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A BRONZE MEDAL PRESENTED BY THE GAWLER AGRICULTURAL, HORTICULTURAL AND FLORICULTURAL SOCIETY

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As early as 1854 ploughing competitions had been conducted in the Gawler district. These were soon followed by haymaking and harvesting competitions. These led up to Tuesday 1 February 1856 when the Gawler Agricultural & Horticultural Society's First Annual Show was held.

In reporting on the new Show on 21 February the Adelaide newspaper, *The South Australian Register* commented that "We never remember to have seen so large a company together at Gawler Town. Not only the immediate residents, but the settlers for miles around. All were delighted with the display of fruit which comprised as fine specimens of garden produce as any district in the country could have exhibited"

The objects of the Society were to encourage and foster the improvement of all aspects of Agriculture, horticulture and floriculture, to promote shows and exhibitions of livestock, primary produce and farming plant and equipment.

The Society had humble beginnings in 1854 when a special public meeting was convened at the Globe Inn (now the Kingsford Hotel) in Gawler, where about sixty gentlemen attended. Since then, the Society and its Annual Show has had three distinct phases of development.

The first phase of the Show development reflected characteristics in the broader Gawler

community, it was an era of self-help, self education and of exchanging ideas. This was most pronounced in agriculture where a need clearly existed. The colony of South Australia was founded on 28 December 1836, so it was less than twenty years old when the Gawler Society was formed.

Most of the pioneer agriculturalists came from a European background and soon found that the only common factor between their known agricultural operations and Australian agriculture was in a willingness to work hard. Consequently there developed a need for inventiveness in farming techniques and farm machinery design. It was hardly surprising that farm machinery sections in the early years of the Gawler Show played a prominent part. It was perhaps a natural corollary that Gawler should have become the major production area in South Australia for farm machinery.

The economy boomed until 1905 but a recession then set in which would continued up to the First World War. The local machinery producer James Martin & Co. closed down in 1907. Support for the Society dwindled, there were only eighteen members attended the Annual Meeting in 1908.

The great boom years around the turn of the century did one important thing, they proved Gawler Show could be the premier show and established the Society as a solid institution in the Gawler community.

The second phase developed as agricultural practices became established and produced greater emphasis on the quality of agricultural produce and animals. In turn, this resulted in an increasing interest in plant breeding, animal genetics and breeding practices, and above all, an improvement in general agricultural management.

The Gawler district became the centre for some of the leading sheep stations in Australia. At the Gawler Shows some of the best British breeds of sheep in Australia were exhibited. It was almost inevitable that the breed which revolutionised fat lamb production in Australia should originate in the Gawler district with the establishment of the Poll Dorset breed by the late W.J. Dawkins.

The third phase of the Show developed slowly over a period of some years. It occurred as the result of public seeking more entertainment as well as conventional competitive sections. Horses in action and horse trotting have carried through to the present two day show program.

The Medal

In 1878 it was resolved to “get up the design and die for the medal. The medals were first issued in the same year. Over the years they have issued in bronze, silver and a small number in gold.

In the early 1900s winning competitors had the option of being awarded a medal or taking their prize in cash, in lieu of a medal.

It was in the early 1920s leading up to the depression that medals ceased to be issued. The Gawler A.H.&F. Society medal awarded to the Gawler Implement Manufacturing Co. Ltd. (fig.1) was struck in bronze with dies originally manufactured by Stokes and Martin of Melbourne.

The reverse depicts a figure of the goddess Ceres (goddess of the Earth), standing holding a shield. There is a head of a horse, ram & cow at the feet of Ceres. In the field area is a harvester machine, a plough and a fence. Some hills are depicted in the background on the right hand side and a ship and lighthouse on the left (the ship and lighthouse are very similar to those on the reverse of the English pennies issued during Queen Victoria’s reign). In the exergue the words “Stokes and Martin/Melbourne”.

This die is a modified form of the reverse prepared by Stokes and Martin for their commemorative medal for the 1872 Melbourne Exhibition (Car. 1872/3 which is the same obverse die as 1873/3). The heads of the horse and cow look a little out of place as they were not on the original. The harvester takes the place of a mill and a factory.

The obverse is a simple design. Just inside the rim on a slightly raised circle is the legend “GAWLER AGRICULTURAL HORTICULTURAL & FLORICULTURAL SOCIETY S.A.:" There is an inner circle wreath of various types of leaves interlocked with the following inscription contained therein:

Awarded to
Gawler Implement
Manufacturing Coy.
Ltd.
1st Prize
Set Four
Stump Jump Harrows
22 Sept. '09

Gawler Implement Manufacturing Co. Ltd.

In 1908 the first meeting of the Company was held. This Company was formed to carry on the agricultural portion of the business of Jas. Martin & Co. Ltd.. It was owned chiefly by local business people and farmers.

The directors were Messrs. H.B. Crosby (Chairman), A. Sheard, H.W. Mortimer, and Jas. Fergusson as manager. Mr. Sheard was an importer and owned a department store in Gawler’s main street. The manager of the Gawler Implement Manufacture Co. Ltd., Jas. Fergusson had been for many years the head of the agricultural department of Jas. Martin and Co..

The new company received promises of support from most of the clients of the old firm and so had begun business with good hopes for success.

The award of the medal from the Gawler Show in September 1909 was no doubt an important moment in the early development of the firm.

References and Acknowledgments

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- *Bunyip* 1909 (Local Gawler Newspaper)
- Davidson, Yvonne (Secretary Gawler Show Society)