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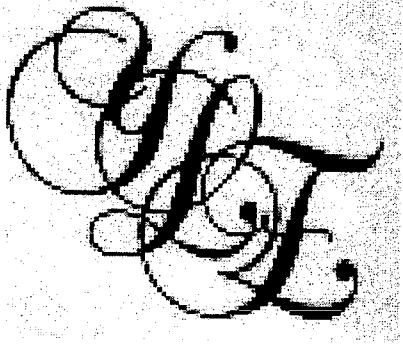
The Australian Lavender Growers' Association

(T.A.L.G.A.)

The Last Decade



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The Last Decade.

It gives me great pleasure to be back here in Bombala, ten years on. Thank you for the invitation to make the opening presentation covering the background, foundation and then the growth and development of The Australian Lavender Growers' Association – T.A.L.G.A. This is a subject dear to my heart, and I do feel really proud of so many people in this Lavender Industry who have given so many hours of their time, in a voluntary capacity, to grow and develop this Association. Those of you who have been on this Committee will know how many dedicated, unpaid hours have been given to T.A.L.G.A. – and with great results both in Australia and Overseas.

Many growers across Australia have now developed a professional business. Firstly, I want to take you back 25 years, to 1980, when I found I could not buy over 100 lavender plants in Australia – they had to come in from overseas. A Lavender Nursery at that time would have gone broke.

Back 20 years to the opening of Yuulong to the public in 1985. Bridestowe Lavender Estate in Tasmania had been operating for over 80 years, but they did not sell their specifically developed plants nor any allied lavender products. Yuulong was a property on the mainland where you could buy plants, try lavender culinary products and purchase lavender craft.

Visitors began to show an active interest in the possibility of growing lavender themselves.

In 1989 the first Newsletter of the newly formed Ornamental Plant Collections Associations (OPCA) based at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne printed an article on the Lavender Collection at Yuulong –there were then 14 different lavenders.

In this article I suggested that we should take tentative steps towards forming some sort of Lavender Association commenting that "Maybe one day there will be a group exchanging information around the world."

This concept was encouraged by the visitors and those coming to Seminars at Yuulong. We started taking the names and addresses of all those who might be interested in joining an Association. These were filed away State by State and the numbers grew to over 100.

In July 1993, the British Herb Trades Association organised a meeting at Norfolk Lavender, hosted by Henry Head. Susyn Andrews, Senior Horticultural Taxonomist at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, gave a presentation on the problems of identifying lavenders, the varieties and their characteristics.

Following this meeting The Lavender Bag was born, a twice yearly publication edited by Joan Head (no relation to Henry Head). The first issue came out in May 1994 and still continues as a great reference for lavender lovers.

Joan Head was most enthusiastic about the possibility of forming a Lavender Association and offered to promote any groups or conferences arranged in Australia.

Two months later, with swelling folders from each state in Australia asking to be contacted if any groups were formed, I flew across to New Zealand to give five Seminars from Kerikeri in Northland, down to Auckland and Peter Carter's Ploughman's Garden and Nursery then to Virginia McNaughton in Christchurch, in the South Island.

We had several discussions about the possibility of founding an Australasian Lavender/Group/Association with the possibility of Virginia being the Secretary- she had the computer skills, and the Treasurer and President coming from Australia.

These Trans-Tasman link ups did not come to fruition, principally because of distance.

Ian and Leslie Corrie from Elmore were actively interested in forming a group and persisted during 1994 that Yuulong be used as a base to launch a Lavender Association. Ian (former Company Secretary) offered to be Secretary and Lesley (Tax Agent) offered to be Treasurer.

Informal discussions were held during the year. Those first tentative steps took five years to become a stride and in early 1995 plans were made to commence formal meetings.

We obtained the assistance of Mr. Don Gresswell, the Business Facilitator for the Moorabool Shire, to guide us through the Model Rules for forming an Incorporated Association.

