

# Hazlett News

A newsletter for clients and mates of Hazlett Limited



The Bray family: Sam and Annabelle with Maggie, Alice, Toby and Rose.

## Win-win Funding Service Powers Trading

Sam and Annabelle Bray have been operating Annabelle's parents' property at Albury for ten years.

It's now 570ha rolling to steep after 190ha were sold in the past year, partly to fund a still-to-be-finalised succession plan that's been in the works for five years.

Dairy grazing had been a mainstay on the farm for a number of years but last season's big dry prompted a rethink. Sam came to see grazing dairy cows as too risky in a district prone to summer-dry (although they are experiencing the exact opposite this year!) because of the cost of the supplementary feed required to attain contracted weight gains when things get tight.

The farm has been growing its own barley, as well as other occasional arable opportunities that present themselves each year, on 30-40 ha but that's down to 15 ha this year.

There's also a 300-head ewe flock maintained as cleaner-uppers, and 200 velveted stags.

The move away from dairy grazing and the reduction in acreage is seeing radical changes. They have been trading about 5000 lambs a year and will continue to do that although with less land available it may become more intensive – just one aspect of "... a fair old juggle..." to consolidate operations on the reduced footprint. This year that will include 2500 halfbreds being wintered and shorn for a Merino New Zealand contract immediately before they are sent to a processor in early November.

"We kill everything we trade unless we get caught out," Sam said.

The Brays will continue some capital stock hogget grazing: this involves taking on a client's hoggets over spring while the client is lambing. This arrangement has worked well for the last 3-4 years.

The farm restructure process means that capital is tight, which is where the Hazlett Funding service comes into play in the trading activity. And it's proving a win-win.

Hazlett buys and owns the stock while Sam has complete control over their management and eventual disposal, taking whatever value he has been able to add to them. This relationship is a continuance of one the farm had for many years with Peter Walsh and Associates. While the facility is a little more formal than the traditional 'handshake' arrangement with PWA, the essential benefits are, for Sam, undiminished, and still based on a great deal of mutual trust.

"It really does give us the chance to make a decision and go forward with it. It's just a phone call to Maddie Hassall in the office who is really easy to deal with. They're out to see our business grow and do well.

"It's just so flexible ... you don't have to go cap in hand to the bank every time you go to a sale and pick up a few more lambs. A unit load of lambs is kind of a hundred grand these days and it's not hard to spend a couple of hundred grand on a day.

"Greg Shearer (Hazlett Livestock Agent based in Fairlie) is there in the mix, and between us we find them."

The lambs start coming in off their mothers before Christmas and are all on by mid-February. (The first crossbreds were starting to go out when we spoke to Sam in early March).

Sam tries to buy lambs from the same breeders as he gets to know what they are producing; he's been buying from some producers for 6-7 years.

"Those relationships are important. Relationships are what drive our business:

between us and our clients, between Greg and me; and between us and the funding team. We work on keeping the communication going really well: everyone's informed and there's no surprises – the good, the bad and the ugly!

"That's where the trust model comes into play. With the involvement of the stock agent they can ascertain that we're doing what we told the funding team we were going to do.

"I talk to Greg several times a week even when there's nothing going on just to keep a handle on the market. He gets to keep a handle on the farming side of things.

"There probably are other financing options out there, but when you're tight on capital and you've got a relationship with someone who understands your business it's not all about the dollars and cents."

A major point of benefit for Sam is that he and Greg are not tied to any outlet for the lambs – they can send them to whichever processor or sale outlet that suits them best.

There's cattle in the mix too. They had been running a beef breeding herd of around 80 cows; they've sold those and are moving to trading dairy beef in the form of Charolais/Friesian and Angus/Friesian animals, with Hazlett also funding about 300 of those.

"The Hazlett team definitely don't dictate to me what happens to them although, of course, I listen to their advice. It's my decision where they go."

Sam and Annabelle have four children, Maggie, 11; Alice, 9; Toby, 6; Rose, 3. Annabelle used to work off the farm but now she's got a job in the house that Sam says he wouldn't want – she always gets involved outside when the whips are cracking, though.

