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A Brief History of Calperum

The Calperum Homestead complex is situated on one of the oldest historical sites in the Riverland, the site formerly being known as Ral-Ral. As early as 1838 European drovers bringing livestock into South Australia used Ral Ral as a watering point and camping place.

Sheep and cattle men occupied the Calperum area from about 1846 under an annual license and in 1851, 14 year Pastoral Leases were issued, with the first pastoral lease issued to Albermarle Cator. This lease covered an area from Spring Cart Gully (upstream from Berri) along the river to the eastern border of the colony. The property became known as Chowilla, then...(p2)

Calperum News

Will be issued quarterly and it is intended to provide up to date information about Rotary at Calperum. Please let us have the stories and photos of your times at Calperum

Message from Chairman Bob

Welcome to this first edition of the "Calperum News".

For some time the Calperum Committee has been trying to improve communication with the Rotary Clubs in South Australia to encourage them to be active participants in the programmes based on Calperum Station.



Rodger Hedley (Norwood Rotary Club) offered to help with the publication of a regular newsletter containing articles and photos of some of the Calperum based activities, which are many and varied, and here we are with the very first edition

Calperum is now the base for many District 9520 youth activities, including the **Health of The River Forums**, the **Camp Calperum Programmes**, **RYWELL**, **Youth Exchange Schoolies Week**, **Euan Miller's International Student's Group**, **RYLA** and **ROTARACT** as well as hosting **District Management Committee meetings**, **PETS**, and various **Rotary Training Seminars**.

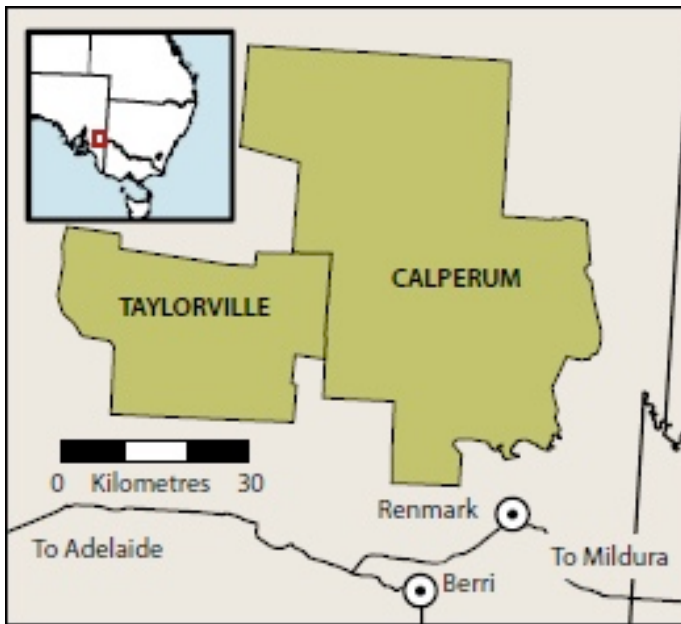
Above all Calperum is a place for Rotarians to meet as friends, enjoying the unique location and the quietude of the environment. It's a place for reflection, for planning, and for action.

Working parties provide the opportunity to get close to nature and more importantly Calperum provides a place where ordinary people, Rotarians like you and me, can contribute something towards making our environment a better, safer place for the generations that will follow.

Comfortable accommodation in Rotary House provides a pleasant base for Rotarians to escape from a metropolitan environment and encourages individuals to feel part of a family—the Rotary family

You are all most welcome.

B. A.



The Management Office on Calperum Station is located approximately 20km north of Renmark on the Wentworth Road.

The large complex includes management offices, workshops, plant nurseries and various types of accommodation.

Rotarians stay in a very comfortable house named after Rotary - "Rotary House".

Chowilla-Bookmark. In 1896 the property was divided into two separate properties: Chowilla and Calperum.

From 1896 John Holland Robertson held the Calperum lease until his death in 1909, the property remained in the family and was run by Robertson's wife and daughters up to the death of the last daughter in 1953. Colin Watson and Howard Martin co-leased the property until Watson was bought out and then Howard transferred the lease to his sons - Brenton, Eric and Chester. In 1979 Chester purchased his brothers property shares in the property which he sold in 1981 to Ken McNaughton.

In 1993 the property was purchased using funds provided by the Chicago Zoological Society and the Commonwealth Government.

The title was transferred immediately to the Office of the Director of National Parks via a Deed of Assignment specifying that the land be used for community involvement in restoration and conservation.

