prices of around 20 to 25 per cent, capital investment fell by 61 per cent, and immigration virtually ceased. Hardship and homelessness became a feature for many (Bolton, 1972; Snooks, 1974; Stannage, 1981).

Within the farming sector the impact of the Great Depression was mixed. For example, between 1926 and 1934 wool production, which was a major export commodity, grew rapidly despite the price of wool falling by 60 per cent during the height of the depression in 1930-1931. Unfortunately, a severe drought impacted the WA agricultural and pastoral sectors from 1935 to 1940 with devastating effects. When the drought commenced, the WA pastoral sector was able to support 5.5 million sheep. An estimated 4.2 million sheep died during the drought, and by 1946, the total population of sheep in WA was only half size of the 1934 flock (Snooks, 1974).

Commodity prices were also impacted throughout the 1930s, and many farmers from the group and soldier settlements, walked off the land (Wilson, Layman & Christmas, 2004). As a pivotal actor within the York District, the economic and social developments taking place within the district shaped The Co-op York's activities. The local farmers and pastoralists owned the Co-operative, and relied upon the sale of fertilisers, commodity trading, livestock and land agency, and general merchandise to sustain its profits. It was a period of technological change, with the arrival of motor vehicles, public radio, civil aviation, and local, interstate, and international telephone services (Menck, 2022).

The impact of the Great Depression in the early 1930s was significant across the Australian economy. However, the oversupply of wheat saw a sharp fall in prices to the point where many growers were of the view that it wasn't worth harvesting (Ayriss, 1999). Many of the soldier settlers and group settlers, who were often undercapitalised, found the going too challenging and were either forced off, or simply walked off, their land during the years 1930 to 1936 (Halse, 2009; Sauman, 2009).

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CBH

In 1933, Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd. (CBH) emerged, revolutionising the grain handling industry. CBH took over the storage of wheat, oats, and barley, replacing ninety farmer-owned co-operatives established between 1914 and 1929. Its significance to The Co-op York lies in it supporting the economic viability of farmer shareholders and converting it from a producer to a consumer co-operative.

The antecedents of the foundation of CBH can be traced back to the creation of the Wheat Pool of WA in 1922. During the First World War, a bumper wheat harvest in 1916 led to the Federal and State Governments to set up compulsory pooling of wheat to regulate grain prices and ensure that sufficient shipping was available (Ayriss, 1999). A compulsory Federal marketing scheme for wheat was also established, which comprised representatives from State grower communities sitting alongside Federal and State Ministers (Zekulich, 1997).

After the war, this centralised grain pooling system was abandoned by all States other than WA, who reverted to a voluntary pooling model from 1920 to 1922. In WA, the move was from a government controlled to a grower owned and operated pool, which was viewed as preferable by most WA growers (Ayriss, 1999).

The preference by farmers for a compulsory pool was due to the ease of management involved. With non-compulsory pools, the growers were usually forced to undertake additional work such as arranging banking, marketing, financing, storage, and sales. These administrative tasks were handled by the compulsory pool, which took these compliance burdens from the farmers' shoulders (Ramshaw & Lee, 2022).

Both Walter Harper and Alexander J. Monger were significant actors in the formation of the Wheat Pool of WA and were Trustees of the voluntary Wheat Pool of WA in 1922 along with Thomas Bath, and John Smith Teasdale. The passage of the *Wheat Pool Act 1932* (WA) eventually saw the Wheat Pool become a Statutory Authority with a Producers' Council comprised of growers who provided advice to the Board (Zekulich, 1997).

Thomas Bath, like Harper and Monger, was a strong supporter of the Co-operative movement and advocated for grower-owned companies (Baskerville, 2019). He warned growers about potential wheat price drops, which he predicted in several articles in the *Wesfarmers Gazette* and the *Primary Producer*. He was particularly concerned about the global grain surplus during the 1927-1928 season, predicting it would lead to oversupply and falling prices (Zekulich, 1997). Harper, Monger, and Bath were instrumental in founding Wesfarmers in 1914 and the Co-operative Federation of Western Australia in 1919 (Baskerville, 2019).

By 1900, bulk grain handling and storage was known in North America and to Australian producers. However, its high upfront costs required State Government investment, which caused delays. A 1908 Royal Commission in South Australia discussed the issue but took no action. After water and pest damage to the grain harvest, the Federal Government hired Metcalf & Co. to review the system. The 1914 review found bulk handling more cost-effective than using jute bags (West Australian, 1918).

Although NSW established a Grain Elevator Board in 1916, other states were slower to invest in bulk handling and storage. The benefits of these systems were clear, but ownership and management remained contentious. NSW adopted state government ownership with grower representatives in 1916, followed by Victoria in 1934 (Ayriss, 1999). WA chose a grower-owned co-operative model in 1933 with CBH, and South Australia established its own co-operative bulk handling in 1954 (Thomas, 2006).

In WA, farmer-owned co-operative Wesfarmers secured the grain handling and storage contract and aimed to expand into bulk handling. However, the Wheatgrowers' Union, while supporting bulk handling, preferred a locally owned system over Wesfarmers' profit-focused approach (Baskerville, 2019).

In the 1920s, Wesfarmers attempted to establish a bulk grain handling system in WA, including forming The West Australian Grain Growers' Co-operative Elevators Ltd. in 1920. They lobbied

the State Government for investment in railway infrastructure and port facilities at Fremantle, Geraldton, Bunbury, and Albany, and for relevant legislation. However, progress was minimal until the 1930s (Zekulich, 1997).

During the Great Depression, Wesfarmers built horizontal wheat silos across the wheatbelt at rail sidings, holding 14,000 tonnes of wheat (Ayriss, 1999). Additionally, a bulk grain storage facility was constructed at Fremantle port, and around 200 railway wagons were converted to transport the grain (Zekulich, 1997). Charles Harper estimated that this bulk handling system saved Wyalkatchem district farmers £21,000 (approx. \$2.3 million in 2023 dollars) (Baskerville, 2019).

In response to the rural hardship, the WA Government passed the *Debts Adjustment Amendment Act 1931* (WA), which enabled the farmers, who were in bankruptcy, to stay on their farms and work to pay off the debts under the supervision of creditors (Ayriss, 1999). It was in this context that the pressure mounted for the creation of a bulk handling system. This approach to the management of grain had been known for many years, with the first bulk handling elevators emerging in the United States in 1780 in the form of a bucket system, followed in 1843 by a conveyor belt system (Fornari, 1982).

On 5 April 1933 CBH was established with both Wesfarmers and the Wheat Pool of WA contributing the necessary seed capital. A total investment was made of £100,000 (approx. \$12 million in 2023 dollars) divided into £1 shares. The Wheat Pool of WA provided £80,000 (approx. \$9.6 million in 2023 dollars) and Wesfarmers the balance (West Australian, 1933; Farmers' Weekly, 1954).

CBH was founded under a Board of Trustees representing Wesfarmers and The Grain Pool of WA as providers of the necessary seed capital. Growers paid a toll on their grain supply, with the initial capital to be repaid by 31 October 1948 (West Australian, 1933). However, CBH repaid the investment by 1943, bringing the Co-operative under grower ownership and control (Goldfinch, 2003). Alexander Monger chaired CBH from 1933 until 1944, when ownership transferred to members, and Thomas Henry Bath took over until 1947.

MANAGING THROUGH THE GREAT DEPRESSION

As noted above, the impact of the Great Depression on Australia's economy was severe and the collapse of commodity prices that followed the Wall Street Crash of 1929 left many farmers in the Wheatbelt struggling. This impacted the growers in York District, and had flow on effects to The Co-op York. The years from 1930 to 1933 saw numerous farmers' meetings taking place across the Wheatbelt as primary producers sought to organise to seek support and action from the State Government.

For example, at a farmers' meeting at Bencubbin, in the northeastern Wheatbelt, held at the Road Board Hall on 3 December 1930, over 300 growers turned up for the evening. It was reported that meeting involved "a lively debate" that continued past midnight. The meeting agreed to form a local branch of the Wheatgrowers' Union and lobby the State Government for a 2-shilling bonus on wheat. It also resolved not to cart wheat until after a much larger farmers' meeting took place in Perth on Saturday 6 December, to which all farmers were encouraged to attend (DGALA, 1930).

The meeting was calling for government intervention to help stabilise the price of wheat. However, as one of the speakers, Mr. W. Bagshaw declared,

"It is no use discoursing on the 'world price' for the simple reason that to improve it is beyond the scope of this meeting and would, therefore, only be a waste of time. We are, however, all agreed that we cannot grow wheat at 2/- per bushel and maintain our farms. It therefore becomes our duty to examining the position very carefully with a view to finding how we can improve our position both in a general domestic way, as well as financially" (W. Bagshaw, DGALA, 1930, p. 4).

He went on to provide a detailed analysis of the problems facing the Wheatbelt and dismissed both the Federal and State Governments' level of concern for the plight of the Australian farmer. While they enjoyed the revenues generated by grain exports, they were less forthcoming in the provision of assistance. As a result, he declared that it was up to the farmers to unite and join forces, "with a view to working out our own salvation" (YGQDH, 1931, p. 2). This passionate speech reflected the mood that was common across the Wheatbelt and much of rural Australia. It was a factor in stimulating the WA State Government to introduce the *Debts Adjustment Act 1931* (YGQDH, 1931).

In January 1931, a farmers' conference was held in Perth with delegates from York District attending. The Wheat Growers' Union and Primary Producers' Association were prominent. According to a report of the meeting,

"A moderate tone was evident throughout the discussions and highly intelligent additions to the debates were made by farmers' representatives" (YGQDH, 1931).

Various motions were put, ranging from a cessation of wheat production to guaranteed prices for wheat set by the Federal Government. While the first motion was defeated, the latter was supported. This read as follows,

"Conference views with alarm the serious position of wheat growers and demands that the Federal Government guarantee a price equivalent to 4s, per bushel at Sidings, on all wheat marketed for 1931-32 seasons thereby enabling the farmers to make arrangements to carry on their operations to produce the seasons crops" (YGQDH, 1931, p. 2).

It is clear from the reports of these meetings that things were difficult for the growers, the Wheatbelt community in general, and the wider community within the State. This was reflected in calls within the conference for Government attention being given to taxation relief and a review of the basic wage to bring costs down for the primary producers. The report of the conference concluded that it had not provided anything new in way of solutions, but did highlight the financial problems facing the WA State Government (YGQDH, 1931).

To illustrate the impact of the Great Depression on the York District, on 6 April 1932, the first annual meeting of the York Unemployment Committee took place. It was Chaired by the Mayor Mr. C. A. Foreman and attracted over 40 people. The role of the Committee was to raise donations of cash to purchase clothing, food (bread) and groceries "sustenance", plus "Christmas cheer" orders for their distribution to the unemployed. The Council was also involved in providing work

for such assistance in the form of post cutting, with the recipients referred to as “sustenance men” (West Australian, 1932).

While the unemployed sought relief the farmers continued to focus on their grain harvests. A report on the farming situation in the York District published in May 1932 spoke of seeding operations being progressed across the district, which had been assisted by “recent rains” that enabled “the working up of fallow”. It was forecast that the amount of land put under seed would not be any less than the previous season and might even be larger. It also noted that wheat would be sown along with barley, oats, and peas. Farmers were reported to be seeding the land “thoroughly” in the hope of yielding more bushels per acre. The rainfall over the January to May period was considered good. The same report highlighted a positive trend in the export of lambs, and the import of rams, and short horn and jersey dairy cows (Western Mail, 1932). However, despite this optimism, the following year, in an article published in May 1933 relating to York, it was reported that,

“Although farmers in the York district were more thorough than usual during seeding, wheat returns were disappointing this year and considerably less wheat was delivered at the sidings” (NPMDA, 1933, p. 1).

The establishment of CBH in 1933 saw the steady roll out of grain receival sites across the Wheatbelt. However, there had been some opposition to the creation of the bulk handling system and in 1935 there was a Royal Commission established to investigate and report on the bulk handling system in WA. This was led by William Angwin CMG who commenced the review in January and undertook a diligent study of the relationship between CBH, the Grain Pool of WA, and Wesfarmers. He examined the relative costs of jute bags against the bulk handling process with assessments made on the cost of railway and port infrastructure upgrades for the latter. His data was gathered from the 1933/34 season and drew upon information from local flour milling companies (Royal Commission, 1935).

Angwin’s review was an important milestone for both CBH and the Wheatbelt. It declared that the process of bulk handling was clearly more beneficial to the growers and exporters than the system of using jute bags. He recommended that CBH be allowed to operate a monopoly and that State Legislation be passed to provide the Co-operative with security of its operations. In addition, Angwin recommended that the port terminals be upgraded, and that permanent storage receival sites be constructed at a minimum of 75 per cent of rail sidings (Royal Commission, 1935). This Royal Commission was followed by the passage of the *Bulk Handling Act 1935 (WA)*, which took on these recommendations and was used to guide the operation of CBH for much of its history.

To assess the impact of these events on York District there is a report from the *York Chronicle* published in February 1935 that overviews a meeting of the Central Southern District Council of the Co-operative Federation of WA held at Wickepin. This attracted around 25 delegates from a range of districts in the central and southern areas of the Wheatbelt including, Dumbeyung, Wickepin, Beverley, Lake Grace, Quairading, Corrigin, and York. A key feature of the meeting was a unanimous view from the delegates that the State Government’s decision to set up the Royal Commission was unnecessary.

As the report on the meeting states,

“The delegates were unanimous and emphatic in their denunciation of the Government in its attitude to co-operative bulk handling and for obvious reasons were disgusted at the appointment of the Royal Commission. The opposition to bulk handling came from a few people with ‘axes of their own to grind’ and it was significant that practically all farmers in the areas served, whether members of the W. G. U. [Wheat Growers’ Union] or not, used the bulk scheme although still at liberty to use bags if they wished ...” (York Chronicle, 1935, p. 4).

It can be seen from this report that while there may have been some farmers who were still advocates of jute bags, the majority were in favour of bulk handling and storage.

Despite the hardship created by the Great Depression, The Co-op York continued to pay regular annual dividends and generous rebates to its shareholders throughout the period. As outlined in Table 2, the payments were made at a rate of 8 per cent of paid-up-capital in 1930, reduced to 6 per cent for the years 1931 to 1934, and then back to 8 per cent for the remainder of the decade. In addition, from 1936 onwards, The Co-op York paid rebates (discounts) to members from its profits and still had sufficient funds to transfer to its General Reserve Account. It is also of note that the only year when the Co-operative needed to transfer funds to its Bad & Doubtful Debts Reserve was 1931, which was arguably the peak of the Great Depression.

This pattern of financial distribution suggests that The Co-op York was trading successfully throughout the decade of economic depression, and even able to pay regular dividends and from 1936 onwards, rebates to shareholders. Further evidence of the Co-operative’s financial position was the decision in 1937 for the Board Directors to receive a sitting fee to compensate their time attending board meetings. In the minutes of the AGM for that year, under ‘General Business’ the following resolution was entered,

“That the action of the Board allowing Directors a fee of one guinea per meeting, attended by them, was confirmed and approved on the motion of Mr. Fairhead seconded by the proxy of Mr. G. J. Boyle” (YDC, 1937, p. 44).

This payment of one guinea (e.g. £1 1s or approx. \$115.09 in 2023 dollars) for Directors to attend Board meetings is also a sign of financial confidence on the part of The Co-op York. It indicates, in conjunction with the regular payments of dividends and rebates, that the Co-operative had been able to successfully navigate the economic malaise of the 1930s.

AMENDMENTS TO THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

The other noteworthy developments within The Co-op York during the 1930s were further amendments to the Co-operative’s Articles of Association. Both amendments were related to financial distributions and echoed those discussed during the 1920s. The first amendment took place in 1930 at an extraordinary general meeting of shareholders held on 30 August.

Table 2: York Co-op Financial Distributions 1930-1939

Year	Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves
1930	12 th dividend paid at a rate of 8% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1930.
1931	13 th dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1931, and a sum of £500 (\$41,504) be transferred to the Bad & Doubtful Debts Reserve.
1932	14 th dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1932.
1933	15 th dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1933, to be paid in January 1934.
1934	16 th dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1934.
1935	17 th dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1935.
1936	18 th dividend paid at a rate of 8% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1936, and a sum of £375 (approx. \$42,749 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders in accordance with schedules submitted.
1937	19 th dividend paid at a rate of 8% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1937, and a sum of £450 (approx. \$49,326 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders in accordance with schedules submitted.
1938	20 th dividend paid at a rate of 8% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1938, and a sum of £500 (approx. \$53,436 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders in accordance with schedules submitted.
1939	21 st dividend paid at a rate of 8% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1939, and a sum of £500 (approx. \$53,436 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders in accordance with schedules submitted.

Sources: York Co-op Annual Reports, 1930 to 1939.

The special resolutions were,

"1. That the Memorandum of Association of the Company be altered and amended so as to enable the Company to be registered under the Companies Act Amendment Act, 1929. Moved by Mr. Monger seconded by Mr. Pinchbeck.

2. That the present Articles of Association of the Company be hereby repealed and in lieu thereof new Articles of Association be passed and adopted so as to enable the Company to be registered under the Companies Act Amendment Act, 1929. Moved by Mr. Monger seconded by Mr. Jager.

3. And that the Board of Directors of the Company be and are hereby authorised to apply to the Registrar of Companies for the registration of the Company under the Companies Act, 1893, as amended by the Companies Act Amendment Act, 1929. Moved by Mr. Monger seconded by Mr. Whitfield" (YDC, 1930a, p. 33).



The motivation behind this amendment to the Co-operative's Articles of Association was that the *Companies Act Amendment Act, 1929* (WA) made specific provisions relating to the registration and operation of Co-operatives. The legislation prohibited use of the title "Co-operative" by companies not otherwise registered under the *Co-operative and Provident Societies Act, 1903* (WA), *Building Societies Act, 1920* (WA), or the *Companies Act, 1893* (WA), as amended by the new Act. (CAA, 1929).

In addition, the *Companies Act Amendment Act, 1929* (WA) specified that any Company wishing to trade and register as a Co-operative, had to amend their Articles of Association to meet a range of practices. These included limitations on the number of dividends that could be paid in a given financial year, that dividends had to be paid only to shareholders, that dividends could only be paid after setting aside sufficient funds for reserves, and that such payments,

"... shall be distributed by way of bonus, either in cash or bonus shares or debentures in proportion to the business done by shareholders with the company, or to the profits earned by the company on such shareholders' business" (CAA, 1929, p. 3).

There were also changes to the number of shares that could be purchased by the Company from the members' paid-up capital with a limit of no more than one-twentieth of such capital. In addition, the new legislation placed restrictions on the distribution of funds from reserve accounts, or upon wind-up. Shareholders would only be eligible for repayment of their paid-up share capital and any dividends or other monies that they were owed. Further, the Company could not be wound up if its nett assets exceeded its subscribed capital, except for it getting the support of not less than three-quarters of the shareholders, or with the sanction of a Judge from the Supreme Court of WA. The new legislation also contained "stand still" provisions in regard to the *Co-operative and Provident Societies Act, 1903* (WA) with no new registrations permitted under that legislation (CAA, 1929). The new legislation was designed to address some degeneration within the co-operative sector with some enterprises having lost their adherence to the principles of co-operation. It was viewed as necessary,

"... to compel the directors to restore the co-operative policy of the company if they desired to continue to trade as a co-operative company" (MWT, 1931, p. 3).

Further amendments were made to The Co-op York's Articles of Association in 1936 at the AGM held on 12 December. These amendments focused on some minor wording changes, but also a substantial change to the distribution of profits. The amendments read,

"(a) The profits of the Company available for dividends shall only be divisible among the members in proportion to the amounts paid up on the shares held by them respectively and all dividends shall be declared and paid accordingly. The Company in general meeting may declare a dividend to be paid to the members according to their rights and interests in the profits and may fix the time for payment.

(b) No larger dividend shall be declared than is recommended by the directors, but the Company in general meeting may declare a smaller dividend.

(c) That the word 'declared' in the second line of the third paragraph of Article 50 be deleted and the word 'recommended' be inserted in lieu thereof" (YDC, 1936, 40).

As can be seen, much of the focus of The Co-op York during this period was sorting out the wording of its Articles of Association, specifically in relation to those sections that related to the payment of dividends.

EMBRACING THE AUTOMOTIVE REVOLUTION

The decades of the 1920s and 1930s were marked by the arrival of motor vehicles, in the form of motor cars, buses, and trucks, as well as motor tractors for farming. Initial excitement about the arrival of the automobile in WA was created as early as 1896 in articles published in the *Coolgardie Miner* (1896a/b) and *Inquirer* (1896), which discussed the emergence of motor vehicles in England, France, and Germany.

However, despite a growing interest in automobiles within the WA community, it took until 1898 before such a machine arrived in the form of a motorised tricycle imported by a Frenchman named Mr. A. Bargigli, which he hoped to use to cart water to the Goldfields. This plan failed due to the harsh nature of the roads and tracks that ran to Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. It was followed in 1899 by the arrival of a “motor carriage” manufactured in France with solid rubber tyres and seating for eight passengers, which was imported by Mr. W. G. Brookman. Then, in 1900, Mr. Percy. W. Armstrong imported a motorised tandem bicycle built by De Dion-Bouton, England, with a single cylinder 2¼ horsepower petrol engine and pneumatic Dunlop tyres (Baskerville, 2020).

Percy Armstrong established the first motor dealer business in WA and served as an agent to import motor vehicles for the affluent citizenry of the State. By 1905, with the increasing volume of motor vehicles operating on the roads, the Royal Automobile Club of Western Australia (RACWA) was established. It was focused on several goals: i) to provide a social club for the owners of motor vehicles; ii) promote their use; iii) collaborate with Governments over the setting of laws, and regulations governing their operation; vi) promote and encourage the development of road and associated transport infrastructure, and v) protect the rights of motor vehicle owners (Baskerville, 2020).

The enthusiasm for motor vehicles in WA was illustrated by a column published in the *Call*, a newsletter with the title “Movements in Motordom”. It contained short notes about the arrival of cars and other motorised vehicles, as well as humorous anecdotes and snippets of business activity by vehicle importers and distributors. Some examples from the 1920s are as follows,

“Messrs. G. J. and Gordon Gooch have shipped a Dodge car to their Wandagee Station, Carnarvon. This is their fourth Dodge” (Call, 1923, p. 6).

“Mr. T. Marchant, of Kellerberrin, has now purchased a Buick ‘four’ finished in an attractive grey colour. He left in it for Kellerberrin at the end of last week. Another of the same make goes into the same district within the next few days” (Call, 1923, p. 6).

“Two more Dodge cars for Goomalling this week. One to Mr. W. H. Smith, the Dodge representative there for his own use, and the other to Mr. F. B. Johnson” (Call, 1923, p. 6).



Figure 19: Advertising for Texaco Super-Power Kerosene, York Co-op 1936

"Because I demand the utmost out of my equipment, I use Texaco products exclusively —"

says Mr. E. G. STONE, of WOODSTOCK, VICTORIA

Proved and tested for greater power and economy

TEXACO
SUPER-POWER
KEROSENE

1K.276.

York District Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd.
LOCAL DISTRIBUTORS

Source: York Leader and Quairading and Dangin Herald (1936).



Figure 20: Advertising for Texaco Super-Power Chief Petrol, York Co-op 1937

EIGHT of the
SEVENTEEN DIFFERENT CARS
which proved the
GREATER ECONOMY, QUICKER
STARTING, more RAPID and
SMOOTHER ACCELERATION of
SUPER POWER-CHIEF
in recent R.A.C.A. Tests.

You too, can get similar results.
Fill up NOW with . . .

SUPER
POWER-CHIEF

This PONTIAC did
28.61 Miles Per Gallon

This STANDARD did
47.18 Miles Per Gallon

This TERRAPLANE did
32.15 Miles Per Gallon

This WOLSELEY Hornet did
50.95 Miles Per Gallon

This STUDEBAKER did
27.85 Miles Per Gallon

This FORD V-8 did
32.02 Miles Per Gallon

This CHRYSLER did
30.28 Miles Per Gallon

This OLDSMOBILE did
28.12 Miles Per Gallon

88,276
ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB
OF AUSTRALIA
Certificate

★ ONLY CERTIFIED PERFORMANCE COUNTS

York District Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd.
LOCAL DISTRIBUTORS

Source: York Leader and Quairading and Dangin Herald (1937).

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

York and District Co-operative Ltd. – Proudly serving the community since 1917



Motor vehicle ownership grew strongly in WA during the 1920s but slowed during the 1930s because of the Great Depression. All vehicles plus parts, fuels and oils, had to be imported. As the extracts from the Call show, the United States became a major source of motor vehicles. Fuels and oils came either from America or the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), which was generally cheaper than the US (Baskerville, 2020).

For the pioneering motorists, motor truck operators, and farmers purchasing tractors, their ability to secure regular supplies of motor oils, petrol and kerosene was an important issue. As Australia at that time had no domestic oil refining the distribution networks of petrol, oils and kerosene was left to general stores, particularly in the regional areas.

It was an opportunity for The Co-op York to move into the distribution of these products, which it did, with prominent use of advertising in the local newspapers during the 1930s. As shown in Figures 19 and 20, the Co-operative was a local distributor for Texaco “Superpower” kerosene and “Power Chief” petrol.

CHAPTER 5: ANOTHER WORLD WAR AND AFTER, 1940-1949

The period from 1940 to 1949 saw another global war, which unlike the first, brought the conflict directly to Australia's shores, with German raiders mining the nation's shipping routes, and even fighting a deadly duel between HMAS *Sydney* and the German auxiliary cruiser *Kormoran* off the Western Australian coast in 1941. Then the Japanese air raids on Darwin in the Northern Territory, Broome, Port Headland, and Exmouth in WA, plus Townsville and Mossman in Queensland in 1942. There was even a Japanese invasion plan published that same year, which outlined an amphibious attack on Fremantle and Perth, with Japanese troops storming the State Capital via the Swan River (Baskerville, Mazzarol & van Aurich, 2023 citing Gōshū shashinchō, 1942).

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 impacted the Australian economy, particularly the WA economy due to the collapse of the gold mining sector. During the 1930s the gold mining industry had enjoyed a resurgence in growth driven by rising gold prices, which attracted new investment into the WA Goldfields. This helped boost the State's economy. However, the war led to falling gold prices, high input costs, and labour shortages that saw the goldmines reduce their operations or even close (Wilson, Layman & Christmas, 2004).

At the community level, the war saw the introduction of rationing and restrictions, and the arrival of Dutch refugees from the Dutch East Indies, and American servicemen to support US Naval and Army Airforce operations. There were also labour shortages as many men voluntarily enlisted, or were conscripted (Menck, 2022). In addition, the Federal Government significantly increased its legislative controls over the State's economy. This took the form of price controls, centralised control over production and supply within many industries, plus sea transportation (Snooks, 1974).

THE CO-OPERATIVE IS ROBBED

During the early 1940s The Co-op York experienced successful and unsuccessful robberies. The successful robbery took place in March 1941 when thieves broke into the Co-operative's premises and stole a quantity of new chaff bags worth £100 (approx. \$9,606.48 in 2023 dollars). According to the Police report, the thieves used a truck to load the chaff bags and were stolen over a weekend as they were in stock on Friday but were missing on the following Monday (West Australian, 1941).

The unsuccessful robbery took place the following year when thieves broke into The Co-op York's premises early in the morning on Monday 16 March 1942. They attempted to blow open a safe. However, while the thieves were able to blow open the safe's main doors, the explosion jammed the steel draws inside the safe, which contained cheques and cash. The thieves were therefore unable to steal these funds. Three other safes located on the premises were untouched (YLQDH, 1942). As a report from the *York Chronicle* described the attempted robbery at the time,

"Early on Monday morning the premises of the York and District Farmers' Co-operative Company Limited were broken into and the large office safe used by the firm was blown. The intruders, who apparently gained entrance by removing a panel from the eastern door of the board room, were unable to open the small draws which had jammed owing to the explosion,

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

York and District Co-operative Ltd. – Proudly serving the community since 1917

and these contained cheques and cash. Three other safes in the adjoining office on the premises were untouched. Evidence of the attempted robbery were first noticed by Mr. J. Bown, an employee of the company, opening up the building for trading purposes, as usual, about 8.30 am. Police investigations are being made” (York Chronicle, 1941a, p. 3).

REPATRIATION OF SHARES

At The Co-op York’s AGM held on 14 December 1940 the Secretary Gordon Fisher, was requested to write to all the shareholders no longer residing in the York district, to ascertain whether they would be prepared to sell their shares. This share buy-back suggests that several farmers who had joined the Co-operative in the preceding years had left the district and were no longer active members. Co-operatives require member shareholders who actively trade with the Company either buying or selling to keep the business operating. Unlike an investor-owned firm (IOF), where share capital can be purchased purely for speculative capital growth and dividend payments, the role of share capital in a Co-operative is for a different purpose, which is to secure a right to join and trade with the enterprise.

As a result, inactive shareholders, who are still eligible for dividend distributions are not acting in the spirit of Co-operative enterprise. They are essentially free riding on the other member shareholders who are active. This explains the repurchasing of shares from the inactive members.

FINANCIAL DISTRIBUTIONS CONTINUE

Despite the 1939-1945 war years, The Co-op York continued to trade successfully and as it had done during the 1920s and 1930s, it made regular financial distributions to its member shareholders. Table 3 lists these distributions. Dividends were issued during the period from 1940 to 1949 at a lower rate than in preceding decades. Commencing with a rate of 6 per cent of paid-up capital in 1940, this was lowered to 5 per cent in 1941, and then to 4 per cent for the period 1942 to 1947, before returning to 5 per cent for 1948 and 1949.

In addition to the dividends, the Co-operative also paid rebates (referred to as discounts) at a generous rate, with payments made almost yearly. Data for the years 1943 and 1944 was unavailable at time of writing, but it is assumed that similar payments were made during those years.

The financial records for the Co-operative also show that periodic bonus payments for the Staff were continued during the 1940s, with such payments made in 1940 and 1947. Furthermore, in 1948 the AGM recorded a motion that declared Directors should only be paid their one guinea sitting fee if they attended the board meetings. This suggests that some Directors might have claimed the sitting fee even if absent from these meetings.

Another financial matter recorded in the minutes of the 1948 AGM was that a letter from the Registrar of Companies was read granting an extension of time to 31 December 1948, within which Directors must present accounts made up to 30 June 1948 to Shareholders in General Meeting (YDC, 1948).

Table 3: York Co-op Financial Distributions 1940-1949

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1940	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1940, and a sum of £500 (approx. \$50,293 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders. That a bonus of £10 10s (approx. \$1,056 in 2023 dollars) be paid to the Manager and Staff – the allocation of the payment to be left in the hands of the Manager.
1941	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1941, and a sum of £450 (approx. \$43,229 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders.
1942	Dividend paid at a rate of 4% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1942, and a sum of £500 (approx. \$44,071 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders.
1943	No record available.
1944	No record available.
1945	Dividend paid at a rate of 4% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1945, and a sum of £500 (approx. \$42,749 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders.
1946	Dividend paid at a rate of 4% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1946, and a sum of £550 (approx. \$46,102 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders.
1947	Dividend paid at a rate of 4% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1947, and a sum of £650 (approx. \$52,428 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders. That a bonus of £25 (approx. \$1,827 in 2023 dollars) be paid to the Staff – the allocation of the payment to be left in the hands of the Secretary.
1948	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1948, and a sum of £650 (approx. \$47,499 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders. That the sitting fee of £1 1s (i.e., one guinea) (approx. \$76.73 in 2023 dollars) is payable only to those Directors who attend.
1949	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1949, and a sum of £1,500 (approx. \$100,192 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders.

Sources: York Co-op Annual Reports, 1940 to 1949.

This appears to be a letter issued by the Registrar of Companies in response to an earlier letter from the Co-operative to the Registrar, seeking an extension of time to present the audited accounts to the shareholders. It is unclear why this was necessary as a review of the AGM minutes of the Co-operative suggests that at each meeting these accounts were presented and that the accounts had been independently audited.



The letter from the Registrar reads,

"The Secretary, The York District Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd. Avon Terrace, York.

Dear Sir,

Re – COMPANIES ACT. 1943-1947 – SECTION 126.

In response to the application contained in your letter of the 10th of September I hereby extend to the 31st of December 1948, period within which the directors of your company must present to the members in general meeting, accounts made up to the 30th of June 1948.

Yours faithfully.

ACTING REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES." (YDC, 1948, p. 54).

FOOD PRICES AND FUEL DISTRIBUTION

A consequence of the Second World War was the imposition of rationing and price controls, which included food, fuels, and oils. For example, the introduction of price ceilings for beef and mutton, intended to curtail price gouging, evoked strong opposition from the primary producers. In an article published in the *York Chronicle* in July 1940 a report of a special meeting of the Primary Producers Association (PPA) outlined the farmers' concerns. The meeting was described as "large" and it was addressed by several prominent speakers including Warren Marwick, Chair of The Co-op York, and William G. Burges, from the Royal Agricultural Society (*York Chronicle*, 1940a).

Their protests were targeted at the State Commissioner of Prices, Mr. W. A. White, who they felt had set the price ceiling too low for the farmers to gain sufficient profits from their livestock. They argued that the cost of purchasing sheep and cattle, then the feed required to fatten them for sale, had risen significantly due to the war conditions. With the price ceiling set too low, the producers would not be able to sustain their farming businesses. They passed a resolution that the Commissioner had set the price ceilings in an arbitrary manner without consulting the farmers and graziers. It also resolved to establish a delegation representing the PPA, Royal Agricultural Society, Pastoralists' Association, Wheat and Wool Growers' Union and stock agents to meet the Commissioner. This meeting, which included Warren Marwick, duly occurred, and the price of mutton was increased to 6½d. (*York Chronicle*, 1940a). However, the following year, the primary producers were once again active in lobbying for price ceilings on meat to be increased. Once again, the State Commissioner of Prices was in the firing line and being accused of failing to honour previous agreements. As an article in the *York Chronicle* of May 1941 declared,

*"Producers have been, and are, hard up against it. They have had to carry their stock through perhaps the longest dry spell in the history of Western Australian agriculture. They have had to hand feed and cart water. Only in the past two or three weeks, due to early and good rains, has there been any natural green feed over a period of at least seven months" (*York Chronicle*, 1941b, p. 3).*



Figure 21: Advertising for Caltex Texaco Insulated Motor Oil, 1941

Smoke means TROUBLE!

JOHNNY has learned the hard way that smoke means trouble! Smoke from the exhaust of your car can mean trouble too. Usually it means excessive wear . . . expensive replacement parts and repair bills — all caused by poor lubrication and irregular oil change intervals.

Guard against your car becoming a "smoker" . . . insist on Texaco **INSULATED** Motor Oil—the **INSULATED** Oil proven by all tests and leading Truck, Bus and Taxi Companies everywhere to give cleaner . . . better . . . safer lubrication with considerably increased . . . fully efficient . . . engine life.

You, too, will profit with regular 1,000 mile changes of Texaco **INSULATED** Motor Oil.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL YOUR CAR SMOKES!
Start now—change to Texaco **INSULATED** Motor Oil and avoid the possibility of having a worn-out engine when new cars and replacement parts may be hard to get.

CALTEX **TEXACO INSULATED MOTOR OIL**

YORK DISTRICT FARMERS' CO-OPERATIVE CO. LTD.,
LOCAL DISTRIBUTORS

Source: York Leader and Quairading and Dangin Herald (1941).



Figure 22: Advertising for Caltex "Light of the Age" Kerosene, 1941

**"LIGHT OF THE AGE"
CONTAINERS
HAVE MANY
HANDY USES!**

A handle and a few minutes work -- and there's a bucket.

LIGHT OF THE AGE KEROSENE for cooking, lighting and heating, burns brighter and longer . . . There is no smoke—no flicker, and no smell.

The CALTEX process of refining results in the complete removal of sulphur and sulphur compounds, providing maximum heat or light per unit of consumption. It burns evenly and cleanly.

ORDER YOUR LIGHT OF THE AGE KEROSENE in these handy containers!

Incinerators and all sorts of articles for everyday use can be made with these containers.

Two of these food troughs can be made from each can.

For spraying fruit trees and fowl houses, the can is used as a pump.

A useful scoop for chaff, bran and the like.

Make your own colanders. Fit the cans together and cover with cement.

**"LIGHT OF THE AGE"
KEROSENE**

BURNS BRIGHTER & LONGER — NO SMOKE — NO FLICKER — NO SMELL

**York District Farmers' Co-operative Co. Ltd.,
LOCAL DISTRIBUTORS**

Source: York Leader and Quairading and Dangin Herald (1941).

The Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies ended the supply of oil from that source, and all such supplies had to be brought in via ship from the United States. The need to ration petrol, diesel and other fuels led to a range innovative alternative fuel. When the initial introduction of petrol rationing was announced in 1940 there were suggestions that petrol could be replaced with gas. An example, described in the *York Chronicle* in August 1940, was the “Pederick” gas system that could be fitted to a conventional petrol engine without significant modifications. As noted,

“This installation, which was fitted to a truck, reduced running costs approximately 75 per cent, and gave an excellent performance quite comparable with the results obtained on petrol, although naturally a slight drop in both speed and power was noticed” (York Chronicle, 1940b, p. 3).

Despite these pressures of fuel rationing, The Co-op York continued to distribute Caltex Texaco fuels and lubricants, as well as kerosene for home heating, cooking, and lighting. As shown in Figures 21 and 22, the Texaco Insulated motor oil, and the ‘Light of the age’ kerosene were actively promoted by the Co-operative in 1941 and continue throughout the period. A further bonus was that the kerosene drums could be repurposed and used as water troughs, incinerators, buckets, chaff scoops, and drainage culverts.

