



HAZELDEAN LETTER

Recent Rain Changes the Picture

The recent rain has put a smile on all faces around the traps this past week or so. Good falls have been recorded in most areas and it has probably been the best general rain we have seen for a couple of years. The way things are shaping up at Cooma we could nearly call it a wet winter and although we have not seen much in the way of run off, the ground is good and wet and a further decent rain event would see water run. Imagine if we had to start mending floodgates! Despite the wet the Monaro chill has seen little feed get away as yet and this has necessitated hand feeding of all younger animals through the winter. This is always onerous and time consuming and I am always impressed and grateful how everyone takes it in their stride.

In Queensland we recorded a fall of 22 mls in the last drop and this was on top of 20 mls earlier which enabled us to plant wheat. With a good profile of moisture underneath to begin with, providing the kangaroos and natural elements leave us alone, this follow up should see us looking at some sort of crop at the very least for Myall Plains this year.

The tough season up until the two rain events nevertheless necessitated some offloading of animals and all the young

heifer and bull weaners are now spending the winter under the Cowan family's care at Hughenden. We are very grateful to Reay, Lindy and their sons for taking our young weaners on agistment. Agistment has been very hard to find and to find it on a property owned by people we know and respect is simply much more than we could have hoped for.

The Riverina has been tough enough as well although the body of dry feed following on from last Spring has enabled us to maintain numbers and keep hand feeding to a minimum. There had been a few showers earlier on that had been heavy enough to get a germination on the sand hills and red country going and now with 45mls on top of that last week we are really beginning to see some changes and ideal feed come away for young lambs.

The wool market continues to make encouraging signals and it is reassuring to see our decisions vindicated regarding the pursuit of the finer end of the market. We still believe that the real future for wool is in the luxury end of the market where fine wool has a growing niche. Recent reports from the textile industry suggest that demand for wool is growing faster than any other fibre at present in this area.

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Beef remains strong and looks as though it will remain so for the foreseeable future. New markets are opening up and the image of Australia as a clean, green source of beef and lamb is helping our sales immeasurably while other exporting countries grapple with BSE and other disease issues.

We wish all our clients and friends all the very best for a wet Spring and look forward to seeing you again at this year's sales.

Jim Litchfield



Lot 12 Hazeldean Ultravox Z989

Lot 70 Hazeldean Hercules 04-11

Lot 98 Hazeldean Cruz 04-152

A snapshot of the 120 bulls on offer at the Hazeldean Northern Performance Bull Sale, Myall Plains QLD, Thursday August 17.

Where to for wool?

Is the glass half empty or half full?

We are optimists. We believe there is much that can be done to top up that glass if we take an innovative approach and are prepared to think and act beyond the traditional attitudes.

Our competitors including cotton are reducing production and improving the quality and variety of end product. The current price of wool still commands a high premium over those other fibres and although this is of little comfort when measured against our costs of production it proves that for many textile purposes wool is still the supreme fibre.

Another positive concern is the strengthening market value of the merino sheep as a producer of meat. World demand for protein foods will continue to grow against a background of decline in cheaper alternatives such as wild fish stock. Like all primary producers the market for meat products will continue to fluctuate but we are in a new ball game and the benchmark is far higher than it once was. We must exploit this opportunity to the full.

There are of course a wide range of matters requiring a radical re-think in sheep breeding, wool harvesting, marketing, research, promotion and sheep management just to put them in broad categories but it is impossible to deal adequately with all of these in a short article such as this. So let's take a brief look at where we can take immediate steps to top up that glass just through sheep management adjustments.

From our experience of scanning ewes following mating at Hazeldean and Myalla we know that our flocks are then carrying up to 160% of lambs and yet we have in the past



Hazeldean merino ewe and lamb.

been satisfied if weaning numbers are in excess of 90%. The Monaro climate at lambing time presents a formidable hurdle to overcome but research in this area indicates that adequate nutrition for the ewe before and during lambing can build the lamb's resistance to hypothermia and raise survival rates.

It is reasonable to assume that if sheep values have now risen to higher levels then increased numbers of surplus sheep for sale resulting from increased rates of reproduction can boost profitability substantially.

