

LINCOLN COLLEGE CENTENNIAL AWARD 1987

D.J. DAVISON



Don Davison's first association with Lincoln College was as a student in 1965-66. In those days he was known to most students not for his farming activities but for his enterprising rugby while playing for the College First XV.

Don's first-hand experience as a Lincoln student has always shown through in his empathy for the needs and feelings of visiting student groups. The College recognised this and it was only 2 years after he started farming on his own that Don hosted his first student field visit in 1969 by which time he had established himself on 202 ha of light dryland at Te Pirita, Canterbury. It was in this phase of Don's farming activities that those who visited remember him as an excellent exponent of the dryland sheep philosophy. Corriedale and Border Corriedale ewes

were bought in, a high lambing percentage was achieved and their progeny were off the property as export lambs before the inevitable summer dry period. Don admits to being more enthusiastic about stock than tractor work and his thoughtfulness for, and consideration of, his stock always impress visiting groups.

With the depressed prices and rising costs of the early 1970s, the scale of Don's enterprise meant that off-farm work in the local freezing works was essential to supplement farm income. Even under these circumstances Don was happy to entertain student visits and freely discuss his activities. Some of his intimate knowledge and understanding of the lamb grading system and its ever-increasing ramifications stem from his first-hand experience at the works.

A few years ago Don was able to expand his farm area to 340 ha and irrigate a portion of it. This increased flexibility has given an added dimension to his livestock activities. He is now actively pursuing the WX lamb option with a number of his lambs but is very quick to point out to students how essential it is to select suitable strains within both the Corriedale and Border Leicester if suitable lambs are to be produced.

Diversification has also led Don into deer, but a major expansion in numbers depends on a consolidation of the deer industry. Another example of Don and his wife Liz's diversified interests is their venture into the tourist industry. They provide high class on-farm hospitality for overseas visitors.

In recent years Don has not only continued to host major field trips with large student groups but he also serves as a Farmer Tutor. In this role smaller groups of students visit him on a regular basis which requires the development of a major personal involvement with these students. Don with his easy, yet confident manner has readily established these close contacts.

It is for this support to Lincoln College and its students that Don Davison has been awarded the 1987 Lincoln College Centennial Award.