

## **A HISTORY OF THE MOROBE PROVINCE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY**

**Saturday 24th October 1959** - A big day for Lae! This was the commencement of Lae's first Agriculture show!

After the second world war, Lae and its environs were in a neglected and devastated state - the main economic activity being the collection and sale of war disposal equipment.

It was not until the early 1950's that the expat population looked at expanding the small nucleus of agricultural activity in the environs of Lae.

At this time a man named Eddie Ward was Aust Minister of Territories in Canberra and he refused to allow any land purchases. However at the change of Government a Mr. Percy Spender got the job and changed this policy. This action followed a few years later by the ex-servicemen credit scheme saw a significant increase in Agriculture activities throughout P.N.G. - Lae included. A large number of Australian returned servicemen were able to apply for land to establish farms in the Territory and this was the commencement of agricultural development in what was to become Papua New Guinea.

### **Formation of a Morobe Show Society**

By the mid 1950's the mainland of P.N.G. had Show societies in Madang, Goroka, Mt Hagen, Port Moresby and Wau. At this time Lae did not have a show society, however many planters and farmers did support the then Morobe Show Society whose headquarters and annual show were held in the town of Wau.

By the late 1950's Lae had a very active group of Agriculturists who had formed an association called The Morobe District Planters and Farmers Association. The M.D.P. & F. Association considered that the Lae area should be able to support an annual show of its own, but decided that a separate show society should be formed to stage the proposed annual show. To this end the committee requested their president, Mr. J. H. Jacobsen, to call a public meeting to form the Lae Show Society. This meeting was held in the R.S.L. Club in Lae, in 1958.

At this inaugural Show Society meeting two of the M.D.P. & F association members made themselves available for the committee - Mr. Duncan Patterson the then owner of Bewapi Plantation took on the position of junior vice president and Mr. Jim Jacobsen took on the position of committee man in charge of ring events.

The original committee were:-

President: Mr. S. F. Bretag - who previously owned the pre war "Morobe News" Newspaper, and at this time was company secretary for New Guinea Industries. "Bret" Bretag was a very well respected Lae resident and more or less looked up to as Lae's unofficial "mayor".

Snr. Vice President: Mr. N. (Jerry) Owens - who was a senior manager for N.G.G. in Wau, and represented the "Morobe" (Wau) Agriculture Society.

Jnr Vice President: Mr. Duncan Patterson - formally a planter in Malaya who arrived to take up Bewapi Plantation in the early 1950's.

Secretary: Arthur Ewing - who was a long time administration officer and was then the area land titles commissioner.

Treasurer: Mr. Jim Knight - who was financial controller for Greg Goudie (Graham Goudie's father), who ran a disposal business and built what was at that time Lae's most successful Hardware store.

Assistant Secretary: George Spurrier - who was the manager of United Insurance.

Assistant Secretary: Bernice Harris - who worked at the District Office.

Show director: Mr. G. (Ned) Zavattaro - who was managing director of N. G. I.

Committee: K. Bryant - the manager of the Commonwealth Bank,

E.R. (Eric) Wilson - who was the District Agriculture Officer,

J.H. Jacobsen - who was the manager of Suambu and Leiwomba plantations and was president of the M.D.P.& F. Association,

Mr. W.J. (John) Hughes - who was the manager of Bubia Experimental station.

The first three shows were held at the Lae Technical College, the first show being the only one held under the name of Lae Agriculture Show Society as after the first year the Wau people agreed to transfer the title of Morobe Show Society to the Lae Society.

The Show Society has been fortunate over the period that it has been operating for the support that it has received by the way of donations from business houses either operating in Lae, or their end products being sold in Lae. It is interesting to note the list of donors for the first show, who were:-

Arnott, William, Pty Ltd  
Australia & New Zealand Bank  
Bank of New South Wales  
Bulolo Gold Dredging Ltd  
Carlton & United Breweries Ltd  
Commonwealth Bank of Australia  
Commonwealth New Guinea Timber Ltd  
Ewing Arthur  
Fesq & Co. Pty Ltd  
Hills Hoist Ltd  
Hytest Axe & Tool Pty Ltd  
Mason, Theo  
Nelson & Robertson  
Nut Foods Pty Ltd  
Penfolds Wine Pty Ltd  
Qantas Empire Airways  
Red Mill Rum Ltd  
Stubbs, John  
Theatre Milk Bar  
United Insurance Co Ltd  
Universal Business Directors (Aust) Pty Ltd  
Western Barbed Wire & Nail Pty Ltd  
Yates, Arthur & Co Pty Ltd

Being able to use the Tech School facilities was a terrific boost to the new show committee - the show society was given the use of all the lecture rooms and work-shops for exhibit halls, the use of their dining hall for the official show luncheon, and full co-operation in every way from the then Principal, Mr. Ray Oberg and his staff.