Raising weaning percentages by 20 points in 2007 is a modest and achievable objective. Two things need to be done. Firstly by ensuring that lambing paddocks are well rested

before the ewes are moved to them just prior to the start of lambing. Secondly by generous supplementary feeding during the previous two months unless high quality grazing is available such as a winter wheat crop. Do the sums and you will see how you can reap a substantial profit increase from this extra management care.

In the medium term the reproduction and mothering efficiency of your flock can be steadily improved by culling ewes that fail to wean lambs. A simple way to do this is to yard the ewes again the day after weaning (lambs 12 weeks of age) and check them up the race for udder development. Those that do not have milk or very little can be culled and fattened for sale.

James Litchfield snr



Some Thoughts on Bull Fertility

In June the Hazeldean staff from Hazeldean, Myalla and Rosevale attended the annual Holbrook Breeders information day in Holbrook, put on by Holbrook Breeders and Jim Green. It was an informative day with a focus on reproduction. Professor Peter Chenoweth, Head of the Vet School at Charles Sturt University and world renowned expert on fertility and reproduction in cattle was one of the speakers.

Factors Affecting Beef Profitability

It has been estimated that fertility is 10 times more important for profitability in breeding cattle than carcass quality and five times more important than rate of gain. In turn, for cattle breeders, both calving rate and calving pattern are both important for the bottom line. Of course, the bull shoulders a large part of the responsibility for these reproductive measures, as well as contributing the major share of herd genetic progress. Thus, the old axiom that the “bull is half the herd” is not giving him due credit - he is worth much more than that in terms of herd productivity and profitability.

Bull fertility can affect cattle production in a number of ways.

Some of these may be obvious, such as;

- pregnancy %
- calving %

However, others can be more subtle, such as;

- average calving date
- average weaning weights

In addition, small scrotal circumference in bulls can lead to delayed puberty in related heifers.

Thus bulls may be causing problems which are not readily apparent. The overall effects can be large as surveys indicate 15-25% of bulls have problems which adversely affect fertility.

Producers can avoid many reproductive problems associated with bulls by ensuring that a bull breeding soundness evaluation (BBSE) is conducted prior to bull purchase. The Australian Cattle Veterinarians (ACV) have been at the forefront in developing BBSE standards so that we might have considerable confidence in this procedure.

The BBSE

The Breeding Soundness Evaluation (BSE) is a relatively quick and economic procedure which is used by veterinarians to screen bulls prior to sale or the breeding season. It is also useful in helping to diagnose herd infertility problems

A routine BBSE usually includes the following steps:

- Physical examination.
- Reproductive examination (including measurement of scrotal circumference).
- Collection and examination of semen.

In addition, a libido/serving capacity test may be included, as may special tests for diseases (e.g., vibriosis or trichomonosis).

Fertility & Economics

Although it may be relatively simple to recognize a sterile bull, identifying sub-fertile bulls is more difficult. Here the BBSE does enable us to categorise bulls reasonably accurately. For example, when bulls were placed with groups of oestrus synchronized heifers, those bulls classified as “satisfactory” obtained 6- 11% more pregnancies than those categorized as “questionable”. Another approach has determined bull fertility from DNA-based calf parentage in multi-sire herds. In one such study, prior BBSE screening of bulls in a large herd increased pregnancies (3.5%) while using 40% less bulls over a shortened breeding period. In a large Queensland study, semen quality of multi-sire bulls was consistently related to calf output”. The summation was that “these results confirm that semen examination, including sperm morphology, should be standard procedure when assessing bulls for reproductive soundness”.

From these studies, which represent a variety of regions, genotypes, and management conditions, the conclusion was that bull BSEs represented an effective tool for reducing uncertainty associated with bull purchase and usage. **A conservative estimate is made that bulls passing a BSE (and/or semen quality tests) have a 6% (or greater) fertility advantage over non-evaluated bulls.**

In addition to increased calf crop, benefits accrue through increased weaning weights because females become pregnant earlier in the breeding season. In the US, it is estimated that missing one breeding cycle costs



Some Thoughts on Bull Fertility cont.

approximately 20 kg in individual calf weight at weaning time. This combination of higher calving rates and increased weaning weights resulted in a cost:benefit estimate for utilizing the BBSE of approximately 1:20. Although the value of the bull evaluation could easily be justified on the basis of such direct benefits to herd fertility and economics alone, additional benefits occur via improvement in bull to female ratios (BFRs) and genetics.