Peter and David at the Levels Plant  
& Machinery Sale, July 2023.

## Peter Walsh ends 60 years in the business

Peter Walsh retired on the First of April, 60 years to the day since he lay down his scrub cutter's slasher in Cronadun and joined PGG as an office junior in Christchurch.

Details of his career were published in the April 2022 edition of Hazlett News on the occasion of the meshing of his very successful 20-year company (peaking at 36 staff), Peter Walsh and Associates (PWA), with the Hazlett business.

PWA was a business that had steered clear of the usual ancillary farm-services offerings like insurance and rural supplies: livestock was its knitting.

Fundamental to PWA's success, too, has been Peter's wife Karen, New Zealand's first female livestock agent. "She was very good at it too. The thing with her is that she had to be better than the men ... and I can tell you she's got a very thick hide."

They looked towards retirement and as there were no internal options, they took up David Hazlett's standing offer. For the past three years Peter has had an ambassadorial role in Hazlett.

An interview, to mark his retirement, on the radio show The Country started with host Jamie Mackay marvelling at his 60-year career, and Peter butted in straight away with: "And I only remember half of it."

That interview traversed his early sporting successes (he was a junior national champion shot-putter in his youth and he played in the South Canterbury rugby side that took the Ranfurly Shield off Marlborough in 1974) and the role of technology in the evolution of the industry: the arrival of the mobile phone being probably the most significant.

But Peter prefers to talk about the old-fashioned values that stamp a successful livestock agency:

"Although technology is now such a big part of conveying information and opportunities to both vendor and purchaser, the personal face-to-face contact on farm or conversation at the saleyards still really builds a trust and respect between the parties involved.

"There is nothing like visiting the home patch and seeing how the farmer and family are doing. They seem to talk more about how things are going with farming, family and life. I guess they are in their most comfortable environment."

He is highly complimentary of the way the Hazlett business works: "Full of vim and vigour, which is what this industry needs - vim and vigour and a thick skin!"

And straight talking: "A lot of people are not prepared to say exactly what they think. You can cut out a whole lot of time-wasting if that did happen. But that's politics and it's all part of it."

And David Hazlett: "The man's got tremendous enthusiasm, a fantastic memory and a good business head. If something goes wrong, he fixes it and moves on."

And his own career: "It's been an experience and a half. Rewarding ... bloody testing at times ... but I've had a lot of good people around me."

Peter and Karen have a small lifestyle block and he is looking forward to the 'pottering around' that such a holding entails.



## If you are strong, we will be strong

We're fortunate to have some remarkable people, not just within our business but also among those we do business with. Over the past two months I've had the privilege of visiting stunning landscapes, meeting our Hazlett people and connecting with some of our customers throughout New Zealand.

The consistent feedback I've received is that we have truly committed, dedicated people at Hazlett - and I couldn't agree more. I have heard many examples of our people going above and beyond to deliver value for our customers across our Insurance, Livestock, Agronomy, Funding and Procurement businesses. But it's more than just delivering value - our people bring attitude, take the time to understand what our customers need and then deliver it.

I feel incredibly fortunate to have joined a family business with such a strong culture and core values that our people take pride in. In talking about delivering value, it's no surprise that we are seeing real growth in our insurance business as our Hazlett Insurance people challenge the status quo by having risk-led discussions with our customers.

At a time when insurance costs are increasing, I'm impressed by what we are doing to support our customers across the rural, personal, and commercial business spectrums - adding value by taking the time to identify what risks our customers want to cover with insurance and which risks they are happy to mitigate in other ways. I've also received great feedback about our structure and support at claims time.

Finally, thank you to those who have taken the time to meet with me and share your stories. I really appreciate it as your views are helping us shape our Hazlett strategy and your resilience shines through. I look forward to meeting more of our Hazlett community and partners. I know we are well-positioned to navigate this evolving landscape and to work with you to drive our future success.

If you, our customers, are strong we will be strong - it's simple.



**Melanie Brooks**

Chief Executive Officer

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## Time to review your business Terms & Conditions?

Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) are written rules and guidelines that help prevent misunderstandings and disputes with customers, providing legal protections. Most businesses benefit from having T&Cs, but if your business lacks them, consult your lawyer to see if they are necessary.

Our insurance team often find that a business's T&Cs do not align with current risks or conflict with insurance coverage. Unfortunately, these issues usually surface when a loss occurs, leading to debates on ownership or liability, and can result in customer disputes or denied insurance claims.

Now is the best time to review your T&Cs, work with your legal team and ask your insurance broker to review suitability of insurance. This will help protect your business and keep it running smoothly.



**James Smith**  
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## Did you know?

**Jewellery and watches under a typical contents insurance policy are limited to \$3,000 per item. With the rising value of gold and silver, you may need to have these items revalued and listed on your insurance policy.**

## Looking ahead after a challenging season

The Hazlett Agronomy team are now at the tail-end of what has been a challenging season requiring regular intense crop oversight, a standout issue being the wide presence of cutworm in North Canterbury forage crops.

Awareness of this will likely result in more seed being coated in the coming year.

We started the season with a very bleak product price outlook, resulting in a high level of pre-season planning to assist clients to make their budgets work. An outcome of this was a significant shift from proprietary seeds to commons which no doubt will have flowed onto seed breeders having high stocks and a reduction in the areas of seed production contracted for the coming year.

The outlook for the coming year is much improved; however high interest rates remain an issue and it will take several years for farmers to benefit from the recent lowering of rates given that many will currently be on fixed agreements.

Over the next few months we will be working closely with our clients to review this year and map out the program for 25/26. Our focus is on ensuring that in conjunction with our clients we fully evaluate the extensive range of seed and chemical options and that paddocks are well prepared to achieve the optimum outcome.



**Peter Engel**  
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## Has the world gone crazy?

What a few months it's been: dry in wet areas (Waikato/Central NI) and wet in dry areas (East Coast) across the North Island.

Tariffs up the wazoo and traditional trading partners becoming enemies, doomsayers are having a field day; just like during COVID the best industry to be in is agriculture, as we have the one thing the world needs: FOOD.

New Zealand farmers produce the best meat and dairy products anywhere and if the Americans don't want it, someone else will take it. This is not the first time and certainly won't be the last that there is uncertainty in world markets.

The team has been busy in the North Island and are slowly but surely expanding across the island. Plenty of stock has been crossing the strait, ensuring store stock markets remain competitive across New Zealand.

Welcome to our new clients in the North, thank you to all our existing clients for your business and opportunity to market and sell your livestock.



**Tom Mowat**  
GM, Hazlett Livestock - North Island  
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## I wish it could be Christmas every day

You might hear "I wish it could be Christmas every day" being sung across many parts of the farming community; the recent one saw a substantial surge in sheep and beef farmer sentiment.

150mm of rain (and regularly continuing for most in the East Coast of the South Island) has solved the feed problem and, off the back of this and a shortage of stock, has rocketed up commodity prices, particularly lamb. Beef has continued its strong trajectory as well.

The impact of all of this is that working capital is exceptionally tight. Our team is flat-out solving this issue for farmers, funding plenty of trading stock. The fees for doing this have reduced, so if you need help get in touch with the funding team or your Hazlett Livestock agent.

As we know, it won't be Christmas every day - so make the most of this time.



**Richard Hegan**  
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### HAT PIC



**Devereux Roberts, son of Hazlett Insurance Broker Croydon Roberts, helping out with tailing at Hopefield Station last season.**

**Hopefield Station is an insurance client in North Canterbury.**

**The \$250 charity donation will go to Pet Refuge, who offer a safe haven for pets of victims leaving domestic violence across New Zealand.**

# What a difference rain can make

Everybody was hurting up until Christmas. But with all that rain over the break we've got a new lease of life.

And the markets are playing along. Lamb is strong. Beef is where it's never been at this time of year before. Solid ewe fairs. We'd just started the calf sales at time of writing and they were well up on last year.

Dairy is strong too - and the forecasting for next season is very promising as well.