As the advert for Texaco insulated motor oil stated,

“Johnny has learned the hard way that smoke means trouble! Smoke from the exhaust of your car can mean trouble too. Usually, it means excessive wear ... expensive replacement parts and repair bills – all caused by poor lubrication and irregular oil change intervals. Guard against becoming a ‘smoker’ ... insist on Texaco INSULATED motor oil – the INSULATED Oil proven by all tests and leading Truck, Bus and Taxi Companies everywhere, to give cleaner ... better ... safer lubrication ... with considerably increased fully efficient engine life.”

CHAPTER 6: THE FABULOUS FIFTIES, 1950-1959

The post-war years, specifically the 1950s, was a period of economic growth and the expansion of the State's industrial base and its mining and resources sectors. The Kwinana industrial area south of Perth saw the construction of a British Petroleum (BP) oil refinery in 1954, which provided a source of cost-efficient petroleum and oil products which assisted the post-war growth of motor vehicles (Menck, 2022). The WA population also grew strongly over the period as immigration from the United Kingdom and other countries grew at the rate of 2.8 per cent per annum, compared to the national average of 1.9 per cent per annum (Wilson, et al., 2004).

The 1950s was a period of change for both the WA economy and society. The workforce transitioned from one that was predominantly focused on agriculture, pastoralism, horticulture, and mining, to one that focused more on service industries. For example, in 1921 the distribution of population in the State was almost equally balanced between metropolitan and regional communities. This balance was broadly the same by 1933, but by 1947 things began to change as the manufacturing sector expanded, as did construction and services. By 1954 the agricultural industries employed 15 per cent of the workforce, with manufacturing employing a further 18 per cent. However, the construction and service industries made up the remaining 67 per cent (Wilson et al., 2004).

YORK DISTRICT IN THE 1950S – PETER MONGER AND THE YORK FARMERS' UNION

As an agricultural centre York in the 1950s was the meeting point for the local farming community. Along with The Co-op York, an important organisation was the York Farmers' Union (YFU). The Farmers' Union was formed from a merger of the Primary Producers' Association and the WGU in 1946 (Mercer, 1955). As the decade opened the YFU was under the Chairmanship of Peter Monger, the son of Alexander J. Monger. Peter Monger also assumed the Chair of The Co-op York from Warren Marwick in 1954 (YDC, 1954).

Peter Monger was born in 1917 in the family home, Faversham House. In 1940 he married Nancy Rae Seabrook, and the couple had two sons, Paul McCracken Monger (born 1944) and Rodney Wyborn Monger (born 1945). Both children were born in York at the York Maternity Hospital. Peter Monger volunteered to join the Second AIF in August 1940 and served with the 2/11th Battalion, rising to the rank of Lieutenant before being discharged in March 1944. He died in York on 13 February 1988 (WikiTree, 2008).

Key issues discussed within the YFU at the monthly meeting in October 1950 were the 50th Anniversary of the Australian Commonwealth, concerns over the situation relating to water supply in the York District, opposition among wool producers over a proposal to tax export wool, and the delivery of superphosphate by road without notification. There was also concern raised in relation to the lack of regulations over the fitting of spark arresters on chaff cutters, and the suggestion that a film projector be purchased by the local Parents' and Citizens Association to show educational films for the school, and instructional films for the farmers (York Chronicle, 1950a). The creation of a "Coronation Gift Fund" for Queen Elizabeth II was also major event (York Chronicle, 1954a).

In 1951, the YFU, represented by William G. Burges, addressed the York Road Board proposing that the Board provide funding for Agricultural Advisers for the farming community. The argument put forward by the YFU was that such advisory services would enhance the productivity of the local farming community. However, the Board, while thanking Mr Burges for his proposal, suggested that the funding should be sought from either State or Federal Government not the Local Government. They also felt that the matter would be duplicating the role of the State Department of Agriculture and needed to be backed by more input from the wider community (York Chronicle, 1951).

The YFU was also active in negotiations with the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) over the setting of payrates for shearing teams. For example, in 1950, the YFU was collaborating with the Pastoralist and Graziers Association (PGA) to reject a log of claims by the AWU for farmers to pay above the set Award rates. The matter was being taken to the Australian Arbitration Court in Sydney for consideration (Western Mail, 1950).

While the YFU and PGA were engaged in industrial disputes with the AWU, Australia was experiencing an influx of migrants from Britain and Europe. In 1952, farmers in the York District, were receiving letters from the Commonwealth Employment Office (CEO) seeking their interest in hiring Dutch and Italian migrants who had been selected for migration due to their specialist skills and experience in rural industries. The letters explained that 500 immigrants from The Netherlands and Italy had arrived in Australia and were already being employed in the Murray River region, where they were highly praised for their work. WA farmers, who required such workers, could apply via the Federal Government's CEO. However, they would, need to provide accommodation for either a married couple or a family. The local representative for the migrant worker scheme was Mr. H. N. Haley from the York Road Board who was the CEO's representative in the district (York Chronicle, 1952).

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The environment, specifically in the form of the Avon River, was also a challenge for the farmers in the York District. For example, in December 1952 a major storm front swept across the WA Southwest impacting the agricultural sector with hail, rain and wind damage to crops. A massive downpour struck the York District in a single day with a record 211 points (74.5 mm) of rain falling continuously for over 10½ hours from 7:30am. This rainfall disrupted harvesting, although it did less damage to standing crops than some feared. However, bagged wheat, which had been left out in the open fields, was saturated and had to be dried and re-bagged (West Australian, 1952).

The Avon River was also an issue of concern for the York District community. As noted earlier, the Avon River is prone to flooding and several severe floods occurred during the 1850s, in 1902 and again in 1945 and 1946 (Northam Advertiser, 1953). A conference was held in 1947 comprising representative from local authorities through which the Avon River ran (e.g., York, Beverley, Toodyay, and Northam), as well as the WA State Government. Despite some attempts to dredge sections of the river to help alleviate flooding, the matter was still not fully addressed. There was a call for the State Government to fund a program of "snagging", involving the dredging of sections of the river likely to act as barriers and therefore cause the river to break its banks. An

estimated cost of this work, covering around 17 miles (27.4 kms), was £24,000 (approx. \$1.9 million in 2023 dollars). However, no action was taken (York Chronicle, 1953a). This issue was raised again in 1953 with the comment that,

“Our luck cannot hold forever, and concerted action must eventually be taken to clean out the river before we lose all our river flats and lot of valuable agricultural land, and the river dries up altogether” (Northam News, 1953, p. 3).

However, from rainfall and fears of flooding in 1952-1953, the challenge by December 1954 was a massive heatwave, which saw temperatures rising to over 45° Celsius at York (Kalgoorlie Miner, 1954a). The drought that accompanied this heatwave was also impacting the farming activity, with agricultural surveys showing that crop production was down, and there would be a severe shortage of water and fodder for sheep, leading to hand feeding as a last resort. What wheat crop was ready to harvest was being cut for stock feed. However, the situation in the York District was reported as “turning out better than expected” (Kalgoorlie Miner, 1954b, p. 16).

In addition to the weather, the York District experienced problems with rabbit plagues that impacted the farming areas during the 1950s. For example, in 1952 there were reports of serious rabbit plagues within the York and adjacent districts. Cooperation between the York, Beverley, and Quairading Road Boards was developed to tackle the problem. This involved appointing a full-time Vermin Inspector to patrol all three districts and liaise with the local landowners about methods for combating the pest (Beverley Times, 1952).

The Vermin Inspector, Mr. W. Ruby, was duly appointed and in his first report of March 1954, he explained that he had been engaged in ripping up the rabbit warrens, but that many landowners were absent from their farms, making it more difficult to complete the work. He also noted that the single ripping machine was insufficient for the size of the problem and that four such machines would make it easier and faster to address the problem. His report also stated that the farmers were placing too much faith in rabbit trapping to address the problem, and the myxomatosis (a deliberately introduced poxvirus disease infecting rabbits) was still to fully demonstrate its success. However, poisoning was recommended. There was some debate within the Road Boards as to whether the rabbit problem was as serious as Mr. Ruby claimed (York Chronicle, 1954b). By contrast, the York Road Board’s application to undertake a culling of kangaroos was rejected by the State Government (York Chronicle, 1954c).

By 1955, there were reports that myxomatosis was in fact having a significant impact on the rabbit population within the York District. This was attributed to the heavy rains, which seemed to have spread the disease. It was noted that,

“This was the first time since the virus was introduced in the district that it has been successful to a worthwhile degree” (Daily News, 1955, p. 10).

There were also concerns over the influx of the invasive cape tulip the common name applied to two toxic plants native to South Africa that were introduced to Australia as garden plants. In July 1953 articles were published in the local newspapers expressing concern over the spread of the “noxious weed” and seeking help from the local Road Boards to undertake spraying along the roadsides to reduce the chances of it invading farmland (Eastern Recorder, 1953).

PUBLIC UTILITIES AND AN INSPECTION BY THE GOVERNOR

A key issue for the York District was access to the water supply scheme that piped water from the dams in the Darling Ranges, inland to the Goldfields. This scheme, commenced in the late nineteenth century, provided water not only to the population and industries in Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie, but also to towns and farms across the Wheatbelt and Goldfields. However, as with the Eastern Railway, the water supply scheme had been routed via Northam and had bypassed the York District. In response, the Chair of the York Road Board, Mr. W. H. Robinson raised the issue with the State Premier The Hon Sir Ross McLarty KBE MM during a visit the latter made to York in 1950 (York Chronicle, 1950b).

In a subsequent letter from the Premier that was delivered to Mr. Robinson via the local member Mr. J. I. Mann MLA. Sir Ross McLarty stated that he had raised the matter with the Minister for Water Supply and had been advised that when the Commonwealth Committee investigating the funding for the extension of the water supply system, the York District had not exerted any pressure to be included in the scheme. As a result, the scheme was underway and would take at least six years to complete the existing work scheduled. Nevertheless, the Premier was aware of the need for water supply in many areas of the State, where water supply was being undertaken by water carrying in trucks. The State Government understood that market gardeners wanted irrigation, but there was a shortage of pipes and associated materials. He added that,

"You will, I am sure, appreciate that there are very many areas throughout this vast State which are still dependent on carting supplies from standpipes and key dams, and that it will be many years before reticulated supply can be provided on every farm in the wheatbelt"
(York Chronicle, 1950b, p. 1).

On a more positive note, a visit by the Deputy Director of Postal Services, Mr. G. C. Friend, in late May 1950, who announced plans to upgrade the York Post Office. This included general renovations and improvements in the existing building, plus additional buildings that would house a telephone exchange. This would comprise a new manual switchboard, of the most modern and up-to-date type in the State. He also noted that some automatic exchanges would be installed in areas of the York District where there were smaller numbers of subscribers (York Chronicle, 1950c).

In the same year, the General Manager and Chief Engineer of the State Electricity Commission (SEC), Mr. F. C. Edmondson, responding to a request from the York Road Board, that the SEC was commencing the construction of transmission lines to supply electricity to the Northam and York districts. He explained that as these lines were installed, along with associated sub-stations, the consumers would be transferred from direct current (DC) power to alternating current (AC) power. This would require homes and other buildings to be wired for this, but he noted that under the existing State regulations, these standards were already in place, thereby requiring little or no change for the consumers. He stated that most of the electrical appliances operating within the homes (e.g., lamps, toasters, water heaters, cookers) were able to work with the alternating current. However, some equipment, such as motors, would require modification (York Chronicle, 1950d).

During December 1951 the State Governor Sir Charles Henry Gairdner GBE, KCMG, KCVO, CB, (Governor from November 1951 to October 1963), accompanied by Lady Gairdner, visited the York District. The trip included visits to farms and historic homesteads, and included a civil luncheon at the York Town Hall, attended by local Councillors and Road Board members. They were accompanied by the Mayor and Mayoress of York Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Noonan, and the Chair of the York Road Board, Mr. W. H. Robinson and his wife Mrs. Robinson. The tour included a visit to the property of Mr. W. G. Burges, “Tipperary” farm, where livestock was inspected, and afternoon tea was served. The Governor expressed his pleasure with the hospitality that the people of York had shown (West Australian, 1951). The Governor returned to York in 1953 to officially open the newly acquired St. John Ambulance building. This two-storey building had been purchased and renovated at a cost of £3,500 (approx. \$147,027 in 2023 dollars) (York Chronicle, 1953b).

ABORIGINAL HOUSING, FARM MECHANISATION, ROAD ACCIDENTS

Among the many issues being considered during the 1950s was the housing of the Noongar Ballardong community within the York District. This was part of a wider State Government initiative aimed at upgrading the housing facilities for the Indigenous communities. In May 1950, formal letters relating to the need for upgrading the accommodation provided to the Ballardong were sent by the York and Northam Municipalities and Road Boards to the Commissioner of Native Affairs Mr. S. C. Noonan.

These letters raised concerns over the sanitary conditions found in the estates where the Ballardong were living. The land areas allocated to them by the Native Affairs Department were not being serviced by the local government rubbish collection services and lacked basic sanitation facilities. In dispute was the State Government’s view that this was the responsibility of the Local Government authorities, while the latter noted that they had not been adequately involved in the process of applying for services to be delivered to these housing estates (Northam News, 1950).

This led to a dispute between the York Municipal Council represented by Counsellor P. M. Glass, and the state minister for Local Government and Native Affairs the Hon. Victor Doney MLA. Cr. Glass had decried the inspectors from the Department of Native Affairs as “armchair administrators”, suggesting that the field officers from the Department knew nothing of the situation within the Ballardong housing estates. Minister Doney refuted these claims and pointed to the extensive regional travel that had been undertaken by his staff and invited Cr. Glass to attend a meeting at Katanning to get the opportunity to ask him questions about the matter (West Australian, 1950).

Nevertheless, the matter was resolved, at least to some extent by 1954 when the York Municipal Council received notice from the State Housing Commission that twenty-five new homes, costing around £1,600 (approx. \$66,178 in 2023 dollars) each, would be built at York to house the Ballardong. The Council was requested to identify land sites in the town of York where some of the families from the Ballardong community could be housed (Daily News, 1954).

In addition to finding housing for the Ballardong community, another area of activity within the York District during this period was the increase in mechanisation within the farming sector, and

the overall increased reliance on road transport for grain movements. Farming was becoming more mechanised and farm machinery more complex and sophisticated. Field days provided the opportunity to showcase the latest farming equipment, including hydraulically controlled ploughs, post hole diggers and rabbit warren rippers (Northam News, 1952).

The increasing cost of this type of machinery also led the YFU to suggest that farmers establish machinery pools, where equipment could, along with the contract labour to operate it, shared to overcome shortages during peak demand periods. This had been a model used during the Second World War, and was considered a valuable contribution to meeting demands on machinery for harvesting and land clearing (Farmers' Weekly, 1953).

Another issue arising from the increased use of more powerful farm machinery was the significant growth in size of the machines. This made many harvesters and other machinery too wide for the bridges and culverts then found within the York District. In 1950 the York Road Board considered that the cost of upgrading the existing road infrastructure was too costly and suggested that manufacturers be approached to find suitable transportation options for moving over width vehicles and equipment around the district (York Chronicle, 1950e).

The growing use of road transport for grain handling also led to increased road accidents within the York District. On 3 March 1950, a truck heavily laden with wheat collided head on with a passenger car on the York to Perth highway. This killed a passenger in the car, and severely injured the driver. The collision, reported as far away as Kalgoorlie, ripped the roof off the car and tore the front wheels from the truck, which overturned and spilled its grain all over the road (Kalgoorlie Miner, 1950).

THE YORK CO-OP IN THE 1950S

Against this background of activities taking place within the York District during the 1950s, The Co-op York continued to operate successfully with a range of services comprising its retail stores in York and Greenhills, which sold groceries, general merchandise, hardware, fuel, farm supplies, and equipment. In addition, it also served as an agent for Wesfarmers, trading farm properties, livestock, as well as Caltex and Massey Ferguson. As shown in Figure 22, the Co-operative promoted its role as a Caltex fuel distributor. The Caltex advert from 1950 was a somewhat humorous (albeit black comedy) call to the members of the Co-operative to return their fuel drums which were in short supply. The text reads,

"Is this a picture of your Distributor? Things aren't really as bad as this. But quite seriously, drums are in very short supply, and you'll take a big load off our minds if you'll return any empty drums you have. Would you bring them in on your next trip to town? If you're not coming in for a while, we'd be pleased if you'd phone, and arrangements will be made to pick the drums up. Thanks ... it will be much appreciated" (York Chronicle, 1950, p. 3).

Also in Figure 23 is a photo of a Massey Ferguson tractor from 1951, with the narrow front wheel layout. It is pulling a twin-disk cultivating plough equipped with a grain and fertiliser seed box. The picture described as,

"... a scene typical of late autumn industry of a farm in the York District" (Western Mail, 1951, p. 47).



Figure 23: Advertising for Caltex fuels, 1950 and, Seeding after first rains, 1951.

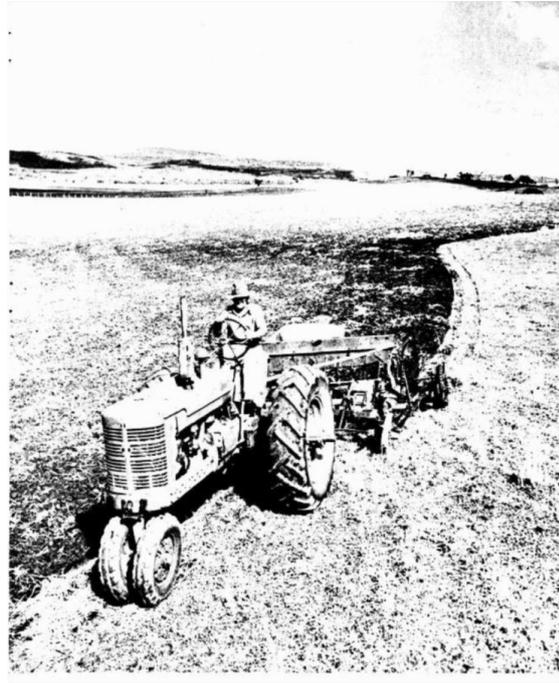
DRUMS, DRUMS, DRUMS...
FOR THE LOVE OF ALLAH!

Is this a picture of your Caltex Distributor?

Things aren't really as bad as all this. But quite seriously, drums are in very short supply and you'll take a big load off our minds if you'll return any empty drums you have. Would you bring them in on your next trip to town? If you're not coming in for a while, we'd be pleased if you'd phone and arrangements will be made to pick the drums up. Thanks... it will be much appreciated.

CALTEX DISTRIBUTORS

Distributed by:
York District Farmers Co-op. Co. Ltd. York



Source: York Chronicle (1950); Western Mail (1951).

Figure 24: Advertising for auction of "Wooregong" farm and "Lightening" concrete mixers

YORK FARMLAND AUCTION
"WOOREGONG"
FRIDAY, DEC. 15th. 1950
At 3 p.m.
AT PALACE HOTEL, PERTH

Westralian Farmers Co-operative Limited have received instructions from MRS. H. M. Burges, to offer by auction as under:—

2,561½ acres, freehold, known as "Wooregong" with a frontage on both sides and directly opposite to the main Northam-York bitumen road. On the south west the property is bounded by the right bank of the Avon River. The distance is 10 miles from York, 11 miles from Northam, 3 miles from Burges siding, and 60 miles by bitumen road from Midland Junction salesyards.

Land is principally red loam, gently undulating, merging to heavy clay on the river flats.

IMPROVEMENTS:

BUILDINGS: Red Brick homestead of 7 large main rooms, entry hall, verandah front, and portion 1 side, recently remodernised and tastefully finished internally with spray tex walls. Blending colours in kitchen, bathroom in green tiles. Hot water system, electrically lit, septic system, telephone and scheme water on. Lawns, rose garden and shrubs.

Garage.
Cottages (2) 6 room J.W.B. and 4 room with verandahs.
Shearing shed 60' x 55' J.W.B. iron roof, jarrah floor, grating where necessary, pens & races.
Chaff shed and barn 36' 70'.
G.C. Iron Smithy. Machinery shed, mens' quarters.
Sheep yards, concrete dip and draining pens.
CLEARING: 2,100 acres, 150 acres part cleared, balance shade and reserve for timber.
FENCING: Boundary principally rabbit netting, balance plain wire, well sub-divided.
WATER: Mundaring Water scheme, large river pools, 4 wells equipped mills, distributed to all parts of property.
SCHOOL: School bus at gate —York School.
PASTURE: Clovers, Wimmera Rye and natural grasses.
FALLOW: 300 acres.
GENERAL REMARKS: A property of outstanding quality and consistency of soil. In the State's most exclusive and reliable district with 19 inch rain fall, renowned for heavy carrying, fattening, fat lamb raising, hay, wheat and pea cropping. Superphosphate quota 52 tons.
DELIVERY: 1st February, 1951.
Inspection by arrangement with WESTRALIAN FARMERS CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED, PERTH or YORK DISTRICT FARMERS CO-OPERATIVE CO

See YOUR
"LIGHTNING"
CONCRETE MIXER
AT
YORK ...
ANDREW BROWN
EELDER, SMITH & CO.
YORK DISTRICT FARMERS CO-OP. CO.
M. J. McCOLL
YORK TRADERS
DALGETY & CO. LTD.

Sources: Avon-Argus and Cunderdin-Meckering-Tammin Mail (1950); York Chronicle (1950).

The Co-operative also acted as a land and livestock agent for Wesfarmers. For example, in 1950, it acted as a local agent in the sale by auction of a rural property known as “Wooregong”, a property owned by the Burges family encompassing 2,561½ acres (1,036.6 hectares), which was actioned on 15 December 1950 and advertised across a broad range of regional newspapers in the months leading up to the sale (Avon Argus, Cunderdin-Meckering-Tammin Mail (1950). See Figure 24.

It also served as an agent for a range of equipment that included “Lightening” concrete mixers manufactured in South Australia by Lightburn Ltd., which produced concrete mixers, washing machines and spin dryers, as well as wheelbarrows, trailers, power tools, hydraulic jacks, go-karts, range hoods, and even a range of small cars known as the “Zeta” during the 1960s. The York Co-op was also an agent for Lightburn washing machines and spin dryers. Figure 24 shows an advertisement for the “Lightening” concrete mixer.

As a livestock agent for Wesfarmers, The Co-op York also participated actively in the sales yards for pigs, sheep, and cattle. For example, in April 1954, a new pig sales yard was opened by Wesfarmers in York attended by the Mayor Mr. A. F. Noonan, and the Chair of The Co-op York Peter Monger, and the past Chair Warren Marwick (Northam Advertiser, 1954).

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF THE CO-OP YORK

As shown in Table 4, The Co-op York continued to pay annual dividends at a rate of 5 to 6 per cent of paid-up capital throughout the decade, and rebates in a lump sum for the first five years, and then via a formula that differentiated between profits from trading with the Co-operative’s stores, and a proportion of each £1 on commissions earned via agencies such as Wesfarmers (e.g., livestock), Caltex (fuels & lubricants), and Massey Ferguson (tractors and farm machinery).

Several key events were undertaken by The Co-op York during the 1950s. The first of these took place on 27 November 1953 at the AGM. This involved a change to the Co-operative’s Articles of Association relating to the capital structure of the Company. In a motion moved by Mr. A. G. Mattiske, seconded by Mr. L. T. Davies, it was decided,

“That (1) The Capital of the Company be increased to £50,000 by the creation of 43,000 new shares at £1 each.

That (2) The Articles of Association be altered by deleting from the section of article 4 the words: -

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

And by adding at the end of article a new paragraph as follows: - a

The quotation of any shares in the capital of the Company or purchase at any Stock Exchange, or in any other public market whatever is hereby prohibited.

That (3) The Articles of Association be altered increasing the maximum number of shares detailed in Article 4 to 1,000 ordinary shares of £1 each” (YDC, 1953, p. 61).

In addition to this change to the Articles of Association, the meeting also resolved that the amount payable to the Directors each year should not exceed 30 guineas (approx. \$1,323.25 in 2023 dollars) (YDC, 1953).

Table 4: York Co-op Financial Distributions 1950-1959

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1950	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1950, and a sum of £1,600 (approx. \$98,322 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders.
1951	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1951, and a sum of £1,600 (approx. \$82,327 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders.
1952	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1952, and a sum of £2,100 (approx. \$92,177 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders.
1953	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1953, and a sum of £2,100 (approx. \$88,216 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders.
1954	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1954, and a sum of £1,750 (approx. \$72,383 in 2023 dollars) be distributed as rebates to shareholders. A sum of £626 (approx. \$25,893 in 2023 dollars) be transferred to the General Reserve for the payment of taxation.
1955	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1955, and the plan of distribution of profit be, 7d in the £1 on trading, 4s/3d in the £1 on commissions earned through agencies, with the balance transferred to the Taxation Reserve. Such bonuses to be in the form of Bonus rebates.
1956	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1956.
1957	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1957, and a sum of 6d in the £1 on store trading, and 4s/- in the £1 on commissions earned from Wesfarmers, and 3s/8d per drum on Caltex Bulk Fuel.
1958	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1958, and the plan of distribution of profit be, 1½% of store trading, 2s/6d in the £1 on commissions earned via Wesfarmers, 2s/= Massey Ferguson and 3s/= per drum on Caltex fuel. Rebates to be in the form of Bonus Debentures, bearing interest at 5% paid in cash.
1959	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1959, and the plan of distribution of profit be, 1½% of store trading, 2s/6d in the £1 on commissions earned via Wesfarmers, 2/6 Massey Ferguson and 3/8 per drum on Caltex fuel. Rebates and Bonus shared paid in cash.

Sources: York Co-op Annual Reports, 1950 to 1959.

NEW CHAIR AND MANAGER

As discussed earlier, Peter Monger assumed the Chair of The Co-op York in 1954, replacing Warren Marwick who had served in the role since the Co-operative's foundation back in 1917. His appointment coincided with that of William "Bill" Fricker, who took on the role of Manager in 1955. Peter Monger served as Chair until 1984, while Bill Fricker served until his premature death in 1964.

Figure 25: Peter Monger, Chair (Left) and William "Bill" Fricker, Manager (Right)



Source: YDC (1961)

NAME CHANGE AND ACQUISITION OF THE AVON TERRACE STORE

The following year the Co-operative changed its name at the AGM held on 12 December 1955, in a resolution moved by Mr. Fairhead, seconded by M. F. Morrell,

"That the name of the Company be changed to YORK AND DISTRICT CO-OPERATIVE LTD."
(YDC, 1955, p. 64).

This change of name appears to have signalled a shift from a Co-operative focusing on farmers as shareholders, to one that is open to a wider community. It was also in 1955 that The Co-op York changed its approach to the payment of dividends and rebates, with a resolution moved by Warren Marwick, seconded by Mr. Ashworth,

"... that the plan of distribution of profit as recommended by the Board of Directors be accepted. Namely, 7d in the £1 on trading, 4/3 in the £1 on commissions earned through agencies, the balance to be allocated to Taxation Reserve, such bonus to be in the form of Bonus Debentures" (YDC, 1955, p. 64).

Figure 26: Edwards Store and York Co-op supermarket



Source: Shire of York (2019b).

An extraordinary general meeting of members was held on 16 March 1956, which focused on an agreement between the Co-operative and the York Traders Association (YTA), which represented the retailers operating in the town of York. The origins of the YTA can be traced back to 1927 when a meeting of the local business owners, chaired by the Mayor of York, agreed to establish the organisation, with an annual fee of 5 shillings (approx. \$24 in 2023 dollars). It promptly moved to set holidays for the Christmas season (Avon Gazette, 1927).

Formation of the YTA was again announced in October 1936 as representing the store owners within the township of York. Its establishment was reportedly motivated by concerns within the retailing community of many itinerant hawkers operating in the town and wider district. One of their first actions was to write to the York Municipal Council and Road Board asking if there was something that could be done to suppress the hawking (York Leader and Quairading and Dangin Herald, 1936).

In November 1947, the YTA decided that it would convert into a Chamber of Commerce, and affiliate with the State Chamber. However, it was still seeking to protect the local retailers by writing to the York Municipal Council about banning travelling sales teams using the York Town Hall for the display and sale of their goods, which was unfair to the local businesses that had to pay rates to maintain municipal buildings (York Chronicle, 1947). In contemporary 2024 language it was a case of “bricks and mortar” retailing verses “pop-up” stores.”

Although the minutes of the extraordinary general meeting do not specifically state the purpose of the agreement between The Co-op York and the YTA, it is likely to have been associated with the Co-operative’s purchase of the Edwards Store located at 138 Avon Terrace, and the corner of Macartney Street intersection (see Figure 26). The building was constructed in 1872 as a single

storey structure with a basement. However, a second storey was added in 1874, and the enclosed front façade was added in 1888 (Shire of York, 2019b).

The building was owned by the Edwards family who ran a store on the site from 1872 to 1936, after which the building was used for accommodation. Mr. William Edwards, a farmer from Beverley, purchased the site which now houses The Co-op York in 1852. However, the store did not operate until 1872. Its ownership passed to his sons, Charles and Kenneth, with Charles buying his brother out following the death William in 1889.

From 1886, a Chemist store was run from the ground floor of the building. Its ownership passed to Hewitt Morris Edwards in 1911, then to Frederick Ashbolt in 1936, and then William Norman Jose in 1952, who converted the upper floor into apartments. The building was acquired by The Co-op York in 1956 and remains under their ownership to the present (Shire of York, 2019b).

It is probably this acquisition that the agreement with the YTA was about. The record of the meeting states that,

“The Chair addressed the meeting and gave the fullest details of negotiations with the York Traders. He outlined the financial arrangements the Board were undertaking and invited the meeting to ask any questions pertaining to the proposed purchase.”

“Mr Newton Burges spoke in favour of the Board’s plans. Mr L. T. Davies spoke of the opportunity the project offered the Company, to provide the fullest service to Shareholders.”

“Moved, Mr. N. Burges, seconded Mr. Fred Fleay, that the meeting approve of the Board’s proposal and pledge support to it. Carried” (YDC, 1956a, p. 65).

HARDWARE STORE ISSUES AND MORE CHANGES TO THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

As the 1950s decade ended, The Co-op York was actively trading, and during the AGMs lively discussions ensued over a three-year period relating to the quality of service and the overall layout of the Hardware Store run by the Co-operative. For example, during the “General Business” session of the AGM held on 25 October 1957 Mr. Newton Burges spoke about the “bad set-up” of the Hardware Department. He explained that there was a wall dividing the space and suggested that either a window be installed, or the entire wall removed (YDC, 1957).

In response, the Chair, Peter Monger, stated that he agreed with the concerns and suggestions raised by Mr. Burges. He said that the Co-operative’s Board had the matter “in mind”, but any action to rectify the problem was hampered by a lack of funds. Nevertheless, the proposal would be borne in mind (YDC, 1957). The following year, at the AGM, Mr. Burges again raised his concerns over the state of the Hardware Store. In this case he drew attention to what he felt was poor service provided by the staff.

In response, Chair Peter Monger stated that he would note these concerns (YDC, 1958). Things seem to have been resolved by 1959 when at the AGM held on 23 October, Chair Peter Monger delivered a report on the progress that been achieved during the year in the upgrading of the Hardware store. In response Mr. Newton Burges declared that he approved the improvements in the Hardware Store (YDC, 1959).



A further amendment to the Co-operative's Articles of Association was made at the AGM held on 25 October 1957. This was a special resolution proposed by Warren Marwick, which focused on changing the wording relating to the activities of the Co-operative, and the definition of the term shareholders.

The wording of the special resolution read as follows:

"That the Memorandum (Articles) of Association be amended as follows:

(a) By inserting before sub-clause 1 of clause 2 the following sub-clause, namely,

'1A. To carry on the business of acquiring commodities or animals for disposal or distribution amongst its shareholders'.

'1B. To render services to its shareholders within the scope, objects and powers of the Company'.

(b) By substituting for the word 'persons' in sub-clause 1 of Clause 2, the words 'such of its shareholders as are' (YDC, 1957, pp. 73-74).

Amendments 1A and 1B above reflect the definition in Section 117 of Division 9 of the *Income Tax Assessment Act 1936* of a co-operative for income tax purposes.

CHAPTER 7: THE BOOM YEARS, 1960-1969

The decade of the 1960s proved to be a boom period for the WA economy. Federal Government restrictions on the export of iron ore from the State (imposed in 1938) were lifted in 1960. This led to the development of the WA iron ore deposits in the Pilbara Region, with Japan being both a key investor and buyer of the mineral (Wilson et al., 2004). It built the foundations of what became a significant platform in the State's economic development. The mining boom within the Pilbara saw the construction of new towns, rail, road, port and airport facilities (Menck, 2022).

However, within other industries things were less rosy. Flour milling had been a major export industry for WA, but it reached its peak in 1961 with 160,000 tonnes of flour exported. This decline in flour milling and export was due to the increased use of bulk grain storage and handling, with rail, road and shipping costs making it more cost effective to ship bulk wheat to the markets where the milling could be undertaken closer to the end-user and at lower cost (Wilson et al., 2004). This impacted York with the closure in 1966 of the York Flour Mill, which was built in 1892 by Thomas Thorn & Co., to become the York Flour Milling Co. in 1908 after its purchase by Marwick, Harvey Edwards & Menck. It produced export quality "Avon Valley Flour" for many years (Beverley Times, 1966; Shire of York, 2019b).

Despite these trends, wheat and other grain production (e.g., oats, barley) continued to grow in production volume and export trade. For example, while the average annual supply of grain received by CBH during the 1950s was just over 1.1 million tonnes, during the 1960s this figure more than doubled to an annual average of 2.26 million tonnes (CBH, 1984).

Urban development also changed, with the Perth metropolitan area transitioning from a "corridor" model with housing, commercial and industrial developments located along the railway lines, to a suburban sprawl with roads linking up housing estates that were focused on regional shopping centres accessed by private cars and public transport buses (Menck, 2022).

In 1968, Aboriginal station workers were granted equal pay to non-Aboriginal workers under the Pastoral Award (1968). This led to many Aboriginal station workers being laid off and resulted in the movement of people to the fringes of the larger towns looking for accommodation and work. However, the 1960s was also a time of social reform and improvement in education. For example, the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1962* received assent on 21 May 1962, granting all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the option to enrol and vote in federal elections. Enrolment was not compulsory for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, unlike other Australians. Once enrolled, however, voting was compulsory. The *Electoral Act Amendment Act 1962 (WA)* gave Aboriginal people the right to enrol and vote in Western Australian elections. The White Australia Policy that limited non-British migration to Australia was abolished in 1966 (Menck, 2022).

The Vietnam War was a major event during the decade, with Australia becoming increasingly involved from 1962 in supporting the United States and the South Vietnamese Government. It was simultaneously committed in the same year to support Britain and the Governments of Malaysia and Brunei in defending their territories from Indonesia in what was called the Indonesian Confrontation (1962-1966). To provide sufficient troops for these overseas

campaigns, the Federal Government introduced the *National Service Act 1964* (Cth), which lasted until 1972 (DVA, 2024).

Other features of the 1960s were the expansion and uptake of television, which came to WA in 1959, but was accelerated with the hosting of the Commonwealth (Empire) Games in Perth in 1962, and the introduction of decimal currency in 1966. There was also a rapid expansion in land clearing, a significant influx of migrants seeking work and a new life, and the commencement of the Ord River Irrigation Scheme from 1963 (Menck, 2022).

Mining development grew along with manufacturing. This saw the expansion of the BHP steel mill at Kwinana, the mining of bauxite in the Darling Ranges, and the processing of minerals. This included the Alcoa alumina refinery at Kwinana in 1963, titanium oxide refining at Bunbury in 1963, and the CSBP superphosphate and industrial chemicals plant at Kwinana in 1967. By 1964 manufacturing comprised 64 per cent of WA's economic activity (Menck, 2022).

YORK DISTRICT IN THE 1960S

For the people of the York District, the 1960s commenced with many of the same issues that had impacted the agricultural and pastoral sectors in the 1950s. This included the need to cull the fox population, which was impacting the lambing season. There was a public call by the Agricultural Protection Board's Fox Unit to get farmers to collect fox baits from the York Road Board and sow them within their paddocks prior to the lambing commencement (Beverley Times, 1961).

In addition to the problem of foxes, there remained concern over the continued spread of Cape Tulip weed across the district. York Shire Councillors were voicing criticism of the State Department of Agriculture, and the Agricultural Protection Board, who they claimed were using ineffective weed control and pushing the cost and responsibility onto the local Shire Councils (Beverley Times, 1967a).

However, on a brighter note, the 1963 mushroom season proved a bonus for mushroom collectors, particularly children, who collected the mushrooms in what even the oldest residents within the district felt was the largest crop ever witnessed. The combination of good rains and a cool temperature had seen the mushrooms growing. The mushroom harvest saw boxes full of the prized delicacy shipped off via rail to Perth where they fetched high prices (Beverley Times, 1963a).

Apart from vermin, weeds and mushrooms, York's focus was also on the construction of a new hospital, a town swimming pool, the introduction of regional television, and a reorganisation of the local government system. The first of these, the York Hospital, officially opened on 11 April 1963 by the WA Minister for Health, The Hon. Ross Hutchinson MLA. Designed to international best practice standards, the building cost £157,000 (approx. \$5.38 million in 2023 dollars) to build and fit out. It provided facilities for maternity, children, and general patients. At the time of its opening, it was declared to be the most modern hospital in WA (Beverley Times, 1963b).