Bull to Female Ratios

Traditional recommendations for bull:female ratios (BFR) of 1:20 to 1:30 often underestimate the reproductive capabilities of bulls. In other words, more bulls are often used than necessary. For example, one study compared single- and multi-sire systems with Hereford bulls at BFRs of 1:25, 1:44, and 1:60. Here, the fertility, libido, and mating ability of individual sires were more important than either BFR or breeding system. In comparing different single-sire BFRs (1:7 to 1:51) with estrus-synchronized females, BFR was not a fertility limiting factor. In North Australia, no difference was observed in herd fertility when reproductively sound Brahman bulls were used at BFRs of either 1:17 or 1:40. Two studies conducted in different environments showed BBSE-screened bulls increased herd pregnancy rates at reduced BFRs (1:20 to 1:33).

From such studies, it is clear that sound bulls which have passed the BBSE (or equivalent) can handle considerably more females in a generic breeding season than traditional recommendations would suggest.

It is also evident that most producers have yet to take full advantage of these findings. Bulls are a major cost item for most cattle breeding operations. Utilization of the BBSE can reduce bull numbers, while enhancing fertility rates.

Genetics

A number of positive genetic “spin-offs” for cow-calf operations occur with the use of BBSE selected bulls. As sires contribute nearly 90% of genetic change in a herd, it is useful to identify male traits which improve both male and female reproductive efficiency. Bull scrotal circumference is one such trait as it is moderately heritable in beef bulls (approximately 50%) and it is favourably related to semen quality. In addition, strong links exist between scrotal circumference in young bulls and age at puberty in related females, with favorable relationships also occurring with other female reproductive traits.

Bull scrotal circumference is an accurate predictor of bull puberty, with remarkable agreement between breeds in scrotal circumference at puberty. With females, earlier age at puberty has been associated with improved lifetime fertility and pounds of calf produced. **Thus, use of bulls with superior scrotal circumference (and associated improved semen traits) can improve both immediate and future herd fertility and production.**

Summary

Bull fertility impacts a number of aspects of beef production, both in the short and long term. Not only does it affect calf crop, but also calf weaning weights and the fertility of female offspring. In addition, by using a BBSE to screen bulls, savings can be made by reducing bull numbers needed for effective coverage of the breeding herd. Use of fewer bulls also permits investment in bulls of greater genetic merit.

The breeding soundness evaluation of bulls is a well-tested, cost-effective, veterinary procedure which puts bulls into categories that reflect their breeding potential. Utilization of the BSE has the potential to return at least \$20 for each \$1 invested in the procedure.

Peter Chenoweth BVSc, PhD

*Professor of Veterinary Reproduction
School of Agricultural & Veterinary Sciences
Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga
He has recently returned from over 20 years working in
Vet depts. in US universities to head the Vet. School at CSU.*



Prof. Peter Chenoweth



Craig Wilson Wether Trial Results - April 2006

The long-awaited results of the Craig Wilson Wether Trial that has been running near Wagga for two years are now out. The trial attracted 27 teams of 15 wethers. The sheep were run in a controlled environment near Wagga for two years, removing any environmental variation between the different bloodlines.

13 different bloodlines were represented in the trial that attracted entries from stud and commercial flocks from Northern NSW to Victoria. Craig said the trial allowed people to compare their wethers against other flocks using the same bloodline as well as between different bloodlines. "It highlights where people can make improvements," he said.

In many cases the Merino studs producing the genetics for the commercial industry were moving really quickly but others were almost standing still.

"The studs that are really progressing quickly will continue to take market share from those that are standing still," he said.

Hazeldean clients took out three of the top ten positions, and 6 of the top 13.

Craig said the trial results were highly repeatable over the two years the teams which performed well in year one did well overall.

"This gives you confidence to do quite a lot of measurement on younger sheep," he said.

The wethers were six months old when they entered the trial, and they were first analysed at 18 months and then 30 months.

Using market values, the sheep were assessed on their wool and meat value in the two years.

The wool values were calculated using a five-year rolling average of the market price. The meat value was given by assessing the body weight and fat scores of the wethers to determine a yield, which was multiplied by \$2 a kilogram. The deviation from the average market values in the trial ranged from plus \$48.03 per head to minus \$44.69. Craig said the gap in performance between the highest performing bloodline and the lowest in the trial was not reflective of the industry.