However there was still a lot of work to be done as there was no oval. Fortunately across the road from the tech school there were no buildings in those days - only bushland and so the committee set to work to build a suitable oval - in the course of which, I think that Ray Oberg might have had some second thoughts about the decision to let the show committee loose in the vicinity of his school - there were some rather large Buttress rooted trees that had to be removed in the course of the oval construction, and as there were still plenty of old war time explosives available, the committee blew out most of those stumps - on one occasion Walter Zarattaro became a bit too enthusiastic with the result that a huge stump was blown over the road and landed on the steps of the Tech school main office.

The second show was held with much excitement - particularly with the social set of Lae, because

the official guest was the then Governor General of Australia and anyone who thought themselves anybody were manoeuvring to get themselves an invitation to the official luncheon. This auspicious occasion was held in the Tech School dining room. The powers that be decreed that it would be rude for anyone to sit with their back to the G.G. - therefore the seating was arranged in a large "U" shape with the G.G. in the middle. Unfortunately the tables used were the normal tech schools tables with seats affixed to both sides of each table. The assembled company politely stood waiting for the G.G. to be seated upon which they also sat down - all on the outside seats of the tables - whereupon the tables capsized with all the weight on one side, covering the well dressed guests with all the food and drink which was on the tables.

Because of heavy rain during the second show, the committee decided to try another month other than October.

They decided on **April Fool's Day 1st April 1962** - of course it rained.

The first three shows were in a very similar format to today's events except there were no gambling stalls, and only a few food outlets and the society and a baby minding centre for the members who were busy exhibiting or organising events at the show. One of the more popular agricultural exhibits were the District Exhibits and from the old show schedules can be seen that during the first three years the following competed for this competition:- Wau, Lae, Finschhafen, Kaiapit, Bukawa local council and Leiwomba Local Councils.

A feature of the ring events during those first three years were the horse flat races where stock horses competed for the Erap Stakes, Huon Handicap, Markham Valley Stakes and the Lae Cup.

Other Equestrian Events were much as they were until the 1980's with champion Boy, Girl, Lady riders, Best turned out rider etc. There was however a strong emphasis on gymkhana type events such as saddling races, Gretna Green Bending and Flag races etc. By the late 1980's the number of expatriate riders had diminished significantly but there were as growing number Papua New Guinean cowboys keen to become involved in the ridden events. Today all the riders are cowboys from the Markham and Ramu Valleys and they compete vigorously in all events. The Champion Cowboy wins a new saddle and he is the envy of all his fellow cowboys.

Sing Sings - now the most popular ring event was very low key and did not start to build up to the spectacle that is produced today until after we moved on to our own show ground.

During the three years that the show was held at the Lae Tech the committee fought hard to be given a ground of its own. First the society was given an area of land alongside the airstrip where the ICI complex is today, the committee had actually moved on to this land and started cleaning and levelling when the powers that be changed their minds.

Eventually the present site was awarded to the show society and after a lot of hard work the **first show on the new ground** was held on **19th and 20th of October 1963**.

The 1963 show was again hampered by wet weather and the committee decided to move away from October again and the fifth show was held in December 1964 -you guessed it - it rained again!

After this effort the committee gave up on trying to pick a specific date for the Show and adopted a new system for selection of the date for the Show and take whatever comes. Since this time the show dates have been determined as the nearest weekend to the full moon in October each year which has ended up with the dates falling from late September, through October to early November. It is interesting to note that still to the present day we have not had a Show, that had commenced, washed out due to rain. There have been some wet ones but none have had to be abandoned.

It is interesting to look back on the Post Courier show supplement of October 1973.

Twenty years ago the president's message was obviously written in reply to criticism made in previous issues of the paper and he commented on:

"That neither the President nor any committee members received any financial benefit from show takings.

That the show committee was made up of a lot of hard working unpaid volunteers who's only benefit was the satisfaction of an interesting job well done!

Papua New Guineans were welcome on to the committee and indeed were actively encouraged, however, those who had become committee members usually lost interest and did not bother to attend committee meetings.

That the show society belongs to the people of Morobe and anyone could become a member on paying the membership fees.

There were 90 financial members of the show society of which 25 were Papua New Guineans.

The show society owed \$12,000 to the Commonwealth Bank still outstanding on its original overdraft."

At this time the show society had raised and spent over \$150,000 on establishing the showgrounds, without any financial support from any Governmental Department or Statutory Authority.

In the same supplement a report from the agronomist in-charge of Bubia Experimental Station commented:

"that station staff were concentrating on commercial crops suited to Markham - Ramu, Sepik and Madang Districts.