In 1996 the Australian Landscape Trust was established by the Ian Potter Foundation to extend the focus of natural resource management issues in the rural sector and the environmental, social and economic problems that resulted from these issues, onto an actual landscape scale.

In 1998 the Australian Landscape Trust negotiated a management agreement for Calperum Station and in 1999, with the assistance from the Natural Heritage Trust, it purchased the adjoining 92,000 hectare Taylorville Station.

In 2002 the Australian Landscape Trust, with the assistance of a number of organisations and individuals, built the *McCormick Centre for the Environment* in Renmark to be a resource centre for the local community.

Bookmark Biosphere

The concept of a biosphere reserve was developed by UNESCO in 1974. The purpose was how to deal with one of the most important questions the world faces today - *"How can we reconcile conservation of native species and biological resources with their sustainable use?"*

Calperum and Taylorville make up more than 35% of the Bookmark Biosphere Reserve (now known as the Riverland Biosphere Reserve), being one of the 14 biosphere reserves in Australia and part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. It was officially designated and listed by UNESCO in 1997 and extended in 1995.

Rotary's Involvement

The main environmental thrust of Rotary began when R.I. President, Paulo Costa, conceived the idea of "Preserve Planet Earth" in 1990 with the object of promoting awareness amongst Rotary Clubs and Rotarians of environmental issues and to increase the number of environmental projects undertaken by Rotary Clubs. Preserve Planet Earth (PPE) became a Joint District Committee with the involvement of Districts 9520 and 9500 and interest in environmental issues within these districts was expanded with the "Rotary's Native Bird Nestbox" (ROBIN) program and Australian Campaign for Rabbit Eradication (ACRE) program.



Beautiful flowering gum near the headquarter's main

A Very Brief Rotary History

The Rotary Club of Blackwood first became involved with Calperum in 1996/97. Coincidentally this was the year club member John Jackson was the District 9520 Governor. Blackwood was one of the first Rotary Clubs involved and is the club that has maintained contact from the beginning, remaining a major supporter, both in a financial sense as well as by logistic support and organisation.

The first ten years were difficult and beset with management problems until the appointment in 2007 of Dr. Grant Whiteman as General Manager of Australian Landscape Trust operations in the Riverland.

The Rotary Club of Blackwood commenced regular trips to the Station in 2003 and in the period 2006/7 to 2009/10 all of the seven clubs in Group 5 were motivated to join in on a regular basis. Since that time many other clubs from District 9520 and now District 9500 have become involved.

Calperum and Taylorville total about 405,000 hectares (one million acres), with the Headquarters located quite close to Renmark, and situated alongside Ral Ral Creek. The management of the property is now in the hands of the Australian Landscape Trust.

Why is Rotary Involved?

Calperum's permanent staff consists of five people that includes the manager, a senior ecologist, an administration manager and two field officers. It is impossible for this group to physically maintain such a large property, and the successful operation of the Station depends entirely on volunteer support.

Please send an article and photos of your club's Calperum experience to Rodger Hedley rghedley13@gmail.com

“Ad hoc” visits started in 1995, which were more short-term “weekend” projects. In addition, there were also localised educational camps supported by the Riverland Rotary Clubs.

In 2010/11 volunteers from all sources worked over 10,000 hours.

In 2007 with the appointment of Dr. Grant Whiteman as the manager of Riverland Operations for the Australian Landscape Trust, a planned series of working parties was commenced and continues to this day.

In 2011 District 9520 had 13 Clubs involved, and regular working parties were then scheduled for the standard April to November working period.

The Rotary Tasks

The task of regeneration and preservation of ecologically valuable land is huge and the resources are limited. Calperum relies on volunteer labour to operate under the guidance of a small but highly experienced and enthusiastic management group initially headed up by Dr. Grant Whiteman and now continued by Dr. Peter Cale.

Activities by Rotarians and friends include: *Seed collection, Plant propagation, Salinity checks on the creeks and lakes, Monitoring of flora and fauna, Protecting native plants and animals, Re-vegetation, Track clearing and mapping, Fence removal, Building maintenance and Arid zone garden development.*

Accommodation

Calperum has given Rotary the priority use of the “Homestead”, now known as “Rotary House”. This provides comfortable accommodation for up to 10 people with five large bedrooms. The “Leader’s Room” contains a double bed and an en-suite bathroom, and the other bedrooms each contain two single beds.