The York community raised £1,561 (approx. \$56,544 in 2023 dollars) to provide equipment for the operating theatre and other areas (Beverley Times, 1963c, p. 16). However, by June 1963, the York Town Council was lobbying the State Government to provide nurses quarters at the new

hospital because the nurses were still accommodated at the old hospital site, which required a “considerable journey to get to work” (Beverley Times, 1963d, p. 9).

This call was not ignored, and by November 1963, the Minister for Health, had confirmed that the Public Works Department (PWD) had been tasked to prepare plans for the construction of nurses’ accommodation, with “every endeavour being made” to get the work underway during the FY1963-1964 (Beverley Times, 1963e, p. 3).

A less easily acquired public facility was the move to construct a town swimming pool at York. The community had historically used the Avon River for swimming, but this had issues related to safety and health. Momentum was building over the construction of a public swimming pool in the town, although the cost of the project was an obstacle. A York Swimming Pool Committee was formed to promote the idea and assist with fund raising. However, the estimated cost of the pool was £36,000 (approx. \$1.24 million in 2023 dollars). This required loans from the York Town Council and the York Shire Council (the district has two municipalities at that time), and this caused some friction (Beverley Times, 1963f).

However, the pursuit of a public swimming pool in York continued, and in 1965 a well-known local scuba diving enthusiast John Craig undertook a public stunt in which he put on his diving equipment and swam the length of the existing public pool within the Avon River. After inspecting the conditions at the bottom of the river, he declared the pool to be,

“Unfit for cultivation, navigation, reclamation, acclamation, recreation, or irrigation”
(Beverley Times, 1965. P. 1).

Despite the anticipated cost, the swimming pool was finally constructed and opened in 1967, but not before an 11-year-old boy, Kevin Wayne Beard, from the Perth suburb of Willagee, a non-swimmer, who was holidaying at York, fell into the deep end of the Avon River swimming pool, and almost drowned. Fortunately, two local teenagers, Denise McNamara and Heather Randall saw Kevin at the bottom of the pool, rescued him and alerted the pool supervisor Mr. George Green who was able to administer mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and get the boy to the hospital where he recovered (Beverley Times, 1967b).

As noted earlier, television came to WA in 1959, but its spread throughout the State took time as the regional network of TV Stations had to be built. The roll out of regional television was the responsibility of the Federal Government’s Australian Broadcasting Control Board. A Royal Commission into the development of a national television network had been appointed in 1953. This recommended a gradual introduction of the network, with initial stations located in Sydney and Melbourne, then their establishment in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart, followed by the opening of regional TV stations in the larger inland cities such as Canberra, Newcastle, Bendigo, Ballarat, Townsville, and Rockhampton. However, regional WA was not included. By 1962 plans were in place for the rollout of regional TV stations in Bunbury and Mount Barker, with consideration given for Northam and York to be the centre for television services across the central Wheatbelt. Despite a location being identified at Needing Hills, located 14.5 kms from York, the station was not built in York (Beverley Times, 1962).

A further major change in the York District was the merger of the Municipality of York, which encompassed the York Town Council, and the York Road District (e.g. York Road Board). These two entities had been formed in 1871 when they were separately gazetted. On 1 July 1961 they became the Town of York and the Shire of York under the *Local Government Act 1960* (WA). However, there was a strong call for the two entities to be merged, and a petition was circulated in 1963 urging for the two entities to be amalgamated. The legacy of the Town municipality and the Road Board, which dated back to 1843, were considered no longer relevant (Beverley Times, 1963). This movement for unification proved successful as the two entities were merged on 15 March 1965 to form the Shire of York (inHerit, 2020).

THE YORK CO-OP IN THE 1960S

The 1960s was a period of change, growth, and on-going maturity for The Co-op York. The acquisition of the Edwards Store in 1956 provided the Co-operative with a prime location on Avon Terrace, the main street of York, and the opportunity to develop its retailing operations. However, as the decade opened, the Board of Directors were already reviewing their business portfolio with particular focus on the performance of the Greenhills store and their Massey Ferguson dealership.

PROPERTY SALES, ACQUISITIONS, AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

At the AGM held on 21 October 1960, Chair Peter Monger, in his address to Shareholders spoke of the problems of the Greenhills property and the performance of the Massey Ferguson farm machinery dealership. Neither of these business areas had been performing well. At the same meeting, a Miss Whitfield asked the Chair if The Co-op York could make a special effort to promote the sale of WA goods and advertise that it was doing so. Chair Monger promised Miss Whitfield that the Co-operative would do this (YDC, 1960).

The following year, at the AGM held on 20 October 1961, Chair Monger reported that there was a trend towards self-service in the Co-operative's retail stores. Self-service within retailing was becoming a trend in the 1960s and the Co-operative had to adjust its business operations (Baskerville, 2019). He also referred to the increased volume of sales within the Drapery Department, but also the fluctuations in the Wesfarmers Agency business and the sales in the Hardware Store. In response, Mr. Newton P. Burges expressed his pleasure at the improvements he had seen in the store in general, and the Drapery Department in particular (YDC, 1961).

A major announcement at the 1961 AGM was the purchase by the Co-operative of the Macartney Street parking area, which runs parallel to the former Edwards Store that the Company had purchased in 1956 on the corner of Avon Terrace and Macartney Street. It accommodated not only a car park, but also the Co-operative's Hardware Store for many years (YDC, 1961).

He also spoke of the enlargement of the Drapery Department, the Grocery Store and the Cold Room within The Co-op York's retail premises. This included improvements to the self-service fixtures (e.g., refrigeration and display shelves) (YDC, 1962).

In his report, Chair Monger congratulated the staff and management working within The Co-op York, and gave specific thanks to a Mrs. Fairhead for, "her generous gift of two counters" for the store. He also declared the Board's decision to sell 410 shares it owned in a superphosphate business to 'help defray costs of fixtures etc.' associated with the store fit out (YDC, 1962, p. 89).

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

York and District Co-operative Ltd. – Proudly serving the community since 1917

During the same meeting, concern was raised about price comparisons between those charged within The Co-op York's stores and those found within the competition in Northam and Midland. The Chair was asked if price comparisons could be checked, particularly in relation to small items so that they could be kept "in line with competition". Chair Monger explained that this was indeed Company policy, but that prices of specials varied each week at various places (YDC, 1962).

The trading position of The Co-op York continued to improve in 1963, and at the AGM held on 18 October, Chair Monger was able to announce an increase of £8,000 (approx. \$273,987 in 2023 dollars) in sales for the previous year. He also reported that the Greenhills store and grain sheds had been sold, and that there were plans to relocate the Wesfarmers Agency Department near to the main store. Mention was also made of the purchase of a new Holden Utility, and he emphasised the Board's policy that all Company owned vehicles should be maintained in up-to-date condition (YDC, 1962).

Although the service provided by the Drapery Department was now particularly good, with significantly improved sales, service problems remained in other areas. For example, at the 1963 AGM a complaint was voiced by Mr. A. Wallace, and other shareholders, about the poor service in the Massey Ferguson showroom. As noted in the minutes,

"Mr. A. Wallace and other shareholders commented on the poor service in the Masey Ferguson Department and expressed the need for a big improvement when we make the move to the new site. Also mentioned was the closing of the Agency for lunch. The Chair stated that both items would be looked into by Board and Management" (YDC, 1963, p. 93).

However, it wasn't all complaints because during the same meeting,

"Mr. M. Brett congratulated the Directors on their initiative in going ahead with the new showroom and described the move as an example to the Town when conditions were a little doubtful, as he was in a position to observe the financial affairs of the Company. He remarked on the Company's affairs and the way the Manager handled them in a prudent manner" (YDC, 1963, 93).

Although the Co-operative had acquired the Edwards Store building in 1956 it was not officially opened until 1964. This may have been due to the need to renovate the building which had been converted into apartments on the first floor (Shire of York, 1919b). The new store was fitted out for self-service and was described as, "quite an addition to the business" (YDC, 1964, p.6).

In the Chair's Report for the 1964 AGM held on 11 December, Chair Monger stated that a new self-service supermarket had opened in York on 4 June, but that the Co-operative had responded by reorganising the Company's store to offer self-service to meet the competition. Yet, this refurbishment had impacted the Company's accounts (YDC, 1964).

In addition to the opening of the Avon Terrace store, the Co-operative also spent money on the renovation of another property that it owned in Grey Street, a house that was refurbished and its backyard and fence replaced. The original facilities as acquired from Alexander Monger in 1919, were also cleaned up, filled and new storage sheds built (YDC, 1964).

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN THE 1960S

The overall financial performance of The Co-op York during the 1960s was good. As shown in Table 5, the Co-operative was able to pay both dividends and rebates, the latter of which was allocated differently depending on whether it was for store trading, commission on Wesfarmers and Massey Ferguson products, or the purchase of drums of Caltex fuel. Dividends were paid at a rate of 6 per cent to 7 per cent over the decade, which with rebates amounted to distributions totalling around 12.4 per cent of paid-up capital.

At the 1962 AGM, held on 19 October, Chair Peter Monger announced the good news that the Co-operative's annual turnover for the year had increased by £20,000 to a total of £143,000 (approx. \$4.93 million in 2023 dollars). With profit up by £1,100 to a record £5,200 (approx. \$179,233 in 2023 dollars) (YDC, 1962). The following year Chair Monger was able to report an increase in £8,000 (approx. \$273,987 in 2023 dollars) in annual sales (YDC, 1963).

However, at the AGM of 1964, Chair Monger reported a decline of £1,718 (approx. \$57,199 in 2023 dollars). Although the annual turnover £149,257 (approx. \$4.94 million in 2023 dollars) delivered a net profit of £10,894 (approx. \$362,702 in 2023 dollars), which was more than double of the previous financial year. This improvement in profitability was attributed to two things. First, was an increase in commissions earned on Wesfarmers and Massey Ferguson sales. Second, was a revaluation of stock, which was undertaken by valuers from the Co-operative Federation of WA, who found that the stock had been undervalued the previous year (YDC, 1964).

The 1965 financial year was less successful, Chair Monger reporting at the AGM that the trading conditions had been "adverse" with machinery sales down by £11,094 (approx. \$357,200 in 2023 dollars), and retail sales down by £5,521 (approx. \$177,763 in 2023 dollars). However, he forecast that the outlook for the new financial year was positive. He also noted that the net profit of £5,139 (approx. \$165,464 in 2023 dollars) represented a rate of return on Shareholders' funds of 12.91 per cent, enabling the Company to pay a 7% dividend and distribute rebates.

There was also an increase in bank interest rates during the year, which when overdue accounts of customers were factored in, would lead to an increase annual bank interest charge of about £200 (approx. \$6,440 in 2023 dollars). As a result, the Board decided to charge interest on overdue accounts. The fuel distribution provided by the Co-operative was also able to provide free compressed air to inflate tyres, and member-shareholders received a rebate of 3d (approx. 40 cents) a gallon on petrol purchased (YDC, 1965).

Trading for the 1966 year had proven successful with a surplus of \$8,444 (approx. \$131,604 in 2023 dollars) being generated. At the AGM held on 28 October Chair Monger stated that,

"This result has not been achieved without careful management and planning. A serious problem for management is the difficulty of obtaining an adequate number of employees to cope with the work. The situation is difficult to understand as the company offers permanent employment and a sound experience in retail selling to young people starting out on a career" (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1966, p. 10).

**Table 5: York Co-op Financial Distributions 1960-1969**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1960	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1960, and the plan of distribution of rebates of £1,418 (approx. \$52,048 in 2023 dollars) be, 1½% of store trading, 2s/6d in the £1 on commissions earned via Wesfarmers and Massey Ferguson and 3s/8d per drum on Caltex fuel. The Caltex rebate to be paid in cash and the remainder in bonus shares and odd amounts of cash.
1961	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1961, and the plan of distribution of rebates of £1,585 (approx. \$55,703 in 2023 dollars) be, 1½% of store trading, 2s/6d in the £1 on commissions earned via Wesfarmers and Massey Ferguson and 3s/8d per drum on Caltex fuel. The Caltex rebate to be paid in cash and the remainder in bonus shares and odd amounts of cash. Directors' remuneration be £1 10s (approx. \$92.18 in 2023 dollars) per meeting.
1962	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1962, and the plan of distribution of rebates of £1,757 (approx. \$61,748 in 2023 dollars) be, 1½% store trading, 2s/6d in the £1 on commissions earned via Wesfarmers and Massey Ferguson and 3s/8d per drum on Caltex fuel. The Caltex rebate to be paid in cash and the remainder in bonus shares and odd amounts of cash.
1963	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1963, and the plan of distribution of rebates of £1,764 (approx. \$61,994 in 2023 dollars) be, 1½% store trading, 2s/6d in the £1 on commissions earned via Wesfarmers and Massey Ferguson and 3s/8d per drum on Caltex fuel. The Caltex rebate to be paid in cash and the remainder in bonus shares and odd amounts of cash.
1964	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1964, and the distribution of rebates of £1,753 (approx. \$61,607 in 2023 dollars).
1965	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1965, and the distribution of rebates of £1,597 (approx. \$51,420 in 2023 dollars).
1966	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1966, and the distribution of rebates of \$3,194 (approx. \$49,780 in 2023 dollars) be paid.
1967	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1967, and the distribution of rebates of \$3,436 (approx. \$51,751 in 2023 dollars) be paid.
1968	No dividend paid due to costs associated with the need to pay for earthquake damage, but a distribution of rebates at 2½% was paid on store trading.
1969	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1969 amounting to \$3,047, and the distribution of rebates of \$3,300, on trading, and at 37 cents per drum of Caltex fuel.

Sources: York Co-op Annual Reports, 1960 to 1969.



He explained how the Co-operative distributed its sales revenue stating that for every dollar received, 49 cents went to wages, 10 cents went into dividends and rebates, 28 cents was spent on general expenses, 7 cents on income tax, and 6 cents retained in the business. In addition, he noted that while the year had seen good trading, the Board was of the view that the dividend would not be increased beyond the 7 per cent. This was due the Co-operative paying rebates as well as dividends. When dividends and rebates were added together it represented return on paid-up capital to the Shareholders of 14.86 per cent.

Chair Monger also made the following comment,

“Another factor that governs the amount to be declared is the fact that we started from humble beginnings; paid-up capital at the 31st December 1918 was \$1,657 and development over the years has had to be financed from profits. On the 31st December 1918 the assets of company were valued at \$6,517. On 30th June 1966 they were valued at \$146,239” (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1966, p. 10).

In addition, he reported that the York Shire Council had given the Co-operative notice that the shop veranda posts had to be removed by August 1968, with a cantilever veranda put in its place. The Board had also felt that the shopfront should be remodelled to provide a more “up to date” appearance and provide a wider view of the store display to be seen from the street. However, the estimated cost of this work was around \$14,000 (approx. \$218,197 in 2023 dollars). This would require the Shareholders to be invited to subscribe to a new issue of debentures, to be issued for a term of 10 years bearing interest at a rate of 8 per cent per annum. He stated that,

“The new building will add to the appearance of the street, and we believe will enhance sale prospects as our goods will be displayed to much better advantage. I trust you will give this development your support and thus evidence your faith in the district and in the company. You will also secure, what we consider to be, a sound investment in debentures” (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1966, p. 10).

The annual turnover of The Co-op York in 1967 reached only \$383,000 (approx. \$5.77 million in 2023 dollars). This was due to the agency sales having declined significantly. The main items that had been impacted were sales of fencing, building and irrigation pipes, which were being collected via the Wesfarmers’ Midland store and not charged to the Co-operative. This trend was viewed as concerning by Chair Monger as it would not allow the Co-operative to meet the turnover target of the previous financial year (YCC, 1967).

However, in his Chair’s report, Peter Monger explained to the members that The Co-op York would need to accept that inflation was going to increase the Company’s annual costs, which in turn, would require an increase in annual sales revenue to meet financial targets. As he stated in the Annual Report,

“The question of expenditure is continuously under review, but the directors realise that increased costs – inflation – is now an integral part of our economic life and that to maintain profits at a level required to meet the Company’s financial commitments, we must endeavour to increase the volume of sales year by year” (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1967, p. 12).



Chair Monger also noted that the Co-operative had budgeted for the redemption of debentures and a reduction in its bank overdraft. In addition, due to the high costs of goods sold, the Grocery Department was unable to make a profit if it were to charge competitive prices and pay a trading discount. Therefore, the 2½ per cent trading discount on groceries would not be paid during the period after January 1968. However, the 1½ per cent rebate (paid in addition to the discount) would be increased to 2½ per cent with the hope that this might encourage customers who are non-members to become members (YDC, 1967).

The Co-operative's annual turnover for 1968 was also down by \$1,684 (approx. \$24,740 in 2023 dollars), with net profit down by \$908 (approx. \$13,340 in 2023 dollars). In addition, the 1968 earthquake that had its epicentre in the town of Meckering (located 48 kms from York) caused damage to several buildings in York, including the Avon Terrace store. In the Annual Report to shareholders, Chair Monger explained that the cost of repairing the building had been estimated at \$5,000 (approx. \$73,456 in 2023 dollars), which required the Board to allocate funding for this. These unforeseen expenses meant that for 1968 no dividend was paid to the shareholders (YDC, 1968).

In 1969, as The Co-op York ended the decade, its annual sales had declined by a total of \$21,348 (approx. \$303,672 in 2023 dollars). This fall in sales was due to the termination of the Massey Ferguson agency, which was being transferred from York to Northam. However, despite the fall in sales, the Co-operative reported an increase in its gross profit margin from 13.4 per cent in FY1967/68 to 14.8 per cent in FY1968/69. Yet, Chair Monger cautioned that while it was hoped that the trend in gross profitability would continue, the drought conditions impacting the farming community might create problems along with the rising cost of wages and services (YDC, 1969).

The termination of the Massey Ferguson agency ended a long period of The Co-op York providing sales of farm machinery and service support. Figure 27 shows two advertisements from 1963 and 1964 representing the Massey Ferguson 525 mounted rake, and the Massey Ferguson 500 spring tine drill cultivator. In the advertisement for the 525 mounted rake the message reads,

"High-speed haymaking with the 525 helps you make better hay. From swath to window, hay is gently moved only half the distance of conventional rakes. The swath is 8 ft. and it's a P.T.O. model that's hydraulically controlled ... may be visited and backed into a fence corner, into irrigated ditches and terrace channels. It will operate in any field with ease, and you can work up to 10 mph. You'll really see something when you hitch the 525 to Massey Ferguson tractors – the ground speed P.T.O. allows the rake speed to be directly proportional to the tractor's forward speed for best raking in all conditions" (Beverley Times, 1963g, 13).

The caption on the Massey Ferguson 500 cultivator advertised in 1964 stated,

"Reliable, trouble-free sowing season after season. You can depend on an MF500 Spring-tine Drill Cultivator for accurate sowing, uniform fertilising and a first-class job of secondary cultivating. Its reliability and trouble-free performance, season after season, is the reason why it is the most popular drill on the market. Unique design is another advantage – a simple, basic frame design with big-capacity steel hoppers. With the weight distributed on the wheels resultant light draft pays off in faster work at less cost. Force-feed grain runs and the equalising differential drive features ensure even sowing on turns and uneven ground."



"Draft is taken direct to the cultivating unit, reducing strain on main body of machine and aiding rigidity – a M-F exclusive! Readily visible depth indicator ... acre meter standard equipment ... automatic clutch disengagement when floats are raised ... simple, positive feed change mechanism by gears, quick to change, easy to maintain ... rope-operated or hydraulic lifts ... small seeds box available ... 12, 16, 20 and 24-row sizes" (Beverley Times, 1964, p. 13).

Figure 27: Advertising for Massey Ferguson mounted rake and spring tine drill 1963-1964



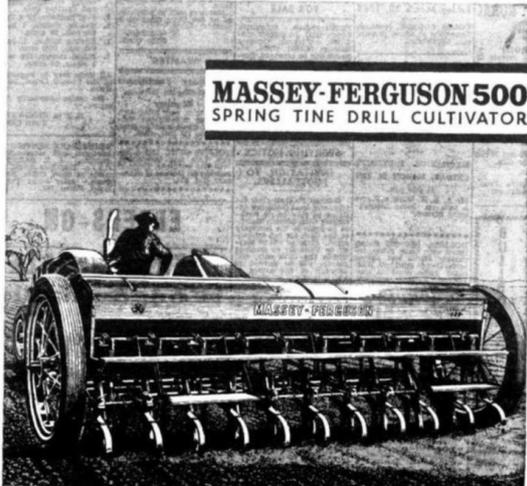
GET NEAT, FLUFFY WINDROWS AND MORE EVEN CURING...

High-speed haying with the 525 helps you make better hay. From swath to windrow, hay is gently moved only half the distance of conventional rakes. The swaths to 8 ft. and it's a P.T.O. model that's hydraulically controlled... may be raised and backed into a fence corner, into irrigated ditches and terrace channels. It will operate in any field with ease and you can work up to 18 m.p.h. You'll really see something when you hitch the 525 to Massey-Ferguson tractors — the ground speed P.T.O. allows the rake speed to be directly proportional to the tractor's forward speed for best raking in all conditions.

MASSEY-FERGUSON 525 MOUNTED RAKE

Call, phone or write for further details

T. W. ETTRIDGE & SON QUAIRADING. Phone: 5 <small>Ask for G. ETTRIDGE</small>	YORK & DISTRICT CO-OP LTD. YORK. Phone: 48 <small>Ask for E. ASHWORTH</small>
R. L. & M. R. BOLLAND CUNDERDIN. Phone: 56 <small>Ask for R. BOLLAND</small>	McINTOSH & SON PTY. LTD. WONGAN HILLS. Phone: 10 <small>Ask for L. McINTOSH</small>



MASSEY-FERGUSON 500 SPRING TINE DRILL CULTIVATOR

Reliable, trouble-free sowing season after season

You can depend on an MF500 Spring-tine Drill Cultivator for accurate sowing, uniform fertilising and a first-class job of secondary cultivating. Its reliability and trouble-free performance, season after season, is the reason why it is the most popular drill on the market. Unique design is another advantage — a simple, basic frame design with big-capacity steel hoppers. With the weight distributed on the wheels resultant light draft pays off in faster work at less cost. Force-feed grain runs and the equalising differential drive features ensure even sowing on turns and uneven ground. Draft is taken direct to the cultivating unit, reducing strain on main body of machine and aiding rigidity — an M-F exclusive! Readily visible depth indicator... acrometer standard equipment... automatic clutch disengagement when floats are raised... simple, positive feed change mechanism by gears, quick to change, easy to maintain... rope-operated or hydraulic lifts... small seeds box available... 12, 16, 20 and 24-row sizes.

Your local Massey-Ferguson Dealer

YORK AND DISTRICT CO-OP. LTD. T. W. ETTRIDGE & SON

York. Phone: 48 <small>Ask for W. A. FRICKER</small>	Quairading. Phone: 5 <small>Ask for G. ETTRIDGE</small>
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NORTHAM AGENCY CO.
Northam. Phone: 146

Sources: Beverley Times (1963b; 1964).

At the 1968 AGM, Chair Monger reassured members who had purchased Massey Ferguson farm machinery that they should not be concerned over the purchase of spare parts because The Co-op York would continue to supply them until the manufacturer made alternative arrangements. In addition, he added that from 1969 onwards, the Co-operative planned to be an agent of Wesfarmers machinery working on a commission basis (YDC, 1968).

EARTHQUAKE REPAIRS, HOUSE SALE AND STORE RENOVATIONS

The damage caused by the October 1968 Meckering earthquake to the outside of the Co-operative's Avon Terrace store was repaired by June 1969. However, in his annual report to shareholders, Chair Monger explained that while the outside had been addressed, it had proven impossible to repair the damage done to the inside of the building due to lack of tradespeople. This had rendered the first-floor apartments no longer usable, although he stressed that the building was "quite safe" to use. The Board planned to finish the internal repairs in stages (YDC, 1969).

It should be noted that many of the historic buildings in York were impacted by the earthquake, with other buildings heavily damaged and some being made unusable (Shire of York, 2019). This may explain the difficulty in getting tradespeople to work on the store. Also in 1969, the Co-operative had finally sold the Grey Street house for \$8,500 (approx. \$120,911 in 2023 dollars). This money was then used within the Co-operative which had been experiencing financial challenges caused by rising costs, the expenses associated with the repairs to the earthquake damage and declining sales revenue.

In addition to the earthquake repairs to the Avon Terrace store, The Co-op York Board made the decision to undertake alterations to the store's layout. This involved reorganising the location of the various Departments. The Co-operative's office and the Wesfarmers agency office were moved to the right-hand side of the building, which substantially improved the display area in the Drapery Department. Plans had also been drawn up to combine the self-service supermarket and grocery departments within the main store. The rear car parking area was also to be re-developed. These plans were to be undertaken in 1970. As the Chair's annual report stated,

"This we feel will enable us to reduce costs and stocks on hand at the same time giving better service to shoppers. The reduction of stock will improve our liquidity" (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1969, p. 17).

THE PASSING OF CO-OP MANAGERS AND VETERAN SHAREHOLDERS

The decade also saw some sad events within The Co-op York, most notably the passing of the Manager of The Co-op York, Mr. William "Bill" Fricker, who died on 2 April 1964. In his eulogy, at the AGM for that year, Chair Peter Monger stated,

"I must refer to the sad passing of our late Manager and friend Bill Fricker. He was a man well-liked and respected by all and, as you know, did a tremendous amount for this company. In fact, he largely made the business what it is today. We have all missed him greatly" (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1964, p. 6).

Bill Fricker's death was unexpected, and the Assistant Manager Cyril Screaigh had to stand in and fill the gap left by Mr. Fricker. The WA Co-operative Federation assisted in finding a new Manager, Mr. Monnock. However, in 1968, Mr. Monnock also passed away, having resigned his role as Manager in May that year due to ill-health. Again, Cyril Screaigh stepped in to fill the vacancy and was subsequently appointed to the role of Manager (YDC, 1968).

In addition to the death of Manager Monnock, one of the Co-operative's foundation shareholders, Newton Burges, who at the time was the oldest member, also passed away. Mr. Burges was from

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the Burges family, pioneers of York, and played an active role in the Co-operative, and was a regular attendee at AGMs (YDC, 1968). As Chair Peter Monger stated in his annual report,

“Before proceeding with my report on the affairs of the company I regret to record the deaths of Mr Newton Burges who was our oldest shareholder, and of Mr Monnock, our late Manager. Our sympathy has been expressed to both the families” (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1968, p. 14).

CHAPTER 8: DROUGHT, QUOTAS AND HERITAGE, 1970-1979

The 1970s was a period of economic and social change for WA. For the mining sector the decade was a period of boom, which led to per capita income across the state more than doubling by 1973-1974 (Ghosh, 1981). The mining boom was led by the expansion of iron ore mines in the Pilbara region but supplemented by the mining of many other minerals such as bauxite, nickel, mineral sands, and uranium in other regions of the state (Menck, 2022). The ending of the Gold Standard by the United States in 1971, also led to a resurgence in gold mining as prices rose, which also led to rising inflation (Wilson et al., 2004).

YORK DISTRICT IN THE 1970S

However, while the 1960s had been a boom period for the agricultural sector in the Wheatbelt, the 1970s saw the arrival of severe droughts. These emerged in the winter of 1969 and required the State Government to aid farmers in the supply of fodder and water, plus the transport of livestock to more suitable areas. These drought conditions continued into the early 1970s and saw farmers investing in water saving strategies and private irrigation programs. This was the beginning of the long drying in south-western WA, although that was not clear at the time (Morgan, 2015). In addition, the outlook for farmers was shaken with the prospect of wheat quotas, introduced in 1969 by the Federal Government in its response to an oversupply of wheat onto global markets. This combination of drought and quotas saw the reduction of wheat sown by one third, which combined with high inflation, had a negative impact on farmers (Morgan, 2011).

YORK BECOMES A "NOTABLE TOWN"

An important theme emerging in York during the decade was its identification as an historically significant town with the potential for tourism. This process commenced in 1970 with a visit by the National Trust of WA, to meet with the York Shire Council, and discuss whether York should be declared a "Notable Town". The visit took place in August that year and involved a range of discussions focusing on the town's heritage buildings, and whether they had been kept in sufficient state to warrant their being officially registered. Concern was raised by the Trust representatives over the removal of the verandas to many buildings. They voiced their concerns that no communication had taken place between the Shire Council and the Trust over the matter. In response, the Councillors explained that the Council had not issued any order for the verandas to be removed, and that they were surprised by the uproar that ensued after they were taken down. The Councillors showed the Trustees plans of the original building and expressed their confusion over what was, or was not, considered to be worthy of heritage listing. With so many historic buildings in the town it was a major consideration (Beverley Times, 1970a).

The Councillors expressed the view that many residents in the town wanted all modern buildings and were generally unimpressed with the idea of preserving the historic character of the town. They declared that as the representatives of the community who lived in York, it was challenging for them to make a case for preservation of the existing buildings and promote to their electorate the advantages of York becoming a "Notable Town". Nevertheless, it was agreed that the Council would decide at its next meeting as to whether York should be assessed by the Trust as being a

“Notable Town”. If this decision was to be taken, they should confer with the Trust to establish a committee to oversee the heritage project (Beverley Times, 1970a).

For its part, the Trust was tasked with making written suggestions outlining the respective functions of the two parties. It was suggested that the Council identify twelve buildings to receive priority for special plaques that would be prepared, based on a national standard. This issue was subsequently taken to the Council’s next meeting where a key concern was raised in relation to how the heritage listing of the buildings would be received by the owners of these properties. There was concern that the National Trust might take control of the buildings away from the Council and dictate what the property owners could and could not do with their buildings. As a result, it was decided at the meeting to defer consideration of the “Notable Town” program until the Trust had responded with a written explanation as to what the impact of the heritage listings might have on the property owners and the Council (Beverley Times, 1970a).

The National Trust made a further visit to the York and Beverley districts in May 1971, to review a range of historical buildings and assess their heritage value (Beverley Times, 1971a). In 1972, the identification of York as a historic town was further enhanced by the decision of the WA Museum Board to approve the Residency Museum in York to become the first municipal museum in the State. The museum had been developed by the York Historical Society, into a place that displayed furniture, clothing, maps, photographs and illustrations of historical buildings, and other artifacts to show how the early pioneers had lived (Beverley Times, 1972a).

In response to the official recognition of the Residency as the first municipal museum in WA, the York Residency Museum Committee prepared for a weekend celebration in August 1972. This involved local arts and crafts people to present their goods in a fair-like atmosphere with music and dancing. Fund raising for further development of the museum was also planned (Beverley Times, 1972b). The museum became a repository for many historical artifacts including a copy of an edition of the *Eastern Districts Chronicle* dated 9 January 1892 (Beverley Times, 1972c). When the museum opened on 27 August 1972 the event attracted over 400 people including Sir Thomas Meagher, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the WA Museum. The building, which was the original home of the resident Magistrate, was built in 1842 (Beverley Times, 1972d).

It took until March 1977 before York was officially gazetted by the National Trust as a “Notable Town” of historic significance. As noted in the local media at the time,

“The Shire of York welcomes the status and hopes that this will be of some assistance for the future tourist potential of York. There are very few towns within Australia which have gained this recognition as it is only conferred on those having significantly historic background preserved over a number of years to give a complete historic town concept. The only other town gazetted in WA is Coolgardie, in the Goldfields of West Australia” (Beverley Times, 1977a, p. 10).

The momentum within the York community to have the town officially recognised as a historic location was driven by the York Society, which was founded in 1968. Among the leaders of the Society was Ms Esmée Lili Marwick, a decedent of the Marwick pioneer family. She played a key role in the establishment of the York Society, and her vision was to see York become recognised as the State’s early history showcase (Beverley Times, 1973a).

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York's success in securing heritage status had an impact on the way the community viewed the value of the town's many impressive historic buildings. For example, in 1975, a program of restoration of the old York Gaol, dating back to the 1850s, was targeted by the local member for Central Province, the Hon. Harry Walter (Mick) Gayfer MLC, who was also the Chair of CBH. In September of that year, he expressed concern over the planned renovation of the York Gaol noting that a renovation had been planned in 1967, but had been suspended due to his personal intervention on the grounds that the work would have destroyed the building's heritage value (Beverley Times, 1975).

He raised questions with the State Government over whether the renovation work would be undertaken in a manner that would preserve the historical integrity of the building. His questions were addressed by the Minister for Lands that any restoration would be undertaken with the oversight of the National Trust and the WA Department of Tourism, to allow York to become a recognised historic town (Beverley Times, 1976a). During the same year, renovation work commenced on the York Town Hall with painting and restoration of wooden windows that had suffered from weather damage. This was part of a longer-term plan for the restoration of the historic building (Beverley Times, 1976b).

TOURISM BECOMES A MAJOR FOCUS FOR YORK'S ECONOMY

York's transition into a "Notable Town" was undertaken in conjunction with a refocusing of its potential to become a tourism centre. Its historic buildings, picturesque location on the Avon River, and proximity to the Perth metropolitan area, provided the foundations for a tourist destination. The foundation of the York Society in 1968 provided a community catalyst for this, which was facilitated by the march towards Heritage Listing by 1977. The vision for York to be a key tourism centre had been identified as early as 1973 when the decision was made to convert the former Magistrate's Residency into the York Residency Museum (Beverley Times, 1973b).

During 1973 the Shire of York received a grant of \$4,167 (approx. \$46,679 in 2023 dollars) from the WA Tourism Development Authority as a contribution towards the first stage of a redevelopment of Avon Park, estimated to cost \$6,250 (approx. \$70,013 in 2023 dollars). This funding provided the Council with the ability to upgrade the river foreshore, with picnic tables, BBQ and toilet facilities, and a rotunda (Beverley Times, 1973c). It was an early sign of York viewing its economic future including tourism in addition to farming and pastoralism, and also a sign that the standards of public roads and modern motor vehicles had brought York within 'day-tripper' distance of the metropolitan area.

In February 1976 an Advisory Committee was formed to oversee the development of York. This comprised representatives from WA Department of Tourism, the National Trust, the WA Museum, the York Society, the York Tourist Information Centre, and the York Shire Council (Beverley Times, 1976c). By April, the Advisory Committee was providing the Council with its advice and recommendations for action, all of which were approved by the Council (Beverley Times, 1976d).

In September 1976, the shires of York, Northam, Toodyay, and Beverley formed a regional tourism committee known as the Avon Valley Tourist Committee. Its overall aim was to promote the scenic Avon Valley region as a tourist destination, highlighting its historic buildings and



natural attractions (Beverley Times, 1976e). When the official recognition of both the York townsite and the surrounding district as being areas of significant heritage value was granted in 1977, the foundations for positioning York as a tourist destination were already laid and York was viewed as ranking with the best in this regard (Beverley Times, 1977b).

THE YORK CO-OP IN THE 1970S

As discussed earlier, the decade of the 1970s saw the farming community in WA impacted by a severe drought and this had an impact on The Co-op York. In his annual report to the members, Chair Peter Monger stated,

“Unsatisfactory seasonal conditions and depressed prices for agricultural products plus extremely strong competition for a limited market have made the period under review a very difficult one. However, your Directors feel that the net profit of \$8,664 (approx. \$119,147 in 2023 dollars) is reasonably satisfactory” (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1970, p. 19).

Despite the somewhat gloomy assessment provided by Chair Monger, he was able to report that the Co-operative had seen annual turnover rise by \$7,783 (approx. \$107,031 in 2023 dollars), to \$369,332 (approx. \$5.1 million in 2023 dollars). However, in the face of fierce competition the Co-operative’s, gross profit margin had fallen from 14.8 per cent to 13.6 per cent, although it had been possible to keep costs under control. Due to depressed wool and sheep prices, it had not been possible to maintain high income from agency commissions. As a result of these financial outcomes the Co-operative’s Board decided not to pay discounts. Nevertheless, it was decided to pay dividends at a rate of 6 per cent of paid-up capital (YDC, 1970).

The first trading year of The Co-op York in the new decade also saw the sale of the house in Grey Street. These funds were used to purchase fixtures and fittings for the Avon Terrace main store to offer self-service and a coffee bar. These new facilities enabled the Co-operative to consolidate its grocery department in the Avon Terrace store, thereby reducing the need for rental over other premises, and improving the overall cash position (YDC, 1970).

A further achievement for the year 1970 was the completion of repairs from earthquake damage to the Avon Terrace store. However, some minor damage remained in the form of cracked plaster in the first-floor area. This damage was not considered structural in nature and as the upstairs apartments were no longer used, it was decided not to proceed with these minor repairs at that time (YDC, 1970).

THE CO-OPERATIVE IS ROBBED AGAIN

As noted earlier, The Co-op York was subject to a break-in in 1941 when thieves used explosives to try to open a safe. On the night of 7 August 1970, the Co-operative was again targeted by thieves who stole over \$1,000 (approx. \$13,752 in 2023 dollars) in clothing and cigarettes (Beverley Times 1970b).

The thieves gained access to the Avon Terrace store by climbing in through an open skylight. They then stole four suitcases from the store, filled them with merchandise and left. The store trading for that day had been particularly busy, which had left the Co-operative with a large amount of cash held on the premises. In addition, the buildings lights had been left on for security reasons.

It is unclear whether the thieves were aware of the cash held on the premises, but it is likely that they did because they tried, unsuccessfully, to break open the safe (Beverley Times, 1970b).