Work with peanuts, sorghum and rice is continuing, while the need to farm rotationally to conserve soil fertility and minimise problems with pests, diseases and indications of fertiliser response on some of our less fertile soils have been indicated".

Rice trials in the East Sepik District are continuing while yields of dry land rice in the upper Markham Valley have reached 2.5 tons per acre. The show supplement of 1973 also mentions that during the past year, Lae had received City Status and also the year that the Lae based P.N.G. Institute of Technology became a University.

Also that in the financial year ending June 1973 there were some 50,000 head of cattle in the Morobe District of which 10,000 head were on 350 small holder blocks and there were currently 50 more of these small holder blocks being developed.

That during the past year 1200 tons of peanuts were exported from Lae, some 700 tons of which were grown by Papua New Guineans.

The total production of copra in the District was 1442 tons, coffee 2295 tons and cocoa 285 tons."

An article by the then Lord Mayor of Lae, Councillor John Rogers sounds somewhat familiar when he comments on the Lae City Council:

"The council experienced a great amount of political turmoil in its early stages"

So much for the 1973 Show Supplement. For the previous 15 years agriculture, the show society, Morobe District and the city of Lae had grown and prospered. Since then, however we are not likely to be terribly proud of the progress made in the subsequent years since!

The Lae show most likely hit its peak as far as agricultural exhibits are concerned in the early 1970's.

At this time there were some 38 expat cattle producers, all competing for the livestock prizes. This resulted in there being two rings of led cattle and horses in the grand parade. There were twelve cocoa plantations as well as the locally owned small cocoa blocks which resulted in stiff competition not only for the cocoa prizes - but also copra, fruit and vegetables which these properties also produced.

At around this time, as well as Morobe District Exhibits, both Goroka and Mount Hagen used to enter the District Exhibit Competition, and the Morobe Show Committee used to mount a Morobe Exhibit in return at the time of these two Districts' Shows.

During the 70's and 80's Lae had a very strong Horticultural Society that held their own show each year, as well as running the Horticultural section at Lae's Morobe Show.

Over the years the one area of the show that has not only kept up their standards but actually improved is the sing-sings and I think I can say that although Lae might not have the thousands of performers that used to turn up to the Mt Hagen Shows -that without doubt - Morobe Show contains the most diverse and interesting of cultural dancing groups in spectacular numbers, presenting a truly grand display.

## **RASC**

The 1973 show was also exceptional in that the Morobe Show Society hosted some 62 delegates from Scotland, England, Wales, Kenya and Australia, who had been attending the Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth Conference in New Zealand. All our visitors were billeted out to Lae hosts and they enjoyed our show, show ball and the varied agricultural tours arranged for them by the Morobe Show Committee during their stay in Lae.

The Morobe Agricultural Society was a Member of the RASC and has had a strong association with it ever since. The RASC was established by HRH Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh, and it conducts Bi-annual Conferences at varying locations throughout the Commonwealth. A number of our Society Members were regular attendees at these Conferences - notably Jim and Glen Jacobsen as well as Lady Barbara Jephcott who helped set up Dumpu Ranch in the Ramu Valley. In 2015 Prince Philip retired as President and his daughter, The Princess Royal, took over that role.

The RASC has been very helpful in sponsoring a number of Papua New Guinean delegates to the Conferences and more recently has established the Next Generation Programme aimed at encouraging young farmers to involve themselves in their local Show movements. PNG has been heavily assisted in this area with Next Generation delegates attending Assistance and Understanding Missions in the gap year between Conferences to various Commonwealth countries.

The RASC also acknowledges the work of long time contributors to the Show Societies around the Commonwealth and in 2014 the Morobe Show Society President - Mike Quinn - was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth for his services to the Society. This award was presented to Mike by Princess Anne at the RASC Conference held in Brisbane in 2014. There is currently only seven such Fellows in the Commonwealth.

## **Amazing Feats**

Morobe Show has had many unusual, amusing or meritorious incidents over the years among which may be included:-

George Pike - competing in the 440 yards foot race completed the round of the oval doing hand springs - he didn't win!

Terry Rothwell - competing in the 110 yards hurdles - after hurdling the last hurdle he walked to the finish line and still won!

Competing in the Morobe District tree climbing championship Doug Youd, allowed his local competitors to climb one side of the pole - chop 1/2 way through the block on top - return to the ground and climb the other side of the pole before he started. He also won! P.S. He was Australian

Champion of this event at the time.

One of the more entertaining events over the years was the time that the fire brigade put on an exhibition in the main arena. They built a two story structure, clad it with hessian, doused it with diesel, and put one of their people on top. They then lit the building and the fire engine came rushing onto the oval to put out the fire.