As Tom Mowat observes, there are areas up north that are dry - and not accustomed to it, but for most South Island regions, there is grass, grass and more grass. Quite a contrast to this time last year when we had no rain leading into winter.

We seem to be back on the wave and we can only hope that international events don't tip us off it again so we can perhaps get on with some debt reduction and even a bit of farm investment/development.

As we have previously foreshadowed, there are fewer lambs around because of the impact of last year's drought on the ewes in central and northern parts of the South Island, and the storms down south of course, but that will be compensated for, at least in part, by the ability to put more weight on the ones that are there. The trick will be getting the timing right in sending them away to make room for trading lambs to carry through the winter.

It remains for us to hope that all this is no flash in the pan: farmers were under the pump in the latter part of last year with a feed pinch against the background of rising costs and other pressures. The current situation is a relief - certainly enhanced by the ongoing rainfall - and we can only hope that strengthening beef, lamb and dairy markets overseas are a trend that's going to continue.



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**STAFF PROFILE**

## Snow Buckley

### Livestock Bloke, South Canterbury

Snow was born and bred in Blenheim. When he left school aged 17 in 1984 he headed to Cam Champion's *Okirae* Romney stud at Fordell just outside Wanganui where he worked for nearly two years. His immediate family weren't farmers but, with maternal grandparents who had farmed in Wales, Snow reckoned farming was in his genes.

After a short OE in the UK, he did a season back home in Waitaki NZR's Riverlands works. Then the Romney stud industry found him again.

This was in the person of the late and noted Harry Brensell who had two Romney studs, *Fernvale* and *Tresco* (plus a small Southdown stud) on his property at Moa Flat in West Otago, running around 1200 stud ewes. Snow spent almost 10 years there as studmaster.

That period, and Harry Brensell himself, left an indelible mark on Snow. He remembers that operation being regarded as one of the world's leading Romney breeders, if not the world leader. A special recollection from the late 1980s is selling 19 elite rams for \$260,000, with the top one making \$42,000; a few from that offering went to South America. He also sold a half-share in one ram for \$20,000.

Snow is justifiably proud of his track record as an auctioneer and is now regarded as one of the company's senior ones: "I've always put a lot of emphasis on doing my homework. You only get one chance to sell your vendors' stock, and you want to make it a very rewarding experience for them. That's why they keep coming back."

He left Moa Flat for an invitation to join Southland Farmers Co-op as a trainee livestock/stud stock agent that saw him based in Otautau for five years.

That was a time when stock agents wore a lot of different ties. Snow was one of those.

The SFC/Reid Farmers merger happened at around the fourth of those Otautau years (1997). He then moved to PGG to be based at St Andrews for five years until the PGG/Reid Farmers merger in 2001; he resigned in early 2002 and joined Peter Walsh and Hamish Lane under their banner of Peter Walsh and Associates.

Snow fondly recalls the small tight-knit group whose later growth, in hindsight, mirrors the early years of David Hazlett's company. He was with PWA until that company joined forces with Hazlett.

"I'm still here and still loving it.

"I really appreciated the way that Hazlett handled the coming together of the two companies - in the way they accepted Peter Walsh and his employees. Nobody lost their jobs. I've never seen that handled so well. David said he wanted the process to be the coming together of two families rather than simply a merger and that's exactly what it was.

"There's a really good vibe. Hazlett are a great company to work for; if you pull your weight they'll pull their weight."

Snow and his wife Mandy live on a small lifestyle block on the south side of Timaru; they have three daughters: Caitlin, 25; Tegan, 21; and Georgia, 14.

Snow's out-of-work time is spent following his family's sporting interests and he is also a keen hockey player.

## Sales Calendar

### Weekly Sales

Blenheim	Every Second Monday
Coalgate	Each Thursday
Temuka Prime Cattle and Sheep	Each Monday
Temuka Store Cattle	Every Second Thursday

For all sale dates including special sales, please refer to our calendar or visit [www.hazlett.nz/whats-on](http://www.hazlett.nz/whats-on) for up-to-date information.

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