

NZ GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION

Fuelled by Science, Tempered by Experience

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NZGA Executive Update

After the AGM in Twizel, it is timely to reintroduce both the old and new members of the NZGA Executive team.

At the AGM, the members present re-elected Graham Kerr (Barenbrug Agriseeds) as President and Warren King (AgResearch) as Vice President for the coming year.

The members also confirmed the new appointment of Dr Ruth Falshaw as Editor of the *Journal of New Zealand Grasslands* replacing Errol Thom who gave two years (Vols 79–80) of excellent service to the Association in this role (in addition to a previous three-year stint).

The other members of the Executive are: Laurie Copland (farmer and chair of NZGA Audit Committee); David Chapman (DairyNZ); Aaron Meikle (Beef+Lamb NZ); Alistair Black (Lincoln University) and Jo Kerlake (AbacusBio). Jo is working with Jeff Morton and the LOC for the 2019 conference in Napier. In addition, Marie Casey and Glenis Thomas continue to provide the Executive Office services that are vital for the smooth running of the Association.

NZGA publications and editorial support

During 2018, the Executive resolved that the role of Editor needed to be expanded from the previous focus on editing the Journal to include the strategic development of the Journal, plus our other publications. Such a change is necessary to keep pace with the rapid changes that are happening in science publication around the world. These changes, and the implications of them for the Association, are highlighted in Ruth's report overleaf.

Fundamentally, if we don't make changes now, the Journal (and other publications like the Research and Practice Series) will drop off the radar for many NZ and international readers, and the full value of the great science and practice that is presented in them won't be realised. In turn, this could erode the local and international standing of the NZGA and, therefore, the value that is being provided to

members.

Hence, the decision by the Executive to appoint a professional editor with experience in navigating the choppy waters of science publishing. Ruth is an experienced scientist, author, reviewer and editor so has exactly the expertise we need, and we are delighted that she accepted the role, beginning 1 December 2018. As you can see from the following section, Ruth has hit the ground running and has already implemented several changes that lift the professional 'look and feel' of the Journal!

While the points above deal mainly with trends in science publishing, this does not mean that farmer and agribusiness contributions to the Journal or R&P Series will be diminished in any way. The Executive firmly believes these contributions are not only valuable but are also an important and distinctive feature of the Journal and R&P Series so are totally consistent with the "*Fuelled by science, tempered by experience*" mission of the NZGA. They are a strength of our publications and, while they may not conform to the 'normal' science publication standards, we don't want to lose them.

The Executive and Ruth will work together to deal with any issues that might arise from the requirements of indexing services like Scopus so that we retain this strength and develop it further in the future.



NZGA CALL FOR PAPER OFFERS REMINDER - NAPIER 2019

Abstracts are due to the Editor by Friday 15th February 2019.

For further details on the topics, submission dates and more download the [Call for 2019 Paper offers here](#).



NZGA for over 80 years

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The NZGA has published credible and evidence-based information to farmers and the wider pastoral industry for 80 years through its science journal.

The advent of the internet has resulted in enormous changes to science publishing over the last 20 years and the NZGA must continue adapting to the new digital era. Eight years ago, the NZGA made the decision to make all published papers freely available online. They considered the information and science published in the journal was too valuable to be behind a paywall so all papers were digitised and pdf versions provided through the NZGA website. This move aligned with the increased use of resources such as Google Scholar and ResearchGate that people use to access research.

Another change resulted from the proliferation of conferences and one-off non-peer reviewed proceedings that has devalued regular peer-reviewed proceedings, such as the NZGA's journal. To maintain its standing, the name was changed from the *Proceedings of the New Zealand Grassland Association* to the *Journal of New Zealand Grasslands* five years ago. Other similar NZ organisations have also removed the word "Proceedings" from the title of their key publication, for the same reasons. For example, the *Proceedings of the NZ Plant Protection Conference* has become *New Zealand Plant Protection*. The NZGA also introduced online submission of manuscripts using specialised journal-management software around this time.

The digital age has resulted in a proliferation of science journals and papers of dubious quality so the *Journal of New Zealand Grasslands* must continue to demonstrate its credibility. To be credible, the Journal must, first of all, be visible. Therefore, additional functionality within the journal-management software has been activated to provide a separate journal website <https://www.nzgajournal.org.nz> that is linked to the [NZGA website](https://www.nzga.org.nz) (go to Journal Tab).