Unfortunately for the guy on top, the fire engine broke down, the man had to jump from the burning building and broke his leg and eventually the fire engine was towed off the oval by the society tractor using their fire hose as a tow rope.

The Society was lucky that Bill Clift was visiting the Brisbane Exhibition in 1978 and was so impressed by the fireworks that he enquired who put on the display. He was pointed in the direction of Syd Howard who then come up to Lae and put on a fireworks display here.

He obviously enjoyed it as his company has been up every year since and I think that Syd himself has only missed one show in all these years.

### **Life Vice Presidents and Life Members**

The Society developed the procedure of acknowledging the work of some of its hard working committee members by creating a position of Life Vice President. This position was filled in the earlier years by people who had worked on the committee for some time and who had decided to reduce their involvement in the Society without pulling out altogether. Life Vice Presidents that we have had over the years are Jon Hamilton, Jim Jacobsen and Chris Salmon. The Society recognised the efforts of another of its staunch supporters in 1996 by making him a Life Vice President and that is Trevor Kennedy. Trevor has contributed twenty years to various positions on the committee and joins an illustrious group of previous holders of the position. A further addition was made in 1997 when Heather Atherton was elected Life Vice President. Heather left Lae in 1996 after some twenty five years with our Society. Ten years of which were as Show Grounds Director, a very demanding position. A list of current Life Vice Presidents is attached below.

In 1998 the Society at its Annual General Meeting created two new Life Vice Presidents. The first was **Greg English** who has become the **first Papua New Guinean** to become a **Life Vice President**. Greg then took on the roll of Agriculture Councillor for a number of years.

The other Life Vice President created was Mike Quinn. This was an interesting decision as Mike was and still is the President of the Society. Is it possible to wear the two hats simultaneously? Mike had been on the Committee for twenty three years, twenty of which had been as a Councillor and as President for the previous nine.

The position of Life Member was also created for members who had contributed to the work of the Society for a lesser period than those that were elected as Life Vice Presidents. Arthur Ewig was the first to be awarded a Life Membership. A list of current Life Members and Life Vice Presidents is also attached below.

### **Vale**

In December 1994 the Society suffered a major loss with the **sudden death** of a founder of the Society and mainstay of the Society **Mr. Jim Jacobsen**. Jim who helped found the Society in 1958 contributed thirty six years to the Society in many varied capacities and as a Life Vice President for fifteen years. The experience and knowledge that Jim had and was able to contribute was invaluable and the Society is considerably saddened and weaker for his passing.

Another Councillor who passed at a young age was John Mok – a Papua New Guinean – who was our Livestock Councillor. John had held that role for a number of years and his passing was quite a shock. He passed in 2020 and was awarded a posthumous Life Vice Presidency for which a certificate was presented to his widow at the 2022 Show.

## Other Interesting Things

The 1997 Show was a great success and in fact represented our best ever year financially up until that time. The recent years efforts in upgrading fencing and ticket selling booths has paid off and the decision of the Committee to continue to provide quality displays and entertainment has ensured that attendances remain good. The Ferris Wheel - the first of its kind in PNG - proved to be a popular attraction in 1996 when it was imported from Australia and 1998 brings another first - the first Monster Slide in PNG. This should be a major attraction for the Show and another worthwhile purchase by the Society. 1997 saw one of the worst droughts ever in PNG affecting the highlands particularly badly and this resulted in agricultural and livestock displays being markedly reduced. We hope that 1998 will be much better with the passing of the drought and the lifting of the cattle tick quarantine.

In 1999 at its AGM, the society awarded a Life Vice Presidency to Glen Jacobsen. Glen, wife of Jim Jacobsen, has been a stalwart of the Society since its inception. After Jim's untimely death, Glen continued the involvement of the family in the Society and became a Committee Member in her own right. Glen has also been a delegate to the Royal Agricultural Society Conference for our Society over the past twenty or more years and still looks forward attending the Bi-annual Conferences.

1999, our last show before the new millennium, proved to be very successful. In 2000 we moved into 21st century with the Society proudly celebrating the 40th Morobe Show. It proved to be even more successful than previous years with an attendance of approximately 100,000 people making it our most successful show ever held. This was due in no small part to increased participation from the community.

## Introduction of Morobe Show Queen and other events

2000 also saw the introduction of the **MOROBE SHOW QUEEN** contest. The aim of the contest is to promote pride in traditional Papua New Guinea Culture, with all entrants dressed in full traditional dress. This new attraction proved to be so successful that we expect to make it an annual event. 2001 will be remembered as the year that terrorists attacked New York. We hope that there will be no further attack in the future and that Papua New Guinea is not adversely affected in the future.

