

LIFE MEMBER

Roland M.W. Sumner

Dip. Wool, Wool Cert. (NSW), B.Agr.Sc., M.Agr.Sc., Ph.D.

Roland Martin Winchester Sumner was born in England, but reached these shores early in life. The son of an actuary, thoroughness with numbers might be hereditary. Roland brings thoroughness to everything!

Roland joined the Department of Agriculture in 1966 to train as a Wool Advisory Officer. He was awarded a Bachelor of Agricultural Science in 1967, a Master of Agricultural Science with First Class Honours in 1969 and a Diploma of Wool and Wool Classing in 1970, all from Massey University. By the time he completed this training the Department of Agriculture had been restructured and the Wool Division closed down! He transferred to the Research Division at Whatawhata Hill Country Research Station, near Hamilton, in 1969. He moved to New South Wales in 1972, obtained a Wool Certificate from the Department of Technical Education in 1976 while studying for a Ph.D. at the University of New England in 1978.

Roland presented his first paper to this Society in 1969 co-authored by his Master's supervisor George Wickham. He has presented a total of 34 first author papers, at least one every year since 1980 and co-authored 22 others. When Janine Dick won the Young Member Award in 1996, she was supported by a second author with meticulous design, good mentoring and guidance.

For this Society Roland served as Secretary 1996-2003, Vice President in 2004, President 2005 and Past President in 2006. As President, he organised sponsorship and an editorial panel for Occasional Publication 14 "Pastures and Supplements for Grazing". He was Editor in 1987 and 1988 and has been paid Editor since 2008. He has contributed an enormous amount of time and energy, and dragged his wife Rell in for the long haul to publish the Proceedings.

As a wool scientist, 44 out of 101 publications have wool in the title, others have shearing, bulk or fibre. His most significant contribution to science was on loose wool bulk. Like a terrier with a bone he investigated every possible environmental nook and genetic cranny and heaven protect anyone that wandered close to that bone. Scobie had the privilege of reviewing the culmination of that work and suggested it should go to a journal. Roland published it in our Proceedings in testament to his



regard for this Society. This work began in the early 1980s passed through the wool boom of the 1990s and came to fruition during the slide into the current malaise. An un-named processor currently acquires bulky wool at a premium alleged to be around \$1 per kilogram – a substantial advantage over prices of \$3/kg!

His other research interests in wool yellowing, frequency and timing of shearing, remain as enduring influences on the sheep industry.

Composites have less wool than Romneys and suit annual shearing, yet "second shear" prevails to manage wool yellowing, flystrike and monitor condition score during pregnancy, despite the cost.

Passion is an over-used word but it definitely applies to Roland. Rell can attest to the enthusiasm that required her keyboard skills, the family and the dining table to sort wool samples into the night. This passion extended to weekends when the Sumner's ran coloured sheep. Roland has a wool sample from every sheep for each year of its life in his shed. He co-owned Te Awa Wools which sold naturally coloured yarn, and held positions with the Black and Coloured Sheep Breeders Association between 1977 and 2002. He was assistant editor of their newsletter between 1992 and 2002, supporting Rell as Editor. Roland has been a member of the Massey Wool Association since 1978, on their Executive from 1993 to 2001, President from 1996 to 1998, and organised their 50th Jubilee Conference in 1997.

Sadly, there has been little recognition of these achievements. Roland was relieved of his duties at AgResearch Ruakura in 2005 in a manner familiar to members of this Society. Given his temerity, he has continued working on various contracts at Ruakura regularly ever since and continues to publish in his own time!

The Drysdale, Perendale and Coopworth breeds carry the name of their creator. The "Rolandale" or the "Sumnerworth" is called the "GrowBulk" because it grows bulky wool. In the future some may forget the creator. This breed ranks very well in the Central Progeny Test run by Beef and Lamb New Zealand.

As a living example of the objects of this Society we should feel proud to have Roland Sumner as a Life Member.

David Scobie and Andy Bray