



## **ALIL – George Brown Citation**

2014 marks 25 years since the incorporation of Ashburton Lyndhurst Irrigation Limited.

To mark to occasion the Directors have elected to create an ongoing outstanding service award.

The award is to be presented on an irregular basis at the discretion of the Directors to mark outstanding service to the Company and the progression of irrigation in our community.

Over the years many people have made huge contributions to the progression of our co-operative company – whether they be directors, staff or shareholders – this award has been created to recognise these individual contribution's – of which there have been many.

The recipient of this the inaugural award – is George Brown - who served as a director for 23 years.

I would just like to read a short citation that will give you some background to the formation of the Company and George's contribution.

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Prior to 1989 the Ashburton Lyndhurst, Mayfield Hinds and Valetta Irrigation schemes, along with the RDR were owned by the Crown and administered by the Ministry of Works.

The irrigators on the Ashburton Lyndhurst scheme were represented by the Ashburton Lyndhurst Irrigation Association – a group of farmers who met with the Ministry of Works annually to discuss operational issues and set the annual charges.

George and Lucille Brown moved into the district with the purchase of 27 ha on Mitcham Road in 1983 and this was subsequently increased to 40 ha and developed into a deer farm. They farmed deer on this property for 30 years along with George being a full-time accountant and director of Brophy Knight Limited in Ashburton.

George was asked to join the Irrigation Association in the late 1980's – and it was around this time that the Government of the day were becoming dissatisfied with its irrigation investments, which were being run at a loss under the management of the Ministry of Works. They complained that they were effectively “subsidizing” the farmers and wanted the farmers to take the scheme's over.

A committee was formed to negotiate with the Crown and this included John Morris, Alan Grant, John Roadley, George Brown and Mark Lemon – with Laurence Cooney engaged as legal counsel.

An independent valuer was appointed to assess the value of the scheme and it should be noted that in general the schemes were in a rundown state and no easements existed on almost all the races.

The committee knew they could run the scheme more efficiently than the Crown and after extensive negotiations including a number of representations to Wellington – a favourable outcome was achieved – but only in the nick of time. The scheme was purchased from the Labour Government with the contract signed by David Caygill (ironically now an Ecan commissioner) just one day before a General Election that saw Labour removed from office.

The five committee members who negotiated the purchase became the first board with John Morris as Chairman and George Brown as Secretary. The Company was incorporated on 22 September 1989 with farmers subscribing for shares (2/ha) to fund the start-up capital required to get the business operational - such as employ staff, buy plant and machinery and funding easements and legal work (water supply agreements)

The early meetings would be held at John Morris' home starting at 7 pm and often running through until midnight – once or twice a month.

Ashburton Lyndhurst also took over the operation of the RDR as well as its own scheme and Roger Stoker was appointed both ALIL and RDR Manager. The early racemen included Bevan Smith, Wally Campbell and Ross Spicer – soon to be followed by Noel Green.

The main objectives of the first Board were to get costs lower than the Ministry of Works, run the scheme efficiently and satisfy the farmer's needs. Main races were cleaned and upgraded, rosters changed and gating improvements were made. RDR also made operational efficiencies.

The 1990's saw River Management Plans being introduced – where all stakeholders were asked to agree on how local rivers should be managed. Many hours were put at meetings to protect the interest of the shareholders which often ran along the lines of "The Irrigators versus The Rest"

Throughout this time on-farm efficiencies were promoted such as wide borders and grazing of races etc.

The early 2000's saw two big challenges for the Company – these being the proposed water storage at Blowing Point and the RDR consent renewal.

The water storage project failed in the face of a huge capital requirement and a strong environmental lobby. The RDR consent renewal, largely driven by Mark Lemon and Will Nixon, had a successful outcome of a 35 year renewal from January 2007. It is this consent renewal success that has facilitated the capital raising for the existing and present piping projects

Around this time the groundwater zones were classified by Ecan as over-allocated and red-zones introduced. Irrigation New Zealand emerged from recess strongly through this period and they began promoting even more efficiencies.

The development of overhead spray irrigation rapidly started to replace the borderdyke's. The stage one piping proposal commenced around 2008 – it was ground-breaking thinking in New Zealand at the time - eliminating both water losses and energy cost. George recalls shareholders took some convincing of this concept with the proposed debt funding being a considerable step for the Company.

While regarded as a bit of a learning curve – stage one piping was deemed a resounding success and has led us onto the current stage two upgrade – being the biggest project in the history of the Company since the RDR was built in the 1930' and 40's.

George Brown served this company in a governance role for 23 years – an unparalleled achievement that is unlikely to be repeated.

He joined like-minded farmers to bring a vision of ongoing improvement to the Company along with the courage to try new ways and a determination to protect the interest of its shareholders.

Much of this commitment was made for little personal financial gain but to benefit the shareholders and the community as a whole. He could not have made such a contribution without the support of Lucile who kept the farm running in his absence and we acknowledge her significant indirect contribution.

Along with all the high level achievements – George is equally proud of the fact that during his 23 years involvement there had never been a bad debt and that the governors and staff had all got along well.

We all salute your achievements George and ask you to come forward and receive this memento from the Company.