"In the wider industry, the gap between good and bad is a lot wider than in this trial," he said.

"We are only dealing with people in the top 15% - 20% of the industry as they are generally the ones who enter trials."

Craig now plans to compile all of the data gathered from the trial into a booklet, and compare it to the National Wether Trial at Orange, to give entrants an even wider perspective on how their sheep performed.

(The Land, April 27th 2006)



Growers inspect sheep in the Craig Wilson Wether Trial

CWL Wether Trial 2004 - 2006 Team Averages

Team	Entrant	2005 Wool Value	2006 Wool Value	Average Wool	Total Wool	2005 Meat Value	2006 Meat Value	Average Meat	Total	Deviation From Average	Rank	Bloodline
6	GB McGuffick & Sons	\$67.50	\$41.81	\$54.66	\$218.62	\$41.72	\$ 40.25	\$40.98	\$259.60	\$48.03	1	Greendale
12	T & R Westblade	\$55.11	\$42.24	\$48.68	\$194.70	\$49.05	\$ 46.96	\$48.00	\$242.70	\$31.13	2	Pastora
10	Jimenbuen Past Co	\$51.22	\$45.98	\$48.60	\$194.40	\$44.45	\$ 43.95	\$44.20	\$238.60	\$27.02	3	Hazeldean
15	P & M Drew	\$54.41	\$37.76	\$46.09	\$184.34	\$51.59	\$ 49.97	\$50.78	\$235.12	\$23.54	4	Pastora
26	Millabong Past Co	\$57.07	\$35.95	\$46.51	\$186.04	\$47.87	\$ 44.98	\$46.42	\$232.46	\$20.89	5	Avenel
2	G & K Davidson	\$51.96	\$43.54	\$47.75	\$191.00	\$40.96	\$ 40.76	\$40.86	\$231.86	\$20.28	6	Middleview
9	B & E Dwyer	\$54.75	\$37.69	\$46.22	\$184.88	\$44.14	\$ 43.43	\$43.79	\$228.67	\$17.09	7	Mixed
11	Woodstock P/Ship	\$53.78	\$38.38	\$46.08	\$184.32	\$42.78	\$ 43.00	\$42.89	\$227.21	\$15.63	8	Hazeldean
3	DS & S Eccleston	\$50.14	\$40.77	\$45.46	\$181.82	\$43.47	\$ 42.66	\$43.06	\$224.88	\$13.31	9	Hazeldean
7	Maiton Agriculture	\$49.10	\$41.46	\$45.28	\$181.12	\$41.22	\$ 39.56	\$40.39	\$221.51	\$9.93	10	Middleview
16	Wantabadgery Past Co	\$48.39	\$37.42	\$42.91	\$171.62	\$48.39	\$ 44.55	\$46.47	\$218.09	\$6.51	11	Hazeldean
5	Coolringdon Past Co	\$50.82	\$33.81	\$42.32	\$169.26	\$46.03	\$ 45.58	\$45.81	\$215.07	\$3.49	12	Hazeldean
27	JE & C McClure	\$45.69	\$38.51	\$42.10	\$168.40	\$46.19	\$ 44.55	\$45.37	\$213.77	\$2.19	13	Hazeldean
21	Blyth Merinos	\$44.85	\$40.61	\$42.73	\$170.92	\$42.89	\$ 41.71	\$42.30	\$213.22	\$1.64	14	Blyth
22	Waerawi Farming Co	\$46.13	\$33.78	\$39.96	\$159.82	\$47.12	\$ 45.32	\$46.22	\$206.04	-\$5.54	15	Mixed
20	W & H Rose	\$43.01	\$36.11	\$39.56	\$158.24	\$45.59	\$ 45.75	\$45.67	\$203.91	-\$7.66	16	Middleview
1	Peter Campbell	\$47.78	\$34.10	\$40.94	\$163.76	\$40.78	\$ 38.36	\$39.57	\$203.33	-\$8.25	17	Ellerina
13	IE MB PJ & TA Unger	\$46.57	\$31.83	\$39.20	\$156.80	\$43.92	\$ 43.26	\$43.59	\$200.39	-\$11.19	18	Westray
25	D & L Walker	\$43.67	\$32.14	\$37.91	\$151.62	\$48.36	\$ 46.01	\$47.18	\$198.80	-\$12.77	19	Mixed
18	Muerer Past Co	\$41.76	\$35.21	\$38.49	\$153.94	\$41.63	\$ 41.19	\$41.41	\$195.35	-\$16.22	20	Merrigree
17	RB & TM Turnbull	\$40.39	\$34.21	\$37.30	\$149.20	\$44.94	\$ 43.69	\$44.31	\$193.51	-\$18.06	21	Cassilis Park
14	D & A Murdoch & Sons	\$42.55	\$33.56	\$38.06	\$152.22	\$38.66	\$ 38.87	\$38.76	\$190.98	-\$20.59	22	Corroboree
23	C R C & M Morton	\$41.58	\$31.23	\$36.41	\$145.62	\$44.88	\$ 43.26	\$44.07	\$189.69	-\$21.88	23	Haddon Rig
24	JR & GJ Holmes	\$40.61	\$33.46	\$37.04	\$148.14	\$41.21	\$ 40.94	\$41.07	\$189.21	-\$22.36	24	Corroboree
8	Armstrong Past Co	\$39.32	\$31.93	\$35.63	\$142.50	\$46.28	\$ 46.10	\$46.19	\$188.69	-\$22.89	25	Mixed
4	Curry Flat P/Ship	\$37.16	\$32.48	\$34.82	\$139.28	\$43.75	\$ 43.69	\$43.72	\$183.00	-\$28.58	26	Avonside
19	Burbar P/Ship	\$32.05	\$29.16	\$30.61	\$122.42	\$44.65	\$ 44.29	\$44.47	\$166.89	-\$44.69	27	Cassilis Park
		\$47.31	\$36.49	\$41.90	\$167.59	\$44.54	\$43.43	Average	\$211.58			