A steering committee was set up for this first formal meeting on 13th June 1995. Present were Rosemary Holmes (Yuulong) Edythe Anderson (Yuulong) Steven Conroy (Staff) Mt Egerton, Glen Heyne (3AW Radio announcer- Daylesford) Lesley Corrie (Elmore) Ian Corrie (Elmore) and Don Gresswell. Don has taken an active interest in the growth of TALGA over the past ten years and you will know him as our Returning Officer for the Committee elections each year. At this meeting it was agreed unanimously to form an Association and that the name of this association be The Australian Lavender Growers' Association. Further more this association was to be Incorporated.

The constitution as set out by the Associations and Incorporation Act 1981 Victoria was used as a Model. This constitution complied with all State and Federal requirements.

Full membership would be \$25.00 and an Associate member \$15.00. This was later changed to \$50.00 Full member and \$25.00 Associate member as the general consensus was this would be a more practical working structure.

Glen Heyne provided a sample copy of a journal which it was agreed to name The Good Oil.

It was agreed that the first Annual General Meeting be held at the Yuulong Lavender Estate on Saturday December 2, 1995 at 2pm.

Objects of the Association were agreed on and the next meeting was scheduled for "River Bend" Elmore on July 4th at 11am.

Mid year a telephone call came from Jo Walcott at Bombala asking if I would speak at a Lavender Conference they were arranging for 1-2 September that year. This was great news and when I explained we had formed a Lavender Association, she suggested we formally launch this at the Bombala Conference, which was practical and an ideal opportunity.

The steering Committee agreed to produce 300 sample copies of the journal with 200 to go to the Bombala conference. This National Conference was an outstanding success with 200 people coming from many states in Australia.

Prior to the Annual General Meeting of TALGA in the December of that year, the files came out with the names for notification if an Association was formed. Spread out over the sitting room floor, three of us sat down to address and stamp the envelopes and enclose the notes about the formation of TALGA and the forthcoming AGM at Yuulong.

411 letters were posted out with the state breakdown as Vic. 280, NSW 59, SA 27, WA 23, Q 12, Tas 5 and ACT 5.

Membership was currently 45 Full members and 12 Associates. Some people had gone in another direction; some were as enthusiastic as they had been in previous years.

Edythe and I, together with Ian and Lesley Corrie funded that first year for the Steering Committee – the staff wages from Yuulong, the telephone bills, postage and travelling expenses. We believed that the Lavender Industry in Australia had a viable future and could be assisted by the formation of a National body.

All membership forms sent out requested information about each member's involvement in the industry.

The Certificate of Incorporation was received, the Statement of Purpose was finalised and the term Non-Profit Organisation was added to the Articles of Association. A name stamp was purchased and membership cards were printed. The Editor decided we needed to change the format of the magazine to The Goode Oil (now with an e) and to an A4 instead of the A5 we had done for the sample copies.

A Commonwealth Bank account was opened at Rochester, signatories being the President and Treasurer. and much discussion was needed re the Budget for the rest of the year. The Statement of Purpose and Constitution had to be filed with Corporate Affairs and the number of potential members from all states was now 244.

Guests for the Inaugural AGM were agreed on and Media contacts made. The Federal Member for Ballarat Mr. Michael Ronaldson agreed to Chair the AGM, Yuulong was chosen as the venue so visitors could also look at the Lavender Collection. Grants were discussed bearing in mind the need for Job Creation, Import Replacement, Export Enhancement and Competitive Manufacturing. Mr. Tim Denny of Bridestowe Estate agreed to offer his services as a Consultant for the Association and Tim's Tips were a regular feature in the early days of the magazine.

Before this Inaugural AGM we thought we should offer the visitors some Information programme (some were coming from as far as Western Australia). We invited Elspeth Swan a Horticulturalist from Mt. Egerton, Greg Cahill from the Department of Agriculture in Bendigo and Julie de Hennin who was currently growing lavender at Talgarno in northern Victoria, and Don Gresswell as Facilitator to present an Agricultural Seminar relating to the business of Lavender.

We had one lengthy meeting to discuss what we believed were essential operational areas for committee members to be involved with in the future, so the work load would be evenly distributed.

The following areas were identified-

1. Technical Information.

Production of a slide, photographic and magazine Library(Australian and Overseas).A card index of plants. A pressed flower collection. A data base of technical information on lavender, its identification and classification. A video on growing lavender. Linking to the Internet and Plant Variety Rights.

2.Membership.