The journal website contains key information about the scope of the journal, its editorial structure and processes, and author requirements. All papers in volume 80 have been published online in sequential order and under separate headings for farm-systems reviews, research reviews and peer-reviewed research articles. The abstract for each research paper is available online as well as in the pdf file. The full name of each author has been used instead of initials, which provides a distinction (in most cases) between males and females enabling the contributions by women scientists to be more visible. Full names and section headings will be included in the print version of volume 81 too.

One way to assess visibility is by collecting data on the number and location of visitors to the Journal website using Google Analytics. Nearly 200 people visited the new website in December 2018. Most visitors (62%) were from New Zealand but 10% were from Australia, 7% from the USA and 3% from the UK. The rest were from a range of other countries.

The next change to look out for is that each paper in volume 81 will be assigned a digital object identifier (doi), which is a unique code that permanently and unambiguously identifies each paper. Papers in volume 81 will be published online as soon as they are laid out and will be citable using the doi even though there will be no page numbers at this time. Page numbers will be assigned to papers once the conference programme is determined, and updated papers with page numbers will be available online and in print prior to the conference. Also, authors can include their ORCID number (if they have one) in their submission and this will be displayed in the online version.

A further development is that details of all papers published in the journal since 2006 can now be downloaded from the website to make citation easier. The number of citations received by the Journal is critically important as it affects key bibliographic metrics such as the Journal Impact Factor provided by Clarivate Analytics and CiteScore provided by Scopus. Such metrics are considered by many employers and funding agencies as a proxy for quality. This assumption is known to be incorrect (see <https://sfdora.org/>) but is still widely held. Therefore, many scientists are under pressure from their employers to publish in 'high impact-factor' journals and many NZ journals suffer from a misguided perception that they are of low quality simply because they don't have these metrics. Currently, the Journal does not have either of these metrics but we are working towards attaining them in the future.

Another way of demonstrating credibility is through validation by other external organisations such as the Directory of Open Access Journals and the Committee on Publication Ethics. Each of these organisations also require certain standards to be met and the Executive is currently working to achieve these.

Further developments will be rolled out over the next few months.



The NZGA annual conference was another great networking occasion for researchers, farmers and agribusiness, both members and non-members.

A presentation worthy of special mention was the obituary delivered by John Caradus for an NZGA stalwart, Dr David Scott. Before he passed away in 2017, David had prepared his final NZGA paper "Thirty six years (1981-2017) of Mt John pasture trials", which is published in Vol 80.

The life and times of David Scott-"Scotty" (1934-2017)



Educated by correspondence until attending high school as a boarder at Timaru Boys High.

Otago University, followed by PhD from Duke University, Durham, North Carolina DSIR Plant Physiology (PN) then Grasslands (Lincoln) and then AgResearch, retiring in 1996.

He was awarded the Ray Brougham Trophy in 2008 by the NZ Grassland Trust.

His passion for the Mackenzie country shows in his work:

- In the 1970s, he established a wide range of trials across the temperature and moisture gradient of the Mackenzie country
- In the early 1980s, it was decided to concentrate on one site near Tekapo
- Even though funding for high country work was difficult David and his technician, Alec Maunsell, continued the trials until 1996. On retiring to Tekapo, David continued to maintain the trial site and publish results.



David's legacy is the results of these long-term grazing trials that showed for the high country:

- A range of legume species are available according to the level of fertiliser used
- The success of perennial lupin for low fertility
- Success of Caucasian clover at higher fertiliser inputs
- The impact of improved fertility on *Hieracium* control
- Sulphur and phosphate can increase sheep grazing capacity 3-4 fold, while adding irrigation is 8-10 fold

On a final note – David bequeathed \$100,000 to NZGT so the Trustees will decide on how this can be used to provide an ongoing recognition of David Scott.

Ode to Scotty (by Lee Sutherland)

We worked for this Scotty bloke on trials down the Mackenzie way, trying to grow forage over *Hieracium* so cockies could feed sheep and make hay.

Scotty had that leathery look and was built lean and spare of frame, he approached his hard working life in a similar austere vein.

But he worked with us in the freezing wind and under that burning Mackenzie sun, Scotty always stayed with his staff as long as hard work was to be done.

But those who know and use high country research regard Scotty and his work with esteem, for they know that his commitment meant quality as he worked to achieve his dream.

