

# Contribution to rural community

**REO WALLACE HUMPHRYS,**  
**OAM**  
Farmer  
**Born:** May 9, 1913; Adelaide  
**Died:** November 27, 2000;  
Maitland

**R**EO Humphrys was one of the Yorke Peninsula's best-known farmers for more than 70 years. He began farming at the age of 14 when he left school to become a farm hand on a Maitland property in the Yorke Valley.

He worked on the farm owned by SGR Smith for 25 years, during which he also bought his own 320ha property, REBA at Urania.

REBA was an acronym for the first two letters of his name and that of his wife Barbara Emily Spooner, whom he married on 21 March, 1936. Farming was the first interest of his life, followed by an extensive community involvement. Mr Humphrys worked tirelessly to transform REBA from a run-down property into a beautiful, highly productive farm. With son Brian, he built a large homestead, a second homestead for Brian and his wife, Gill, a major workshop, several barns, various other sheds and numerous kilometres of fencing.

Mr Humphrys was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in 1985 for his community service-based activities. These included soil conservation; he served on the Soil Advisory Board for a record 34 years from 1952 to 1986.

He was also a foundation member of the Yorke Peninsula Conservation Board which covered 150,000ha.

He was awarded the Sir William McKell



**WELL KNOWN:** Reo Humphrys.

Medal in 1987 by the Australian Soil Conservation Council for the most outstanding contribution to soil conservation in Australia. Mr Humphrys had promoted and encouraged soil conservation among farmers for 35 years; the Federal Government announced at the time.

Among his greatest achievements was the Petersville Watershed project which was set up in the early-1950s and involved 16 badly eroded farms north-west of Ardrossan. Mr Humphrys played a leading role in helping landowners review their land management. The result was a fertile cereal and sheep production area, protected by contour banks and stable waterways.

It was described as an example of the type of grassroots practical action against land degradation urgently needed on a wider scale. Mr Humphrys was also a

member of the District Council of Yorke Peninsula for 19 years. He was chairman of the council for six years from 1961 to 1967 and also served on the state executive of the Local Government Association. His many other roles included being a justice of the peace from 1962 to 1993.

He also provided distinguished service with the United Farmers and Stock Owners grain section, the State Emergency Service and spent 40 years with the South Kilkerran Agricultural Bureaus and was a life member of the South Australian Agricultural Bureaus.

Other community roles included membership of the Yorke Peninsula Hunt Club and Yorke Valley Tennis Club and he was a member of the Volunteer Defence Corp during World War II.

Mr Humphrys was also widely recognised as a natural engineer, despite a lack of any formal training. This enabled him to complete major repairs and refurbishment of a wide range of farm implements and equipment and the design of various farming items.

Mr Humphrys' service with the Yorke Valley Freemasons Lodge was acknowledged with the award of a "50-year jewel" in 1993 and a five year bar in 1998.

He was also a member of seven other lodge chapters, three at Moonta and four at Port Pirie, and was awarded honorary membership of all eight lodges.

He was also a district inspector of lodges for the Grand Lodge.

Mr Humphrys was predeceased by his wife, Barbara. He is survived by his children Brian, Rosalie and Elaine.

**Nigel Austin**