Membership promotion. Membership certificate. Membership of allied nurseries. A Secretariat.

3.Training and Development.

Establish and list Consultants.Organise workshops and seminars. Organise conferences in all states. Prepare a video on the "Basics" of growing.

4. Quality Assurance.

Work with suppliers and propagators both wholesale and retail to ensure correct plant labelling and identification. Work with suppliers of labels for the same purpose. Consult with Government bodies re types classified as "noxious weeds". Make buyers and sellers aware of the existing Australian Standard Specification for Lavender Oil AS K177-1967 and review if necessary.

5. Cultivation and Production Management.

Encourage work into tissue culturing. Examine characteristics of a typical cultivar, planting, size, management and harvesting schedules. Establish an index of best types of plants available in Australia for dried, cut and oil. Encourage and develop field trials.

6.Promotion and Publicity.

Get articles into print and electronic media. Promote advertising in The Goode Oil . Recommend prices for advertisements and build up buy and sell columns.

7.Marketing.

Establish a bank of information on domestic markets – where lavender is coming from, who is importing etc. Domestic potential for cut dried and heads. Investigate market co-ordination (as a co-op). Investigate export markets and establishment of a co-operative board.

Nominations began coming in for election to the committee. Nominees had to be Full Members of TALGA. At the close of nominations there was only one nominee for each of the first five positions, so no election was required.

Inaugural committee members were-

President – Rosemary Holmes

Vice-President- Dawn Baudinette,

Secretary – Ian Corrie

Treasurer – Lesley Corrie

Publications-Glen Heyne.

Committee – J.de Hennin and Jo Walcott.

.At the end of November 127 people had registered for the Inaugural AGM, many wishing to be foundation members of TALGA.

Marquees were set up in the Car Park on a magnificent sunny afternoon with no wind.

Following the Seminar, the Inaugural Annual General Meeting of The Australian Lavender Growers' Association Inc. commenced at 2pm on 2nd December 1995.

The Minister for Agriculture was present and following the formalities and as there was no formal business, Rosemary Davies, from the ABC Radio Gardening programme was guest speaker – and she wore a lavender dress!

The first Board Meeting of the newly elected committee took place later that afternoon with Liaison representatives for each state agreed and Operational Areas allocated to members. Discussion for the forthcoming International Conference agreed on 8-10th November 1996 in Ballarat, and the next meeting was to be held at Julie de Hennin's property at Talgarno, so we could look at her plantings. Development began on our Mission statement. Membership was now Full =89 and Associate 54.

So much discussion was needed to formulate the Association that we always met on a Friday evening, then all day Saturday and sometimes briefly on the Sunday.

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Apart from the usual venues we also met in the next few months at Dawn Baudinette's property in Portland and at the Ballarat Conference Centre.

We finally completed our Vision for the future, our Mission Statement and the Statement of Purpose.

Mr. Henry Head and his wife Gillian from Norfolk Lavender in England were to be in the region and he agreed to be our guest speaker at the Conference. We could not have afforded to bring them out from England and they were most generous with their time. Jane Edmanson from ABC Gardening (Television) agreed to speak and Tim Denny was to be available for any questions.

196 delegates attended this first International Conference, 12 from New Zealand and three from the United Kingdom. Dr Simon Charlesworth, Donderry Nursery in Kent flew out here for three days only and took about four months to recover from the trip!!

A similar format from this conference has been followed for the past ten years. Meeting on the Friday evening, workshops on the Saturday, a guest speaker on the Saturday evening and the AGM on the Sunday morning. It was voted at Ballarat to hold a conference the next year and at Lilydale in 1997, it was voted to hold a conference every year.

The majority of the membership were in Victoria and New South Wales, but as there were members in every state of Australia we decided to try and hold the Conferences in different regions each year.

1997 we really did try to have it in NSW but logistics brought us back to Victoria, to Mt Evelyn in the Yarra Valley, north of Melbourne.

This Second International Lavender Conference was held in November at York on Lilydale- titled Plant to Product it saw 158 delegates attend with 14 from overseas.

Senator Judith Troeth, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Primary Industries gave the opening address. A large laminated map of Australia was provided and members were asked to put a pin where there property was located. This gave the committee an overall picture of the lavender growing areas across Australia.

