



THE PIONEER

RURAL & RESIDENTIAL
PROPERTY

John Bowen – A Full Life

A MAN FOR HIS PEOPLE

This article is the second from an interview with John last year and looks at his business and community service.

John became a fuel agent for Caltex when there were seven fuel agents in Stroud and he was the last one left when he sold the fuel depot in 1988. As fuel agent, John had fuel depots in Stroud and Dungog, delivering bulk fuel to businesses and properties.

John used the truck purchased earlier to cart gravel for bush roads and later saw an opportunity to cart timber. John was the first person to take a load of billets, timber posts, from the top of Sugarloaf Mountain which is the highest of the Pinnacles range, to Raymond Terrace for chipping¹. The trip down the hill was a nightmare. The brakes were hydraulic and heated up, deeming them ineffective.

John also ran beef cattle on 'Greenacres' at the southern end of Stroud and later on the family home property. 'Greenacres' had 30 head of cattle and John expanded this to 100. He was told the cattle would die so he added chicken manure to the ground for nutrition. The kikuyu grass and cows loved it. He was the first to do this and then everyone else followed. They also have a quarry on the property.

John was Stroud's first chicken farmer, starting in 1962 with 5,000 birds, and now has about 150,000 birds². He was the first of six contractors for Bruce Steggles. The main change that John has seen is the controlled environment. Everything is run by computers. The temperature is set between 23-26 degrees with large birds needing cooler temperatures and small birds requiring warmer temperatures. As well as being a businessman, John was a community leader.

John joined the Lions in 1964 and continues in this role. John has been president twice, secretary twice, and treasurer. The Lions Club tended the columbarium and grounds of the cemeteries. After looking after the dead, they felt it was important to look after the living, and the Lodge commenced.

In the early 1980s the Lions Club elected John to chair a committee to investigate bringing aged care to Stroud. John was Chairman of the Board of the Lodge for thirty years. This was an issue that was close to John's heart as he struggled to find aged care for his Mother, Joyce. This crystallised the idea and gave John added incentive to bring aged care to Stroud.

The land for the Lodge was gifted to the Lions Club by Arch Austin and the project began. Locals made great contributions. Dr Roy Mills was the ideas man. The height of the building had to be in line with the 1 in 100 year flood regulation. John's quarry donated the gravel



to build the ground up. The Worth family rolled the gravel. Delivery truck drivers provided the transport for the gravel and The Lions Club paid their petrol costs. The builders were OJ Hannan from Dungog and they constructed a twelve room facility. The Lodge opened on 17 February 1990.

Finally, John arranged the building of the rotunda and update of the cenotaph. This was done with Neil Skeggs and Eric Burgess. John wanted to revive the honouring of the many local men and women that had served our district.

On reflection, John stated that his greatest legacy was The Lodge. His other great legacy was helping local families. John was thankful to have his beautiful wife, Doreen, by his side as she has been the most wonderful person right from the beginning.

"I don't help people for the honour. I do it for the love of the people."

— John Bowen

Many thanks to John Bowen for allowing me to write his story. If you would like your story published by Sharon, please contact her through the R & R office.

Sharon Burke © 2016

¹ Gus Cheers and Ted Johnson operated the saw bench on top of the mountain that cut the timber.

² John sells chicken for meat.