

Bill Bolton-Smith

The development and success of regional branches within the Australian Rangeland Society has been largely due to the foresight and efforts of a few. Pre-eminent among the land managers who have contributed in this way is Bill Bolton-Smith.

Bill Bolton-Smith spent the first 56 years of his life (until his move to Adelaide in 1982) at "Willangee", a property of 67,000 hectares north of Broken Hill. From 1942 to 1950 Bill worked under the direction of his father and from 1951 to 1982 managed the property with his family.

During his years at Willangee, Bill became increasingly involved in a number of grazier organisations. He served on the Council of the Pastoralists' Association of the West Darling from 1957 to 1982 and was President from 1967 to 1969. He was Director of the Pastures Protection Board from 1960-82 and was Inaugural President of the West Darling Bush Fire Council. In 1982 he became an Honorary Member of Fowlers Gap Arid Zone Research Station, after fifteen years as a committee member.

Bill Bolton-Smith was elected foundation President of the Broken Hill branch of the Australian Rangeland Society in 1977 and held that position until 1982, when he retired to Adelaide. During this period the Broken Hill Branch has organised eleven field days, seminars and special education courses for isolated communities in the West Darling area. The large attendances at these functions have been due in no small part to his contributions.

At a Branch seminar on the theme "Financial management for the Pastoralist" Bill presented a paper on "The Financial Management of Willangee Station". In it he described his family's 30 year involvement in that property. A quote from the abstract of the paper highlights his willingness to contribute his experience freely to the discussion of issues confronting rangeland managers: "In this paper I hope to lead you through the financial history of Willangee Station. Through decisions we made, the mistakes we have made, the lessons we have learnt, the debts we have taken on and the profits we have made. Our aim is to expose all of these facts so



people may learn from them". The paper, along with others presented at the Seminar, was published in the Australian Rangeland Journal.

In 1980 Bill hosted a tour of Willangee by the Barrier Environment Group during a Conference on the theme "Is the West Darling becoming a Desert?" By his actions, conservationists and graziers were brought together during a period when conservation of Australia's arid lands was becoming a major issue.

Through his leadership of the Broken Hill Branch of the Australian Rangeland Society, Bill has contributed greatly to the exchange of ideas between academics, the pastoralist community and conservationists. With such a wealth of knowledge of the district and its people Bill has been a guiding influence to the Broken Hill Branch, the Committee and its members.