Regional area groups, under the banner of TALGA began to come together starting with the Far South West Lavender Growers' Group around Portland.

After four years "living TALGA" it was time for the next stage of growth and development with a new leader and Dawn Baudinette from Portland Bay Lavender Farm, with her skills in Training and Development, took on the role as President.

Early in 1998, Virginia McNaughton came across to Yuulong and gave a series of Workshops for about forty growers.

Joan Head, editor of The Lavender Bag, came to Yuulong for a few days and a luncheon was arranged for as many members of the committee as possible.

The Third International Lavender Conference moved to Canberra to The Chifley on Northbourne in November 1998. Titled "Expanding Your Horizons", there were some 15 qualified speakers covering information on Agri-Tourism, Planting, Soil Types and Plant types. 158 attended with 5 from overseas.

Mr. Tadao Tomita from Farm Tomita on Hokkaido in Japan was guest speaker, telling us he has over 700,00 visitors each year, mainly in June and July.

He had also begun a "Lavender Club" in Japan comprised of business people and within eight months he had 1500 members!

The end of October 1999 saw the Fourth International Conference go to Portland to be hosted by the Far South West Lavender Growers' Group." Lavender Links –Options and Opportunities" again saw Mr. Tomita telling us the story of the development of his lavender farm – his great empathy with lavender was inspirational.

192 delegates, 5 from overseas listened to Workshops on Aromatherapy, Oil Distillation, Business Plans and heard Virginia McNaughton and her husband Dennis Matthews talk on the New Zealand Oil Industry and launch Virginia's latest book titled "Lavender –The Grower's Guide".

During the year the committee dealt with Insurance and Business covers, implemented the TALGA website and TALGA became an Associate member of the Essential Oil Producer's Association of Australia.

Membership was now Full-229 and Associate -115.

The Fifth International Conference in 2000 went to Tanunda in the Barossa Valley in South Australia and was hosted by the South Australian members of TALGA and Lyndoch Lavender Farm.

"The Business of Lavender" – keynote speaker was Dr. Heather Urwin from the School of Biomedical Sciences at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. She spoke about Lavender –the Essential Oil?

This "revealing and spell-binding" talk was prior to morning tea.

Immediately afterwards I heard so many say it would have been worth the drive to Tanunda just to listen to this information!

Dr. Noel Porter from Christchurch, New Zealand, spoke about Lavender Oil – over the years he has been a wonderful supporter of TALGA and he is here again to-day.

An interesting International visitor to this conference was Paola Imberti from Rio Gallegas in Patagonia, Argentina. Growing *L.x intermedia* lavenders on the windswept plains, her 300 plants had Hessian windbreaks and grew in a hollow with mounded rows alongside- the opposite to us planting on top of mounded rows.

Another change at the helm brought Peter Manders from Warratina Lavender Farm and Carlton and United Breweries bring his business expertise to the Presidency.

2000 saw Monaro Country Lavender present a National Lavender Oil Conference in the February and Nedlands Lavender Farm on the Mornington Peninsular hold a Lavender Field Day for about 80 people. Lavender Badges and Posters were designed as were Information Kits for growers.

The Sixth International Lavender Conference was held in Wagga Wagga at Charles Sturt University in August 2001.

This conference continued with the tradition of previous TALGA conferences, but following this, on the Monday and Tuesday came the Inaugural Scientific Forum with reports on worldwide research into the “effects, uses and properties of lavender”. This comprehensive forum was available to growers, industries and the academic community.

This great four day conference covered subjects such as Bioactivity Honeys, DNA Fingerprinting, Biopesticides, development of new varieties, Antimicrobial activity of lavender oil, oil analysis, Biotechnical Research.

The speakers for the Scientific Forum came from Ireland, Iran, Japan and New Zealand.

An overseas grower also came to this conference – Cathy Toda from Hawaii who is growing on Maui Island, up in the hills and in conjunction with a large tourist operated Beef property.

It was back to Wagga Wagga again in 2002 for “Lavender Network 2000”, another International Conference this time held at the Country Comfort Conference Centre and Charles Sturt University.