4x Ave Wool

05 + 06 / 4 shearings and 1 meat value

Wool values are based on a 5 year average

Thanks to Sponsors - Riverina Wool Testers; Rodwells Noonan; NSW DPI



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Property Updates

Hazeldean Queensland Update....

Well half a year has slipped by very fast. And as it seems to be a common stance - we look upwards to the sky for rain! Summer was not too kind, delivering us above average temperatures and well below average rainfall.

Despite the conditions our cattle have held up well and are due to start calving next month.

The bulls for this years sale are travelling along really well and for those of you who are come along I'm sure you want be disappointed.

We have sent all our weaner heifers and bulls up to Reay and Lindy Cowan's at Hughenden to grow out over winter. Hopefully we will receive some rain soon and be able to bring them home after our sale.

We took up some Senepol cattle to Rocky beef expo in May and displayed them on the Senepol sites. There was a lot of interest in the Senepol bulls and it pleased a lot of people to know that we have a base in Queensland and that the cattle are running in the conditions that they are bred for. Also it was interesting to see how our cattle compared to other cattle being bred by other Senepol breeders. It was great to see our cattle more than held their own, and to Hazeldean's credit they had no help (feed wise) in getting there.

With no crop in the ground as yet, we hope for some early winter rain soon.

We took along some Senepol bulls to the Dirranbandi Show where we were awarded Champion individual bull of any age, Reserve champion pen of 3 bulls, and 2nd individual bull under 3yrs.

It was great to attend the Roma steer sale earlier in the year where one of our regular clients, Bevan Doyle sold 1054 head all by Hazeldean Angus bulls for an average price of 217c.

Until next newsletter
Keep well

Corey and Mel



Above: Corey and Mel at Rocky Beef Expo with some of the senepol bulls.

Right: Bevan and Alison Doyle with Corey and Mel at the Roma saleyards.



Hazeldean Riverina Update....

2006 began with Rosevale looking in magnificent condition holding a large body of dry feed after an exceptional spring in 2005. Unfortunately since the beginning of the year we have only received 55mm of rainfall and are experiencing a very long cold winter.

April saw the third annual Hazeldean Riverina bull sale held at Rosevale. 34 bulls averaged \$4000 and topped at \$8500 for a total clearance. We welcomed several new clients and many repeat buyers. Bulls sold to both pastoral and higher rainfall areas of NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

It was pleasing to see the "Winilba" Hazeldean blood wether lambs owned by Ian and Jan Auld top the wethers at the June Hay sale at \$61 a head.

