

ADDRESS FOR FARMERS' DAY LUNCHEON, TUESDAY MAY 14 1985.

It would be most interesting to hear the opinions of the man after whom this University is named, on events in a modern university. Known for his quick mind and caustic, often sarcastic wit, Cecil John Rhodes had very definite ideas about most things, ranging from the qualities of manhood to the role of women! Told of a fight between two men one day, Rhodes replied:

"Of course, I know there was a woman at the bottom of it. There always is. You needn't tell me anything about it. I know."

One of the things of which I suspect he might not approve is the extension of Rhodes Scholarships to include women. Though not prepared to challenge him to a duel over the issue, I should be among the first to defend this development as my own daughter, Margaret, was up at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar in 1982.

This, however, is one occasion of which I am sure Rhodes would heartily approve, as he not only loved being "on the veld", but was also keenly interested in agriculture. He established many farms and agricultural projects in the Cape Colony and in what was then "Rhodesia".

Through De Beers, Rhodes purchased farms near Kimberley for which he imported a number of bloodstock horses and cattle - constant prize-winners and exhibitors at shows, one of his biographers tells us. For the fruit farms created in the Western Cape, he gained the services of several Californian fruit growers, and the fruit-farming and jam-manufacturing became a thriving concern.

In "Rhodesia" he purchased two blocks of farms, one in the Matopos in the South and the other in the North Eastern highlands of Inyanga. He built a large dam in the Matopos where he hoped to establish winter crops and the fruit-farms in Inyanga have their roots in his endeavours.

Rhodes was frequently asked his reasons for coming out to Africa, and once replied to a friend:

"Why did I come to Africa? Well, they will tell you that I came out on account of my health, or from a love of adventure - and to some extent that may be true; but the real fact is that I could no longer stand the eternal cold mutton."

Perhaps that is why Rhodes liked nothing better than to have nicely-cooked chops for lunch, wherever he went. Whenever possible, he would insist that his party leave town so that he could have his chops for lunch out in the open veld.

Perhaps it was also the memory of cold mutton which made Rhodes go to particular lengths to encourage the wool industry in the Cape. He managed to get permission on a visit to the Sultan of Turkey to purchase and import several Angora rams to improve the strain of the flocks in this country.

Perhaps all this also has something to do with the absence of cold mutton from the table today!

The tradition of close contact with the farming community and farming matters established by Cecil John Rhodes has been perpetuated right up to the present. This University draws almost 53% of its students from the Cape and 10% from Zimbabwe. Constituting a goodly number of them are those who come from old established farming families. Amongst our Old Rhodians of agricultural origin in Zimbabwe rank people like Ian Smith, once again happily engaged in running his farms.

We are very pleased to have with us today Mr Errol Moorcroft, an Old Rhodian and member of the University's Council, one of the more illustrious among the farming community in the Eastern Cape who claim this University as their alma mater. It is relevant to note here that he too went to Rhodes' beloved university - Oxford - another link in the chain which I am outlining.

By the end of this day you will have visited a number of the University's research units which are engaged in research of an agricultural, or related nature. Many of you will already be familiar with the investigation being done by the Tick Research Unit and the Plant Nutrition Research Unit. We are grateful to the agricultural bodies and individuals concerned for their support and interest which they lend to these projects.

You are perhaps not familiar with the fish farming activities of the J L B Smith Institute of Ichthyology, or the research of the Leather Industries Research Institute. The valuable work done by all of these organizations and others in the University is yet another link in the chain wrought originally by Cecil John Rhodes.

For many years the University has been involved in protracted negotiations with the Government over the establishment of facilities to offer Veterinary Science as a field of study. Under the present economic climate we cannot hold out much hope of the realization of this ambition, but it is another area in which Rhodes is sensitive to the needs of the farming community of the Eastern Cape.

It is indeed fitting for Rhodes to reaffirm its ties with our neighbours who are engaged in agriculture. It is my pleasure on this happy occasion to welcome you very warmly, we look forward to a continued and growing association between the farming community and the University, which I am sure will afford our chop-eating predecessor as much pleasure as it does us.

REFERENCES

Le Sueur, Gordon: Cecil Rhodes, the man and his works, John Murray, London, 1913.

Jourdan, Philip: Cecil Rhodes, his private life by his Private Secretary, John Lane, London, 1910.