



## Bruce Henderson – Award Citation – 13 October 2015

In 2014 - to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the incorporation of Ashburton Lyndhurst Irrigation Limited - the Directors introduced an award to recognise outstanding service to the Company and/or any significant contribution to the progression of irrigation in our community.

The inaugural recipient was George Brown – a company director for an unrivalled 23 years. His citation is now posted on the Company website – as will be any future citations.

We are proud this year to recognise the significant contribution made by the late Bruce Henderson.

The Director's unanimously agreed to present his year's award to Bruce at our meeting of 24 August. We were aware that Bruce's health was failing and it was unlikely that he would be strong enough to attend the AGM – so we arranged to present the award to him personally on the day of our September board meeting – unfortunately Bruce died on the 30<sup>th</sup> August.

Tonight I have the privilege to read Bruce's citation and present the award to the family.

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Frank Henderson (Bruce's father) served for New Zealand in WW1 and on his return he took up a dry land Soldier Settlement Block of 279 acres at Pole Road, Lyndhurst around 1920.

Bruce was born in 1929 and grew up watching his parents and neighbours struggle through the difficult and dry years of the depression – but also keeping one eye on the beginnings of irrigation in our region, with the construction of the Rangitata Diversion Race as a Government Works Project to create employment from the late 1930's onwards.

The first water delivery to the Lyndhurst district from the RDR commenced in 1948 and as a young and energetic 19 year old – Bruce fully embraced the opportunity. To quote Bruce from a 2007 interview he said – “in 1948 I got stuck into everything, watering everything”.

In the early years the water was mainly applied by wild flooding and was a very manual process involving long hours moving sheets, often through the night.

Bruce married Chris Small in 1954 and took over ownership of the farm from his parents in 1955. Gradually they border-dyked the whole property and set up gates to replace the heavy sheet work.

Bruce actively experimented with water application techniques and discovered gains to be made from watering crops at flowering and head fill. The fertility of the dry plains soils improved and the irrigation enabled "two-crop" farming such as lambing ewes in September, selling the lambs in November and then growing a crop of linseed.

Bruce was an active member of Methven Young Farmers Club and in 1966 was awarded the South Island A.C. Cameron Memorial Award which is presented to former YFC members for demonstrating excellence in farming, innovation, leadership and community involvement. He later became vice-president of the Methven Federated Farmers and was a farmer committee member of the Ashburton Lyndhurst Irrigation Scheme when it was administered by the Ministry of Works prior to 1989.

Bruce was also a pioneer in the practice of minimum tillage and direct drilling from the late 1970's and received a "Conservation Tillage Award" in 1981.

Throughout his life Bruce was a great proponent and supporter of irrigation- sometimes being sought out to speak to groups of farmers in other districts about the long term benefits of developing their own irrigation schemes.

Along with huge support and commitment from his wife Chris, they were able to expand their land holdings to allow all 4 sons to farm independently on their own account.

The wider family are now some of the Company's larger shareholders and Bruce's commitment to farming, irrigation and the community has now passed to the next generation.

Bruce was one of our last shareholders who witnessed the district prior to irrigation, the construction of the scheme, the start-up of the scheme and the on-going development of the scheme up to today's advanced piped and pressurised system.

We are pleased to recognise Bruce as one of our true pioneers – and I would like to finish this citation with another quote from his 2007 interview – "The water coming on has altered the whole district. It has altered my life and if it wasn't for the irrigation I might have never been farming. There is no doubt that it was outstanding when the water came on "

We now salute you Bruce and I ask Chris Henderson to come forward and receive the trophy on his behalf.