The best result to date in terms of gate attendance came in 2004 with a record crowd and gate revenue. Our combined gate sales, pre-sold tickets, memberships, Gold passes and commercial exhibitors placed our combined numbers at around 105,000 people over the weekend. A great achievement.

With Lae generally experiencing roughly 200 inches of rain per annum it is likely that from time to time the show can get a bit wet. In **2005** we had the **wettest show on record** with approximately **15 inches** of rain falling over the **show weekend**. The entire show ground was a quagmire, nothing but mud to be seen and it was impossible to find a single blade of green grass as we still had an attendance of approximately 80,000 people over the weekend. There has never been a washed out Morobe Show but the 2005 show was a close as you could come. The result was financially bad but we got through it and in 2006 had a fantastic improvement in revenue with well over 100,000 people again at the show.

## Who Opens the Show?

In a break from tradition the 2016 Show was opened by the Chancellor of the University of Technology – Sir Nagora Bogan KBE. He was the first “non-political” person or Head of State to open the Show. The Society has long held to an order of selection of people to officially open the Show and has not had the same person open the Show twice. The order of selection is: a new Head of State, followed by a new Prime Minister, followed by a new Provincial Governor, followed by a new Minister for Agriculture, followed by a new

Member for Lae. This system has seen a great variety of eminent people open the Show.

### **Volunteers and assistance**

The Morobe Show relies on volunteers to keep it going and as time goes on the assistance of Sponsors becomes more and more important. 2007 saw our sponsorship arrangements reach a new level with Coca Cola contributing K60,000 in cash and kind as well as Trukai Industries Ltd with K40,000 and Ramu Agri-industries K35,000. Recognition of the Morobe Show as a significant commercial event has prompted these organisations to become heavily associated with the Show for promotion of their products. Also and maybe more importantly the fact that the Morobe Show is the last of its kind in Papua New Guinea has awakened a social conscience that recognises the need to keep events like the Morobe Show going. Whatever the reason the Society is very indebted to our Sponsors for their assistance. 2007 also saw an increase in the number of tourists coming to the Show for the Sing Sings. There are more and more tourists coming to Lae for the Sing Sings and this is probably due to the variety of groups that attend the Morobe Show. 2006 we had 78 groups and in 2007 we reduced that to 52 groups as we concentrated on quality rather than quantity. Nonetheless in 2007 we still had over 1000 participants and the tourists went away very happy with what they had seen.

### **Challenges: Show Cancellations**

Throughout the history of the Society there have been three years other than COVID-19 years that the annual show was unable to be held. The first was 1983 when Lae experienced exception wet weather the month before the show with 1100 mm falling in September. The rain caused flooding of the creeks and rivers surrounding Lae which washed out the bridge approaches at Yalu, Markham and Bumbu Bridges effectively cutting Lae off. It was unknown how long it would take to repair the road and bridge infrastructure so it was decided to cancel the show that year. The second year that the show was cancelled was 1991 which was due to law and order issues at the time which resulted in a "State of Emergency" being declared in Lae and a 6.00pm to 6.00am curfew being introduced. Again it was not possible to determine how long the curfew would be in place for and so the show was cancelled. The most recent was **2009** when Lae and parts of Morobe had been experiencing a **cholera and dysentery outbreak**. The cholera appeared to be being brought under control and the show was still going ahead however with three weeks to go to the show there was a spike in cholera cases again and as a result **the show had to be cancelled**.

### **We survived!!!!**

The period 2009 to 2010 has been the worst period ever in the history of the Morobe Show. As stated above just days before the 2009 Morobe Show was due to commence it had to be cancelled due to the resurgence of the outbreak of Cholera in Lae. The Society is very conscious that the health and well being of the citizens of Lae and Morobe Province it is of the highest priority to us so there was no option - the Show was cancelled. The risk of more people contracting Cholera and of the disease spreading further throughout Papua New Guinea was too great a risk.

The Morobe Show was cancelled but Cholera spread anyway. It is still with us and is unlikely in the short term to be eradicated but it appears to be more manageable. The most important thing to be done is to educate people on how Cholera is spread and at the Morobe Show in 2010 at the Health Expo there was information on what you should and shouldn't do to avoid Cholera. We hope people take up the opportunity to learn. All people entering the grounds were given some anti-bacterial hand wash to help ensure that Cholera did not become an issue.