MANAGING A FINANCIAL ROLLER COASTER

The impact of droughts, quotas, inflation and increasing competition from other towns and outer Perth suburbs (e.g., Northam and Midland), made the financial management of The Co-op York something of a roller coaster ride. Table 6 lists the dividend and rebates paid by the Co-operative throughout the decade. It is noteworthy that while dividends were paid, rebates were often replaced by interest bearing debentures, and discounts were no longer offered.

Table 6: York Co-op Financial Distributions 1970-1979

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1970	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1970, and rebates were also paid.
1971	Dividend paid at a rate of 6% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1971, and rebates were also paid.
1972	Dividend paid at a rate of 7% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1972, and rebates were also paid.
1973	Dividend paid at a rate of 7½% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1973, and rebates were also paid. These included store rebates from 2% to 3%, and fuel rebates from 30 to 40 cents a drum.
1974	Dividend paid at a rate of 7½% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1974, and rebates were replaced by bonus debentures paying an annual 7½% (redeemable by 30 June 1977).
1975	Dividend paid at a rate of 8% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1975, and rebates were replaced by bonus debentures paying an annual 7½% (redeemable by 30 June 1978).
1976	Dividend paid at a rate of 3% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1976, and rebates were replaced by bonus debentures paying an annual 7½% (redeemable by 30 June 1979).
1977	Dividend paid at a rate of 8% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1977, and rebates were replaced by bonus debentures paying an annual 7½% (redeemable by 30 June 1980).
1978	Dividend paid at a rate of 10% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1978, and rebates were replaced by bonus debentures paying an annual 7½% (redeemable by 30 June 1981).
1979	Dividend paid at a rate of 10% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1979, and rebates were replaced by bonus debentures paying an annual 7½% (redeemable by 30 June 1982).

Sources: York Co-op Annual Reports, 1970 to 1979.



At the AGM of The Co-op York held on 17 December 1971, Chair Peter Monger reported that annual turnover, and both gross and net profit had improved over the preceding year. However, there had been a decline of \$4,414 (approx. \$57,191 in 2023 dollars) in income from commissions due to the depressed prices for rural commodities, as well as a reduced per centage by almost half paid by Wesfarmers on the commissions. These commission reductions had only affected part of the year but would continue into 1972 and suggested that the Co-operative would have to face lower revenues (YDC, 1971).

In addition, company tax had been increased, as had wages and salaries, which had been increasing significantly in recent years due to the high inflation. On the positive side, he noted that the Co-operative had managed to lower its mortgage significantly and achieve cost savings by extending self-service shopping into kitchenware. In addition, debentures totalling \$5,900 (approx. \$76,444 in 2023 dollars) had been redeemed (YDC, 1971).

In 1972 the Co-operative's profit had almost doubled, which was attributed to the ability of the management to significantly increase revenue, with all departments making a good contribution, while keeping expenditure to the same level of the preceding two years. Nevertheless, wage rises were still an issue likely to challenge the Co-operative's budget (YDC, 1972).

Despite this, the Board had decided to pay a dividend at 7 per cent rather than the previous 6 per cent, and to increase the rebates from 1 per cent to 2 per cent. The combined dividends and rebates paid for the year totalled \$6,114 (approx. \$74,716 in 2023 dollars), and the wages paid totalled \$43,361 (approx. \$529,891 in 2023 dollars). This demonstrated that The Co-op York was making a direct financial contribution of \$49,475 (approx. \$604,607 in 2023 dollars) into the York and district community (YDC, 1972). As Chair Peter Monger stated in his annual report for 1972,

"The uplift in farm incomes has undoubtedly contributed to increased sales, but we like to think that we offer a service and goods at competitive prices, which also influence shareholders and non-shareholders to buy from us and the directors and management continue to plan improvements to merit your support" (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1972, p. 22).

Net profit rose again in 1973, which led the Board to increase the dividend from 7 per cent to 7½ per cent, with an increase in store rebates from 2 per cent to 3 per cent, and fuel rebates from 30 to 40 cents per drum. The Co-operative had also issued debentures to shareholders paying an annual 8 per cent interest rate that were to be redeemed by 28 February 1974. This would require the Company to payout \$13,500 (approx. \$131,028 in 2023 dollars). As a result, the Board had placed \$11,255 (approx. \$126,079 in 2023 dollars) into reserve to provision for this liability (YDC, 1973).

As Chair Monger stated in his annual report,

"I will not speak about the problems that rising costs impose on the Board. We are all too familiar with inflation through Press reports and the public opinions expressed by politicians and commercial interests. The river of inflation carries us along with it at an ever-increasing rate and so far, it has been beyond the skill of the government to build a lifeboat to save us from drowning in it" (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1973, p. 25).

Although the impact of inflation remained a concern, the Co-operative was able to report an increase in revenue of 23 per cent over the preceding year. This result was attributed to enhanced sales from the hardware and drapery departments. Although, groceries also showed increased sales revenue, it was largely a reflection of rising prices caused by the inflation. However, wages had also risen by 25.54 per cent, which meant that overall net profit was unlikely to be much better than the previous years (YDC, 1973).

Despite the generally positive outlook expressed at the 1973 AGM, the view in 1974 was more sombre. The farming community was experiencing financial difficulties, which impacted The Co-op York through reduced income. However, costs continued to rise as did taxation. In addition, the Co-operative was faced with the need to redeem a special bonus debenture issued in 1958. It was now the policy of the Co-operative to redeem bonus debentures every two years, however, the 1958 issue remained unpaid after 16 years! To achieve this, given the tight budgetary situation facing the Co-operative, it was decided by the Board to replace the 1958 issued debentures with bonus debentures paying an annual interest rate of 7½ per cent (like the dividend rate), with a redemption date of 30 June 1977 (YDC, 1974).

Other matters concerning the shareholders at the 1974 AGM were the operations of the Grocery Department and the Agency Department. In the case of the groceries, a Miss C. K. Whitfield asked, during “General Business”, whether the cost of packing and delivery had impacted the overall turnover of the Grocery Department. The Co-operative’s Manager Cyril Screaigh responded by explaining that although several customers had left because of these costs, in most cases they had returned to the Co-operative. Her question was followed by another from a Mr. A Wallace, who requested that the Manager investigate the performance of the Agency Department. According to Mr. Wallace many clients were not happy with the way the Agency Department was being run. He criticised the quality of the service provided, and described the Department as being both untidy and unclean in its layout and condition. In response, Manager Screaigh acknowledged some of the complaints had merit, but noted that the delivery of goods ordered was not always within the control of the Department. However, he stated that the matter would be investigated (YDC, 1974).

The financial situation facing The Co-op York in 1975 continued to be problematic. The grocery, Caltex fuel depot, and machinery spare parts departments had all made losses. The loss on the groceries was \$9,884, Caltex fuel was \$1,416, and spare parts \$794, a total of \$12,094 (approx. \$101,927 in 2023 dollars). The major concern relating to the Grocery Department was in relation to the self-service layout of the store. In the annual report of that year, the Chair Peter Monger suggested that if a resolution to the loss making could not be found, the decision might need to be made to close the self-service operation (YDC, 1975).

The financial losses within the Caltex fuel service were also a concern. It was noted that the fuel truck, used to deliver the fuel drums to customers was old and in need of replacement. However, to justify this expenditure, the Board would need to have more confidence in the future profit that the fuel supply service could provide. Yet, because the outlook for the fuel service to become profitable was not guaranteed, the Board decided to terminate the Caltex agency by 31 December 1975. The tight budgetary situation facing the Co-operative meant that only limited expenditure



on capital items was made in the form of enclosing the first-floor veranda. In addition, bonus debentures rather than store rebates were distributed (YDC, 1975).

During the following year all departments returned a profit, although the dividend paid was only 3 per cent to reflect the need for financial prudence. The Co-operative's auditors recommended that the Company's buildings be valued and depreciated, presumably to assist with taxation minimisation. However, due to the heritage nature of the buildings, it was believed to be difficult to provide any realistic assessments of their value, and the recommendation not progressed (YDC, 1975).

The Co-operative had also taken over the York Food Supply business, which had decided to cease trading. Although the acquisition had only involved a nominal sum of \$100 for the goodwill, it had proven too challenging to slow down the loss of grocery business to competitors in Northam and Midland. Despite these issues, The Co-op York had invested in enhancing the appearance of the Avon Terrace store and was able to repurpose the fuel truck from carting Caltex fuel drums, to carrying goods from the railway station. Further, the Co-operative's two aging utilities were replaced with new vehicles (YDC, 1976).

The Co-operative's financial situation improved in 1977, with a record trading profit of \$65,205 (approx. \$431,782 in 2023 dollars) achieved. This was despite a patchy trading year with a mild winter resulting in many people not buying new winter clothing. In addition, many wholesalers were selling winter clothing at heavily discounted prices (YDC, 1977). The following year was also profitable, with an increase of 35 per cent over the 1977 level. This enabled the Board to declare a dividend at a rate of 8 per cent. The fuel truck was also sold. In his 1978 annual report, Chair Peter Monger commented on the Co-operative's economic contribution to the York District as follows,

"It may not be out of place to mention our unique position in the community. We employ a permanent staff of 17 and our wages bill was \$123,225, which means that we do make a real contribution to the stability of the district in keeping families together and in creating job opportunities. Our staff turnover is low, and staff dissention practically doesn't exist" (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1978, p. 40).

In the final year of the decade, 1979, The Co-op York generated additional sales over the previous year of \$65, 599 (approx. \$368,575 in 2023 dollars). However, despite this impressive result, the net profit was down by \$17,526 to \$70,426 (approx. \$395,696 in 2023 dollars). The upgrading of the Avon Terrace store continued, with fresh painting, and paving at the entrance to the Agency Department. The plan was to seal the rear carpark of the Co-operative in the coming year. Overall, the 1970s was a financial rollercoaster but prudent management, and a decision to exit from unprofitable lines of business such as the Caltex fuel agency, enabled the Co-operative to end the decade on a positive note.

A TRENDY DENIM DUNGEON AND KLEENHEAT GAS COOKERS

Although The Co-op York terminated its Caltex fuel agency in 1975, it continued to be alert to other business opportunities with the potential to deliver value to the York District community, and the Co-operative's shareholders. This took the form of a 'denim dungeon' established in the



basement of the Avon Terrace store. It was the brainchild of the Co-operative's Manager Cyril Screaigh and may have been inspired by the denim dungeon that had opened in Perth at the Walsh's menswear store on the corner of Hay and William Streets in the early 1970s. The 1970s was an era of denim jeans and the "Hippy" look. The establishment of Jeans West, by entrepreneur Alister Norwood in Perth in 1972, helped to boost this fashion trend. At the AGM for 1975, Chair Peter Monger stated,

"In this year we have decided to 'get with it' and provide a denim dungeon for the trendy people. This is expected to prove a profitable venture if we receive the patronage that has been indicated" (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1975, p. 30).

The opening of the denim dungeon attracted interest from the local press, and on 25 March 1975 an article titled, "New Approach" was published in the Beverley Times. This described The Co-op York as making,

"... a bold and exciting departure from present-day shopping services with the opening of a new department designed to cater for the 'denim generation'" (Beverley Times, 1975b, p. 1).

It explained that the new clothing department was the initiative of the Manager Cyril Screaigh and targeted at attracting the younger shoppers seeking trendy new clothing. As the news article stated,

"Situated downstairs, in what was once a storeroom, the décor is in character with the historic links York has with the pioneer past, complete with stone walls and rough-hewn timber. Old style lanterns and draped chains and plough discs, together with wagon wheels and a glazed brick floor complete the picture. Stocked with the latest in denim 'in' gear, the new department should be an overnight sensation, and we might add, with many of their parents and younger siblings who also incline toward the easy wearing, good-looking qualities of denim outfits" (Beverley Times, 1975b, p. 1).

The description of the dungeon décor points to the Co-operative seeking to turn York's new heritage sensibilities to commercial advantage, and the article also declared that Mr Screaigh was planning to organise a grand opening for the new department in April of that year. In the 1976 annual report, Chair Peter Monger stated that the 'denim dungeon' venture had proven successful, attracting "a gratifying amount of extra business", which enabled the Drapery Department more space (YDC, 1976).

In addition to the denim dungeon, The Co-op York was also acting as an agent for the Kleenheat bottled gas business of Wesfarmers. This included being a local agent for gas cookers supplied by Kleenheat in a range of models. Figure 28 shows two advertisements from 1971 and 1975. These were Chef brand products. As the 1975 advertisement stated,

"What a nice surprise! Your Kleenheat dealer has the new 1975 Chef gas cookers at really attractive prices. The very latest models, with brand new features. Right now, is a surprisingly good time to change to modern gas cooking – at your Kleenheat dealers" (Beverley Times, 1975c, p. 4).



Figure 28: Advertising for Kleenheat Chef Gas Cookers 1971 and 1975

Gas cooker bargains!
 Top makes. Big discounts.
 *Free installation.
 *Normal installations FREE within 15 mile radius.

\$75 off famous Chef Regal.
 SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE \$285
\$210
 Even less with trade-in.
 * FREE INSTALLATION.
 Optional extras:
 • Black glass door
 • 5-hour timer
 • Continuous oven cleaner
 • Rotisserie and oven light

Save **\$30** on New World Conway.
 SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE \$160
\$150
 Even less with trade-in:
 • Attractive glass splash back
 • 1-hour timer
 • Solo grill
 • Large glass door
 • FREE INSTALLATION

See your local Kleenheat Agent now!
BEVERLEY BEVERLEY FARMERS CO-OPERATIVE LTD.
YORK YORK DISTRICT CO-OPERATIVE LTD. K. M. BULLOCK & CO.

GAS COOKER SURPRISE

SURPRISINGLY GOOD DEALS ON FAMOUS CHEF GAS COOKERS.

What a nice surprise! Your Kleenheat dealer has the new 1975 Chef gas cookers at really attractive prices. The very latest models, with brand-new features. Right now is a surprisingly good time to change to modern gas cooking — at your Kleenheat dealers.

SPECIAL SURPRISE (INCREDIBLE VALUE FOR MONEY)

CHEF 'PRESTIGE' DELUXE.
 Look at these features:
 • New type splashback
 • Spark ignition system to all burners
 • Digital Clock with one hour minute minder
 • Continuous clean oven
 • New type black glass door
 • Glass-away grill
 • Storage drawer

\$279
 * Freight extra in country areas

GET A 'SURPRISE' DEAL NOW AT YOUR LOCAL KLEENHEAT GAS DEALERS.
 BEVERLEY Beverley Farmers Co-op Ltd. BROOKTON Brookton Farmers Co-op Ltd. YORK York District Co-op Ltd.

\$220
 * Freight extra in country areas

\$356
 * Freight extra in country areas

Kleenheat Gas

Sources: Beverley Times (1971b; 1975c).

ASSESSING THE TRUE VALUE OF THE CO-OP YORK IN THE 1970S

The 1970s was also a period in which The Co-op York participated in the local agricultural shows. For example, in 1976 the Co-operative sponsored a prize for York Co-op Trophy for best wool clip at the Beverley Centennial Agricultural Show on 27-28 August (Beverley Times, 1976f). The retirement in June of 1976 of long-term York Co-op employee Artie Blakiston after 13 years of service was noted in the local media, along with the resignation from the Co-operative of Lyn McNamara, who was leaving to marry Rodney Daly of Quairading (Beverley Times, 1976g).

At the AGM held on 25 November 1977, Chair Peter Monger noted that the Co-operative had 285 shareholders, of whom 185 were active and would receive rebates. He also acknowledged that the Co-operative was celebrating its 60th Anniversary and in recognition he made the following statement,

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

York and District Co-operative Ltd. – Proudly serving the community since 1917



“The first directors were: Warren Marwick, Alex J. Monger, D. Barrett-Lennard, William T. Craig, Claude R. Clifton, Francis W. Fleay, Cameron J. Scott, Samuel R. Webb, Edward G. Whitfield and William O. Jager. A formidable body to direct a company with a paid-up capital of £843 15s (\$1,687.50). The first year’s profit was £515 7s 6d (\$1,030.75) 61% of paid-up capital, a remarkable result for a first year. The original directors deserve a place in the history of York for they created a business that has become an integral part of the community, and which paid out \$108,543 in wages last year” (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1977, p. 37).

This statement highlighted the overall success of The Co-op York to that date. With its economic and social contribution to the York District well-demonstrated. This took the form of a significant annual payroll to the local workforce, plus dividends, rebates and bonus debentures distributions to the local shareholders. In addition, the Co-operative provided a range of services at competitive prices, usually at a discounted rate (if the rebates are counted) of around 6 per cent. However, as Chair Monger explained in his annual report of 1979, the true value of the Co-operative was not just measured in financial benefits but in social terms.

As he explained,

“Another particular feature of buying from us is the personal relationship. We know you are not just someone who has just walked in off the street and this makes it so much easier and pleasanter to discuss purchases. All this means that the store is yours and it is your support that enables us to offer a wide range of goods and provide employment to the community” (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1979, p. 41).

Finally, as discussed in this section, the 1970s was the period in which the town and district of York was recognised as a “notable town” with significant heritage value. This ushered in the ability for York to develop itself as a tourist destination. However, for the owners of the heritage buildings, there were some significant long-term issues. As noted above, the heritage nature of The Co-op York’s buildings meant that their valuation was problematic, which limited the ability of the Co-operative to use asset depreciation to alleviate taxation costs. Despite this, the Board continued to invest in the upgrading of the Avon Terrace store, not only repairing the damage caused by the 1968 Meckering earthquake, but also enhancing the appearance of the store. Yet there remained some limitations. In his final annual report for the decade, Chair Peter Monger summed it up as follows,

“The massive construction of the main store building with its empty upper storey is admired as a monument to the faith our pioneers had in the future of York, but its maintenance presents problems. As a matter of interest, it is insured for \$200,000” (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1979, p. 41).

CHAPTER 9: RURAL CHANGE AND THE SERVICE ECONOMY, 1980-1989

The 1980s ushered in a major growth in mining operations, including a revival of gold mining in the WA Goldfields. However, inflation and unemployment, which had been rising during the 1970s, continued into the 1980s. Between 1970 and 1979 unemployment rose from 1.2 per cent to 4 per cent, yet it continued to rise until it reached 10 per cent in 1984. It declined gradually over the rest of the decade only to rise again with the onset of the 1990/91 recession (Wilson et al., 2004).

The 1980s was also a decade in which significant economic reform was undertaken. This took the form of deregulation of financial markets, with the floating of the Australian dollar in December 1983. This led to the Australian dollar falling from around US \$1.15 at the start of the decade, to around US \$0.49 by the end. This enhanced the competitiveness of Australian exports sold in US dollars, which proved beneficial to WA's mining, agriculture, fishing, and tourism industries (Wilson et al., 2004).

Another major trend in the 1980s was the widespread establishment of Landcare groups across the State, which led to significant reductions in land clearing. In fact, new land allocations for farming effectively ceased in the early 1980s, which led to a social change in the Wheatbelt, with many farmers selling their land, and the population declining while the size of the remaining farms increased. Salinity and soil erosion also became major problems during the decade, which was compounded by periods of drought. This also served to accelerate the departure of many farmers from the region. Inbound migration also changed, with a shift away from British and European migrants to people from South Africa, India, Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia (Menck, 2022).

The State's wine producing regions of Mount Barker and Margaret River became major premium wine and tourism destinations, replacing dairy farming as the main industries. In addition to wine, the export of live western rock lobster by the Geraldton Fishermen's Co-operative also boosted export earnings. Also expanding were industrial land estates in Canning Vale, Perth, and Kemerton, Bunbury. However, it was also a period of deindustrialisation with the closure of the Wundowie smelter in 1981, and the BHP blast furnace in Kwinana in 1982. The 1980s also saw the rise of craft beers from small micro-breweries, and the transformation of the area around the Perth Metropolitan Markets into the new Northbridge as a cosmopolitan dining region within Perth. Tourism, particularly from Asia, grew strongly, and the opening of the Burswood Casino in 1985 further enhanced Perth and WA's reputation as a tourist destination (Menck, 2022).

A further boost to tourism was the success of the WA based yacht Australia II in winning the America's Cup race in 1983. This was the first time a non-US yacht had won the race since 1870, and it enabled WA to host the triennial racing event at Fremantle in 1986/87. Although the race was lost to the American challenger, it helped to revitalise the port of Fremantle, and place WA firmly on the global map as a tourist and events destination (Menck, 2022). Overall, the 1980s in WA was a period of economic and social change, with the rise of many high-profile entrepreneurs, and the emergence of a State that had significantly diversified its economy from one dependent

on agricultural and mining exports, to one that included services such as tourism, events, and international education.

YORK DISTRICT IN THE 1980S

Just as the wider WA economy during the 1980s transitioned into a service economy focused on tourism and events, so too did the town and district of York. As discussed previously, the securing of heritage status in the 1970s was accompanied by a refocusing on tourism as key industry for future development. Among the activities that led to the creation of York's position as a tourist destination, was the restoration of many of its historic buildings.

An example of this restoration was the work undertaken on the Imperial Hotel, which is a majestic building constructed in 1886. It was severely damaged during the 1968 Meckering earthquake and had its two-storey bullnosed verandas removed. It was used as a second-class lodgers' accommodation for several years and then closed in 1981 on the grounds that it was unfit for human habitation. This led to the building becoming subject to vandalism and weather damage. However, in 1982 it was purchased and extensively renovated with a conference room and enlarged dining room added. Then in 1987, it was refitted with its two-storey verandas using wrought iron, to match the originals. This work was overseen by one of the owners, local builder David Ayob (Shire of York, 2019).

THE YORK MOTOR MUSEUM AND YORK FLYING 50

A further example is the York Motor Museum located at 116-122 Avon Terrace. The site of one of the first buildings in York, erected in 1853, the current building was built 1909 (see Figure 29). Used over the years as retail and professional services offices, and a Ford Motor dealership in the late 1940s, it was purchased in 1979 and converted into the York Motor Museum (Shire of York, 2019).

The founders of the York Motor Museum were entrepreneurs Peter Briggs and James Harwood who saw the potential for the museum to attract visitors. To enhance the publicity of the museum, they organised for an annual race, the "York Flying 50" to be held. This involved a race around the town for vintage and veteran racing and sports cars, and motorcycles, the first of which ran on Sunday, 21 September 1980. These races were held annually throughout the decade and continued until 1997 (Speedway and Road Race History, 2024) (see Figure 30).

Although the York Flying 50 event is no longer conducted, the York Motor Museum remains. It was recognised as one of Australia's best collections of, veteran, vintage and classic racing cars, with more than 150 vehicles housed within the facility. Amongst the collection was an 1894 Peugeot and a 1980 Williams FW107 racing car used by Australian Alan Jones to win the World Grand Prix Championship in that year (Aussie Towns, 2024).

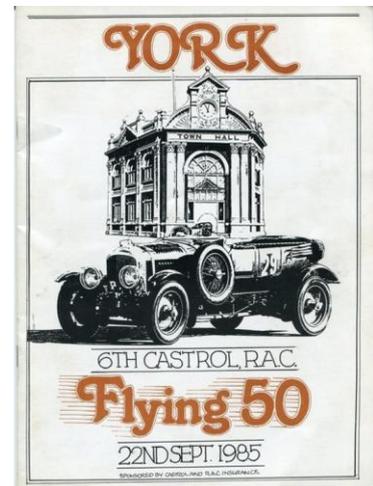
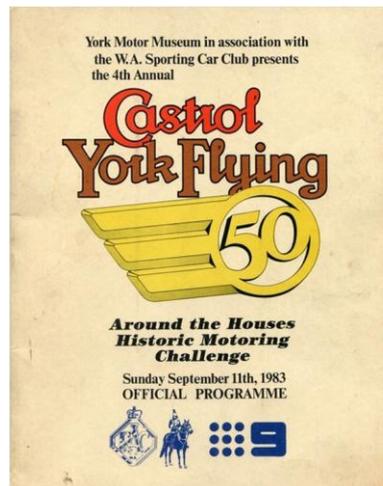
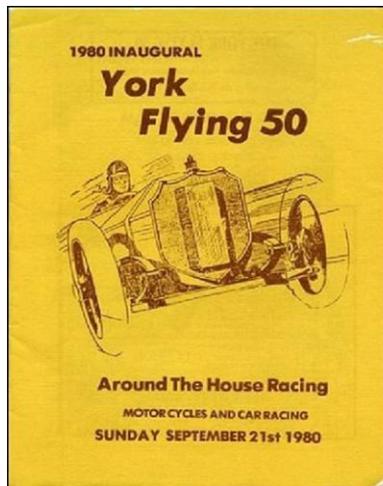


Figure 29: The York Motor Museum



Source: Shire of York (2019).

Figure 30: York Flying 50 Posters 1980, 1983 and 1985



Source: Speedway and Road Race History (2024).

THE HAUNTING OF THE OLD YORK HOSPITAL

Another noteworthy event from York in the 1980s was the mysterious case of a haunting that allegedly took place within the Old York Hospital in 1980. Located at 3 Brook Street, the building was constructed in 1896 at the height of the WA goldrush. It served as the main hospital for the Goldfields until suitable facilities could be built at Southern Cross, Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. It was decommissioned as a hospital following the construction of the new hospital in the 1960s and was acquired by the National Trust in 1976. The following year it became a Youth Community Recreation and National Fitness Council facility, and then a Youth Hostel in the 1980s (Shire of York, 2019).

Figure 31: Old York Hospital



Source: Shire of York (2019).

It was during this time that the haunting event reportedly took place. According to the legend, a former Matron, who had worked at the hospital during the 1920s reported that “something terrifying” was to be found in the upstairs rooms, and that nursing staff refused to go up there alone. There was also talk about wildlife not coming close to the building. Then, in 1980, when the building was being used as a Youth Hostel, a group of children from an athletic club, along with their adult supervisors stayed for a week in the former hospital. Allegedly, late on the first night, there was a sound of moaning coming from inside the walls. The source of the noise was never found, but it occurred several nights in a row. The following morning during breakfast, a large China jug reportedly levitated and smashed onto the floor in front of two women.

Then, directly after breakfast, two young girls from the group claimed to have been attacked in the hall by an unseen presence. They began screaming and one was reported to have been thrown or pushed into a glass panelled door, which broke and cut her arm, requiring her to be sent to hospital for stitches. The following day a boy apparently went into shock when he claimed to have seen a ghostly figure suddenly materialise with its hand on the broken door (Justus, 2013).

This event created a good deal of discussion at the time and has remained in the historical record. Whether or not these supernatural events ever happened remains contentious and is likely to depend on an individual's belief in such phenomena. However, it did add an interesting twist to the history of the Old York Hospital and supported York's growing reputation as a historic town.

THE YORK CO-OP IN THE 1980S

After the financial rollercoaster ride of the 1970s, The Co-op York entered the 1980s with a degree of confidence. In 1980 Chair Peter Monger, as part of his annual report to shareholders, stated that the Co-operative was employing 16 full-time and five part-time employees, which involved an annual wages expense of \$141,000 (approx. \$719,314 in 2023 dollars). In addition, he noted that the Co-operative supported many local clubs and organisations through donations and had a Father Christmas in the store during the Christmas period, handing out sweets to the children.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN THE 1980S

In the annual Chair's report for 1980, Peter Monger pointed to the continuing rising inflation, which was running at 10-11 per cent, as well as rising wages and other expenses, such as stock costs that had risen by \$28,000 (approx. \$142,842 in 2023 dollars) over the previous year. This, he warned, placed the Co-operative's profitability under pressure with delivering the same profit in real terms as 1979/80 would require an increase of 10 to 11 per cent in profit, which was going to be difficult. Despite these warnings, Chair Monger was able to report that the 1980 year had delivered a record profit. This enabled the Co-operative to pay shareholders a dividend of 10 per cent and cash rebates of 6 per cent rather than bonus debentures (YDC, 1980).

The 1981 year saw the Co-operative also make a profit for the year of \$84,727 (approx. \$394,780), which after taxation, allowed it to pay a dividend of 10 per cent on paid-up capital, plus cash rebates of 6 per cent. Nevertheless, inflation rates continued to rise, as did sales tax. Furthermore, there was a need to spend money on upgrading the main store, purchasing a new utility vehicle, and installing a new electrical switchboard. Despite this, the Co-operative continued to provide sponsorships for local clubs and community organisations, including the York 150th New Year celebrations, the York Fair, York Bowling Club, York Art & Crafts, and York Theatre Group. Some of these donations were funded by the Town & Country Building Society for whom The Co-op York was a local agent (YDC, 1981).

In 1982 The Co-op York reported a "fairly good year", with a net profit of \$92,280 (approx. \$386,140 in 2023 dollars). This allowed the payment of a 10 per cent dividend and 6 per cent rebates. However, the cashflow remained tight. Profit margins were held steady across all departments other than groceries, where the margin was reduced by 5 per cent to attract local customers. Yet, the Co-operative continued to offer delivery of goods to cars, and/or residences

at no additional cost. Faced with ongoing inflationary rises, and squeezed profit margins, the Board decided, as a cost saving initiative, to reduce trading hours by 1 hour per day, with 7 full-time employees moved onto a 30-hour week (YDC, 1982).

Table 7: York Co-op Financial Distributions 1980-1989

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves</i>
1980	Dividend paid at a rate of 10% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1980, and 6% rebates were also paid rather than via bonus debentures.
1981	Dividend paid at a rate of 10% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1981, and 6% rebates were also paid.
1982	Dividend paid at a rate of 10% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1982, and 6% rebates were also paid.
1983	Dividend paid at a rate of 10% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1983, and 6% rebates were also paid.
1984	Dividend paid at a rate of 10% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1984, and 6% rebates were also paid.
1985	Dividend paid at a rate of 10% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1985, and 3% rebates were also paid.
1986	No dividends or rebates were paid for the year.
1987	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1987, but no rebates were paid.
1988	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1988, but no rebates were paid.
1989	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1989, but no rebates were paid.

Sources: York Co-op Annual Reports, 1980 to 1989.

As shown in Table 7, dividends of 10 per cent and cash rebates of 3 and 6 per cent were again paid for the years 1983, 1984 and 1985. However, the financial situation facing The Co-op York remained tight. During 1983 lamb and sheep prices were depressed, and the significant expansion of the Midland Shopping Centre in northeastern metropolitan Perth, drew away many local customers. The distance from the centre of York to the Midland shopping centre is only 78 kilometres, which is about one hour's drive, making it attractive for York residents to travel to Midland for their weekly shopping, where they could expect a wider range of goods and services, including restaurants. The Co-operative was still able to report a net profit of \$83,524 (approx. \$317,616 in 2023 dollars). Nevertheless, Chair Monger implored the members at the 1983 AGM to give their "full support to their company" (YDC, 1983, p. 49).

The net profit for 1984 was reduced to \$76,005 (approx. \$278,013 in 2023 dollars), which was only possible due to the Co-operative's management being able to keep expenses under control (YDC, 1984). By 1985 the gross profit generated by the Co-operative had risen to \$84,345

(approx. \$289,052 in 2023 dollars). However, after taxation the net profit fell to \$48,668 (approx. \$166,786 in 2023 dollars), resulting in reduction in rebate payments to 3 per cent (YDC, 1985).

By 1986 the financial situation of The Co-op York was becoming further strained. The decline in profit led the Board to announce that it would not pay either dividends or rebates for the year. At the AGM held on 28 November that year, a Mr. L. T. Davies asked if the Board could consider the issuing of shares or bonus shares instead. However, the response was that the Board had looked at all possible options and had decided that no payments was the best decision (YDC, 1986).

The financial situation had improved sufficiently by 1987 that a dividend of 5 per cent from net profits was paid. However, no rebates were paid. Additionally, the Board opted not to be paid for their time attending the regular meetings. At the AGM held on 27 November, a shareholder, Mr. Ray Lawrence, asked why The Co-op York was being taxed as a normal company rather than as a Co-operative under the *Income Taxation Assessment Act* (Cth). He was advised by Mr. Roberts, the Auditor from Attwell & Co., that The Co-op York did not qualify because of the high number of non-shareholders who used the store. He added that, Wesfarmers was also not eligible for the tax concessions (YDC, 1987).

At the same AGM, a Mr. Fred Morrell expressed the view that the Agency Department of The Co-op York was the main business area that justified the establishment of the Company as a farmers' Co-operative. He proposed that the department should be separated from the Company and run as a separate Co-operative business, declaring that it was still a major part of the overall business, and focused on providing "service to farmers". In response, the Secretary explained that the Agency Department's fuel and chemicals business were very low-income earners. Furthermore, it took three full-time and two part-time employees within the department to deliver the required services. To run this operation separately would require an additional manager, and the added overhead costs would most likely make it unprofitable. However, he also stated that the Board might at least look at the proposal (YDC, 1987).

The years 1988 and 1989 saw the Co-operative paying a dividend of 5 per cent, but no rebates. Once again, the Directors chose not to be remunerated for their time (YDC, 1988; 1989). Overall, the 1980s was as financially challenging as the 1970s had been. Inflation, rising wages costs, increasing competition from competition in Midland, and the ongoing need to upgrade the heritage Avon Terrace store, meant that management of the Co-operative's finances was a major challenge for both the board and the management team.

NIGEL FLEAY REPLACES PETER MONGER AS CHAIR

At the AGM held on 31 October 1984, Peter Monger retired as Chair and was replaced by Nigel Fleay. In his final address to shareholders, Monger made the following statement,

"At this stage I will take the opportunity to state that it is my intention to retire from the Board on 31st December 1984. I extend my thanks to my co-directors, management and staff for their excellent work during the year and their help and cooperation. I would like to make special mention to Mr. Screaigh who's enthusiasm and hard work over long hours never seems to flag" (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1984, p. 50).



In his inaugural Chair's report the following year, Nigel Fleay paid homage to the role that Peter Monger had played for the Co-operative over a long and distinguished period. As he stated in his address,

"I wish to begin by referring to the retirement at the end of 1984, of Mr. Peter Monger after 39 years of dedicated service as a director, 36 of those as Chair of the board. Having served with him for many of those years, I have an appreciation of his work and dedication in the company's interest. The Company has progressed in those years, and it has been in the final period of his service that our present expansion plans were set in motion. I wish to move on behalf of the Directors and Shareholders, that a minute of appreciation for Mr Monger's services be recorded" (N. Fleay, Chair, YDC, 1985, p. 3).

THE CO-OPERATIVE IS ROBBED YET AGAIN

After the robberies that took place in the 1940s and 1970s, The Co-op York was again hit by thieves in late 1983 during which several burglaries took place. The total estimated loss was around \$4,500 (approx. \$17,112 in 2023 dollars). In response, the Co-operative installed a burglar alarm system at a cost of \$2,500 (approx. \$9,507 in 2023 dollars). This apparently led to the cessation of breaking and entering raids on the stores (YDC, 1983).

ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS TO THE AVON TERRACE STORE

The 1980 Annual Report outlined a range of improvements that had been undertaken on the Avon Terrace store. This involved painting the outside of the building and repairing the north side veranda. Ceiling fans were also installed in the Drapery and Grocery Departments, and the loading ramp was extended, and overhead cover purchased. New office equipment was also acquired (YDC, 1980).

However, although these improvements were welcome, Chair Monger also disclosed the 1980 plans that the Board had for the store. The first of these was the completion of the initial stage of installing air-conditioning, which was to be extended subject to the successful performance of the initial installation. A second initiative was the replacement of worn or damaged floor coverings in the store. Finally, the first-floor apartments were being dismantled to make the upper floor with the plan to reuse the area for retail space, to relieve pressure on the ground-floor area, which had become congested. The total cost of the work on the store undertaken over the previous year was \$17,730 (approx. \$90,445 in 2023 dollars). It was explained that these plans would take time to implement and that they were conditional on the Co-operative's financial position (YDC, 1980).

Further upgrades of the Avon Terrace store continued throughout the decade. In 1981 six evaporative air-conditioning units were installed in the main retail store, and two in the Agency Department at a cost of \$14,700 (approx. \$68,494 in 2023 dollars). In addition, the old, galvanised iron pipes throughout the store had to be replaced with copper ones, and sections of the roof replaced at a total cost of \$2,200 (approx. \$10,251 in 2023 dollars) (YDC, 1981).

The following year, the first-floor area was renovated to install a boardroom and general offices. This allowed for the freeing up of ground-floor space to expand the Drapery and install "teenage fashions" and additional fitting rooms. The upgraded Drapery Department floor was also recarpeted. Other improvements included upgrading the rear carpark, modernisation of the

vegetable display, re-roofing of the entire back section of the Hardware Department, and replacement of a wooden ramp with a concrete loading ramp (YDC, 1982).

During 1983, the Co-operative completed the resurfacing of the road and carpark access behind the Agency Department and the entrance off Lowe Street. The Grocery and Hardware Department areas were repainted, and new shelving installed, and new computerised cash registers were installed at the Grocery checkouts. The floorcovering in the Hardware store was replaced, as was the flooring in the main entrance. In addition, new steel fencing was erected, and two additional air-conditioners were installed in the upstairs offices (YDC, 1983).

That same year, The Co-op York became a member of the Foodland Grocery Advertising and Franchise Group, as well as Agents for Mckenzie's Dry Cleaning and Commonwealth Industrial Gases (CIG) in York (YDC, 1983). In 1984 the Co-operative added bread and milk to the grocery store product line. Additional stocks and services were added to the Hardware Department (YDC, 1984). In August 1985 the Co-operative issued a report to members outlining its plans for expansion. By the AGM held on 19 November that year, work on the extension of the main store had commenced, although there were delays due to a shortage of skilled tradespeople. The work was due for completion by early 1986 (YDC, 1985).