For although he is by no means finished the farmers of our *Hieracium* land, know the green and productive pastures they graze are due to the vision – of just one man.

(5 of 13 stanzas)

Thanks to:

Dick Lucas and John Keoghan in assisting with editing the paper; Alex Maunsell, David's senior technician who worked with him in the Mackenzie for 28 years, working up there on an alternate week basis except for the dead of winter; and Lee Sutherland who fought off the moths to find old photos and files about the trial site and provided an excellent biography.

Photos of the high-country plants David was associated with – *Hieracium* and lupins.



Simon Upton - Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment

The NZGA Executive invited Simon to present a keynote address at the Twizel conference as the Mackenzie Basin is a region that is facing significant environmental challenges. He hoped to speak on the Overseer review but this hadn't been completed at the time of the conference. However there were two further reviews of interest - the treatment of biological sources and sinks in the context of climate mitigation policies and a review into the approach to environmental reporting that was taken under the Environmental Reporting Act 2015.

The following is an extract from Simon's address to the NZ Society of Soil Science in December following our conference. It highlights the points he was making in Twizel.

By early next year, we will have completed the first full cycle of six domain reviews and a synthesis report. So it will be a good time to ask if we have it 'right' – in terms of domains, frequency of reporting and, more broadly, what we're trying to achieve.

The most recently released domain report was entitled '[Our Land 2018](#)¹' and covered a somewhat heterogeneous bundle of topics: physical processes, the land-based impacts of climate, how human activity affects the land, the state of our biodiversity and ecosystems and – you guessed it – the state of New Zealand soils.

May I ask you to put your hand up if you have read the report or parts of it? I asked the same question of roughly 300 people gathered for the NZ Grassland Association conference in Twizel a couple of weeks back. I was mildly staggered when only two hands went up. It would be hard to imagine a user and scientist audience more directly invested in the state of our land. It certainly provided a new motivation for me to ask why we are gathering this information and what difference it will make.

The report is a fascinating – and disturbing – read on many fronts. For instance, we learn that the last version of the land cover database came out in 2012 and that "options are currently being investigated to fund the production of LCDB5 and LCD6". For a country that relies on its land for a living (both agriculture and tourism) and is trying to manage severely perturbed terrestrial ecosystems, it is incredible to me that regular updates are not a core recurring expenditure item. We should not be relying on six-year-old data when satellites are just about able to monitor in real time what is happening on the ground (cloud permitting).

There is no single, comprehensive, robust dataset that characterises land use or land use intensity; there is no measure of habitat fragmentation; we lack a nationally agreed, quantitative and scalable ecosystem classification and monitoring system. Unsurprisingly, it means we don't really have high quality information on the impacts of the change in state of soils and biodiversity on our economy, culture and recreation. All this comes from Table 4 of the report – the data gaps table – which states, rather laconically: "In this report we rely heavily on additional sources or express these descriptively through case studies. A systematic approach and data to better quantify impact is required."

Simon's message was that those of us involved in agriculture should read the report and take extra note of Table 4 (page 106).

¹ Ministry for the Environment & Stats NZ (2018). [New Zealand's Environmental Reporting Series: Our land 2018](#).

New NZGA Life member

Dr John Caradus, past President of NZGA and current Chair of the NZ Grassland Trust, was awarded Life membership of the Association for his services over many years. John is the Chief Executive Officer of Grasslanz Technology, a company focussed on innovative forage technologies such as ryegrass endophytes as well as new forage varieties.

Here, he is awarding the Ray Brougham Memorial Trophy to Tony Rhodes for his work over many years in agricultural consultancy.



Tony is based in Dannevirke, originally working for MAF, Agriculture New Zealand and currently PGG Wrightson Consulting. Over this time, he has had a long association with both AgResearch and Massey University—working with science and extension of practical messages to farmers. He will also have questioned the scientists in these organisations on many occasions.

The NZGT Regional award went to Peter Anderson, a vet from Marlborough, who has contributed significantly to local properties through his work with merinos and the StockCare programme.



The NZGT farmer awards went to Annabelle and Richard Subtil, Omarama Station, and Lisa and David Anderson of Bog Roy Station. Both of these farms were visited on the conference field tours with the photo above showing the trials underway at Omarama Station (Photo credit: R Falshaw).