At the beginning of 2010 there was real doubt that our Society would survive the financial crisis that we had due to the cancellation of the 2009 Morobe Show. Effectively we had a full year of operating expenses with no income. Our cash reserves dwindled to a dangerously low level. We set about securing new sponsors and the support we received was enormous and was sufficient to get us through and conduct another Show. The Governor Hon Luther Wenge and Morobe Provincial Government supported the Society with K100,000. As well as our existing **Grand Champion Sponsor** - Coca Cola - and **Blue Ribbon Sponsors** - Trukai Industries and Ramu Agri-Industries - we have a new group of **Red Ribbon Sponsors** - BeMobile, InterOil, K.K. Kingston, Bank South Pacific and Morobe Mining. For the first time this year we also have a large group of **Platinum Supporters** and **Life Subscribers** (membership criteria who all helped to save the Morobe Show from financial ruin.

2011 brings the **50th Morobe Show**. Be there!!!!!!!

And they WERE there. We had a great Show, officially opened by the Governor General, Grand Chief Sir Michael Ogie GCMG CBE and attended by nearly 100,000 people over two days. The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary Band provided music and entertainment along with a variety of special ring events. The new Blimp purchased by the Society was on display for the first time and had a special 50th Logo displayed on its sides. It was a great crowd pleaser. It was the Golden Anniversary of the Society as far as conducting Shows was concerned and so the theme colour was Gold. A special 50th Show Commemorative Ball was held in the Ballroom the week before the Show again with a Gold theme. This was organised by a special committee and it was a great success.

Thus the start of the next fifty years of the MPAS commenced. The 2012 Show was number 51 and a special ring event comprising Lumberjacks from Canada and New Zealand was the main attraction. The current World Pole Climbing champion was there and did pole climbing displays. 2013 got away to an unusual start with Mike Quinn - President since 1992 being awarded a Queens New Years Honour - Member of the Order of Logohu - for services to the Community and the Morobe Provincial Agricultural Society. This honour not only recognised Mike Quinn but also the significant role that the Society plays in the city of Lae and Morobe Province. For those who don't know what a Logohu is - the Papua New Guinea national crest is the Bird of Paradise. In the Papuan language - Motu - the word for Bird of Paradise is Logohu. Hence the Order of Logohu which is specific to Papua New Guinea is used in Papua New Guinea alongside the British Empire honours system. As usual the Motor Bike Jumping was the feature of the ring events and it is so popular that it is just about enshrined in the annual programme.

The 2013 Show was a very good success and was marked particularly by the overall behaviour of the crowd. There were very few instances of unruly behaviour and zero tear gas used which is very unusual. While the Shows are always safe events there is often a disaffected few who find a time and opportunity to cause a problem however 2013 was a standout peaceful year. The only matter to mar the show was the loss of the Blimp. In 2011 we purchased an inflatable blimp for promotion and advertising. Unfortunately on the Sunday of the show the blimp, being operated by remote control by Brad Leyden, developed a fault and despite Brad's best efforts it floated off on the breeze. It eventually landed about 2 klm from the showground on the Markham Road at 2 Mile where thousands of people were heading home from the show. It was set upon by the hordes all anxious to get a piece and consequently it was literally torn to shreds. We got a few pieces back - enough to start a rebuild of the blimp but we will need to revise our flying procedures. Our new Governor - Hon Kelly Naru opened the show and very much enjoyed his time at the show. Also a new thing was the change in fireworks displays. The committee has been finding over the years that the crowds are leaving the showgrounds earlier and earlier on Saturday and Sunday of the show weekend. This has led to the

fireworks displays on both days coming forward to become daylight displays. This year we dispensed with the Saturday display all together and did a special night show on Friday night, fired from Mt Lunaman, to announce the start of the Annual Show. It was very good and put on by Des Lawton again. We still had a twilight display on Sunday to signal the end of the Show.

2014 heralded a change of the guard with Mike Quinn stepping down as president after 22 years in that post. He was succeeded by Phil Franklin who was also elected a Life Vice President at the 2014 AGM. Time for new ideas? Unfortunately it didn't last and in 2016 Mike Quinn was back.

Weather again dogged the Show in 2016 with rainy starts to each day of the Show and a wet week leading up to the weekend. Crowds were down but the rain cleared late morning each day with the exception of the Sunday when the official opening was performed. Unfortunately light rain fell through-out the opening ceremony, however it didn't seem to deter people to much of an extent. Interestingly, as many would know, most Papua New Guineans prefer "rubber thongs" or "flip flops" as their footwear of choice. Regrettably they don't perform in wet muddy conditions and tend to get "stuck" in the mud. Hundreds of pairs were abandoned by people who gave up and walked out of them. The roads and paths around the grounds now have a bit of spring in them!

## **COVID-19**

We weren't the only ones that were affected – the whole world was and of course we could not conduct Show's in 2020 and 2021. Fortunately we had managed to get a little bit of "fat" into our Bank and were able to scrape through. We kept R&M to a minimum but did not have to shed staff although any natural redundancy was not replaced. The grounds were continued to be maintained and looked to be always in good condition.