A fully stocked kitchen along with dining and lounge areas also support making a working party visit a memorable social occasion. Additional accommodation is available for larger parties.



Jan Arnold (Blackwood) making use of the generous kitchen



Blackwood & Norwood Rotarians outside Rotary House

Scheduled Visits

Calperum staff supported visits are planned for midweek, when re-vegetation sites are the focus.

Weekend visits can be arranged but these generally need to be self-supervised.

Working Parties can be of whatever duration a club can manage, and can range from two to five days.

Opportunities for extended Rotary Service Projects

Calperum encourages participation by community and education groups and offers the use of its facilities for all of Rotary's Youth Programs such as RYLA, RYPEN, RYWELL, Youth Exchange, Health of the River, Interact, Rotaract etc.

Already several District Management Committee meetings have been held at the Station.

Calperum is eager to continue working with Rotary in the medium and long term to establish major educational programs at the Station, and develop specific projects that demonstrate sustainable living with arid zone domestic gardens, utilizing research based decision and actions applicable to the geography and geology of the Arid Zone Mallee country and the flood plain.



Barbara Saunders (Norwood) working in re-generated grasslands



Blackwood & Norwood Rotarians relaxing after a good day



Loading cut Mallee timber from a recently made fire break

**Rotary needs you at
Calperum**

Please get involved

This presents a unique opportunity for Rotary to partner with an organization that is internationally recognised as a leader in science and in practical research in the joint endeavour to explore and create new and innovative ways towards a sustainable environment.

There are now about 26 Clubs with some Calperum "Working Party" experience. Opportunities exist for a rewarding club project that ticks all the boxes of fellowship and service.

Chairman Bob's Story of his Calperum Connection

In 2002 I became a member of the Rotary Club of Blackwood and was invited to join the District's Preserve Planet Earth committee.

Looking through the list of interests the committee was engaged with I was intrigued to see the words "Bookmark Biosphere" - something I had never heard of. I was told it was a project on an old sheep station near Renmark, and that shortly after it was established in 1995 a group from our Club had spent some time helping place signs on some of the tracks.

The general inference was that it was pretty "daggy", but worth a look.

Jan and I arranged a visit and to our surprise found a large complex situated close to the Ral Ral Creek, and certainly NOT "daggy". We found out that the original Blackwood working party had been to the Oak Bore outstation (not the main headquarters area) and the Oak Bore, some 65km north. The old Oak Bore outstation was a bit "daggy" by comparison, but this has since had some great restorative work completed and is now used by various conservation groups visiting and working in the area.

This was the start of the organised working parties, a programme that has not only continued but grown substantially to the operation we now all take for granted.

Up until 2012 Jan and I organised the programme, working closely with Calperum's senior staff, Manager Dr Grant Whiteman and Administration Manager Karen Brown, and it was because of their encouragement, support and unfailing enthusiasm that the whole project succeeded.

As the programme developed it became obvious that Jan and I needed help to continue and the Calperum Committee was formed in August 2012.

The committee contains two sub-groups. One is committed to running the working parties, convened by Elliott Dwyer, and the other concentrates on education, science and youth programmes, convened by PDG Dick Cuttle. The whole committee focusses on future developments. Mention must be made of David Gooley who for two years spent a great deal of time at Calperum and became (and continues to be) the committee's man on the spot.

The Committee works well and a succession plan for the next six years is in place.

What started off as a Blackwood Club project has become a major asset for Rotary in South Australia, and I look forward to the next phase of development, the success of which depends entirely on Club participation and support.

This first edition of the "Calperum News" so capably edited by Rodger Hedley, illustrates what will be the major source of information for all interested Rotarians.

Thank you all for your support both at Club level and on a personal level. Long may it continue.



Chairman Bob Arnold and Jan, Rotary Club of Blackwood

Chairman Bob



**Opportunities abound
for club members, family & friends
to be part of this unique
environmental experience,
to contribute in valuable and
practical ways and to enjoy a
memorable time of
Rotary fellowship**

For booking arrangements

Contact

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Further information

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(08) 8278 2609

Rotary Calperum Programs

- Rotary Club Work Parties
- Health of The River Forums
- Camp Calperum Programme
- RYWELL - Rotary Youth Wellbeing
- Youth Exchange Schoolies Week
- International Student's Group
- RYLA - Rotary Youth Leadership Awards
- ROTARACT
- District Management Committee meetings
- PETS - President Elect Training Seminar
- Rotary Training Seminars

Contacts

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