CHANGES TO THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

At a General Meeting of Shareholders held on 20 June 1989, amendments were made to The Co-op York's Articles of Association. These amendments were as follows,

"A. Amendments to the Articles of the Company:

- 1. That the authorised capital of the company be increased to \$500,000.*
- 2. That Article 4 of the company's articles be amended by increasing the maximum number of shares which may be allotted or to which a shareholder may be registered to \$5,000.*
- 3. That Article 64 of the company' articles be amended by inserting the following:*

"64. (iii) When declaring a dividend the company in general meeting may direct payment of such dividend wholly or in part by the distribution of specific assets or documents of title and in particular of paid-up shares, debentures, or debenture stock of this or any other company, or in any one or more of such ways and the directors shall give effect to such resolution and where any difficulty arises in regard to the distribution they may settle the same as they think expedient and in particular may issue fractional certificates and may fix the value for distribution of such specific assets or any part thereof and may determine that cash payments shall be made to any members upon the footing of the value so fixed in order to adjust the rights of all parties and may vest any such specific assets in trustees upon such trusts for the persons entitled to the dividend as may seem expedient to the directors" (YDC, 1989b, p. 9).

The first item was proposed by Chair Nigel Fleay and seconded by Fred Morrell. However, it was contested by Mr. J. Cooke who argued that it was not an appropriate time to be increasing the capital base of the Co-operative, and that members should be given more time to consider the future direction that the Company was taking. This counter motion was moved by Mr. Cooke and

seconded by Mr. T. Parton, but was voted against by the members, with the original proposal resubmitted with Chair Fleay moving, and Peter Monger seconding the motion. The motion was then passed. The remaining two motions were passed without debate (YDC, 1989b).

Another matter discussed at the General Meeting was a proposal by Chair Fleay, seconded by Mr. J. H. Springbett, for a sum of \$11, 628 (approx. \$29,203 in 2023 dollars) to be distributed as a dividend amongst the shareholders. This was passed without discussion (YDC, 1989b).

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE CO-OP YORK IN THE 1980S

William “Bill” Wallace, former Director and Chair of the Co-operative (see Figure 34) gave his recollections of The Co-op York in the 1980s. Born in York in 1959, Bill was raised on the family farm, which his parents had purchased in the 1940s. His father bought him 32 shares in the Co-operative as a wedding gift when he married in 1980.

He remembered that the Co-operative during those years operated out of the Avon Terrace main store a small supermarket, with drapery and haberdashery departments. From the adjacent building across Macartney Street, it operated a hardware store, a Wesfarmers agency and a Caltex fuel depot facing onto Avon Terrace. At the time, the hardware store wasn’t branded as part of the Home Hardware or Mitre 10 Hardware group, but did supply all the products that farmers needed.

This included fencing and sheet metal, as well as feedstock (e.g., wheat, oats, barley) and fertiliser. As he recalls,

“It wasn’t branded back in those days. It was like a general farm supplies store. We got all our fancy materials, virtually everything that you’d need. They had feedstock in there. At that time a lot of your feedstock was really only wheat, oats, barley, lupins – which were only just starting to come in then – and a bit of hay. There were no processed pellets, the only processed pellets were your dog food” (W. Wallace, Director and Chair YDC, Wallace, 2023).

His relationship with the Co-operative was enhanced by his ownership of shares. However, in Bill’s view the local Co-operative was the only place to shop. As he explained,

“I suppose from my point of view it was the one place to shop. You didn’t go out of town. Because you could pretty much get everything you needed out of that one store. When I started shearing, you could buy shearing combs from it. You could even buy ammunition for your rifles there at the hardware” (W. Wallace, Director and Chair YDC, Wallace, 2023).

ASSESSING THE VALUE OF THE CO-OP YORK IN THE 1980S

The 1980s was a decade of change in the State in many ways, boosting tourism and services as key industries, and shifting the focus on mining and energy projects involving a fly-in-fly-out (FIFO) workforce. York, which had been a critical part of the fledgling pioneer colony in the 1830s and 1840s, and a major centre in the goldrush era of the 1880s and 1890s, became bypassed because of the decision to make Northam a more significant administrative centre. York’s status as a heritage town and district, and the legacy of historic late nineteenth century buildings, provided a strong foundation for tourism and events.

The creation of the York Motor Museum and the York Flying 50 event by Peter Briggs and James Harwood, and the restoration of the Imperial Hotel by David Ayoub, demonstrated that York's potential as a tourist destination needed a creative flair, investment and hard work to realise. This opportunity was embraced by the likes of the York Society which took possession of the Sandalwood Yards in 1980 to avoid its demolition. Located at 179 Avon Terrace, these yards were part of the original Monger's Trading Post, which had been acquired by The Co-op York in 1917. In 1957 the Monger's Trading Post area was subdivided into four separate lots. The Co-operative sold Monger's Stores (Lot 2) and the Horse Stalls and Wagon Yard (Lot 4) in 1963 (Shire of York, 2019).

However, as the historic value of these sites became better understood during the 1970s, their preservation rose in importance. Following their acquisition by the York Society the Sandalwood Yards were restored, and converted into a gallery, museum, and research centre. Within this context The Co-op York continued to play a significant role within the economic and social fabric of the district. Its sponsorship of sporting clubs, community organisations, and other events continued, and its retail and agency services provided value to both member shareholders and the wider community. However, it could not remain complacent if it wanted to survive.

As shown in the discussion outlined above, The Co-op York weathered the impact of high inflation, fluctuating fortunes across the farming community, increasing competition from the upgrading of shopping and service providers in adjacent locations like Midland, and the need to continuously invest in the modernisation and maintenance of its heritage store on Avon Terrace. The fortunes of the Co-operative were inextricably entwined with those of the York District.

Over the preceding decades the Co-operative had transformed from an enterprise focused on the economic benefit of farmers, to one that focused increasingly on the economic and social benefit of the wider community. Despite the challenges it faced, the Co-operative provided substantial employment opportunities, and a range of goods and services for the community.

CHAPTER 10: DIGITAL REVOLUTION AND A CHANGING ECONOMY, 1990-1999

The decade of the 1990s commenced with a severe global recession that started in the United States and spread to most western countries during the period 1990/91. Its causes were quite complex but included the collapse of the Soviet Union (1989-1991) and the subsequent ending of the Cold War. In addition, the Gulf War of 1990-1991 caused by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, triggered a spike in the global oil price. These events coincided with a tightening of monetary policy by the US Federal Reserve seeking to bring down inflation, which led to the collapse of many Savings & Loans financial institutions across America (Walsh, 1993).

A major feature of the 1990/91 recession was its impact on unemployment, which continued to remain high even after the worst effects of the economic downturn had begun to ease. This reflected a structural change in the workforce affecting both blue- and white-collar employees (Gardner, 1994). Australia was impacted by the recession just as badly as the United States, and it led to rising unemployment, bankruptcies, and the collapse of many building societies, credit unions, and some state-owned banks (Connors, 1990).

Unemployment in Australia was very high in the years 1990-1993, peaking at around 11 per cent for adult workers, and 30 per cent for youth. However, by the middle of the decade the economy began to change and the rate of unemployment fell steadily, lasting for another 20 years, delivering high wages and unemployment rates of around 3 per cent (Menck, 2022).

The Australian Treasurer at the time Paul Keating described it as, "the Recession we had to have", which he viewed as a wake-up call for the Australian economy and which he used as a justification for economic reforms during the decade (Millmow, 2015). For the farming community in WA global wool prices fell significantly during the 1990s, which led to a refocusing of farmers away from wool production to grain, while many pastoralists shifted from sheep to cattle. There was also a rise in environmental protection of native forests, with political action against the logging and wood chipping of old growth forests. This led to the rise of tax incentivised Managed Investment Schemes and plantation tree farming on former farmland (Menck, 2022).

In addition, the mining sector, particularly iron ore in the Pilbara Region, continued to grow during the 1990s, which saw the expansion of the population in that area rise by 40 per cent over the course of the decade. However, the use of FIFO workers also became a feature. This increased the concentration of the population in the Perth metropolitan area at the expense of the regions where the mining operations were located. The 1990s also saw the expansion of the wine regions across the Southwest and the emergence of café strips in Perth and Fremantle, as well as some larger regional towns. The Dome Coffee franchise chain launched in Cottesloe in 1991, and liquor licences were extended to cafés and restaurants (Menck, 2022).

A further feature of the 1990s was the rise of digital technology. Banking services were now linked to electronic funds transfer point of sale (EFTPOS) or accessed via Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs). This reduced the number of regional bank branches across the State and moved the community towards the use of credit and debit (cash) cards rather than cheques or

cash payments. Although EFTPOS was initially launched in the United States in 1981, it did not arrive in Australia until 1984 when it was trialled by Woolworths and Westpac Bank at BP services stations. Over 90 per cent of all transactions in Australia during the 1980s were still being conducted in cash, but this had changed significantly by end of the 1990s (AFT, 2024). Online shopping in WA also began to emerge from the mid-1990s. This initially commenced as an alternative to “bricks and mortar” by the established retailers. However, as the decade progressed many businesses had become established as dedicated online retailers (Menck, 2022).

YORK DISTRICT IN THE 1990S

The York District during the 1990s continued to promote itself as a historic town that offered an attractive destination for visitors from both Australia and overseas. As shown in Figure 32, the road sign outside the town in 1993 proudly announced York as a historic town that welcomed the visitor.

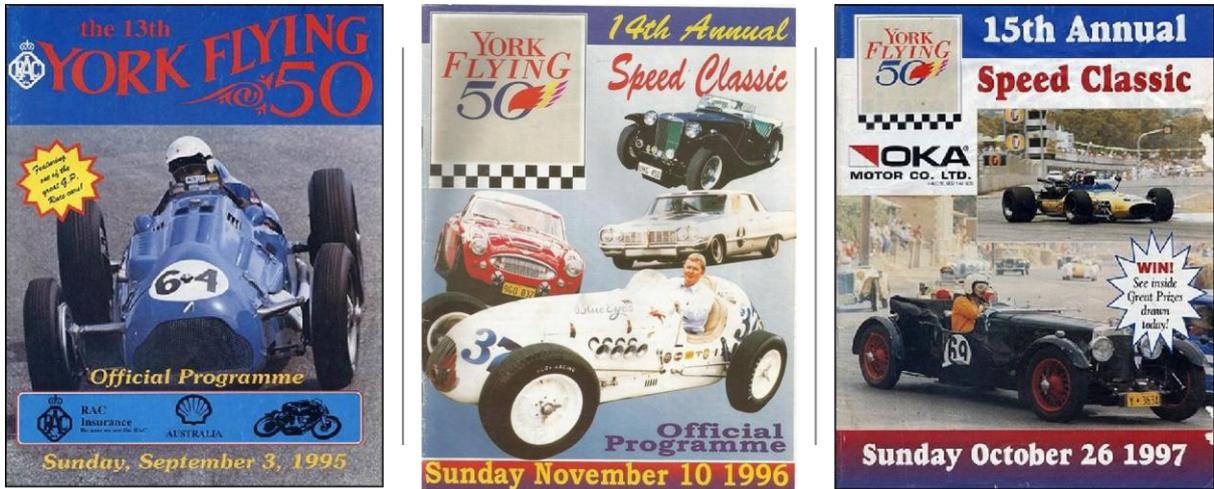
Figure 32: Sign to York February 1993



Source: State Library of Western Australia (1993).

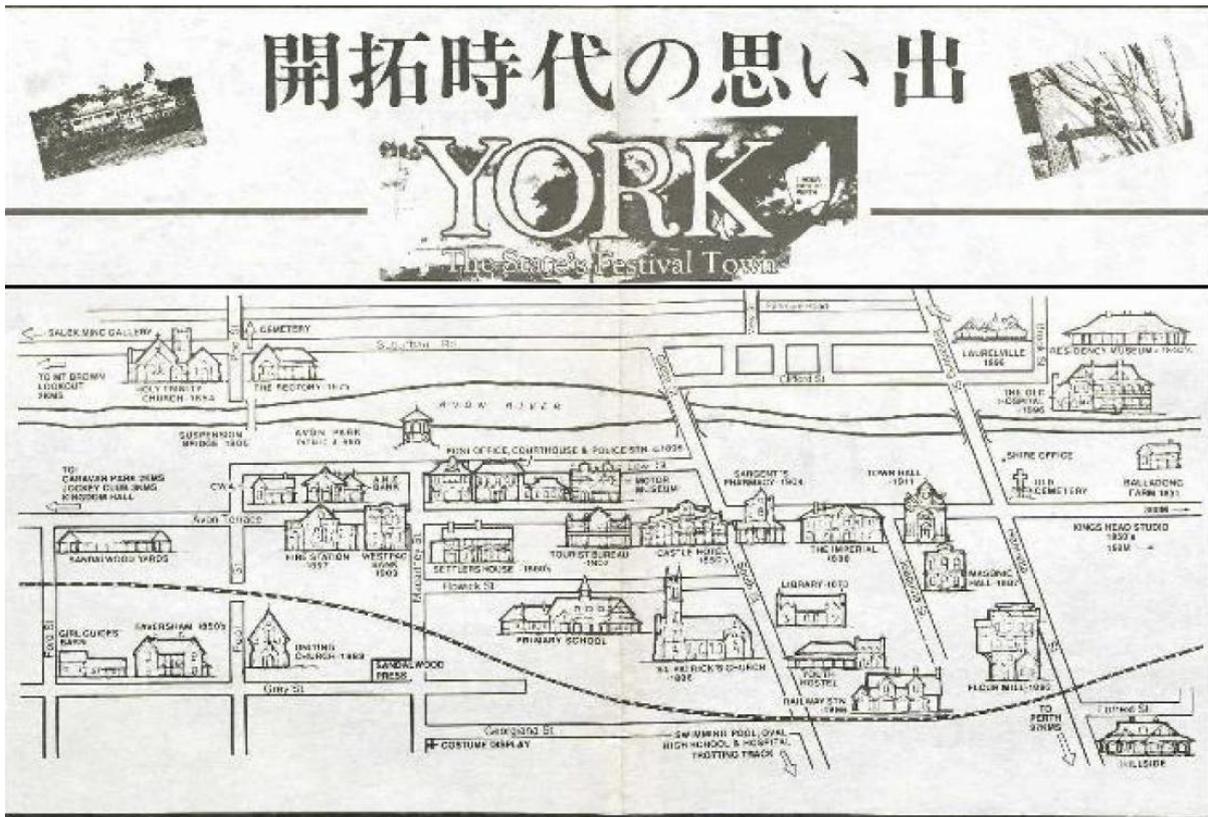
Apart from its historic significance, York continued to stage annual events that served to attract visitors. This included the York Flying 50 event that continued during the 1990s offering a day of excitement, and the opportunity to see unique vintage, veteran and classic racing and sports cars being driven around the streets of the town (see Figure 33).

Figure 33: York Flying 50 Posters 1995, 1996 and 1997



Source: Speedway and Road Race History (2024).

Figure 34: York town map published in the Japanese Perth Times 1990



Source: Japanese Perth Times (1990).

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

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A JAPANESE CONNECTION FOR YORK EVENTS

In addition to petrol fumed classic racing, the events schedule taking place in York during the decade also included the York Jazz Festival, which was held in September or October over a long weekend. This proved popular with Japanese tourists and was featured in the *Japanese Perth Times* in 1993 due to the participation of a seven-piece traditional jazz band from Kobe, Japan, known as “The Royal Flush”, which was returning to York for its third tour of WA. As the article stated,

“The Royal Flush will be attending the Jazz Festival for the third time. Playing a light and breezy Dixieland style, the band won many fans and admirers on their first visit and have now become firm favourites with regular festival goers. Making no apologies for their vocal style, their endless zest results in excellent communication with the audience” (Japanese Perth Times, 1993, p. 4).

In 1992, the same newspaper also promoted the York Jazz Festival, which had been running since 1982, as a must-see event for Japanese visitors. It was described as offering not only jazz music, but a street parade, markets, exhibitions, street stalls, antiques and pottery (Conti, 1992). The *Japanese Perth Times* also published a town map of York so that Japanese visitors could navigate around the town during their time in the district (see Figure 34).

THE YORK CO-OP IN THE 1990S

The decade of the 1990s continued to be tight financially for The Co-op York. It was also period of transition as the Co-operative had to implement computerised accounting systems and EFTPOS at the check-outs. With the decline in rural population, and attraction of alternative shopping centres in Northam and Midland, the Co-operative needed to review its business model.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN THE 1990S

As shown in Table 8, the payment of dividends was suspended for the years 1991, 1997 and 1999, and both rebates and remuneration for the Board of Directors was also cancelled. This financial stringency reflected the difficulties that the Co-operative faced in maintaining its profit margins.

The historical record from the Annual Reports suggests that the financial difficulties faced by the Co-operative were generating a substantial questioning of the firm’s business operations from the shareholders during the AGMs. This took the form of regular questions to the Chair about the financial statements, and wider discussions during the General Business session. These questions and comments increased from 1996.

At the 1999 AGM held on 26 November, there was a robust discussion during “General Business” about the financial performance of the Co-operative. It was noted by Mr. R. Lawrence that the total turnover for the year had been \$5.5 million (approx. \$10.8 million in 2023 dollars), but the net profit was only \$17,000 (approx. \$33,398 in 2023 dollars). This, he suggested, meant that the Co-operative was “sailing close to the wind” (YDC, 1999, p. 28).

A Mr. G. Douperouzel stated that the stock on hand figures shown in the Company’s financial statements suggest that its stock-turn rate was only 6 turn per annum when an accepted industry benchmark was 8 turns per annum. He suggested that this reflected that the Co-operative was

trying to satisfy too many people, rather than targeting high turnover volume stock. Mr. John Munckton added that he felt the Co-operative was not being managed to maximise its potential. In response, the Chair thanked them both for their comments but stated that the Co-op's management and staff had his support (YDC, 1999).

Table 8: York Co-op Financial Distributions 1990-1999

Year	Dividends, Rebates, Bonus Shares and Reserves
1990	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1990, but no rebates were paid and the Directors agreed not to take any remuneration for their time.
1991	No dividends or rebates were paid, and the Directors agreed not to take any remuneration for their time.
1992	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1992, but no rebates were paid and the Directors agreed not to take any remuneration for their time.
1993	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1993, but no rebates were paid and the Directors agreed not to take any remuneration for their time.
1994	Dividend paid at a rate of 10% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1994, but no rebates were paid and the Directors agreed not to take any remuneration for their time.
1995	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1995, but no rebates were paid and the Directors agreed not to take any remuneration for their time.
1996	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1996, but no rebates were paid and the Directors agreed not to take any remuneration for their time.
1997	No dividend, rebates or Directors' remuneration was paid.
1998	Dividend paid at a rate of 5% of paid-up-capital as of 30 th June 1998, but no rebates were paid and the Directors agreed not to take any remuneration for their time.
1999	No dividend, rebates or Directors' remuneration was paid.

Sources: York Co-op Annual Reports, 1990 to 1999.

During the "General Business" session an employee of the Co-operative, Ms. Kathy Emin stated that she had worked for the business for 25 years and felt that the Company was at last moving forward. She acknowledged that there had been a lot of problems with converting to computerised accounting. However, these issues were now under control, and that she looked forward to the next year. Nevertheless, there were comments about the Co-operative needing to get new management and decide what sort of management the Company needed (YDC, 1999). Mr. Douperouzel stated that,

"York only has a limited number of customers and one of the main challenges was trying to keep people in town to shop local. Quairading has started an email marketing program to show the local population that they are offering something different" (YDC, 1999, p. 28).

His comments were supported by Ms. Silvia Watts who added that the Advantage Supermarkets had developed a better way of selling and did not engage in price wars. She also asked what the Board had done to prepare for the threat of the Y2K problem anticipated for the start of the new century, and introduction of the goods and services tax (GST) (YDC, 1999).

ROBIN GENTLE REPLACES NIGEL FLEAY AS CHAIR

Chair Nigel Fleay announced his intention to retire from the position of Chair and from the board at the 22 November 1991 AGM. He was replaced as Chair by Robin Wavell Gentle who proposed, with members joining him, in a vote of thanks to Mr. Fleay, paying tribute to his 34 years of service to The Co-op York as a Director, and 7 years as Chair (YDC, 1991).

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE CO-OP YORK.

The 1990s was also a period of demographic change as many smaller farmers sold out and left the district. Former Director and Chair William “Bill” Wallace recalled this change and the impact that it had on The Co-op York. As he explained,

“The late 1980s and early 1990s was a period when a lot of the smaller farms were beginning to be sold off. A lot of the bigger farmers were beginning to buy up all these small farms and as a result the community did get smaller” (W. Wallace, Director and Chair YDC, Wallace, 2023).

Overall, Wallace considered the 1990s a watershed for the demographics of the York District and for the farming community generally. The average farm business shifted from mixed (e.g., wheat and sheep) operations to larger-scale grain production and cropping. This led to the loss of many agricultural workers such as shearers, and other farm hands, who left the district due to a lack of employment. He described this trend as follows,

“Yes, around about the 1990s, because at that stage I was shearing. Now when I first started shearing, we were flat out for probably seven months of the year. Yet as the farms got bigger, they tended to go to more cropping and less sheep, so the sheep started to taper off. So, it changed York from a mixed farming area, to more of a broadacre cropping area. This resulted in bigger machinery and fewer employees, people that lived in the community and supported the Co-op” (W. Wallace, Director and Chair YDC, Wallace, 2023).

According to Bill Wallace, faced with this demographic change and competition from adjacent towns such as Northam and Midland, The Co-op York had to keep improving its competitive offer. He noted that the Co-operative had added substantial supermarket additions to the rear of the Avon Terrace store during the mid-1980s, but there was always a threat that a competitor might open a supermarket in York.

He acknowledged that the profitability of the Co-operative during the 1990s was marginal, and that many people believed that this didn’t matter because it was not the aim of a Co-operative to do so. Instead, they would point to the jobs that were created in the Town and wider district, and the other benefits that flowed from the Company’s operations.



CHANGES TO ARTICLE OF ASSOCIATION

On 2 December 1994 at the AGM of the Co-operative a further change was made to the Company's Articles of Association. Once again, the focus was on the financial management issues of the firm, specifically the repurchase of shares from inactive shareholders. This reflected an increase in the number of inactive shareholders within the Company, due to the retirement of many farmers who had sold up and left the district.

As outlined in the annual report, the changes were as follows,

"ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION:

- 1. That existing Rule No. 5 be repealed.*
- 2. That a new Rule No. 5 be inserted. The new rule to read as follows:*

'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 exceed the limitation contained in the Act. Any shares purchased by the Company shall not be deemed to be cancelled but may be sold or disposed of by the Company in accordance with the provisions of the 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 re-purchase his/her shares at a price not exceeding the paid-up value of those shares. The shareholder shall forthwith surrender his/her share certificates in exchange for payment of the amount offered by the Company. If the shareholder does not surrender his/her 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/her last known address in full payment for the shares and if such shareholder having become bound as aforesaid makes default in transferring the shares, the Secretary of the Company shall sign the necessary instrument of transfer of the said shares as attorney for and on behalf of such shareholder and the paid instrument of transfer shall be registered in the register of shareholders.

An inactive shareholder is a shareholder in the Company who has not had dealings with the Company within the period of three (3) years immediately preceding the proposed purchase of that shareholder's shares in the Company.

Shares purchased by the Company from a member shareholder may be sold and disposed of by the Board at such a time or times at such price or prices and conditions as the Board shall determine. All dividends declared and payable in respect of such shares after purchase thereof but before the sale thereof by the Company shall be income of the Company" (YDC, 1994, p. 19).

ASSESSING THE VALUE OF THE CO-OP YORK IN THE 1990S

As outlined in the preceding sub-sections, the decade of the 1990s was challenging for the York District and in turn The Co-op York itself. Economic, technological, and demographic change took place during the decade that impacted the rural workforce and led to the loss of population. The consolidation of smaller farms into larger properties, with a shift from mixed farming to

broadacre grain farming and cropping also resulted in the decline of active member-shareholders.

As shown in the financial summary of Table 8, the tight financial situation facing the Co-operative meant that it could not always pay dividends, and did not even have the surplus funds to pay rebates or even a sitting fee for Directors. Despite these challenges, The Co-op York continued to deliver valuable services to the town and district community, while simultaneously providing employment opportunities, and assisting local sports and community organisations.

CHAPTER 11: URBAN EXPANSION AND THE FUTURE OF YORK, 2000-2009

Over the period from 2000 to 2009 the WA economy continued to transition. For example, in the wine growing regions of the State there was a growth in the size of the wineries, resulting in a few large commercial wineries dominating. However, there was still an opportunity for smaller niche boutique wineries, particularly within those areas that were major destinations for tourists. The deregulation of the dairy industry across Australia also led many smaller dairy farmers leaving their land, which saw the remaining producers growing larger. By 2016 many dairy farmers complained about low prices for their milk from wholesalers and retailers (Menck, 2022). However, unlike Victoria and NSW, WA's dairy industry did not have a strong co-operative culture and the failure of the Challenge Dairy Co-operative over the period 2000 to 2010 further weakened the farmers' bargaining power (Plunkett, Chaddad & Cook, 2014).

Elsewhere, the WA fishing industry, led by the Geraldton Fishermen's Co-operative, was successful in exporting its produce, particularly into Asia. By the 2000s, the State's fishing industry contributed around 60 per cent of all Australian lobster exports. The iron ore industry in the Pilbara Region, driven mainly by demand from China, continued to expand during the period. Other minerals such as lithium and nickel also rose in global demand resulting in WA becoming a leading international mining state for a wide range of minerals. By 2008 WA was the world's largest producer of nickel, and by 2014 the State became the world's largest iron ore producer. In addition, Greenbushes had emerged as the world's largest lithium mine by 2010. The nature of the workforce also changed, with a significant rise in the number of women employed in occupations traditionally dominated by men. Full-time employee status also declined to around 60 per cent, with more people working as self-employed contractors, or through labour hire businesses. Less than 20 per cent of the workforce was unionised (Menck, 2022).

During the period the WA economy enjoyed a steady growth in its economy and population. The export of LNG gas from the offshore oil & gas deposits, plus the exports of iron ore, nickel, bauxite, lithium, seafood, grain, wine and international education services, all contributed to this boom. The inflow of foreign investment created jobs and led to a major transformation of the Perth metropolitan area. Commercial and high-rise residential towers became a feature of the Perth CBD skyline, with Mandurah to the south and Karratha in the northwest, also having high rise residential buildings (Menck, 2022).

This resulted in a major property boom with housing prices rising steadily over the period. For many people, this made home ownership more challenging. It led to an expansion of the Perth metropolitan area primarily north and south along the Swan Coastal Plain. There was also a trend towards in-filling within the older established suburbs. This involved larger blocks being subdivided to create smaller blocks for redeveloped into multiple dwellings including medium density townhouses and villas. House prices and rents in Perth and other major centres doubled over the period 2006-2020, driven by the mining and energy resources boom, with most households requiring two incomes to service mortgage commitments (Menck, 2022).

YORK DISTRICT 2000 TO 2009

Within this statewide context, the Shire of York pursued its dual goals as a centre for the local farming community, and as a tourist destination. The Wheatbelt continued to transform as it had during the 1990s, with farms becoming larger and more productive, but with fewer farmers and rural workers. Total grain production increased from an average annual production of 8.2 million tonnes in the 1990s, to 13 million tonnes by 2020 (CBH, 1999; 2020).

This transition from smaller, often mixed farming operations to larger grain production and cropping farms, resulted in a significant decline in the rural population within the Wheatbelt. By 2016 the Wheatbelt had only 5 per cent of the State's population. Droughts during the early 2000s were accompanied by increasing concerns over global climate change and awareness of the need for environmental protection. By 2014 the agricultural sector in WA employed around 24,000 people, which was only half the number employed there during the 1950s (Menck, 2022).

The population of the Shire of York in 2006 was 3,116. By 2016 it had risen to 3,606. A study of the Shire's demographics published in 2018 forecast an increase to 4,260 by 2026 (Shire of York, 2018). However, by 2021 the total population had declined to 3,459 with a median age of 56, and an average of 2.2 people per household. This compared to a median age of 38 and 2.5 people per household across the State (ABS, 2021).

SHIRE OF YORK STRATEGIC COMMUNITY PLAN

In 2016 the Shire of York adopted a Strategic Community Plan aimed at guiding the Council's decision making and priority setting. It also focused on engagement with the State and other Local Governments, the WA Local Government Association (WALGA), and the business community in economic and social development. The Plan was reviewed and reissued in 2017-2018, with the aim of being examined every two years (Shire of York, 2018). It was reviewed again in 2021-2022 and became a key part of the Shire's integrated planning and reporting cycle (Shire of York, 2020).

In 2020 the Strategic Community Plan 2020-2030 had five goals, each with a series of priorities these were:

Goal 1: The Place to Be. *To be a close-knit community, full of life, in a welcoming and accessible place for all. Priorities:*

1.1 *Engage children and young people in their place and future.*

1.2 *Increase disability access and seniors' services to facilitate accessibility, diversity and inclusion.*

1.3 *Support and empower community-led development and self-sufficiency.*

1.4 *Enable housing diversity for all life stages.*

1.5 *Facilitate access to community facilities and services to enable wellbeing, diversity and inclusion.*



Goal 2: Driving the York Economy Forward. *To have a vibrant, diverse and prosperous local economy which creates local jobs, business opportunities and a positive image for the Shire. **Priorities:***

2.1 Support tourism and business development

2.2 Support diversification of the local economy.

Goal 3: A Leader in Sustainable Development. *To be a place which is renowned for the quality of its natural environment, the astounding beauty of the landscape, and the care taken by the community. **Priorities:***

3.1 Improve the ecology and enjoyment of the river and natural environment.

3.2 Define the Shire's climate and sustainability position and commitments.

Goal 4: Built for Lifestyle and Resilience. *To have a built environment which supports community, economy and the environment, respects the past and creates a resilient future. **Priorities:***

4.1 Upgrade roads and complete footpaths.

4.2 Enhance streetscapes with a focus on trees.

4.3 Revitalise Avon Terrace and restore heritage.

Goal 5: Strong Leadership and Governance. *Th have effective and responsive leadership and governance, where a sense of collective purpose and shared direction combine to work together. **Priorities:***

5.1 Continuous improvement of community engagement.

5.2 Continuous improvement of governance (Shire of York, 2020).

The planning process involved significant community engagement and following a minor review undertaken in 2023, it provided a snapshot of the economic and social structure of the Shire of York. Table 9 lists the key statistics representing social and economic characteristics. As shown, the demographic profile of the York district had not changed significantly, and the overall size of the population had grown modestly from 2006 to 2016, only to fall slightly by 2021. In its review of 2020, the Shire noted that its optimistic forecasts for population growth had been revised downwards suggesting only minor anticipated growth over the period to 2030 (Shire of York, 2020).

There had also been a number of lifestyle land developments that attracted people from Perth, who whilst residing in the York district on a part-time and casual basis, typically did not engage with The Co-op York. More often than not these landowners would be captured in official census data for their primary residence outside of the York district.



From an economic perspective, the Shire of York remained focused on the two key areas of tourism and agriculture. The agricultural sector remained the most important economic activity for the district from both an employment and income generation perspective. As Table 9 shows, the annual economic contribution from the agricultural (cropping and grazing) sector was worth \$42.2 million, primarily comprising wheat, plus other grains, and sheep production. Total land area under farming was 136,100 hectares (Shire of York, 2020).

Table 9: Shire of York Economic and Social Profile 2023¹

Social characteristics	<p>Total population (2021), 3,456 people</p> <p>Proportion of people aged over 55 years, 50%.</p> <p>Number of household dwellings, 1,869.</p> <p>Number of households with children, 956.</p> <p>Proportion of people who own their own home, 47.9%.</p> <p>Proportion of people who were born overseas, 11%.</p>
Economic characteristics	<p>Number of heritage-listed buildings, 34.</p> <p>Annual turnover of Agricultural sector, \$42.2 million.</p> <p>Annual tourist visitors to the Shire, 200,000.</p>

Sources: Shire of York (2023). ¹ All data from ABS 2021.

In addition to agriculture, the tourism industry also played a significant role in the district's economy. Annual tourism visitors exceeded 170,000, of which 79 per cent were day trippers from the Perth metropolitan area. As noted earlier, York's proximity to Perth (approx. 97 kms), made it an easy destination for such visitors. Key attractions for tourists were the 34 heritage-listed buildings located in the town and surrounding district, adventure, natural amenity, and festivals (Shire of York, 2020).

A community survey undertaken by the Shire Council, found that economic development, tourism and visitor information services were among the most important areas for strategic focus over the medium term (Shire of York, 2020). Looking out toward 2030, the York Strategic Community Plan highlighted the following desired outcomes:

- *“Strong tourism sector built around intra-State market, providing business and employment growth, with strong recognition of the York brand, as part of the Avon Valley regional brand.*
- *Diversified range of visitor experiences unique to York, including trails network.*
- *York has a strong reputation as a visitor destination where there is always something happening.*
- *Ballardong culture is embedded into the town's visitor experiences, in line with cultural protocols.*
- *New business and job opportunities are created”* (Shire of York, 2020, p. 27).

In addition, the Community Plan forecast the creation of an Economic Development Strategy to guide industry development and attraction. This was to include the construction of an industrial precinct, and new economic clusters focusing on specialist areas designed to attract new residents of working age. It is against this wider economic and social context that the development of The Co-op York over the period 2000-2024 can be examined. After all, the fortunes of the Co-operative had always been linked to the economic and social fortunes of the York District.

THE YORK CO-OP, 2000-2009

At the start of the new millennium The Co-op York saw a change of Chairperson, with Robin Gentle being replaced by Kenneth Charles Severson. The founding director of Severson Agriculture, Ken Severson moved to Dowerin in 1978 as a Farm Management Consultant where he ran his own single consultant practice. In 1985 he formed a partnership with Lisa Featherby, which saw the business grow to become one of the largest Agricultural Consultancy businesses in Australia. In 2010 the consultancy had 12 partners and 22 consultants, with specialist skills in agronomy, grain marketing, and farm management. In 2024 the consultancy had 40,000 hectares of farmland under management with an estimated value of \$20 million (Severson Agriculture, 2024).

At the AGM held on 1 December 2001, Ken Severson, as he accepted the role of Chair, formally acknowledged the retiring Chair Robin W. Gentle stating,

“Robin Gentle, is retiring after 28 years of service to the York & District Co-operative Ltd, including 10 years as the previous Chair. We thank Robin for his excellent contribution to the business throughout this time” (YDC, 2001).

During the same meeting, the new CEO Simon Glossop, was formally acknowledged. He had been appointed in 2000 and at the AGM for that year, was first recorded within the minutes. At that time, he had responded to a question as to whether any action had been taken in relation to issues (relating to financial management) raised by the shareholders at the 1999 AGM. Mr Glossop was able to reassure them that action had been taken, and that the Co-operative would be delivering results over coming years. Then, as CEO, he expressed faith in the Directors’ ability to represent the best interests of the shareholders (YDC, 2000).

At the 2001 AGM, Chair Severson referred to Simon Glossop stating,

“I should acknowledge the fact that our CEO, Simon Glossop, has completed his first full year as the lead manager of this business. Simon is extremely hard working and very demanding. Simon has overseen all the changes that have taken place in this very short period of time and along the way has taken the criticism and complaints of both staff and customers.

I believe that we will look back in a few years’ time and as shareholders and customers view the business as something to be proud of and something which is totally different to what it was a few years earlier. Much of the credit for this success will fall into the lap of Simon Glossop and on behalf of not only the Directors but also the shareholders I thank him for his efforts in helping us achieve these outcomes: (K. Severson, Chair, YDC, 2001).

The 2001 annual report declared a new direction for the Co-operative, with a vision for a profitable, successful, and sustainable business ready for the new millennium.

ORGANISATIONAL AND FINANCIAL RESTRUCTURING

In his inaugural report to shareholders at the AGM held on 7 December 2001, Chair Severson explained that the year 2001 had seen the Co-operative undergo a series of significant changes. These included the division of the business into three separate operational areas that comprised the Wesfarmers Landmark store, the Super Valu Supermarket, and the Mitre 10 Hardware store. The Supermarket was further separated into a butcher's shop, green grocery, gourmet delicatessen, and clothing store (YDC, 2001).

He described the changes as being necessary to increase the transparency of the financial performance of these separate areas, which had previously been "interwoven" with each other, thereby making it difficult to properly track their profitability. Furthermore, the separation would allow the different managers of these separate areas of operation greater accountability. The net benefit to the shareholders and customers would be more focused and specialised staff, who, supported by ongoing training, would deliver excellent service (YDC, 2001).

In addition, Chair Severson acknowledged that the Co-operative had not performed well from a financial position over previous years, and that the Company could not declare a profit for the year 2001. As a result, no dividend would be paid, nor would there be rebates or remuneration for the Directors. However, he explained that a new Chartered Accounting firm, William Buck (WA) Pty Ltd., had been appointed, and a financial consultant, David Day, had spent significant time setting up a new financial reporting system. This would enable more accurate stock control and timely reporting monthly rather than annually as had been the case (YDC, 2001).

It was also noted that the Co-operative had invested in further renovation of the Supermarket, with changes to the store layout, and the installation of new shelving. The Hardware store had also incorporated a new garden centre, which had proved attractive to many customers. However, Severson stated that there had been criticism of the external appearance of the Avon Terrace store housing the supermarket, butcher's shop, deli and clothing store. While he acknowledged the need for the store's appearance to be upgraded, he also made the point that the cost would be too prohibitive given the current financial situation (YDC, 2001).