For some unknown reason Lae and PNG in general did not seem to have the same illness and mortality effect as other countries. Our vaccination didn't get much above 10% of the population but the debilitating effects of the Pandemic were not massive. Some of the Highlands town where the climate is colder and wetter were effected to a much greater effect than Lae and other coastal areas where the climate is much hotter and generally strong sunshine.

We were lucky and as it petered out an approval was secured in June 2022 that we have a Show in October that year. Just 4 months to get a Show organised and up and running. A significant challenge but we pulled it off. The 2022 was a huge success. With people starved for entertainment and deprived of an opportunity to have fun and celebrate for 2 years we had record numbers attend. No Show since 2019 also prompted a significant increase in Sponsorship and an opportunity for the Committee to review rates and fees and bring them back into line with reasonable and standardised amounts.

## **The Diamond Jubilee**

The COVID period with 2 years without a Show brought to 5 the number of years since our first Show that we have not been able to conduct the annual Show. Our 50<sup>th</sup> Morobe Show was held in 2011 and so here we are in 2023 getting ready to celebrate our 60<sup>th</sup> Show, our Diamond Jubilee. Who would have thought that we would still be going this far down the track. So preparations are underway now for the biggest Show yet.

**So come and join us for this very special Show. It will be the best yet!!!**

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## SOCIETY PRESIDENTS

|                 |                 |          |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------|
| 1958 to 1964    | A. J. Bretag    | 7 years  |
| 1965 to 1974    | J. H. Jacobsen  | 10 years |
| 1975            | W. Kundin       | 1 year   |
| 1976 to 1977    | J. Sawanga      | 2 years  |
| 1978            | M. Galore       | 1 year   |
| 1979            | R. Taetaeng     | 1 year   |
| 1981 to 1983    | P. Homu         | 3 years  |
| 1984            | B. Oberleuter   | 1 year   |
| 1985 to 1991    | M. Kerro        | 7 years  |
| 1992 to 2013    | M. Quinn ML     | 22 years |
| 2014 to 2015    | P. Franklin MBE | 2 years  |
| 2016 to Present | M.Quinn ML      | 7 years  |

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### Committee of the MPAS late 1950's



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## **A REPORT ON THE FIRST LAE SHOW 1959**

**N.B. This report has been reproduced from the original without alteration. The language used is as used at the time. No offense is intended.**

### **FIRST LAE SHOW - 1959**

**Courtesy Lady Barbara Jephcott**

The Lae Agricultural Society (later Morobe District Agricultural Society), held its first Show over the weekend of the 24th and 25th October 1959.

In opening the Show, His Honour the Administrator, Brigadier DM Clelland, recalled how post-war Lae was a jumble of shacks in the jungle. Now Lae is a modern town with an excellent shopping centre, attractive homes and a sound economy, which is displayed to advantage at the Show. He also said that Show typified the cooperation between Europeans (whites) and the natives and the Administration. He continued "We are a private enterprise people, and fostering private enterprise is the basis of our government. If Australians are to settle here they can rightly expect security and help". On the question of land alienation, His Honour stated that of the 120 million acres of land that comprises the Territory of Papua New Guinea, only 3 million acres have been alienated necessary for their well being. Land can only be obtained through the Administration, but further land would be made available for pioneer settlers under the ex-servicemen's scheme and for other settlers.

In spite of torrential rain the first day, which caused the ring events to be postponed until Sunday the Show was an outstanding success. The first day 4000 natives and 500 Europeans braved the rain to examine the excellent exhibits and patronize the side-shows, a much larger crowd watched the ring events the second day.

Highlight of the exhibits was the Sub-District exhibits. Five sub-districts took part, namely - Wau, the Markham Valley, Kainantu, Finschhafen and Kaiapit. Wau won the first prize by a narrow margin from the Markham and Kainantu. Wau and Kainantu are at high altitudes, the Markham Valley in the lowlands.

Feature of the Wau exhibit was a magnificent flower display. A profusion of dahlias, gladioli, carnations, lilies, orchids, and many other tropical and temperate flowers were highlighted by massed delphiniums with blooms two feet long. Wau also displayed to advantage the world famous timbers that are milled in the Wau - Bulolo area, notably Klinki pine, Red Cedar and Hoop pine. Well made wooden bowls and ornaments enhanced the timber display. The wealth of the Wau area was further shown by exhibits of gold, coffee, vegetables, dairy produce and citrus fruits.