Our Rosevale 2005 drop rams are progressing nicely with results from their first stage hip sample averaging a fibre diameter of 18.4 microns with a comfort factor of 98.15.

We have been continuing our fencing program with an additional 7km of laneway and several kilometres of internal fencing completed so far this year.

I look forward to meeting and catching up with clients in August at Hamilton for Sheepvention where we will be displaying some of our sires and ewes. I hope in the mean time for those who need rain they receive it to set up for a bumper Spring.

Richard Cannon, manager, Rosevale.



Hazeldean Sales

At the **Hazeldean Angus SA Bull Sale** in February, 30 APR and stud bulls sold to a top of \$10,000 and averaged \$4830. Top priced bull was a son of Connealy Lead On out of a Hazeldean heifer with a great stretch of EBVs from +3.6 for BW, through to +93 for 600 day weight. All bulls were out of first calf heifers.

In March at the **Hazeldean Angus Autumn Bull Sale** 47 APR and stud bulls sold to a top of \$13,000 and an average of \$4750. The top priced bull was purchased by Tony Lettice, Manager of Waverley Station Scone for Hazeldean Yellowstone Z738, a grandson of Vermillion Yellowstone with high growth EBVs of +6.4 for birth weight through to +98 for 600 day weight, he was in the top 1% for fertility.

The **Hazeldean Angus Riverina Bull Sale** in April saw 34 bulls average \$4000 and top at \$8500 for a total clearance. Top priced bull was the 682kg Hazeldean Lead On Z502 bought by Paul Gorrie manager of Kangaringa, Keith SA. The bull had a BW of +6.5, 600 day weight of +106, EMA of +3.2.



Clients look over bulls at the Hazeldean SA sale in February 2006

Sale Snippets

Bill Ryan, Darlington Point sold 45 Angus heifers pregnancy-tested-in-calf (PTIC) to Hazeldean blood bulls for a top of \$825 and average of \$800 at the Griffith store sale in April.

At Stanthorpe QLD, an April yarding of 3903 weaners and store cattle averaged \$562. Leading vendors Rod and Glenda Reeves, "Wyuna," Liston averaged \$704 across 84 Hazeldean-blood Angus heifers, including a pen of 20 weaner heifers that went for \$920, topping the sale.

At the February Monaro Merino Breeders Association Sale, Hazeldean offered 1005 January shorn merino ewes, 1.5 years old, the largest yarding for many years. The top 420 went for \$87 to a local woolgrower to join to merino rams. Craig Wilson bought the second pen of 408 for \$77.50 and the remaining 177 for \$52 for Bernie Dwyer who is stocking

newly leased country north of Parkes. Mr Dwyer had been burnt out two years ago and had lost a lot of his Hazeldean-blood ewes. He is stocking leased country with young ewes which he will join to Merino rams for wool production.

Landmark agent Myles Buchanan said predictions of a shortage of Merino ewes appeared to be coming true. "You need those core Merino breeders no matter which way you're going and good lines of Merino breeder's type sheep are hard to come by".

The Dennis family of Truro Angus at Heyfield in Victoria, who have been buying Hazeldean bulls since the first Hazeldean sale in 1972, held their own sale in May and Jim was honored to be asked to open the sale. The picturesque river flats at Truro were the perfect setting and a large crowd attended the video auction. Nineteen stud and commercial bulls sold to \$5,000 and averaged \$2805



Helena, Michael, Richard and Di Dennis at the inaugural Truro Angus bull sale.

Upcoming Hazeldean Sales.....



Hazeldean Northern Performance Bull Sale

120 Bulls

60 Angus

30 Senepol

30 Senegus

.....plus 60 paddock bulls available after the auction

Thursday, 17th August

Myall Plains

Nindigully, QLD



Hazeldean Angus Spring Bull Sale

100 Bulls

Tuesday, 5th September

Hazeldean

Cooma, NSW



Hazeldean Hamilton Ram Sale

100 rams

Thursday 12th October

Hamilton Showgrounds

Hamilton, Victoria

Hazeldean On-property Ram Sale

100 rams

Thursday 9th November

Hazeldean, Cooma, NSW

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