As he stated in his Chair's address about the situation facing The Co-op York,

"Many people in York and even some shareholders view the York & District Co-operative Ltd as being lethargic, out of date and certainly not profitable. It is the Directors' strategic scope to make the York & District Co-operative Ltd the shopping venue of first choice and to do this we need to provide a pleasant shopping environment, friendly and helpful staff, and competitive pricing.

I wish to point out that we aren't a Coles or Woolworths Supermarket and we're certainly not a Bunnings Superstore, but we are and will continue to aspire to be a first-class Supermarket and an excellent Mitre 10 Hardware, which are open to the public seven days a week for their convenience. We also cater for our local farming community with a fully stocked Wesfarmers Landmark store" (K. Severson, Chair, YDC, 2001 p. 1).

The CEO's report to shareholders delivered by Simon Glossop elaborated further on these issues. He explained that the Company had successfully meet the challenges of introducing the Goods and Services Tax (GST) during the previous financial year. Furthermore, the new financial accounting system, designed by David Day, ushered in a more reliable and timely way to track the profitability of the various business units within the Co-operative. In addition, numerous new policies and procedures had been developed and implemented to enhance the operations in the stores.

Glossop also noted that the Co-operative had commenced Sunday trading in December 2000 in the Supermarket, which had been well received by customers. In January 2001, a new reward program for shoppers was also introduced within both the Super Valu and Mitre 10 stores. It was originally designed to reward only the member-shareholders. However, the program was ultimately offered to all customers, with additional benefits to shareholders. The program was described as having been well supported by the community in York. He also reported that an amount of \$14,000 had been budgeted for the coming financial year for sponsorship of local clubs, groups, and events within the York district (YDC, 2001).

In concluding his report, CEO Glossop stated that,

"The vision for the York & District Co-operative Ltd is to return an acceptable level of profit to our shareholders, while providing high levels of services to our local community. A hard feat when one considers the national companies pushing harder in their bid to dominate their given markets. We simply cannot and do not compete with these corporate companies, rather we rely on local support and the understanding that keeping business local, is vital to maintaining all parts of our community" (YDC, 2001, p. 7).

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, 2000-2009

As can be seen from the declarations of the Chair and CEO of The Co-op York in 2001, the financial performance of the Company was a primary area of concern for the Board, management and shareholders. However, the organisational and financial restructuring that was implemented in the period 2000 to 2001 began to slowly bring the Co-operative back into profitability. Table 10 provides a summary of the financial performance of The Co-op York over the period 2000-2009. Annual turnover grew steadily from around \$5.6 million in 2000 to just over \$14.5 million in 2009. However, and more importantly, both earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) and net profit after tax (NPAT) went from a significant loss to a respectable profit. As can be seen, this process took four years to accomplish. It is also worth noting that over the same period, assets exceeded liabilities, and the total equity within the Company grew from around \$1.9 million to over \$3.6 million.

In 2008 the Co-operative hired Accountants RSM Bird Cameron to undertake a review of its financial performance. This report noted that operating profitability had risen strongly between 2007 and 2008, with sales turnover also increasing significantly. Furthermore, the report observed that wages as a percentage of turnover had not changed over the previous four years. However, it also pointed to the need to reduce this percentage as one of the biggest challenges facing the Co-operative (RSM Bird Cameron, 2008).

Table 10: York Co-op Financial Performance 2000-2009

Year	Annual Turnover	EBIT ¹	NPAT ²	Total Assets	Total Liabilities	Total Equity
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2000	5,594,876	(73,804)	(73,804)	1,658,104	559,834	1,098,270
2001	6,015,955	(151,918)	(151,918)	2,219,125	1,113,749	1,105,376
2002	7,467,254	(147,293)	(147,293)	2,497,272	1,430,254	1,067,01
2003	8,102,856	(25,038)	(25,038)	2,484,566	1,430,158	1,054,480
2004	8,406,388	46,260	46,260	2,745,893	1,613,572	1,132,321
2005	8,771,324	60,541	60,541	3,614,115	1,917,498	1,696,617
2006	10,157,921	16,905	11,041	3,491,321	1,792,346	1,698,975
2007	12,028,981	20,433	16,193	3,840,452	22,986	1,739,739
2008	14,324,173	112,387	82,101	6,440,448	2,622,982	3,817,466
2009	14,509,812	50,460	25,478	6,115,099	2,469,401	3,645,698

¹ EBIT = Earnings before interest and tax. ²NPAT = Net profit after tax.

Sources: York Co-op Annual Reports, 2000 to 2009.

The financial performance review also observed that the working capital level² was the worst it had been in five years, and that the Current Ratio³ had declined due to the Co-operative's need to restructure its debt, and that it was carrying more stock than it might have. It cautioned the need to watch both profitability and capital expenditure carefully. On the positive side, the debt-to-equity ratio had improved, primarily due to a revaluation of the real estate values of properties owned by the Co-operative. Also, the EBIT had significantly improved. Nevertheless, wages expenses were a concern. The report observed that a one per cent decrease in wages as a percentage of sales would translate into an increase in net profit of more than \$140,000. Overall, the gross profit margin (gross profit ÷ sales x 100) had remained at an average of 20.8 per cent over the period 2004-2008. However, wages, as a percentage of sales had remained at an average of 13.1 per cent. The review by RSM Bird Cameron, and the financial metrics that it contained, provided a sound foundation for the Co-operative to rebuild its profitability.

² Working Capital refers to cash and other liquid assets that can be available to pay creditors and maintain operations.

³ Current Ratio refers to the firm's ability to pay its short-term debts with short-term assets.

Dividends were not paid during the years 2000 to 2004. However, from 2005 to 2009 dividends were declared. These comprised \$16,067 in 2005, \$17,335 in 2006, \$17,763 in 2007, and \$9,030 in 2008 and 2009 (YDC, 2005-2009). Rebates were no longer paid to loyal members, although the provision of the store loyalty program became a surrogate.

Bill Wallace joined the Board in 2006 and was concerned that the Co-operative had not been able to consistently generate profits. As he explained,

“How can you survive when you look at the end of financial year and you’ve made a loss for the year. So, we would break it down and then say, ‘well we didn’t actually make a profit, but we’ve created this amount of income into the community, we’ve employed X amount of staff, and they’ve all gained employment’. So, when you took it into that perspective, and if you could still afford to pay your bills, you were comfortable. However, we realised that if we wanted to develop the Co-operative how were we going to do it if we weren’t making any money?” (W. Wallace, Director and Chair YDC, Wallace, 2023).

According to Wallace, the general view among the Board of Directors was that as a Co-operative it wasn’t necessary for the Company to make a profit. This didn’t sit well with Bill Wallace, who felt that businesses should at least be profitable. However, it was how some of his fellow Directors seemed to view things.

CHANGES TO THE STORES AND BRANDING

In 2002 The Co-op York employed 16 full-time and 16 permanent part-time, and 18 casual staff. This made a substantial contribution to the employment of the community in the York district. It also provided annual community sponsorships totalling \$12,000 distributed to thirty-three local community groups, clubs, and festivals (YDC, 2002).

The restructuring that had taken place in 2000-2001 had already begun to show results. This was shown in a summary of the operations of the three main businesses operated by the Co-operative that was included in the Annual Report of 2002. These are discussed below:

Supa Value Supermarket (138 Avon Terrace, York). The inclusion of a Delicatessen enabled the store to offer more specialist products and range of both hot and cold foods that it had not been able to supply. The relocation of the Butcher’s shop (Meat Department) also provided new cool rooms and preparation areas that met new health guidelines. A new display cabinet for meat produce, with room to display pre-prepared meals was also installed. The Grocery store (Fruit and Vegetable Department) was also relocated and fitted with new refrigeration and display cabinets (YDC, 2002).

Furthermore, new shelving, customer access, and point-of-purchase checkouts all led to significant increases in customer visitations. The overall financial performance of the Supermarket was improved by a more rigorous analysis of wages and other costs. The Co-operative was also negotiating with Foodland Association Ltd. (the franchisor), to rebrand the Supermarket as a Dawson’s franchise, which offered a wide range of products, better pricing, and enhanced advertising (YDC, 2002).



Wesfarmers Landmark Agricultural Agency (50 Avon Terrace, York). The Manager Phil Northern and his staff Mark Jury, Paul Northern, and Kathy Emin were praised for their work in upgrading the services and products. A Kleenheat Gas House franchise had been secured that was able to provide home delivery of LPG gas to customers. In addition, the agency provided both financial and insurance services and was planning to offer a Real Estate service on behalf of Wesfarmers. Other services provided were Agronomy, and a fertiliser agency for both CSBP and Summit. At that time, there was a plan for the agency to be relocated into a larger and better equipped premise (YDC, 2002).

Hardware Store (142 Avon Terrace, York). The Mitre 10 hardware store was rebranded as a Home Hardware Store. After 13 years of working under a Mitre 10 franchise, the decision was made to shift over to the Home Hardware franchise group. This was motivated by the wider range of products available via the Home Hardware group banner. In addition, the hardware store building was upgraded in 2003 to provide more internal floor space, and to refresh the outside of the store (YDC, 2002).

CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

In 2002 Simon Glossop resigned as CEO. He was replaced from 20 January 2003 by John Partridge who took over the role at a very challenging time for the Co-operative. Partridge had experience in retailing and was recruited for the role by a professional recruitment agent who personally interviewed the applicants and recommended the best candidates for the role. As shown in Table 10, the profitability of the Company was not in good shape. At the AGM held on 6 February 2004, questions were raised about the financial situation by shareholder John Munckton, who asked Chair Ken Severson whether any legal action against the Company's accountants over the poor management of the accounts would be considered. In response, Chair Severson stated that he too had experienced much grief and disappointment at the state of financial management but explained that the matter was best left to be discussed at the Board level (YDC, 2004).

During the same AGM, John Partridge was praised by shareholder Chris Winton, who stated that the meeting should formally note his personal compliments to CEO Partridge for his active role in supporting community events such as the Bushfire Appeal. It seems that John Partridge was by that time actively engaged in implementing plans for the further development of the stores and related business operations of the Co-operative. This was evidenced in his speech to the AGM where he outlined the improvements and plans that the Board had agreed to pursue. In addition, he responded to a question from a Mr. P. Pemberton about the impact of a Landmark agricultural services business opening in York in its own right. CEO Partridge stated that he felt the support the Co-operative enjoyed from its existing clients, and the changes being made to the Rural Services Agency's buying structures, would enable the Company to remain "more than competitive" (YDC, 2004).

In 2008 Ken Severson retired as Chair and was replaced by Christopher "Chris" Joyce, a local York farmer from Maybelling. At the AGM of 2007 Severson stated in his annual report,

"This AGM will conclude my sixth year as Chair of the Co-op Board of Directors. Our new succession plan encourages Chair to complete a five-year term. It is not my intention to renominate for this role in 2007/2008" (K. Severson, Chair, YDC, 2007, p. 5).



In summarising the year, Severson stated in his annual report,

“It has been a busy and active year for the Directors of the York Co-op. The business has continued to trade profitably, but the Directors of the Co-operative are keen to build on the successes that we have had in the past and will look forward to bigger and better challenges as we go forward into the next financial year. I wish to thank, on behalf of the shareholders, the CEO and staff for their sterling efforts throughout the year. I would also like to thank my fellow directors for their support throughout the year and more particularly over the last 6 years in my role as Chair. I believe the Board has worked well together as a team with the key focus of developing a business which is customer focused, profitable to its shareholders and viewed by the people of York as their first choice of a shopping experience. It is my belief that our new strategic plan will provide our shareholders and the people of York with a bigger and better retail experience into the future. The Directors look forward to your continued patronage both as shareholders and customers” (K. Severson, Chair, YDC, 2007, p. 5).

The following year John Partridge retired as CEO and was replaced by Glen Scott (see Figure 34). Born and raised in WA, Glen had previous experience working within the corporate services areas of Bell Group, Woolworths and Bunnings, and then as an owner-manager of a Hardware store in Ravensthorpe where BHP had a mining operation. The decision by BHP to close its operation in Ravensthorpe led Glen to wind up his business and relocate back to Perth. At the same time, the position of CEO at The Co-op York was advertised and so he applied. His experience was a good fit for what the Co-operative was seeking and so he was appointed (Scott, 2023).

Glen Scott’s recollections of how he found the Co-operative, particularly in the light of his work experience with large corporations such as Woolworths and Bunnings, was that there was a lack of systems and procedures in place. As he described it,

“I found a business that from my corporate background was run down, which didn’t have any policies or procedures, I felt that work health and safety was short. There were lots of things that from a corporate view when you overlaid it were missing. So, I concentrated on that in my first year. Also, at that stage, I had never reported to a Board. That was interesting, and we had eight Directors at that time. Also, they had a mantra that they wanted to grow the businesses and be more efficient” (G. Scott, CEO York Co-op, Scott, 2023).

Glen Scott explained that the Chair, Chris Joyce, provided him with an invaluable induction process that educated him into the nature and purpose of the Co-operative, and how it worked in comparison to the Corporations where he had previously been employed. Glen admitted that prior to joining The Co-op York he had no idea about Co-operatives as a business. He found the transition from a Corporate to a Co-operative relatively challenging.

As he explained,

“Firstly, reporting to a Board, which at that time was eight Directors, most of whom were farmers, was interesting. There was also less focus on the importance of profit than in a Corporate” (G. Scott, CEO York Co-op, Scott, 2023).

However, he did find a fit between his own sales management expertise and the needs of The Co-op York. This was related to his focus on building trust and a sense of mutual benefit when

engaged in sales management activities. This also worked well within the Co-operative business model.

Although Glen Scott found the Co-operative in need of greater formalisation of business and governance systems, the realisation of the need for these changes was already in the minds of the Company's Directors. For example, over the period 2006-2008 the Co-operative had issued redeemable preference shares to help finance the acquisition of new facilities. This coincided in 2007 with the launch of a strategic plan designed to enhance the stores, which was accompanied by training for the Board. Then, in 2008, the year prior to Scott's appointment, The Co-op York had had a "shake up".

NEW SHAREHOLDERS AND FUNDRAISING FOR THE YORK RURAL TRADING BUILDING

During 2006-2007 the Co-operative received applications for the purchase of 2,600 shares. This signalled a continued support for the Co-operative within the York community. In addition, the Company raised \$281,000 for the construction of a York Rural Trading store located at 46 Avon Terrace. This capital raising comprised the issue of a parcel of redeemable preference shares to the existing shareholders. At the AGM of 2007 the Chair Ken Severson thanked the shareholders for their willingness to invest in the Co-operative and raise the capital required for the new building (see Figure 35).

THE 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN

At the 2007 AGM Chair Ken Severson announced the completion of both a Strategic Plan and the Heritage Conservation Management Plan. As stated by Chair Severson in his report to the shareholders,

"The Directors of the Co-op have completed a strategic plan which will guide the business over the next 5 to 10 years in new and better directions. This will look at the next major projects which the Co-operative will undertake to ensure that we continue to provide excellent retail service to our shareholders in the York community. Our plan was assessed by external consultant Ms Wendy Newman prior to its adoption by the Board in April 2007" (K. Severson, Chair, YDC, 2007, p. 4).

Part of this planning included the refurbishment of the Supermarket, a process that had commenced in April 2006. There was also a focus on the upgrading of the Hardware store with a review of that facility scheduled for 2007-2008. The Board was also provided with a full day's training in governance by Michael Horibin from the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD).

THREATS OF NEW MARKET ENTRANTS TRIGGERS A SHAKE UP IN THE CO-OP YORK

According to Bill Wallace, the Co-operative had to continuously keep improving its offer to the community, which cost substantial amounts in the refitting of the supermarket, hardware and the agricultural agency. For example, the Co-operative had to take out a loan for over \$1 million to replace the freezer units in the Supermarket. At the time there was concern over the entry of a competitor supermarket in York, an issue that continued until the end of the decade and was still around in the decade that followed (Wallace, 2023).

Figure 35: The York Rural Trading building 46 Avon Terrace



Source: Mazzarol (2023).

Bill Wallace described when, in 2008, the CEO John Partridge brought two Property Developers to a Board meeting where they outlined a plan for the future of The Co-op York. As he explained,

“He brought this couple of Developers in who wanted us to basically sell everything to them and lease back the premises to run our businesses in. We were dumbfounded. Our leases were going to be around \$20 to \$30 thousand per month. Yet we looked at our books and said, ‘we’re not making that now so how could we possibly go into an arrangement like that and continue to survive?’ So, we squashed it pretty quickly” (W. Wallace, Director and Chair YDC, Wallace, 2023).

He noted that when the Developers’ proposal was rejected, they became threatening and said that if the Co-operative didn’t accept their deal, they would develop another retail site they had within the town and set up another supermarket. According to Wallace, this incident, served as a “shake-up” for the Co-operative. As he explained,

“In some ways I think it was good because it was a bit of a shake-up. There was complacency within the business. It made us think, ‘if we don’t improve our offer here a brand spanking new supermarket is going to come into town, and everyone will just flock to it’ (W. Wallace, Director and Chair YDC, Wallace, 2023).

This led the Board to decide to upgrade the stores and ensure that the shop fit-out and customer experience was best practice. The cost of these improvements became a necessary expenditure if the Co-operative was going to survive within a competitive market environment.



In Bill Wallace's view, the "shake-up" also triggered a more business-like focus within the Board. The cost of continuously upgrading the Co-operative's stores required that the Company had the ability to finance these improvements. As he explained,

"Well, the Board had to make more aggressive decisions for the benefit of the business. Not, 'Oh we'll see how it goes this year'. The pressure was on, 'Well, if we're going to borrow a million dollars, we are going to have to be able to pay it back. So, how are we going to be able to pay it back if we're not making any profit?" (W. Wallace, Director and Chair YDC, Wallace, 2023).

As this mindset began to develop, Wallace suggested that the focus began to shift on how to better understand the operation of the Co-operative's business model and operations to enable it to sustainably generate profits. This recognition that the Co-operative needed to start making a profit led to the Board hiring RSM Bird Cameron to undertake the examination of the Company's finances and to provide financial benchmarks for future management and control purposes. This provided both the Management and the Board with valuable tools to assist in boosting the profit of the Co-operative.

Glen Scott recalls the issue, as it coincided with his commencement as CEO, as he explained,

"At that point they had had Developers in working with the prior CEO about building a new premise. He, John Partridge, had formed an alliance with the Developers and the Shire and they were pushing for selling off our hardware store and rebuilding a supermarket on the site. We went through the process of asking why would we do that rather than doing it ourselves and not having to give it all away? So, we decided not to go down the development path. Which the Board was happy about because they weren't comfortable about what was going on" (G. Scott, CEO YDC, Scott, 2023).

According to CEO Scott, after the decision not to progress with the property Developers, the Board approved for the Co-operative to go to the bank and secure a loan of \$1 million to refurbish the stores so that they could become profitable and enable the loan to be repaid. He explained this as follows,

"We went to the bank and got funds to refurbish the IGA store, which had become really run down. We re-did the whole lot. The loan was close enough to a million dollars. We refurbished the entire interior. We needed to make the stores profitable again, but also keep all the shareholders and customers onside. This involved a lot of walking on the floor. I would be down there daily, walking around and talking. So, when shareholders came in and asked questions, we could answer them on the spot. Funnily enough, as we were refurbishing and changing things our sales actually grew" (G. Scott, CEO YDC, Scott, 2023).

This transition process took place during 2011 to 2012. In Glen Scott's view, the boost in sales was not just a result of the Co-operative enhancing the layout and appearance of the supermarket and other stores. It was also due to the daily presence of himself as the CEO, walking around and talking to both shareholders and customers, explaining what was happening, and the long-term outlook for The Co-op York that was planned. He felt that this made the shareholders and customers feel part of the Co-operative's purpose to deliver benefit to the community of York.



PRESERVING HERITAGE, THE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

In 2005 The Co-op York commissioned a review of the heritage value of the Avon Terrace store and the creation of a conservation management plan. The work was undertaken by Laura Grey, a Heritage and Conservation Consultant, and Historian Irene Sauman. It was part funded by a grant from the WA Heritage Council. The final report was published in 2007 and contained a summary history of the building and the Co-operative, a review of the building's heritage significance, and recommendation for its future conservation (Grey & Sauman, 2007).

Bill Wallace described the decision making that took place on the Board in relation to the Heritage listing of the Avon Terrace store,

"We thought at the time that we'd be able to obtain some grants to help re-do the building. Yet, in hindsight, it created that many hoops to jump through that I don't think it was such a smart move to have done it" (W. Wallace, Director and Chair YDC, Wallace, 2023).

As Wallace explained, the Board did understand that the original Edwards' Store was very old and therefore expensive in its maintenance costs. Unfortunately, the hope that government funding might be available to offset this cost did not materialise. This left the Co-operative with the full cost of preserving the building's heritage value.

CHAPTER 12: THE YORK CO-OP, 2010-2024

The period 2010 to 2024 was one of steady return to profitability for The Co-op York combined with a steady improvement in operational efficiency, the acquisition of an additional retail site upon which a new hardware store was constructed, and the formulation of strategies for the redevelopment of the existing sites containing the Home Hardware store and IGA Supermarket. It was also a period in which the Co-operative celebrated its Centenary, and the York District was subject to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its regional lockdowns.

THE YORK CO-OP, 2010-2021

The period from 2010 to 2021 was both a continuation of the financial challenges that The Co-op York had experienced during the previous decade, and an opportunity for rejuvenation. Among the key issues that it faced during this period were the need to manage tight financial conditions, restructure the management team, undertake a rebranding, facelift the buildings, and operate through the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a period of change and of rejuvenation. While the annual turnover remained steady, the profitability fluctuated making the payment of dividends problematic and leading to their suspension. However, the Co-operative celebrated its Centenary in 2017 and saw a resurgence in patronage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DEVELOPING A MEMBER VALUE PROPOSITION

According to CEO Glen Scott, the “shake-up” of the Co-operative’s Board associated with the bid by the Developers to acquire and lease-back the stores, plus the experience of the refurbishment and its related engagement with the shareholders and customers, helped to create a more focused member value proposition (MVP) for The Co-op York. As he explained,

“We were heading down that path pretty well. We were focused on improving the business, but also the offer to the customers, and we were talking to the customers and shareholders, which helped us communicate our value to them, and this boosted sales” (G. Scott, CEO YDC, Scott, 2023).

He also felt the Co-operative had drifted away from this in recent years and that there was a need to revisit the Co-operative’s MVP and communicate it clearly to the customers and shareholders. This he said, remained a “part of the robust discussions at Board level” that were taking place. Glen stated that many new Directors who had joined the Co-operative Board were businesspeople who focused on the importance of increased sales and profits.

In Glen Scott’s view, while financial profitability was essential, it was also important for The Co-op York to focus on the benefits it offered to the local community, and to communicate with the shareholders a “full picture” of both the economic and social contributions of the Co-operative. As he explained,

“For instance, every year we do the financial report, and I put in the fact that we used a local freight contractor, and local fuel suppliers, that 99 per cent of the people that we employ are from the Avon Valley, and that this results in a significant financial return of around \$3 million back into the community” (G. Scott, CEO YDC, Scott, 2023).

According to Glen Scott, it would be desirable for the Co-operative to formalise this MVP and put it on signage within the stores, while communicating this contribution widely to both customers and shareholders. This, he felt, would translate into enhanced patronage of the stores, with “bigger baskets” and increased member-shareholders. However, he expressed the view that it was also very important for the Board to all be aligned with respect to the vision they had for the Company’s future.

CHANGES OF MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

In 2014 Chris Joyce retired as Chair and was replaced by William “Bill” Wallace. In his first AGM Chair’s report in 2015 he described the WA retail sector as being “very flat” and noted that,

“While the retail sector in WA is still very flat, the Co-operative continues to expand on the previous year’s result. Although we posted a loss of \$6,831, this is a \$43,000 improvement on last financial year and with continued good controls in place should see us with a positive result in the next financial year. With our strategic plan in place, we will continue to improve both our businesses in the next few years as we head for our 100-year anniversary in 2017” (W. Wallace, Chair, YDC, 2015, p.2).

He also paid tribute to his predecessor Chris Joyce stating,

“With my first report as Chair of the York & District Co-operative Ltd., I would like to congratulate and thank our past Chair Chris Joyce. Chris served as Chair for 7 years, in that time he recruited our current CEO Glen Scott, and oversaw the refurbishment of IGA with the installation of new fridges, freezers and a new fit out to the store. Chris is to be commended for his dedication and diligence to make sure the Co-operative continued to move forward and improve every year” (W. Wallace, Chair, YDC, 2015, p. 2).

In addition to his tribute to Chris Joyce, Bill Wallace also praised the work of Glen Scott, who had been employed from 2009. In this regard he made the following comments,

“Our CEO Glen Scott was reappointed in June for a further 3 years. In the past 6 years, Glen has been able to continually improve the level of service and offer each year. If you cast your memory back 6 years, we had open freezers that were breaking down and the deli and fresh departments were small. We now have a vibrant store which is a pleasure to shop in. Thanks to Glen and all the Management and staff for their dedication and effort. Thank you also to our Company Secretary Megan who keeps us all in line” (W. Wallace, Chair, YDC, 2015, p. 2).

In 2021 Bill Wallace was replaced as Chair by Mia Monger (see Figure 36). Mia became part of the Monger family by marrying Peter Rodney Monger, the only son of Rodney Wyborn Monger. She grew up in the Perth hills suburb of Kalamunda in a family of four children, with a father who was an engineer, and a mother who was a primary school teacher. She graduated as a mental health social worker and spent ten years as a child and adolescent social health specialist with the WA Department of Mental Health. Mia and Peter Monger had three children, Paige, Henry and Lottie, who now represent the seventh generation of the pioneering Monger family.

Figure 36: Glen Scott, CEO, Bill Wallace, Chair and Mia Monger, Chair, York Co-op



Sources: Wallace, (York Co-op, 2022); Scott & Monger (Mazzarol, 2022; 2023).

According to Mia, the long history of the Monger family, within the context of the family business, and farming, plus the family’s association with the Co-operative, remains an important legacy for the current and future generations of the family. As she explained,

“We are in a very privileged position here and our forefathers have done an amazing job in establishing the property and things where we are. Also, we have most of our children eagerly keen to remain on the property. I have faith that someone in our extended family will want to continue the custodianship of our property and farming history” (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, Monger, 2023).

Mia explained that her own grandparents operated a pig farm in Lake Grace and her Grandfather was a founding member of the Wescobee Honey Co-operative. This, she felt, had given her a connection with the farming and rural communities. In relation to The Co-op York, she related her experience of working with her husband Peter, his father Rod, and Peter’s uncle Paul, on the family property. By 2013, Paul had retired from the farm and moved to Perth. Peter’s father Rodney was also looking to retire so Peter and Mia took over the running of the property Daliak Estate.

As Rodney Monger began to arrange his affairs in preparation for retirement, he spoke to Mia about taking up a position on the Co-operative Board. She had ceased working full time in mental health services and was engaged in raising a family and supporting Peter on the farm. She had not initially given this community activity any thought, but after sitting down and discussing it in detail with Rod and understanding the long history of the Monger family’s engagement with the Co-operative, she felt that she might like to explore the opportunity.

What followed was a call to Mia from the Chair, Bill Wallace, who invited her to have a coffee with him and talk about joining the Co-operative Board. She admitted that although she had lived in York for over ten years, and regularly visited the Co-operative’s stores, she had never fully understood the nature of the business as a co-operative, and how it operated. As a result, Mia put herself forward as a Director and was voted onto the Board at the 2015 AGM, commencing her

role as a Director. At that time, the Board comprised six directors, Bill Wallace (Chair), Guy Lehmann (Deputy Chair), Sharon MacDonald, Brenda Treloar, Christopher Joyce (who resigned on 25 November 2016), and Mia herself (YDC, 2017).

According to Mia, the composition of the Board was changing, with fewer farmers and a wider cross-section of the local community. This included local business owners and professionals. Her appointment to the role of Chair, resulted from Bill Wallace's decision to step down as Chair, which he made public at the AGM in 2020. According to Mia, she was approached directly by Bill Wallace who suggested that she might want to consider replacing him as the Chair. The issue of the time commitment that would be required as Chair was discussed. In this regard, the time spent on chairing the Board was not the real issue. Of more importance was the time involved in working with the CEO and the Co-operative's management team. As Mia explained,

"The visible role of the Chair in chairing the meeting was obvious in terms of the time commitment. It was the line management of our executive team outside of this that was invisible to most of the Board members. So, getting Bill to explain how often he was in town having meetings and what he was doing, such as meeting with Glen, was critical. And, depending on where you are with your CEO cycle, for example, do you have a new CEO or a long-standing one, will impact how much time and energy you need to commit as the Chair. So, a lot of time was spent with Bill in understanding fully what that commitment was, what the relationship looked like, and he was very gracious in saying that he would not leave the board and would mentor me. Bill is still a Board member now" (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, Monger, 2023).

The willingness of Bill Wallace to remain on the Board was viewed by Mia Monger as a benefit to helping her take on the role of Chair. In accepting the role of Chair, Mia became the third generation of Monger family members who had served in that role, and the first female Chair of the Co-operative.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, 2010-2024

As can be seen from Table 11, the annual turnover of the Co-operative during the period was running at an average of \$13.75 million per annum, which compared well against the \$9.5 million of the previous decade. The EBIT were running at an average of \$29,985 per annum, and the NPAT at an average of \$21,127 per annum. Again, this compared favourably against the losses of -\$9,107 EBIT, and -\$2,547 NPAT for the preceding decade.

In 2011, RSM Bird Cameron provided The Co-op York with financial performance and best practice benchmarking data for supermarkets and hardware stores. The purpose of this was to equip the Co-operative with the ability to assess its own performance against industry benchmarks, and to identify areas where the Company could make the most impact on enhancing its financial performance. For example, the report identified that the area where greatest expenditure occurred was in wages, which averaged around 13 per cent of all the expenditure. The gross profit margin (e.g., total sales – variable costs ÷ total sales x 100) was running at an average of 20 per cent over the period from 2007 to 2011 (YDC, 2011).

Table 11: York Co-op Financial Performance 2010-2024

Year	Annual Turnover	EBIT ¹	NPAT ²	Total Assets	Total Liabilities	Total Equity
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
2010	13,690,806	38,958	28,355	5,944,187	2,245,241	3,698,946
2011	13,417,419	51,453	39,360	5,728,392	2,012,113	3,716,279
2012	13,110,455	(141,013)	(110,617)	6,089,365	2,390,688	3,598,229
2013	12,631,666	(174,471)	(122,431)	6,065,359	2,589,732	3,475,627
2014	12,818,036	(73,751)	(50,131)	5,769,694	2,389,663	3,380,031
2015	13,074,011	(13,651)	(6,831)	5,542,479	2,180,477	3,362,002
2016	13,339,535	41,060	29,838	5,444,044	2,050,324	3,393,720
2017	13,127,497	(77,259)	(76,351)	5,279,957	1,915,507	3,364,450
2018	12,294,670	(72,982)	(66,042)	5,162,777	1,770,952	3,391,825
2019	12,154,856	102,539	68,395	5,129,144	1,628,428	3,500,716
2020	13,651,147	376,502	290,781	5,459,708	1,497,096	3,962,612
2021	14,712,985	31,891	38,611	7,030,264	3,208,038	3,822,226
2022	15,526,128	(8,236)	(14,926)	6,958,854	3,207,242	3,751,612
2023	15,981,439	219,857	158,597	7,025,984	2,811,486	4,214,498
2024	16,781,965	148,881	110,291	6,901,193	2,651,122	4,250,071

¹ EBIT = Earnings before interest and tax. ²NPAT = Net profit after tax.

Sources: York Co-op Annual Reports, 2010 to 2024.

The average net assets (e.g., average assets minus average liabilities) over the period were \$3.66 million compared with \$2.01 million for the previous decade. In addition, the average equity for the period was \$3.66 million compared with \$1.89 million for the earlier decade. These figures indicate that while the Co-operative was still experiencing financial challenges during this 15-year period, the general trend was one of improvement.

As shown in Table 11, the Co-operative experienced losses in both EBIT and NPAT during the period 2012-2015, and again in 2017-2018. However, the financial metrics provided a valuable guide for the Co-operative's management team, allowing them to track performance across time

and undertake corrective action where necessary. In addition, the industry benchmarking data allowed the management team to assess their performance against the averages of different types of supermarket and hardware stores, which was a valuable insight when assessing how they compared against their equivalents and competitors.

In 2014, the significant losses were attributed to continued high levels of interest charges, plus the depreciation expenses that were associated with the refurbishment of the supermarket. As a result of these losses no dividends were paid. It is noteworthy that dividends were paid during the years 2010 and 2011, but they were suspended in 2012, 2013 and 2014, and not paid during 2017 through to 2021 (YDC, 2010-2021). There was an increase of 1.89 per cent in sales, with 2015 sales lifting to around \$12.82 million. However, as a result high interest rates and depreciation expenses related to the refurbishment of the stores, the Co-operative reported losses across both EBIT and NPAT (YDC, 2015). Sales also increased by 1.99 per cent during 2016, with total annual revenue of \$13.1 million. This enabled the Co-operative to report a modest NPAT (YDC, 2016).

During 2017 the Co-operative suffered a significant loss of \$77,359, and in the following year, sales fell by 6.2 per cent, a reduction of some \$800,000, which resulted in a net loss of \$66,042 (YDC, 2017; 2018). It wasn't until 2019 that the Co-operative generated a profit of \$102,539. This was followed by a significant profit of \$376,502 in 2020, which was attributed to the lockdowns imposed by the WA State Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (YDC, 2020). This forced the community to shop locally, thereby boosting sales. There was a further, albeit smaller, profit generated in 2021 (YDC, 2021).

In 2022 Mia Monger, in the Chair's report to the shareholders, noted that the Co-operative had continued to face challenges from the "lingering effects of COVID". She explained that The Co-op York had had to deal with the reopening of the intra-state borders, thereby increasing the level of competition from Northam and Midland, plus the need to operate two hardware stores as the Co-operative transitioned from the older site at 142 Avon Terrace (see Figure 36) to the new site at 50 Avon Terrace (see Figure 37). These factors had impacted the profitability of the Company, resulting in a loss across both EBIT and NPAT. As she explained,

"This period of turbulence in the retail industry has highlighted the resilience of your Co-operative, the importance of community loyalty and the need to remain competitive and relevant in our industry" (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, 2022, p. 6).

The financial performance for 2023 was more positive, with a significant rise in profitability, both EBIT and NPAT. This pattern continued into 2024 with slightly lower EBIT and NPAT figures, but still showing substantial profits. In her annual report to the shareholders Mia Monger said,

"We are proud to report your Co-operative returned a before tax profit of \$148,000 last financial year, despite tough economic times. This is a testament to a commitment from our management team and staff on controlling costs while maintaining customer value as a priority. The return to our community was approximately \$2.8 million with the Co-op remaining one of the largest employers in the district. New initiatives such as the monthly Shareholder days, have boosted rewards for loyal shoppers" (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, 2024, p. 2).



THE CO-OPERATIVE'S CENTENARY AND ITS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTRIBUTION

The Co-operative celebrated its Centenary in 2017. It was a year of further financial losses, but it did not dampen the enthusiasm or optimism of the Chair and Directors of the Company. Despite the financial challenges, there was a strategic plan for the Company's future, and strong ambition to keep the Co-operative operating for a further 100 years. In his address to the shareholders at the AGM that year, Chair Bill Wallace stated,

"The Co-operative was set up to service the community, it is now our challenge to continue to provide that service and to also post a profit to ensure that the Co-operative can continue for another 100 years. This is where we rely on you our shareholders, to continue to support the Co-operative.

We, as a Board, have been working hard on our Strategic Directions of the Co-operative. Next year we are working on a rebrand and to revitalize the Co-operative to take it into the future and to keep pace with the way everyone now does business. We want to make sure that the Co-operative will be around for another 100 years.

Yes, we are turning 100. The Co-operative had its first meeting on the 17th November 1917. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the past Directors of the Co-operative. Without their input we would not be here right now" (W. Wallace, Chair, YDC, 2017, p. 2).

Over the preceding 100 years The Co-op York had had six Chair and thirteen General Managers/CEOs. It had provided employment for many local people, as well as numerous local contractors and suppliers. In 2017 it was employing 81 staff. In addition, the Co-operative had provided a range of services to the community including bulk grain handling and storage, fuel supplies, agricultural supplies including farm machinery, groceries, drapery, haberdashery, banking services, real estate agency, farm insurance, and livestock agency.

By 2017 the Co-operative had reduced its business down to two entities, the IGA Supermarket, and the Mitre 10 hardware store. It was no longer a dedicated farmers' Co-operative and engaged both its shareholders and the public customers in delivering value. This took the form of the Shopper Loyalty Card that could be used across both the Supermarket and the Hardware store earning \$50 for every 2,500 points accumulated on purchases at the stores.

In addition, the Co-operative had delivered significant financial returns to the York District and its community. As outlined above, this took the form of rebates, dividends, bonus shares, loyalty vouchers, wages paid to employees, payments to local contractors and suppliers, plus donations and sponsorships to local community groups and events. It was a track record for which The Co-op York could be rightly proud.