The Markham Valley exhibit was that of a farming community. Two calves in a pen beside the exhibit emphasized the fast developing dairy and beef industries. Many and varied crops are grown in the rich valley, thirty miles south of Lae. Among those displayed were high quality peanuts, cocoa, sorghum and maize. The Wealth of the Markham Valley is not yet fully exploited. More exotic crops, such as sisal, ginger and excellent pineapples and pawpaw's were displayed.

Two fearsome warriors in full Highland battle regalia handed out pamphlets on the "Mile High Gateway to the Highlands" - Kainantu. Two uniformed police guarded the gold display of the district. A "Horn of Plenty" was the feature of the Kainantu exhibit. From the Horn spilled Arabica coffee beans, for which the Highlands are becoming famous, vegetables, flowers, fruits, maize, sugar cane, New Zealand flax and the gold.

Kaiapit and Finschhafen have few Europeans to help with display, but the quality of their native grown produce and artefacts was of a high standard.

Other displays featuring native goods came from the Agariba (Eastern Highlands) and the Local Government Council of Lei Womba (near Lae) exhibits. The latter added live animals to their exhibit, including a tree kangaroo, several snakes and some roosters. Agariba emphasized the native production of good coffee and staple foods, especially kaukau (sweet potato) and sugar cane.

Mr. Michael Leahy from Zenag, had a one farm exhibit featuring dairy produce, eggs, fruit and vegetables all produced on his mixed farm near Wau and sold in Lae.

The townspeople of Lae worked hard to make the trade exhibits of a quality that would be creditable in any Show. Morobe Bakery showed their versatility in the variety of breads and biscuits displayed. The New South Wales Bank and Bulolo Goldfields combined to create an imaginative gold display. Lae Joinery showed that not only in New Guinea timber good, but the workmanship does justice to the timber.

The Show was held at the Lae Technical School grounds and the buildings made excellent pavilions. Large entries were received in the art, photography, schoolwork, floral and produce sections.

In the livestock section, dairy cattle were the strongest exhibit. The cattle came from the Lutheran Mission at Malahang, Mrs. Jensen's dairy, both near Lae and the Department of Agriculture and Stock and Fisheries' (DASF) property Erap, 30 miles from Lae. Mrs. Jensen won the dairy cow class with a Jersey cow, while an AIS heifer owned by a native from Malahang won the strong heifer under two years class. Some imported Berkshire pigs from Erap won DASF the prize for Best Exhibitor in the pig section.

The success of the equestrienne events was due largely to Mr. Sid Staines, who drove eighteen horses one hundred miles down the Markham Valley from Gusap cattle station. These horses and some of Erap were "auctioned" for the day, to enable townspeople to have an interest in the hack classes and races.

Although the grounds were soaked with over two inches of rain, sunshine and a tropical temperature dries the ring quickly. By hard work and good organization the Committees were able to hold at the ring events on Sunday.

Mrs. B.R. Jephcott was the judge for the hacks. The Best Imported Hack was won by Mr. Staines' Vilia. This mare was also Champion Hack. The Best Local Hack was won by Mrs. L.J Brady's Wisecrack ridden by Mr. "Rowdy" Grant. Mr. Staines also won the gentlemen rider and best turned out rider. Mrs. P. Anderson won the ladies events and her small son Philip was the best turned out child rider.

In the novelty events, the Flag was won by Mr. Ian Shaw from Mrs. Anderson and the Bending race to Mr. Lockie Ottley from Mrs. Anderson. Mr. J. Kelly and Mrs. Anderson won the Gretna Green and Mr. McKinnon the Saddling race.

The Horse events were wound up with a race meeting. The course was a U shaped three furlongs. There were three heats and the winners rode for the Lae Cup! The jockeys were Sid on Vilia, Rowdy on Old Red and Barbara on Burnished, she drew the inside barrier. In a tight finish Burnished won from Vilia by a neck.

Other ring events for all comers included wood-chopping, sheaf tossing, crosscut sawing, foot races and children's races.

The Grand Parade was both unique and spectacular. Leading the parade was the Papuan Police Band, which had flown over from Port Moresby. The Champion hack led the horses (none of which had ever heard or seen a band before) in, followed by floats. The most spectacular being in the form of a native canoe complete the sails, oarsmen and oars, and so big that it covered the truck underneath, and the canoe appeared to be sailing around the ring. The mixture of old and new continued with a new tractor and plough followed by hundreds of native in full sing-sing regalia; dancing to the beat of the kundus, their massive headdresses and plumes moving in rhythm, their painted bodies (some were completely red) glistening in the hot sun along with their spears and shields.

A Show Ball completed the festivities. It was attended by over three hundred people. The President of the Lae Show, Mr. A.J. Bretag entertained The Administrator and the District Commissioner, Mr. H.L.R Niall and their wives. We were all entertained early in the evening by the Police Band playing dance music.

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