Machinery demonstrations, specialised lavender equipment and a Field Trip were available as well as experts from the Industry.

The Goode Oil magazine changed in the winter of this year, to be called The Lavender Journal – the Good Oil from Australia and New Zealand.

We now had the Trans Tasman connection!

Public Liability and Farm Business Insurances were discussed and the TALGA website was updated.

David Ingram from "Crestwood Lavender Farm" at Wantiool near Wagga headed the committee this year and it was principally due to David that TALGA was able to have such a co-operative liaison with CSU which has resulted in the continuation of this important work. In August of that year Dr. Nigel Urwin from Charles Sturt University and myself flew to Western Australia, compliments of TALGA, for a two day Seminar.

The loyal TALGA members from the West always have a distance difficulty to reach events so it was felt some support should be offered in their home base.

Sue Rogers and Sarah Welbourn met us at Perth Airport, we had interviews at the ABC studio, drove north to Toodyay where 30 people came next day to hear about Plant Identification, Propagation, Growing Techniques, Machinery, Pests and Diseases and value adding.

Nigel then spoke about DNA fingerprinting, weed control and Lavender Breeding.

6am on the Sunday we were driven four hours south to Bob and Jenny Greig's property just out of Collie. We repeated the Saturday programme to about 40 participants and were taken back to Perth for the flight to Melbourne on the Monday. Considerable *Lavandula dentata* var. *candicans* was being grown for the fresh flower market. I called this the "5.30 Special to the West." Left Yuulong at 5.30am on the Friday, was up at 5.30am on the Saturday at Toodyay, then again at 5.30 am on the Sunday to drive south and it was almost 5.30 am on the Monday to head for the Perth Airport!

Peter Manders was again President when we all met at Stanthorpe in Queensland for the Eighth International Lavender Conference. This Conference was well supported by sponsors and the Stanthorpe Shire Council provided the venue and considerable finance for organisational needs.

A great feature of this Conference was community support in the townships had a Lavender theme, staff wore lavender clothes- even lavender coloured sausages and the occasional head of lavender hair were seen!

"Growing Your Future" produced a membership listing of fourteen Queensland farms and great tourism benefit to the town.

"Stop Talking and Get Started", "From Drawing Board to Drawing Money", "What to do when you wish you hadn't started", Insurance, Niche Markets, "Plantscaping", "Spoil Your Soil" "To Weed or not

Weed” and “Oils Ain’t Oils” plus Farm planning were some of the subjects covered at this very happy Conference.

From Queensland down south again to Victoria, to Halls Gap in the Grampians for the Ninth International Lavender Conference- “Lavender Experience, the BIG Picture” held at the Colonial Motor Inn, last September.

Hosted once again by the Far South West Lavender Growers’ Group and supported by the Lavender Growers of the Central Highlands Group, we saw Trade displays, a Lavender and Gourmet Products Market and the usual packed programme with local and international speakers.

The keynote speaker was Catherine Liardet-Couttolenc from the town of Sault in Provence and she spoke of the lavender industry in France and Australia.

Judith Basile, from “Crystal Brook Lavender” at Picton in NSW became President at this AGM and she is currently leading the committee at this Tenth International Lavender Conference here in Bombala.

As has been said previously “Rome was not built in a day”, we are still a young organization, still with a voluntary Committee, still with only small amounts of Lavender in the ground and still emerging from the “Cottage Industry” image to the Commercial Business.

Some people have felt our progress was too slow, but it has been important to build up a solid foundation for the Association.

We now have a P.O. Box number for ALL correspondence, a professionally presented Lavender magazine, a good website, diverse but well organised annual Conferences and that wonderful thing we wanted for so long –a Secretariat!

Berenice Hale through her company Trade Action P/L takes minutes at meetings, maintains TALGA’S database, assists members with enquiries and looks after new member’s applications.

I believe TALGA is now ready to move on to the next phase, to look at Accreditation of Lavender Farms and the development of the Standards and Assessment Committee and to Grow the Business- but it is the members Association and it will only grow with input and assistance from members across Australia.

Thank you for listening – brief though this has been, I think it is important to list historical events for TALGA over the last decade – I hope you have not thought it too long a decade!