THE CO-OPERATIVE'S CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMIC CAPITAL

Throughout its decades of patchy profitability, the Co-operative continued providing sponsorships and donations to local community groups and events. For example, in 2015 a total of \$26,000 was distributed to these causes. During the same year, the Co-operative paid out \$76,000 to customers and shareholders as vouchers rewarding store loyalty. CEO Glen Scott, reporting to the 2015 AGM estimated that The Co-op York had injected over \$2.3 million into the



local community via its wages paid, use of local contractors in areas like freight and maintenance (YD, 2015).

This pattern continued in 2016. During that year The Co-op York employed 88 staff, provided \$27,000 in donations and sponsorships for local community groups and events, and paid a total of \$82,000 in loyalty vouchers to customers and shareholders (YDC, 2016). Again, in 2017, despite a loss of \$77,359, the Co-operative paid out \$76,000 in customer and shareholder loyalty vouchers, and \$26,000 in sponsorships and donations for local community groups (YDC, 2017).

During 2018 The Co-op York returned \$2.5 million back into the community through employment, freight and repairs, plus sponsorships and donations (YDC, 2018). Again in 2019 the Co-operative generated similar contributions of \$2.3 million to the community (YDC, 2019). In 2020/21 the Co-operative contributed \$2.8 million to the community via wages, rewards, local contractors, donations and sponsorships (YDC, 2021). Year on year the Co-operative has also paid significant rates to the York Shire for the benefit of the town and the wider community.

According to Glen Scott, over 70 cents in every dollar of gross profit made at The Co-op York is returned to the local community. This includes the employment of the Co-operative's workforce and the wages paid to them, the repairs and maintenance, local suppliers used, the donations and sponsorships, and the shopper rewards for both shareholders and customers. In his view, this economic return to the community was a more effective way to demonstrate value and retain loyalty than trying to compete on price with the larger national chains in both supermarkets and hardware. He explained this in the following terms,

"You don't sell on price. Everyone can do this better than you can. So, if I say, my basket is cheaper than yours, nothing surer that next week your basket will be cheaper than mine. You can't beat that. Instead, you need to sell your full value proposition" (G. Scott, CEO, YDC, Scott, 2023).

These views were echoed by Mia Monger who explained that many people within the York District community remained unaware of the contribution that the Co-operative plays. She noted that before she became involved with the Co-operative as a Director, she had been active in the local sporting clubs and social groups, particularly with her children. However, she was unaware of the role played by The Co-op York,

"I was probably unaware at that point how big a contributor the Co-op was to groups like the Cricket Shed, the Netball and the Hockey equipment. That the fabric of the sponsorship and the community connectedness this created. We were just there getting to know people. However, as I became involved in the Co-operative as a Director, I began to realise the importance of the Supermarket to the town. Plus, the Nutrien building, the hardware, and that it once had a petrol service there. All the things that it had supported and funded for the community other than just what I had initially seen, which was the Supermarket" (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, Monger, 2023).

Mia Monger and Glen Scott, both recognised the importance of communicating The Co-op York's economic contribution to the local community. At time of writing data had been collected and analysed to show the percentage of the dollars of gross profit generated from the Co-operative's



stores that would remain within the community. This was assessed as being in the order of 70 to 80 cents in each dollar. According to Glen, the Board would be reviewing this in 2023 with the plan to incorporate this information into marketing materials that could be shown to the public with the aim of boosting loyalty.

THE CO-OPERATIVE'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL CAPITAL

While the economic contribution of The Co-op York can be measured in financial returns to the local community, assessing its contribution to social capital is more challenging. Social capital is a complex concept but has been defined as follows,

“Social capital is broadly defined to be a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing a stock of social norms, values, beliefs, trusts, obligations, relationships, networks, friends, memberships, civic engagement, information flows, and institutions that foster cooperation and collective actions for mutual benefits and contributes to economic and social development” (Bhandari & Yasunobu, 2009, p., 486).

It is an important area for co-operative and mutual organisations to focus on due to the critical role it plays in facilitating collective community engagement in mutually owned enterprises. In addition, the strength of a Co-operative's social capital within its membership and community, is a key factor in its success and sustainability (Mazzarol, 2024).

In the words of Mia Monger, the Co-operative plays a central role in connecting the community within York. As she explained,

“The Co-op is central to that community connection in York. We had a strategic meeting early on when Bill Wallace was in the Chair. We were trying to look at our purpose and the strategic direction we were going to head. At the end of the day, a long day, we reached the conclusion that we can't do anything that doesn't continue to create a community space. There are lots of places in small rural towns which shires develop as community spaces, but for York, it's the Co-op. So, you hear mums and dads picking up kids from school who will say, 'I'll meet you at the Co-op,' 'I'll see you at the Co-op', or 'I need to go to the Co-op'. Even though it is an IGA, and could be any store, it is known as The Co-op” (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, Monger, 2023).

Mia explained that during the boardroom discussions over rebranding of the Co-operative it was recognised that the only logical name was “The York Co-op”, because that is what the local community calls it. More importantly, for many customers and shareholders, visiting the Co-operative is more than going about shopping chores. It is a place to meet with people and engage in catching up and by this, engaging in the strengthening of social capital within the community. As she described this,

“Traditionally people have come in from farming to do their weekly shop and they are there to see people. They go to the post office, they go to the Co-op, they will go to the rural store for their feed supplies, this was the hub of the centre of town, and it continues to be” (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, Monger, 2023).



THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE CO-OPERATIVE

In 2019 The Co-op York was enjoying the generation of its first profit in two years, and the launch of a new logo and brand “The York Co-op” accompanied by a new website and Facebook page. As noted by Glen Scott in his CEO’s report to the AGM,

“We continue to also move forward in other areas of the business with the development of our Web Page and Facebook presence, developed by our excellent people employed here, that will allow improved marketing and communication channels. These new media channels tie in well with the new brand ‘The York Co-op.’ During this year you will see this new brand highlighted in signwriting on the external of our IGA building” (G. Scott, CEO, YDC, 2019, p.2).

The competition from adjacent towns such as Northam and Midland remained an issue for the Co-operative. Responding to this, Bill Wallace, in his Chair’s address to the 2019 AGM stated that,

“We continually encourage feedback from our customers, and through this feedback range and price have been identified as the two most important issues. Prices vary from week to week and comparative shops performed show that there are only a few dollars difference between us and our competitors. This result even takes into account that we pay for all our own freight to get the produce to town, an amount of \$230,000 this financial year. When people shop out of town, do they add the cost of fuel and depreciation on their vehicle, and the cost of their own time to travel to and back? If this were to be added to the cost of their shop, then our prices are comparatively competitive. The money they have spent out of town also does not help their community” (W. Wallace, Chair, YDC, 2019, p.1).

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in Wuhan, China during December 2019 it spread globally by early 2020. The first COVID-19 case came to WA on 21 February 2020 and by 11 March the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared that COVID-19 was officially a global pandemic. By 15 March 2020 WA State Premier Mark McGowan declared a state of emergency in WA that was quickly followed by travel restrictions, the banning of gatherings larger than 500 people, and the requirement that people coming from overseas into the State had to isolate for 14 days. Indoor gatherings of over 100 were also banned, and by 1 April, regional border restrictions were put in place restricting travel outside regions to essential services only (McNeill, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdowns and travel restrictions had a negative impact on many businesses, particularly those associated with tourism. However, for The Co-op York, these restrictions provided a significant growth in sales as the community were required to shop locally. As shown in Table 11, sales revenues for 2020 were higher and profits were significantly higher. In her report to the shareholders at the 2021 AGM Mia Monger stated,

“The 2020/2021 financial year results have again been very positive with a continuing trend of posting a before tax profit. This demonstrates the hard work of our management team and staff in retaining and encouraging people to shop local, a year post COVID-19 becoming a part of our lives. Ongoing commitment to cost controls continues to allow profit to reach our bottom line” (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, 2021, p. 2).

At the same AGM, CEO Glen Scott echoed these sentiments when he stated,

“Welcome to the trading report for the year ended 30 June 2021. With COVID-19 still with us through 2021 we continued to accept challenges and move forward in line with our strategic direction. The Co-op team continued to build on sales with an increase of 7.8% on 2020” (G. Scott, CEO, YDC, 2021, p. 3).

According to Mia Monger, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic regional lockdowns on The Co-op York was “massively positive”. The border restrictions forced the community to shop locally, and this led to significant profitability in the stores. It created anomalies in the Company’s financial data that now makes it more difficult to assess the financial trends across the period from 2018 to 2021. However, it also demonstrated the potential that getting the community to shop within their own town can have. As she explained,

“So, we saw the potential of what happens when people are driven to stay within their town, not access travel to work in either Perth or Northam, and shop here. It was an exceptional two years for us” (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, Monger, 2023).

The legacy of the COVID-19 lockdown for the Co-operative was that it boosted the overall volume of customers using the stores, but also saw a strong retention of many of these customers who continued to shop locally even after the travel restrictions were lifted. This was important for the Co-operative as the overall population within the York District had not been growing. A key lesson from the COVID-19 pandemic for the Co-operative was the need to increase share of the shopping basket within the community supplied by the Company’s stores. Competition from Northam and Midland remains a major threat to The Co-op York so it remained important to get the community into the habit of shopping local.

THE YORK CO-OP, 2022-2024

In 2024 The Co-op York owned and operated two major retail businesses comprising the IGA Supermarket located at 138 Avon Terrace, York, and the Mitre 10 Hardware store located at 50 Avon Terrace, York. This site was previously used by the Co-operative as the Wesfarmers Landmark Agency, but it was purchased by The Co-op York during 2021 and developed for the new hardware store (YDC, 2021).

As shown in Figure 37, the IGA Supermarket is located within the heritage Edwards Store, which has been renovated and its facade restored. The building houses the grocery providing fresh fruit and vegetables, a gourmet delicatessen, butchers shop, bakery, and general supermarket. In addition, the second floor houses the administrative offices and boardroom, while the rear area contains storage and cool rooms.

The hardware store had been located at 142 Avon Terrace; York adjacent to the IGA Supermarket. This was originally a Mitre 10 branded store, which became a Home Hardware store, until it was decommissioned and new Mitre 10 branded store was opened at 50 Avon Terrace, York in 2021. Figure 38 shows the former Home Hardware store across Macartney Street. The photo also shows the Westpac ATM machine on the corner of the IGA Supermarket near the entrance. At time of writing the 142 Avon Terrace site was scheduled for redevelopment.



Figure 37: IGA Supermarket, 138 Avon Terrace, York



Source: Mazzarol (2023).

Figure 38: Former Hardware store, 142 Avon Terrace, York located near the IGA.



Source: Mazzarol (2023).

Figure 39: Mitre 10 Hardware store, 50 Avon Terrace, York



Source: Mazzarol (2023).

Figure 39 shows the current Mitre 10 hardware store that was built on the site previously occupied by the Wesfarmers Landmark Agency. This houses a full-service hardware with paints, building materials, a garden nursery, kitchen renovation supplies, trade desk, and tools. It is located next door to the York Rural Trading building at 46 Avon Terrace (see Figure 35), which has been leased to Nutrien Agricultural Solutions. The Co-operative decided that it was more cost-efficient to provide these services via a Landlord/Lessee arrangement than operating it themselves.

OPENING THE NEW HARDWARE STORE

The new hardware store was opened in May 2021 and featured in the local *York & Districts Community Matters* newsletter. Figure 40 shows Mia Monger and Glen Scott cutting the ribbon to open the store on 29 May. There was a large turnout for the opening of the new store which involved prizes, special offers, a sausage sizzle, children’s bouncy castle, and trade displays by major suppliers representing paints, nursery and equipment suppliers.

In discussing the new hardware store, CEO Glen Scott explained that the support from the franchisor, Independent Hardware Group, who own the Mitre 10 brand, provided The Co-op York with a much bigger range of hardware, building materials and household items than had been the case with the Home Hardware group. As he explained,

“The change has improved our competitiveness and is encouraging people to shop local for the benefit of the local community. We are already seeing an improvement in turnover” (G. Scott, CEO YDC, cited in McNeill, 2021).



Figure 40: Opening of the new Mitre 10 Hardware store in May 2021

CO-OP CELEBRATES ITS BIGGEST VENTURE



above: York Co-op Chair, Mia Monger and CEO, Glen Scott cut a ribbon to open the new Mitre 10 store at 50 Avon Terrace

Source: York & Districts Community Matters (2021).

As Chair, Mia Monger explained that the opening of the new store was a part of the long-term aim of the Co-operative to provide the necessary services required by the community of York and the surrounding districts. As she stated,

“The purpose-built store has enabled the Co-op to markedly improve layout and space in the retail area” (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, cited in McNeill, 2021).

As described earlier, the transition from the former hardware store to the new location impacted the profitability of The Co-op York during 2021-2022. In the annual CEO’s report for 2022 Glen Scott explained this challenge,

“With COVID-19 still with us through 2022 we continued to accept challenges in this arena and consolidate our hardware offer to one site at Mitre 10. This move saw hardware increase ranges of products coupled with improvement in customer offer and operating efficiencies. Trying to offer a standalone Garden Centre at our old hardware site saw expenditure on expenses balloon in the first half of the trading year which has been rectified by



incorporating Garden into Mitre 10. The Co-op team continued to build on revenue and across all businesses saw an increase of 5% on 2021. The Co-op, impacted by costs incurred through Covid, our old Garden Centre, and relocation costs returned a loss of \$8,236 before tax. We look forward to 2023, with a new clearly defined strategic direction, to continue to meet sales targets and with improved cost efficiencies return positive outcomes as we go forward” (G. Scott, CEO, YDC, 2022, p. 3).

The following year, Glen Scott was able to report a more positive financial situation for The Co-op York and attributed this turnaround to the consolidation of the hardware operations on the new Mitre 10 store at 50 Avon Terrace. As he explained,

“Welcome to the trading report for the year ended 30 June 2023. Sales continued to grow with the co-operative posting an increase of 2.8%. Along with expense control, this was achieved in part by our consolidation of our hardware business to 50 Avon Terrace, which resulted in the Co-op returning a net profit \$219,857 before tax. Our employees of the Co-op again provided excellent customer service and operating efficiency in times of increasing economic pressures. Cost of living pressures and rental shortages will continue into the next financial year providing challenges to trading” (G. Scott, CEO, YDC, 2023, p. 3).

THE FUTURE OF THE CO-OP YORK

In 2023-2024 The Co-op York was engaged in a collaborative arrangement with the Shire of York to redevelop its site at 142 Avon Terrace, where the former Home Hardware store was located, into a community and retail space designed to enhance the shopping experience within the centre of the town and facilitate both community networking and tourism.

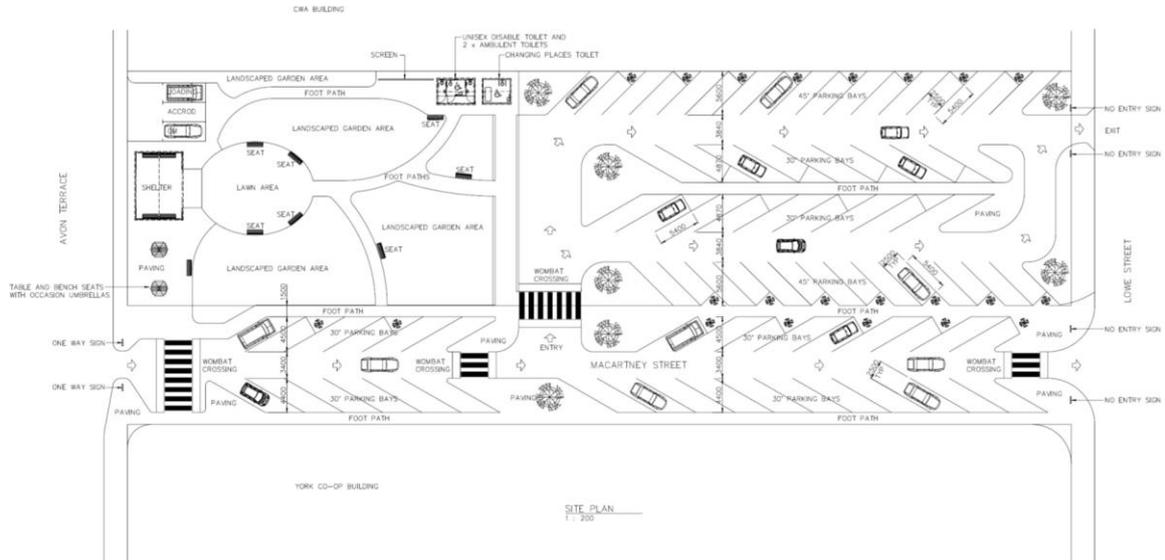
Figure 41 shows the concept plan for the redevelopment of Macartney Street, which will become a carpark with entry from Avon Terrace, and exit onto Lowe Street. There will be a community garden facing onto Avon Terrace, which will include public toilets, outdoor seating, and a sheltered area. At time of writing, this development had commenced, and the former Home hardware site had been cleared (see Figure 42).

This redevelopment forms part of The Co-op York’s long-term strategy of developing its retailing operations in York. The preservation of the heritage part of the IGA Supermarket at 138 Avon Terrace is essential. However, the rear of the building comprises an unsealed carpark running down to Lowe Street. This has the potential for future development.

In her 2023 annual Chairperson’s report to shareholders, Mia Monger provided a vision for the future of the Co-operative, stating,

“Strategically the Board is focused on continuing to improve our customer experience and investing in necessary infrastructure improvements to secure a bright future for York’s retail sector. The Board invites the York community to dream big and work with us to develop a sustainable retail future for the next generation of locals” (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, 2023, p. 2).

Figure 41: Concept plan for the new car park and community garden 142 Avon Terrace, York



Source: Gary W. Byfield (2024).

Figure 42: Redevelopment site, 142 Avon Terrace and Macartney Street, York



Source: York Co-op (2024).



These sentiments were echoed by Glen Scott in his CEO's Report in same year when he wrote,

"As we go forward into the next financial year, in conjunction with the Shire of York development will begin on our old Home Hardware site at 142 Avon Terrace. This will include additional parking for our IGA store, and landscaping and community space to tie in with the river foreshore. Exciting times so watch this space" (G. Scott, CEO, YDC, 2023, p. 4).

The annual report for 2024 continued these statements, which were written as the process of redevelopment of the former hardware store site was progressing. For example, Chairperson Mia Monger in her report to shareholders outlined a vision for 2025 in the following statement, which pointed to the redevelopment of Macartney Street as a major opportunity for The Co-op York and the community to celebrate the United Nation's International Year of the Co-operative,

"2025 is set to be a year of celebration with the progression of the Macartney Street project bringing together business and community. We will also acknowledge the International Year of Co-operatives celebrating the contribution member-owned and member-focused enterprises make to our economy and way of life" (M. Monger, Chair, YDC, 2024, p. 2).

CEO Glen Scott, in his annual report to shareholders, supported the views of Mia Monger, and noted that in 2025 the members and customers of the Co-operative would be able to see new exterior signage and the development of the Macartney Street site as a highlight (YDC, 2024).

CHAPTER 13: 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 York Co-op 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 CO-OP YORK

This study has identified several critical events over the 107-year history of The Co-op York. 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 Co-op York can be examined using the conceptual framework. As outline in this case study The Co-op York has faced five critical events that risked its future viability and required strategic and operational responses from The Co-op York Board and management to address.

THE FIRST CRITICAL EVENT – OPPOSITION TO THE CO-OPERATIVE

The first critical event was the opposition to the establishment of the Co-operative from local farmer of influence William G. Burges Jnr., who wrote a highly critical letter in the *Eastern Districts Chronical* that was published on 1 December 1917, only a couple of weeks after the initial meeting held on 17 November to set up the Co-operative. In his letter, Burges accused the Co-operative of becoming a monopoly that would have a negative impact on the business community in York. This would only benefit a small number of “a few well to do farmers” at the expense of the wider community.

His letter was quickly responded to by the first Chair of the Co-operative Warren Marwick, who refuted the accusations made by William Burges. This response from Marwick was well considered and pointed out that Burges was himself a “well to do farmer” who had been making a lucrative business from providing the services that the Co-operative would be able to supply to the farming community in the district of York.

Although the views expressed by Burges were motivated by his own self-interest, they resonated with many in the local community. This was evidenced by the number of people who also wrote letters to the *Eastern Districts Chronical* and the *Eastern Recorder* in Kellerberrin. In the latter newspaper it was noted that the letter by Burges rallied a substantial number of supporters who were either concerned about the impact of the Co-operative, or simply opposed to its creation.

The prompt response by Warren Marwick to William Burges’ letter arguably did much to defuse what might have become a potential threat to the Co-operative’s establishment. How much of a threat the letter by Burges was to the Co-operative is difficult to fully assess. Although it should be noted that there were letters from the community still being published in the *Eastern Districts Chronical* in 1919.

Once again, it was left to William Marwick, as Chair, to respond to these negative letters, and explain the nature of what a Co-operative business was and correcting the false claims that the decline of the town of Dangan was caused by the establishment of a farmer's Co-operative there. This event highlights the importance of community education designed to provide information and awareness of the nature and role of Co-operatives. It should not be assumed that everyone in the community understands what Co-operative enterprises are about. The prompt, clear and effective responses by William Marwick to the opponents of the Co-operative demonstrated how a Co-operative's Chairperson could not only defend the Co-operative, but also educate the public about the nature of co-operative businesses.

THE SECOND CRITICAL EVENT – MANAGING THROUGH THE GREAT DEPRESSION

The second critical event was the Great Depression, which impacted the Australian economy quite severely with many farmers in the Wheatbelt struggling to survive. Wheat prices were low due to oversupply generated during the 1920s, and there were calls from the Wheat Growers' Union and Primary Producers' Association for State and Federal Government assistance.

As a farmer owned Company, The Co-op York was dependent upon the patronage and support it received from the primary producers living within the Shire of York. Their fortunes were intertwined with those of the Co-operative. Unemployment within the District rose and both wheat and sheep prices fell significantly during the height of the depression in 1930-1931. Later, during the period from 1935 to 1940 the WA agricultural and pastoral sectors were hit by severe drought.

However, several events coincided with the Depression and these global pricing and weather conditions to provide some relief. The first of these was the passage of the *Debts Adjustment Amendment Act 1931 (WA)*, which provided financial support to farmers facing bankruptcy and enabled many of them to remain on their land. The second, was the founding of CBH in 1933, which assisted wheat growers with a cost-effective means of storage and handling of their crop. The third, was the passage of the *Companies Act Amendment Act 1929 (WA)*, which tightened the financial management of Co-operatives, limiting dividend payments to active shareholders, and requiring such payments to be from funds specifically set aside for such payments. The fourth, was the prudent management of the Co-operative's finances by the Board.

Nevertheless, while CBH provided the farmers with a much-needed bulk handling and storage service, it also took away the need for The Co-op York to provide these services as it had done via the Wesfarmers network of grain handling and storage. This impacted the Co-operative by denying it access to a potentially lucrative income stream requiring it to pivot from being a producer to a consumer co-operative. This led to the name change in 1955.

Throughout the 1930s the Co-operative was able to pay regular annual dividends of between 6 to 8 per cent of paid-up capital, as well as rebates from 1936 to 1939. The most difficult year was 1931, at the peak of the Depression, when the Co-operative's Board transferred funds to the Bad & Doubtful Debts Reserve to cover anticipated funding shortfalls. Dividends were reduced from 8 per cent of paid-up capital in 1930 to 6 per cent from 1931 to 1934, before increasing the amount to 7 per cent in 1935 and then back to 8 per cent from 1936 to 1939.

This event highlights the important roles played by the WA State Government in providing debt relief to farmers, and stricter financial management guidelines for Co-operatives. It also showed the value of CBH in delivering significant cost efficiencies in managing wheat handling and storage. This suggests that a Co-operative with loyal members, a prudent Board of Directors, and competent managers can navigate even the most difficult times.

THE THIRD CRITICAL EVENT – CHANGE FROM “FARMERS” TO “DISTRICT” CO-OP

The third critical event was the change of name from the York Farmers’ Co-operative Ltd. to the York and District Co-operative Ltd., which took place in December 1955. This was part of a process of moving the Co-operative from one specifically focused on serving the needs of the local farming community, to one that encompassed the entire community. It took place in the same period when the Co-operative was acquiring the Edwards Store buildings at 136 to 140 Avon Terrace, York, which were purchased in 1956. This was followed by the change to the Company’s Articles of Association at the AGM of 1957, which replaced the word “persons” with the term “shareholders” thereby clarifying the nature of the membership.

These changes to the Company name and Articles of Association, taking place concurrently with the acquisition of prominent retail sites in the centre of York signal a refocusing of the strategic focus of the Co-operative. It led to the transition of the Co-operative from a dedicated farmers’ general store to that of a department store, supermarket, hardware, fuel supply, farm supplies, and rural services provider. This helped to set the Co-operative up for the decades that followed during the 1960s and 1970s that were generally periods of change. The 1970s was a rollercoaster in relation to the Co-operative’s performance, which was impacted by severe droughts, and the rising competition from adjacent towns such as Northam and Midland.

The transition from a dedicated farmer enterprise to one focused on servicing the needs of the entire York District community, enabled The Co-op York to remain sustainable in what became a more competitive environment in the 1980s and 1990s when the farming community was shrinking as farms became consolidated into fewer but larger enterprises focused on large-scale cropping operations. The continuous upgrading and development of the retail operations run by the Co-operative over this period also reflects this new focus.

THE FOURTH CRITICAL EVENT – MANAGING THE FINANCIAL CRISES OF THE 1980S & 1990S

The fourth critical event was the decades of the 1980s and 1990s during which the profitability of the Co-operative was continuously under pressure. Demographic changes within the local farming community and the consolidation of the farms combined with the increasing competition from adjacent towns such as Midland and Northam, which began to offer a wider range of retail stores. By the 1980s and 1990s York was focusing upon its economic future as both a service centre for the local farming community, and a destination for tourists seeking to visit the town for its heritage buildings, picturesque natural environment, museums and regular festivals and events. The York Co-op responded by upgrading its retail facilities, and rationalising its range of service offerings, moving out of fuel and chemicals in the late 1980s due to their unprofitability. During the early 1980s, it upgraded both the hardware store and supermarket, widened its range of groceries, joined the Foodland group, and served as an agent for a drycleaning business, and CIG gases.

While dividends and rebates were paid during the first half of the 1980s, they were both suspended in 1986 and only dividends were paid from 1987 to 1989 at a rate of 5 per cent of paid-up capital compared to 10 per cent during the first half of the decade. By 1989 the Company's Articles of Association were further changed to increase the capitalisation of the business. While this was contested by some shareholders, it reflected the Board's recognition of the need for the Co-operative to have sufficient working capital to allow it to continue its need for the continuous upgrading and maintenance of the retail facilities, while maintaining its solvency in periods of fluctuating profitability.

This fluctuating profitability continued throughout the 1990s leading to only modest dividends being paid, with no rebates and no remuneration of the Directors. The demographic changes taking place within the farming community were continuing from what had started during the 1980s. The loss of many farmer shareholders from the District led to the Co-operative changing its Articles of Association again in 1994 to facilitate the need for repurchasing shares from those members who had left the community.

The 1980s and 1990s were periods of declining profits and continuous demand for ongoing investment in the Co-operative's retail facilities. The ability of the Board and Management team to navigate these years and continue to deliver value to the shareholders and general community is a testament to their prudence and skill. It reflects the focus they had on their purpose for the provision of services to their community rather than the maximisation of profit and shareholder returns.

THE FIFTH CRITICAL EVENT – DEVELOPING COMPETITIVENESS 2000 TO 2024

The fifth critical event was the ongoing challenge of finding a competitive business model that could be sustained over time. As had been shown in the 1980s and 1990s The Co-op York had to adapt to the changing demographics within the District and the market competition from adjacent commercial centres. Profitability remained elusive in the years 2000-2003. The upgrading of the Supermarket, Hardware Store and Landmark Agricultural Agency continued for the first decade, but a change of management and development of a new strategic plan in 2007 helped the Board to refocus.

The “shake-up” that took place in 2008 involving the bid by the Property Developers to buy and lease back the Co-operative's retail facilities, which had the backing of the York Shire Council, was a turning point for the Board. It led to a change in mindset at the board table from viewing the Co-operative as a not-for-profit business that needed to break-even but deliver services to the community, to a business that could compete within its regional context and generate sufficient profit to allow it to grow based on a demonstrable Member Value Proposition (MVP).

Although the profitability of the Co-operative remained patchy during the period 2010-2024, the underlying management of the Company's retail operations was now benchmarked against best practice. Management systems were in place to allow the timely analysis of the areas within the Co-operative's various operations where profit margins were increasing or decreasing. This enabled corrective action. Although the positive impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns helped to

boost the Co-operative's bottom line during 2019-2020, the underlying operational systems within the business were now in place.

From this foundation The Co-op York was well-placed to develop a competitiveness within its regional context that would enable it to remain sustainable over the long-term. The opening of the new Hardware Store at 50 Avon Terrace, and the planned redevelopment of the former hardware store site at 142 Avon Terrace, collaborating with the York Shire Council, augured well for the Co-operative's future.

SYSTEMS LEVEL ANALYSIS – INPUT FACTORS

As the narrative history of The Co-op York 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 outlined in this history, the foundation of The Co-op York took place during a period of focused collaboration and cooperation within the WA farming community that had been generated by a relatively small, but dedicated group of individuals such as Charles Walter Harper, Alexander Joseph Monger, Warren Marwick, and Basil Lathrop Murray. These individuals were champions of the Co-operative business model and played a key role in the creation of several key organisations. These were the Farmers and Settlers Association (FSA), established in 1912, Westralian Farmers Ltd., established in 1914, and the Co-operative Federation of WA (Co-operatives WA), established in 1919.

These champions of cooperation were prominent and influential within the relatively small WA community. Those like Harper, Monger and Marwick were the children and grandchildren of successful pioneering families and were affluent people of means. Others like Murray were from the professional class, with expertise in business management in industries such as insurance and financial services. The creation of the FSA was motivated by the Rural Workers' Union (RWU) demand in 1911 for increased wages. They were leaders within their communities and their views were generally respected.

The FSA's role was to coordinate the farmers in their industrial relations battle with the rural workforce and thereby strengthen their bargaining power against the RWU. Concurrently, the creation of Wesfarmers was to provide the farmers with a business vehicle for enhancing their commercial bargaining power through cooperative action. Wesfarmers growth was enabled by its ability to facilitate the creation of a network of farmer-owned co-operatives across the Wheatbelt through which it was able to distribute its goods and services.

In terms of **resources**, the foundation of The Co-op York was facilitated by the willingness and ability of the local farmers to purchase shares in the Co-operative and actively engage in trading with it. Initially, this took the form of purchasing supplies from its stores and supplying it with their grain and livestock when it had the role of acting as an agent for Wesfarmers. Also, importantly the willingness of Alexander Monger to sell the Mongers' Stores properties to the Co-operative, and under an attractive agreement, enabled it to commence trading quickly in its early years.

The **mobilisation**, of the York farming community to support the Co-operative's foundation was strong. Although there was some opposition to its establishment, most of the farming community viewed it as a positive development. The involvement of leaders such Monger, Marwick, Harper, and Murray, engendered trust. In addition, the Co-operative was part of a wider network that included the FSA, Wesfarmers and Co-operatives WA. This also enhanced the perception of value offered by The Co-op York and strengthened the members' trust in it.

The farmers' **motivations** to support the establishment of The Co-op York were based on their perceptions of the Company's ability to enhance their own farming businesses. Not only did it offer them enhanced bargaining power in relation the purchase of farm supplies and household food and other products, but also financial benefits in the form of dividends, rebates, and discounts. Additionally, it gave the farmers collective ownership of the Co-operative.

From a **systems perspective** the establishment of The Co-op York created a focal point for the local farming community to network with each other, and to systematically engage with the larger networks that were established and maintained by Wesfarmers, the FSA, and Co-operatives WA. These organisations provided the necessary *structural couplings* within which The Co-op York was able exchange information and knowledge, facilitated by its community leaders (e.g., Monger, Marwick, Harper, and Murray), to strengthen its own operations and commercial activities.

As The Co-op York developed over time these structural couplings continued, with Wesfarmers playing a key role in the Co-operative's commercial operations, and Co-operatives WA its adherence to the effective operation as a Co-operative. Even the FSA (later Farmers' Union and WA Farmers' Federation) provided it with links into the world of rural politics.

Following the demutualisation of Wesfarmers in 1985 The Co-op York widened its commercial linkages. This took the form of establishing a supply agreement contract with Australian-owned independent food, liquor and general merchandise wholesaler Metcash Limited, to operate a Supa Valu and later IGA branded supermarket, and a hardware store under the Home Hardware and Mitre 10 brands.

Furthermore, when faced with financial challenges from the 2000s its engagement of RSM Bird Cameron to provide it with industry financial benchmarking data opened a *structural hole* (window) into the wider information space of the supermarket and hardware industries. This was facilitated by the appointment of Glen Scott as CEO, who, with a background in large corporations from those sectors, was able to help the Co-operative navigate the competitive environment it was facing.

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 into which The Co-op York was established included the *Co-operative and Provident Societies Act 1903* (WA). As explained in the case study, this was one of the first statutes introduced across the British Empire and outside the United Kingdom, that provided a dedicated legislative framework for Co-operatives. It provided a useful guide as to how the Board should operate the Co-operative and facilitated its governance.

Subsequently, the passage of the *Wheat Pool Act 1932* (WA), *Debts Adjustment Amendment Act 1931* (WA), and *Bulk Handling Act 1935* (WA), during the depths of the Great Depression assisted The Co-op York indirectly by providing much needed assistance to the Co-operative's shareholders who were predominantly grain producers. The benefits accruing from bulk grain handling and storage, plus the debt relief for farmers facing bankruptcy helped to preserve their economic sustainability and in turn continue supporting The Co-op York through their patronage.

The WA State Registrar of Companies also effectively supervised the regulation of the Co-operative. As shown by the letter sent to The Co-op York's Company Secretary in 1948 reminding the Board that it had a responsibility under the *Companies Act* to present audited accounts to its shareholders at AGMs. The regular changes to the Co-operative's Articles of Association, mostly to address financial issues, suggests that the Board was eager to comply with the regulations.

The formal recognition in 1977 of York as a "Notable Town" with significant heritage value assisted its transition from a primarily rural centre to a tourist destination. However, the decision made by The Co-op York to have the former Edwards Store and now the IGA Supermarket at 138 Avon Terrace heritage listed has imposed additional regulatory burdens.

The heritage listing made it difficult to place a valuation on the building, and thereby secure taxation benefits from its depreciation. The heritage listing of the building placed some restrictions on the refurbishment of the Supermarket, and its overall utilisation. It also added to the cost of maintaining the building and preserving its heritage value.

During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021, the decision by the WA State Government to impose regional lockdowns across the State created a positive benefit to The Co-op York. These lockdowns required the community to shop locally as they were unable to travel outside the District without special permission. This helped to significantly boost trading at the Supermarket and Hardware stores and resulted in a significant profit for 2020. It also encouraged the York community to shop locally, a habit that many continued to adhere to after the pandemic had ended.

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.

Throughout its history The Co-op York has operated across a variety of industries. During its early years from 1917 to 1929 the Co-operative acted as an agent for Wesfarmers engaged in bulk wheat handling and storage, making it a producer co-operative. However, it also managed retail operations in York and Greenhills where it distributed groceries and farm supplies. By the 1930s and 1940s the Co-operative was acting as a distributor for Texaco (Caltex) supplying kerosene, petrol, and oils. It also acted as a stock agent, and real estate agent on behalf of Wesfarmers, and by the 1950s was a sales representative for the Lightburn company distributing “Lightening” concrete mixers and washing machines. It also operated a hardware store, drapery department, and a Massey Ferguson tractor dealership throughout the 1960s.

By the 1970s the Co-operative had terminated its relationship with Massey Ferguson, which transferred its dealership to Northam. It subsequently ended its relationship with Caltex in 1975 due to the declining profitability of the fuel distribution service. In that period, it opened a trendy “Denim Dungeon” fashion department in its basement, and distributed gas cookers as part of its agency relationship with Wesfarmers’ Kleenheat business. Commencing from the 1990s The Co-op York consolidated its operations around the supermarket and hardware stores and providing Agricultural supplies and services. The latter being undertaken as an Agent for Wesfarmers’ Landmark services, and more recently as the landlord for Nutrien Agricultural Solutions at the Rural Trading Building, 46 Avon Terrace, York.

The rather eclectic nature of the Co-operative’s continuously changing range of services suggests a business that was unable to focus on doing a few things well, which can be a risky strategy. However, for much of the Co-operative’s history it was a major agency and distribution outlet for Wesfarmers. This enabled The Co-op York to negotiate competitive prices from Wesfarmers, and secure reliable supply of produce. In addition, the Co-operative was not facing competition from within the York District, although it did face competition from Northam and Midland over time.

From the 1990s onwards The Co-op York began facing increased competition from expanding retailing operations in Northam and Midland. The Co-operative’s relationship with Metcash has assisted it to secure the necessary bargaining power within its supply chain. Although it continued to face strong competition from major national chains such as Woolworths, Coles, and Aldi in supermarkets, and Bunnings in hardware from the adjacent towns. The strategy that has been followed by The Co-op York is to focus on fewer business areas and to benchmark its profit margins across both the Supermarket and Hardware stores carefully monitoring the key financial metrics that enable the Company to operate profitably.

As discussed later, going forward the strategy is likely to include communicating in clear terms to members and the wider community a compelling MVP against which the performance of the business, and the board and management team, can be measured and held accountable.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Geography significantly influences human activity and shapes business behaviour and industry operations (Banerjee, Iyer & Kashyap, 2003). The impact of the natural environment on The Co-op York is best assessed in relation to the impact of the environment on the farming community that have traditionally comprised its membership. The severe drought that impacted the WA agricultural sector in 1914 resulting in an 80 per cent fall in grain production coincided with the outbreak of the First World War and followed closely on the heels of the demands from the RWU for increased wages. These events were the backdrop for the 1914 establishment of Wesfarmers, which in turn, prosecuted a deliberate campaign to establish a network of farmers' co-operatives across the Wheatbelt.

During the 1930s, the collapse in wheat and sheep prices that accompanied the Great Depression from 1929, was compounded by severe droughts that commenced in 1935 and lasted until 1940. This impacted the farmers within the York District. However, as discussed above, despite these environmental impacts, the Co-operative was able to trade successfully throughout the decade, issuing regular annual dividends and even rebates for the years 1936-1939.

Flooding and droughts also impacted the York District during the 1950s along with rabbit plagues. However, there is no evidence that this affected the Co-operative in any significant way. However, during the late 1960s it did evoke a declaration by Chair Peter Monger at the 1969 AGM that drought impacting the farming community, along with rising wages and services costs posed a risk to the Company's profitability. Drought hit the Wheatbelt again in the 1970s and there was an oversupply of wheat on global markets. This impacted the farmers significantly in the early 1970s, as did the removal of phosphate bounties that were important to farmers' overall profitability. In his annual report to the members, Chair Peter Monger stated,

"Unsatisfactory seasonal conditions and depressed prices for agricultural products plus extremely strong competition for a limited market have made the period under review a very difficult one. However, your Directors feel that the net profit of \$8,664 (approx. \$119,147 in 2023 dollars) is reasonably satisfactory" (P. Monger, Chair, YDC, 1970, p. 17).

This created financial challenges for the Co-operative with the Board deciding to replace rebates with bonus debentures from 1974 to 1979. Droughts impacted the Wheatbelt again in the early 2000s and there was a rising concern over global climate change. However, the most significant event was the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020-2021 that had a positive impact on The Co-op York due to the State Government's lockdown policies forcing the community to shop locally.

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

At the meeting held in the York Town Hall on 17 November 1917, organised to discuss the establishment of The Co-op York the inaugural Chair Warren Marwick spoke of the importance of farmers taking control of their future to avoid being forced to accept whatever prices more powerful incumbent buyers would impose upon them. His statement was,

“Things were getting more critical for the producer every day, and up to now it had been a case of pay what other fellow asks and smile. If the farmers can do better for themselves than the other fellow had done for them, then it was up to the farmers to move” (Avon Gazette, 1917, p. 3).

He noted the opposition from incumbent agricultural agents to the Co-operative's creation, adding that these people were not driven by the best interests of the country and were already well-off.

Basil Murray, Managing Director of Wesfarmers, highlighted its purpose was to benefit WA farmers and mentioned securing the contract for the 1917-1918 grain harvest from the State Government. Murray emphasised the need for farmers to eliminate the middleman, quoting Prime Minister Billy Hughes, and noted Wesfarmers' role in establishing around sixty co-operatives in the Wheatbelt to that date. He stressed that farmers would control the Co-operative, have local Directors on the Board, and keep all profits within the community.

From the historical record it can be ascertained that the Co-operative's purpose is to provide its member-shareholders and the wider community of York District, with a range of services that are more conveniently located. Additionally, the Co-operative keeps ownership and governance at the local level while maintaining local employment. Furthermore, it supports local community organisations and events, while returning value to both shareholders and customers via shopper loyalty vouchers. Although The Co-op York has not officially issued a purpose statement it can be implied from the “Company Profile” issued by the Co-operative, which states that,

“The objective in forming a Co-operative was to provide the township and it's surrounds with the full facilities as those that were available in the distant township of Midland and the nearby larger town of Northam” (YDC, 2022, p. 1).

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 in this historical case study CEO Glen Scott stated that after the “shake-up” involving the Property Developers in 2008, and following changes on the Board, and the refurbishment of the stores, the Co-operative was developing a clearer MVP for The Co-op York.

He also observed that the Co-operative had diverged from this in recent years and suggested a need to revisit the Co-operative's MVP and communicate it clearly to customers and shareholders. He noted that this remained a topic of discussion at the Board level. Glen mentioned that many

new Directors on the Co-operative Board were businesspeople who emphasized the importance of increased sales and profits. Glen Scott believed that while financial profitability was crucial, The Co-op York should also highlight its local community benefits and share a comprehensive view of its economic and social contributions with shareholders. As he explained,

“For instance, every year we do the financial report, and I put in the fact that we used a local freight contractor, and local fuel suppliers, that 99 per cent of the people that we employ are from the Avon Valley, and that this results in a significant financial return of around \$3 million back into the community” (G. Scott, CEO YDC, Scott, 2023).

Glen Scott suggested that the Co-operative should formalise an MVP and display it on signage within the stores, while communicating this contribution widely to customers, shareholders the wider community. He believed this would lead to increased patronage of the stores, with larger purchases and more active member-shareholders. Additionally, he noted the importance of the Board being aligned with respect to the vision for the Company's future.

Patronage role

The commitment and participation of a Co-operative's members in trading activities are crucial to its success and longevity. From its inception, The Co-op York successfully garnered active support from its members. Between 1917 and 1933, the Company functioned as both a producer and consumer Co-operative, handling farmers' grain supplies on behalf of Wesfarmers under the State Government contract for managing the annual wheat harvest. Furthermore, the Co-operative operated stores in York and Greenhills, providing farm supplies, groceries, and fuel, while also acting as an agent for Wesfarmers.

Over time, The Co-op York's patronage shifted from farmer shareholders to general customers. In the 1980s, improved retail facilities in nearby towns like Northam and Midland challenged local loyalty. As a result, the Co-op phased out rebates and dividends, replacing them with store rewards vouchers for all customers due to profitability concerns and the need to retain local shoppers. During the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020-2021, regional restrictions improved the Co-op's profitability as residents shopped locally instead of traveling. Since the lockdowns ended, the challenge has been retaining local customers' spending. To do this, the Co-op must strengthen its other roles discussed below.

Investor role

From its foundation, The Co-op York called its members "Shareholders," encouraging them to see themselves as investors. Dividends were paid from 1919 to 1989, with exceptions during financial struggles in 1968, 1986, 1991, 1997, and 1999. Rebates were regularly given but suspended during tight cashflow periods like the Great Depression and the 1990s. These rebates were eventually replaced with store loyalty vouchers.

Over the last twenty-four years, the Co-operative has shifted its focus from dividends and rebates to its wider community contributions. Annual reports now highlight how The Co-op York benefits the local economy through wages, local suppliers, contractors, sponsorships, and donations to community and sports groups. It should be noted that fundraising for the purchase of the Rural Trading Store site at 46 Avon Terrace was undertaken with the issuance of redeemable

preference shares to existing shareholders. This was successful demonstration of the investor's role within the shareholders of the Co-operative.

Ownership role

Promoting a sense of ownership within a co-operative is essential for maintaining members' engagement and loyalty. Historical records indicate that the sense of ownership among York Co-op members was generally strong. Although attendance at the AGMs varied, members actively participated in "General Business" sessions to ask questions of the Chair and CEO or raise concerns about issues such as prices, service quality, or store layout. Additionally, there was a readiness to provide positive feedback regarding the management and staff, as well as the Board.

Community of Purpose role

A strong sense of purpose and community is crucial for a co-operative's member commitment and loyalty. Evaluating member engagement with this purpose can be challenging. However, historical records indicate that York Co-op shareholders recognised its economic importance to their community and took pride in its local ownership.

As discussed above, the purpose for which The Co-op York was established in 1917 was to keep ownership, control, and financial returns within the local community, while providing the range of services required by the community. Although the range of services changed over time, the fundamental purpose for which the Co-operative had been founded has not changed.

Furthermore, as Mia Monger explained in relation to the Co-operative's social contribution to the community, the reference by the people of York to "going to The Co-op" or meeting someone "at The Co-op" reflected their recognition of the Co-operative as an important and valued member of the local community.

GOVERNANCE

The governance of any CME focuses on the composition, quality, and character of the directors of the Board. The composition of the co-operative's board informs the effectiveness of its operations. Throughout its history The Co-op York has enjoyed a committed and active Board, led by a succession of competent and professional Chairpersons. The long tenure of Warren Marwick and Peter Monger, who provided continuity for the first sixty-eight years of the Co-operative's history, served the Company well.

It can be seen from the historical record that The Co-op York engaged the services of competent Company Secretaries, and sought regular advice from third-party auditors, accountants, Co-operatives WA, and the State Registrar of Co-operatives when required. The use of special general meetings to amend the Co-operative's Articles of Association was also a sign of the Board's adherence to the Legislation and Regulations under which the Company operates.

In 2008, the Property Developers' bid to purchase and lease back the Co-operative's major assets prompted the Board to focus on financial sustainability. Despite having a Strategic Plan and training from the AICD in 2007, this "shake-up" improved the Co-operative's governance. It set the strategic trajectory of The Co-op York towards achieving profitability and ensuring that it could offer competitive retail services for the local community.

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 shown in the historical narrative, The Co-op York was generally profitable for much of its history, and despite some difficult times during the early 1930s, 1968, 1986, 1990s, its profitability did not become a major issue until the 2000s. The cost of upgrading the Supermarket, acquiring the Rural Trading Building at 46 Avon Terrace, and the new hardware store at 50 Avon Terrace, put pressure on the Co-operative's profitability.

As discussed above, the regular payment of dividends and rebates was a feature of the distributing policies of The Co-op York during much of its history. However, the cessation of dividend payments and rebates in favour of store loyalty vouchers over the past two and a half decades effectively shifted The Co-op York approach to profit distribution. Although it remains a distributing co-operative (e.g., one that issues dividends to shareholders), it is now effectively operating as a non-distributing co-operative.

RESOURCES AND PROCESSES

The resources and processes used in CMEs depend on the enterprise's nature and goals. The York Co-op has historically relied on its acquired property assets, including Monger's Stores, Greenhills store, Edwards Store, and other sites on Avon Terrace. Continuous maintenance and upgrades of these retail and storage facilities have been necessary to keep The Co-op York competitive. Other major resources have been the staff and management team hired to deliver the services offered by the Co-operative. In this regard, The Co-op York has had some long-serving and capable Managers and CEOs, as well as other managers and staff. Throughout its history The Co-op York has demonstrated that its employees make the difference between satisfied and unsatisfied customers.

In concert with the resources described above, The Co-op York has developed its processes. As a service provider, the Co-operative has adapted its approach to retailing. This has included the transition from service to self-service in the Supermarket, and the delivery of fuel, groceries and farm supplies to the customer. Additionally, the Co-operative has restructured its retailing operations, and its approach to financial management. These changes to processes have assisted in securing greater efficiency and bringing the business operations into profit and best practice benchmarking.

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. Over the past 107 years, The Co-op York has focused on providing its members and the wider community, with goods and services that are competitive in price, quality, and availability to those that could be acquired from adjacent towns such as Midland and Northam. The distribution of dividends and rebates to shareholders over much of its history also provided economic value to the members and their families.

In addition, The Co-op York has regularly contributed to the York District's economic well-being by keeping as much of the money spent at their stores within the local community. This has been assessed as contributing around \$2.3 million to over \$3 million per year since 2015 in the form of wages, payments to local suppliers and contractors, donations and sponsorships to local sport, community and events, and discount vouchers to loyal customers and shareholders. Moreover, historically, the Co-operative has made significant contributions of this kind annually since its foundation in 1917.

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).

Throughout its history, The Co-op York has provided a focal point and networking hub for the local farming and associated community within the York District. Since 1917 the Co-operative has had eight Chairs, thirteen Managers/CEOs, and hundreds of employees drawn from the local community. By providing a meeting place for the community, as they come to town to shop and transact their business, The Co-op York has served to strengthen social capital. It has also helped to keep services within the town and district that might otherwise have been lost to Northam or Midland.

KEY LESSONS FROM THE CO-OP YORK CASE

The history of The Co-op York 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 The Co-op York 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.
- 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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APPENDIX A: YORK CO-OP WITHIN THE CME RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Influencing Factors	Application to The Co-op York
<i>Systems-level inputs</i>	
Social co-operation	In 1917 the York District farming community had the resources, motivations, and mobilisation abilities to establish and sustain The Co-op York. This is consistent with the <i>Mutual Incentives Theory</i> (Birchall & Simmons, 2004). It was facilitated by the involvement of the FSA, Wesfarmers and Co-operatives WA, and led by prominent advocates for cooperative behaviour such as C. W. Harper, A. J. Monger, W. Marwick, and B. L. Murray.
Role of government	<p>The passage of the <i>Co-operative and Provident Societies Act 1903</i> (WA) followed by the <i>Debts Adjustment Act 1931</i> (WA), <i>Wheat Pool Act 1932</i> (WA), and <i>Bulk Handling Act 1935</i> (WA), provided a legislative framework that favoured both The Co-op York, and its members.</p> <p>The heritage listing of the Shire of York as a ‘notable town’ in the 1970s boosted tourism, but also resulted in additional costs and restrictions on The Co-op York’s main store at 138 Avon Terrace. Lockdowns of regional areas imposed in 2020-2021 by the WA State Government during the COVID-19 pandemic helped to boost The Co-op York’s profitability as the community had to shop locally.</p> <p>Collaboration between The Co-op York and the Shire of York has been important to both parties. The redevelopment of the 142 Avon Terrace site into a carpark, mall, and community garden, in 2024-2025 is a good example.</p>
Industry structure	Throughout its history The Co-op York has operated across several different industry sectors. However, as a consumer co-operative its retail operations have been subject to competition from adjacent towns such as Northam and Midland. This impacted The Co-op York’s profitability from the 1980s and became worse until the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.
Natural environment	Initially, as a farmer-owned business The Co-op York has experienced challenges caused by the impact of droughts, floods, and the infestation of vermin on the local farming community. This has affected the overall business that the farmers transacted with the Co-operative during difficult times.

Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU)

York and District Co-operative Ltd. – Proudly serving the community since 1917



Influencing Factors	Application to The Co-op York
	<p>The geographic location of York places it into competition with adjacent towns such as Northam and Midland. These towns offer a larger range of retail opportunities and with many York residents working in these other centres, the attraction of shopping outside the York District draws away local customers.</p> <p>The loss of population within the Shire of York, caused by the restructure of the farming community in the 1980s and 1990s, reduced the overall volume of customers for The Co-op York's stores. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was a net positive as it boosted sales during the State Government imposed lockdown.</p>
<i>Enterprise-level factors</i>	
Purpose	The York Co-op's purpose is to provide York and the surrounding District, with retailing facilities that offer the same range of products and services as found in adjacent, larger, towns of Midland and Northam.
Profit formula	The York Co-op is a distributing co-operative that has paid dividends and rebates to its member-shareholders for most of its history. However, due to low or negative profits during the 2000s, it has ceased to distribute dividends and pay rebates. Instead, it has focused on issuing loyalty store vouchers to both shareholder and non-shareholder customers.
Processes	The York Co-op has developed its retailing and agency businesses over the years to provide the best quality products and services. It has focused on setting best practice benchmarks in customer service, pricing, product range and quality.
Resources	Over the years The Co-op York has relied upon its physical, financial, and human resources to deliver value to its members and customers. The ownership of retail premises in the town of York, and their continuous upgrading and improvement, have played a key role in the Company's success. The commitment and capabilities of the management and workforce of the Co-operative have also played a critical role in this success.
Share structure	As a Co-operative anyone can apply to be an owner-shareholder of The Co-op York. Shares cost \$2.00 each, with a minimum purchase of 100 shares. Each member has one vote, regardless of the number of shares owned.



Influencing Factors	Application to The Co-op York
Governance	<p>The power of the Board is subject to the Membership Rules and the <i>Co-operatives Act 2009</i> (WA). The York Co-op operates under its Articles of Association. Since its foundation in 1917 it has had only 7 Chairpersons and a tradition of returning its Directors to the Board at the end of their three-year terms, thereby encouraging continuity.</p> <p>Over the years the diversity of the Board broadened. This has seen the proportion of women on the Board increase, and the appointment of the first female Chair in 2021. The range of backgrounds among the Directors has also widened with cross-section of farmers, professionals, and business owners serving on the Board.</p>
Member Value Proposition	<p>Although The Co-op York has not publicly declared its MVP it has focused on emphasising that it offers high quality products and services to the York District community. In addition, it keeps the money spent in its stores within the community. They achieved this by employing locals, using local contractors and suppliers, rewarding customer loyalty, and providing sponsorships, donations, and support to events within the local community.</p>
<i>Member-level factors</i>	
Patron	<p>The York Co-op provides its member-shareholders and the community of the York District with a range of retailing and agency services that they would otherwise have to travel outside the district to obtain. In its early years, the Co-operative's services were focused specifically on the needs of the farmers. However, over time, most of its customers now come from non-farming backgrounds.</p>
Investor	<p>From 1917 to 1989, members consistently reinforced their investor roles, with dividends and trading rebates paid in most years until the 1990s. This role was especially evident in 2006-2007, when \$281,000 was raised from members through redeemable preference shares to build the York Rural Trading store at 46 Avon Terrace.</p>
Owner	<p>All active members of The Co-op York possess voting rights at general meetings. They can influence the Co-operative's activities and may nominate themselves for a Director position if they so choose. However, a challenge facing the Co-operative is getting its customers to become shareholders and commit more of their retail spend to businesses operated by The Co-op York.</p>



Influencing Factors	Application to The Co-op York
Community member	York Co-op membership is bolstered by a shared commitment to the economic growth and sustainability of York District. The York Co-op employs local people, uses local suppliers and contractors, and provides sponsorships and donations to community, sporting, and events groups in the local area.
<i>Systems-level outputs</i>	
Economic capital	In 2024 The Co-op York employed 71 staff and contributed approximately \$2.8 million back into its local community through wages, payments to local suppliers and contractors, and charitable donations and sponsorships. Over the past 107 years it has delivered significant economic benefits to the York District.
Social capital	Assessing social capital is complex, but The Co-op York is viewed by both the member-shareholders and the broader community in a positive light. The community speak of “going to the Co-op” or “meeting at the Co-op,” which demonstrates front-of-mind acknowledgment of the important role of the Co-operative.

APPENDIX B: YORK CO-OP DIRECTORS AND EXECUTIVES

York Co-op Chairpersons

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
1917-1954	Warren Marwick	Farmer/Politician
1955-1984	Peter Monger	Farmer
1985-1991	Nigel Fleay	Farmer
1992-2000	Robin Wavell Gentle	Farmer
2001-2008	Kenneth Charles Severson	Agricultural Consultant
2009-2014	Christopher "Chris" Joyce	Farmer
2015-2020	William "Bill" Wallace	Farmer
2021-present	Mia Monger	Farmer

York Co-op Executive Officers

<i>Term</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Job title</i>
1917-1953	Samuel Gordon Fisher	Company Secretary
1917-1922	Mr. E. T. Hick	Manager
1923-1935	Mr P. S. Cameron	Manager
1953-1954	Samual Gordon Fisher	Managing Director
1954-1955	George Neville	Manager
1955-1964	William "Bill" Fricker	Manager
1964-1968	Mr. Monnock	Manager
1968-1999	Cyril Screaigh	Manager/CEO/Secretary
2000-2002	Simon Glossop	CEO
2003-2008	John Partridge	CEO
2009-2025	Glen Scott	CEO
2025-Present	Megan Bateman	CFO and caretaking CEO

**York Co-op Directors (members of the Board)**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Clifton, C. R.	1917-1919	Farmer
Craig, W. T.	1917-1928	Farmer
Davies, S. B.	1917-1919	Farmer
Marwick, Warren (Snr)	1917-1955	Farmer/Politician
Monger, Alexander Joseph	1917-1945	Farmer
Scott, C. J.	1917-1919	Farmer
Fleay, F. W.	1918-1939	Farmer
Jager, W.O.	1918-1954	Farmer
Pinchbeck, J.	1918-1919	Farmer
Whitfield, E. G.	1918-1934	Farmer
Webb, S. R.	1918-1919	Farmer
Endersby, C.	1919-1921	Farmer
Burges, N. P.	1920-1950	Farmer
Seabrook, C. W.	1920-1927	Farmer
Marwick, T. Warren (Jr)	1921-1954	Farmer
Morrell, S. F.	1921-1956	Farmer
Lennard, D. W.	1927-1928	Farmer
Wheeler, R. J.	1929-1951	Farmer
Gault, W.	1939-1945	Farmer
Davies, L. T.	1942-1983	Farmer
Monger, Peter	1945-1984	Farmer
Fleay, Nigel D.	1957-1991	Farmer
Gentle, Robin Wavell	1973-2001	Farmer
Monger, Rodney Wyborn	1976-2002	Farmer
Edmonds-Hill, A. H.	1979-1980	Farmer
Fleay, R. G.	1980-1989	Farmer
Munckton, John S.	1984-2001	Farmer
Davies, G.S.	1984-1987	Farmer



<i>Name</i>	<i>Term</i>	<i>Occupation</i>
Marwick, Gordon. W.	1984-1992	Farmer
Springbett, J. H.	1985-1993	Farmer
Weeks, Eleanor Glen	1988-2002	Retired Farmer
Hansen, B. A.	1988-1994	Farmer
Penny, Graham Henry	1989-2001	Farmer
Kilvington-Guy, John	1991-2001	Accountant
Hall, H. I. E.	1991-1992	Farmer
Sevenson, Kenneth Charles	1996-2008	Agricultural Consultant
Renshaw, Anthony John	2000-2015	Business Consultant
Hay, John Garry	2000-2002	Property Developer
Keeble, Peter	2001-2002	Farmer
Joyce, Christopher "Chris"	2003-2016	Farmer
Roosendaal, John	2004-2014	Insurance Agent
Treloar, Brenda	2004-2021	Business Owner
Sherry, Delys	2005-2007	Accountant
Nicholas, Carol	2006-2007	Bookkeeper
Wallace, William "Bill"	2006-2023	Farmer
MacDonald, Sharon	2014-2020	Farmer
Keeble, Matthew	2014-2023	Farmer
Lehmann, Guy	2014-Present	Farmer
Monger, Mia	2015-Present	Farmer
Ashbury, Candessa	2018-2021	Farmer
Carden, Peter	2021-Present	Farmer
Dwyer, Joseph	2021-Present	Farmer
Connor, Natasha	2023-Present	Farmer

**APPENDIX C: YORK CO-OP. HISTORICAL TIMELINE 1829-2024**

<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
Pre-settlement	Pre-1826 – The Swan Coastal Plain and Avon Valley are the traditional lands of the Noongar Whadjuk and Ballardong people.
1826-1839	<p>1829 - Large-scale settlement commences with the arrival of Governor Sir James Stirling and a contingent of 1,100 British settlers seeking land. Accompanied by troops from the 63rd (West Suffolk) Regiment, commanded by Major Fredrick C. Irwin. Also arriving were Revett Henry Bland, affluent settler, and John Henry Monger, indentured servant.</p> <p>1830 – Ensign Robert Dale, of the 63rd Regiment, seconded to work with Surveyor General John Septimus Roe, explored the Avon River Valley inland from the Swan Coastal Plain, and discovered York. William Burges arrives in Fremantle.</p> <p>1831 – Settlement of the York District and Avon Valley commences. Governor Stirling appoints Revett H. Bland as the Resident Magistrate for York.</p> <p>1835 – Town of York formally gazetted.</p> <p>1837 – John H. Monger relocates his family from Perth to York and purchases land from Revett Bland. He establishes a hotel, and prospers through the hotel, sale of merchandise, and trading sandalwood. William Burges and brothers moves to York and establishes family property “Tipperary”.</p> <p>1839 – Violence between the settlers and the Noongar Ballardong people erupts with deaths on both sides. New Governor John Hutt replaces Stirling and seeks to reconcile relations between the settlers and the Noongar.</p>
1840-1849	<p>1840 – The York Agricultural Society (YAS) is established, which met quarterly at Mongers’ Hotel. William Burges plays key role in its foundation. John Nicol Drummond appointed as the Inspector of Native Police.</p> <p>1842 – The first York Courthouse was built.</p> <p>1843 – Richard Goldsmith Meares appointed District Superintendent of Police for York. York Race Club (YRC) is formed by Richard Meares, Revett Bland and William Brockman.</p> <p>1840s – Labour shortages impact farming. Sandalwood trade opens valuable export opportunity for York. YAS lobby for Convicts to alleviate labour shortages.</p>



Dates	Summary of events
1850-1869	<p>1851 – Convicts and Military Pensioner Guards arrive in York.</p> <p>1852 – Regular postal service between Victoria and Britain commences via P&O steamships operating from Albany. William Marwick arrives in Fremantle and moves to York to find work. He is employed by Burges family.</p> <p>1853 – Castle Hotel York constructed.</p> <p>1853-1854 – Convict depots are built at York, Toodyay and Guildford.</p> <p>1858 – Holy Trinity Church, York formally consecrated.</p> <p>1859 – St Patrick’s Church, York founded.</p> <p>1860s – Collapse of Sandalwood export trade in 1861. William Marwick is rescued by John Monger who hires him to supervise sandalwood cutters, and managed transport of wood from York to Fremantle. He builds a successful transportation business.</p>
1870-1899	<p>1871 – Establishment of the York Road Board.</p> <p>1872 – Edwards Store, 138 Avon Terrace, York built.</p> <p>1885 – Railway extended to York.</p> <p>1886 – Imperial Hotel constructed.</p> <p>1887 – Leasehold pastoral land replaced by freehold agricultural land ownership.</p> <p>1888 – Gold discovered at Southern Cross.</p> <p>1892 – Gold discovered at Coolgardie.</p> <p>1893 – Gold discovered at Kalgoorlie. York Post Office constructed.</p>
1900-1919	<p>1901 – Australia becomes a Federated Commonwealth.</p> <p>1903 – Passage of the <i>Co-operative and Provident Societies Act 1903 (WA)</i>.</p> <p>1909 – York Palace Hotel constructed.</p> <p>1911 – York Town Hall constructed.</p> <p>1912 – Farmers’ and Settlers’ Association (FSA) established.</p> <p>1914 – Wesfarmers established. World War One breaks out.</p> <p>1916 – Quairading Farmers’ Co-operative Co. Ltd. Established.</p> <p>1917 – York District Farmers’ Co-operative Co. Ltd. is founded. Warren Marwick becomes Chair, Gordon Fisher, Secretary, Mr. Hick Manager.</p> <p>Alexander Joseph Monger proposes the sale to The Co-op York of Mongers’ Store at 165-179 Avon Terrace. This is accepted.</p>



Dates	Summary of events
	<p>Opposition to the Co-op is expressed by William G. Burges in the local newspaper. Chair W. Marwick responds strongly triggering a letter writing campaign for and against.</p> <p>1918 – World War One ends. First formal Board of York Co-op appointed, Warren Marwick remains Chair.</p> <p>Inaugural Board includes A. J. Monger, S. R. Webb, Dr. S. R. Davies, W. T. Craig, E. G. Whitfield, W. O. Jager, C. R. Clifton, F. W. Fleay, and C. J. Scott.</p> <p>York Co-op commences receipt of wheat from local producers as agent for Wesfarmers.</p> <p>1919 – York Co-op purchases a further store in Greenhills. First dividend paid to shareholders.</p> <p>Criticism of The Co-op York continues in the local media and is met by Chair W. Marwick and numerous supporters.</p>
1920-1929	<p>1920 – Member complaints at York Co-op AGM over shortage of sugar at the Greenhills store. Chair Marwick and Manager Hick respond that sugar is in short supply across WA.</p> <p>1921 – Member complaints over prices at the Greenhills store emerge again at AGM of York Co-op, and why apples were sourced from Mt Barker Co-op rather than local York suppliers. Manager Hick explained that Mt Barker apples were of a higher quality, and the local suppliers had not paid for fruit cases rented from The Co-op York.</p> <p>1922 – Wheat Pool WA established.</p> <p>1927-1928 – Massive over production of wheat at global level impacts prices.</p> <p>1929 – US Stock Market Crash triggers Great Depression. Passage of the <i>Companies Act Amendment Act 1929 (WA)</i>.</p>
1930-1939	<p>1930 – impact of Great Depression on WA farmers is significant. York Co-op makes amendments to its Articles of Association to bring them into alignment with the amended <i>Companies Act</i> and allow The Co-op York to register with that legislation.</p> <p>1931 – Passage of the <i>Debts Adjustment Amendment Act 1931 (WA)</i> to help farmers facing bankruptcy.</p> <p>1933 – Establishment of Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd.</p> <p>1935 – Passage of the <i>Bulk Handling Act 1935 (WA)</i>, to provide CBH with a monopoly over wheat handling and storage.</p>



<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
	<p>1930s – York Co-op is a distributor for Texaco Super-Power kerosene and Power-Chief petrol.</p> <p>1939 – World War Two breaks out.</p>
1940-1941	<p>1940 – Secretary Gordon Fisher writes to shareholders no longer living in York to buy-back their shares.</p> <p>Government wartime rationing and price controls impact farmers’ profits. Meeting of Primary Producers’ Association is addressed by Warren Marwick as Chair York Co-op, and William Burges of the Royal Agricultural Society.</p> <p>1941 – York Co-op is robbed of £100 of chaff bags.</p> <p>1942 – York Co-op is broken into. Thieves use explosives in attempt to blow open a safe, but it jams the doors and they leave empty handed.</p> <p>1940s – Despite war time rationing, The Co-op York continues to distribute Texaco fuels and lubricants.</p>
1950-1959	<p>1953 – York Co-op changes its Articles of Association relating to the capital structure of the Company. Increasing its capital reserves.</p> <p>1954 – Peter Monger replaces Warren Marwick as Chair of York Co-op.</p> <p>1955 – William “Bill” Fricker becomes Manager, York Co-op.</p> <p>1956 – York Co-op acquires Edwards Store at 138 Avon Terrace.</p> <p>1957 – Member complaints at the 1957 AGM over the floor layout and customer service at the hardware store. Articles of Association were also amended to better define the meaning of “shareholder”.</p> <p>1950s – York Co-op acts as a distributor for Caltex (formerly Texaco) fuels and lubricants. Also, as a real estate agent for farming land on behalf of Wesfarmers. It also acts as an agent for Lightburn Ltd. selling “Lighting” concrete mixers and Lightburn washing machines.</p>
1960-1969	<p>1960 – Chair Peter Monger raises concerns over the performance of the Greenhills store and the Massey Ferguson machinery agency run by The Co-op York.</p> <p>1961 – York Co-op purchases the Macartney Street carpark adjacent the main Edwards Store. Also, the Drapery Department was enlarged along with cool rooms, and self-service was introduced into the Supermarket.</p> <p>1963 – The Greenhills store and grain sheds are sold by The Co-op York.</p>



Dates	Summary of events
	<p>1964 – The York Co-op moves its Supermarket, Drapery and Wesfarmers Agency into the Edwards Store at 138 Avon Terrace. Bill Fricker dies and is replaced as Manager by Mr. Monnock.</p> <p>1968 – Meckering earthquake impacts York and damages numerous buildings including The Co-op York’s store in Avon Terrace. Manager Monnock dies and is replaced by Assistant Manager Cyril Screaigh.</p> <p>1969 – Repairs to the Avon Terrace store are delayed due to a shortage of tradespeople.</p>
1970-1979	<p>1970 – York and Wheatbelt impacted by severe drought. York Co-op sells its house in Grey Street, York.</p> <p>York Co-op is robbed again by thieves climbing through a skylight and stealing clothing and cigarettes worth over \$1,000.</p> <p>1975 – York Co-op terminates its Caltex fuel agency. Manager C. Screaigh opens a “Denim Dungeon” in the cellar of the 138 Avon Terrace store.</p> <p>1977 – York is officially gazetted by the National Trust as a “notable town” due to its heritage status.</p> <p>1970s – York Co-op acts as an agent for Wesfarmers Kleenheat gas cookers.</p>
1980-1989	<p>1980 – York embraces tourism as a significant industry.</p> <p>The York Motor Museum opens and the York “Flying 50” race of vintage and classic cars becomes an annual event. The haunting event at the old York Hospital makes news.</p> <p>1985 – Nigel Fleay replaces Peter Monger as Chair, York Co-op.</p>
1990-1999	<p>1990s – Demographic change within the Wheatbelt results in a decline in farming population and farm workers. Remaining farmers have larger farms focused on broadacre cropping.</p> <p>1991 – Robin Wavell Gentle replaces Nigel Fleay as Chair, York Co-op.</p> <p>1994 – The York Co-op amends its Articles of Association to allow the repurchase of shares from inactive shareholders.</p>
2000-2009	<p>2000 – Manager Cyril Screaigh retires and is replaced by Simon Glossop as CEO.</p> <p>2001 – Kenneth Charles Severson replaces Robin Gentle as Chair, York Co-op.</p> <p>The Co-operative is organised into three separate operational divisions, the Wesfarmers Landmark store, Supa Value Supermarket, and Mitre 10 hardware store.</p>



Dates	Summary of events
	<p>Due to a deterioration in financial performance during the 1990s a review and reorganisation of the financial management systems of the Company are undertaken.</p> <p>2003 – John Partridge replaces Simon Glossop as CEO, York Co-op.</p> <p>2004 – Financial performance of York Co-op since 2000 delivers continuous losses. Major investments have been made into upgrading the stores.</p> <p>2005 – A Conservation Management Plan is commissioned by The Co-op York to help guide the future maintenance and preservation of the main building located at 138 Avon Terrace.</p> <p>2006 – York Co-op issues redeemable preference shares to members to raise \$281,000 for the construction of the York Rural Trading store at 46 Avon Terrace.</p> <p>2007 – York Co-op launches a new strategic plan.</p> <p>2008 – Ken Severson retires as Chair and is replaced by Christopher “Chris” Joyce.</p> <p>Property Developers propose to buy and lease back the Co-operative’s buildings. This plan is rejected by the Board and is a “shake-up” event.</p> <p>RSM Bird Cameron is hired to review the Co-operative’s financial management and established performance benchmarks.</p> <p>2009 – Glen Scott replaces John Partridge as CEO, York Co-op.</p>
2010-2019	<p>2010 – York Co-op borrows \$1 million from a bank to refurbish their stores.</p> <p>2011-2012 – York Co-op engages in refurbishment of its stores. This helps to attract and retain local customers, while developing a Member Value Proposition (MVP).</p> <p>RSM Bird Cameron continue to guide the financial management of The Co-op York’s stores, providing benchmarking across supermarket and hardware sectors.</p> <p>2014 – Chris Joyce retires as Chair and is replaced by William “Bill” Wallace.</p> <p>2017 – York Co-op celebrates its Centenary.</p>
2020-2024	<p>2020 – COVID-19 pandemic breaks out. State imposed regional lockdowns force York community to shop locally. This boosts the sales and profitability of The Co-op York.</p>



<i>Dates</i>	<i>Summary of events</i>
	<p>2021 – Bill Wallace retires as Chair and is replaced by Mia Monger.</p> <p>New Mitre 10 hardware store is opened at 50 Avon Terrace and the former Home Hardware store at 142 Avon Terrace is closed.</p> <p>2023 – Planning for the redevelopment of the 142 Avon Terrace site begins in conjunction with the Shire of York.</p> <p>2024 – The redevelopment of the 142 Avon Terrace site and Macartney Street into a community park and parking lot, mall commences.</p>

About the authors

Tim Mazzarol is an Emeritus Professor and Senior Honorary Research Fellow in Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Marketing and Strategy at the University of Western Australia and an affiliate Professor with the Burgundy School of Business, Groupe ESC Dijon, Bourgogne, France. He is also the Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurial Management and Innovation (CEMI), an independent initiative designed to enhance awareness of entrepreneurship, innovation, and small business management. He is also the founder Director of the Co-operative Enterprise Research Unit (CERU), a special research entity for the study of co-operative and mutual enterprises (CMEs) at the University of Western Australia. In addition, he is a founder Director and Company Secretary of the Commercialisation Studies Centre (CSC) Ltd., a not-for-profit mutual enterprise focused on advancing best practice knowledge of commercialisation. Tim is also a Qualified Practising Researcher (QPR) as recognised by the Australian Research Society (ARS). He has around 20 years of experience of working with small entrepreneurial firms as well as large corporations and government agencies. He is the author of several books on entrepreneurship, small business management and innovation. He holds a PhD in Management and an MBA with distinction from Curtin University of Technology, and a Bachelor of Arts with Honours from Murdoch University, Western Australia.

Amber van Aurich is a Research Assistant at the University of Western Australia where she is engaged in the UWA Business School supporting the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant project investigating the economic and social contribution of the co-operative and mutual enterprise (CME) sector to Western Australia. She holds a Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours from Edith Cowan University (ECU) majoring in History, Politics, and International Relations. She is currently a PhD Candidate at UWA School of Humanities where she is conducting a mixed methods study on identity-based spaces. Amber is experienced in qualitative research skills, including oral and local history, editing, and feminist theory, as well as skills in publicity, communications strategy, and event management for non-for-profit organisations.

Dr Bruce Baskerville is an APDI Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia (UWA) where he is engaged with CERU via the UWA Business School, and the UWA Centre for Western Australian History. A public historian, Bruce grew up on Western Australia's Batavia Coast amid stories of Dutch shipwrecks and convict ruins, and the windswept awe of the Dongara sandplains and Abrolhos Islands. For many years he has researched the ways in which old institutions are adapted and naturalised in new places, from the Crown to building styles, shared histories to commonage systems. This has given him an abiding interest in communal and co-operative models of self-governance and their historical roots.