

Station manager lived for the land

Edgar Gwynne Hughes

Pastoralist

Born: October 30, 1916; Glenelg

Died: December 29, 2005; Adelaide

GWYNNE Hughes was one of South Australia's best-known cattlemen; but unlike many of his contemporaries, he didn't begin his hands-on involvement with the pastoral industry until he was 31.

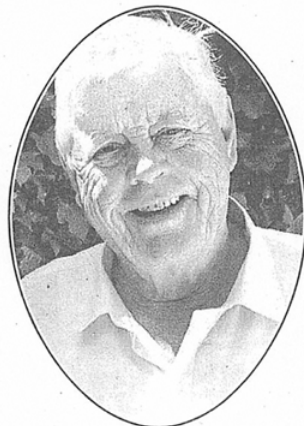
Born at Glenelg in 1916, his preparations for entry into the family pastoral business were interrupted by a lengthy and distinguished service with the RAAF during World War II.

Gwynne was the second of the four children of Edgar and Ita Hughes. He was educated at a private school in suburban St Peters and then at nearby St Peter's College where he spent what he once described as "11 bloody long years". In his senior school years, a significant amount of his holiday time was spent working in cattle camps on family properties.

From school, he went to work in Goldsbrough Mort's stock department in 1935 but with the outbreak of war in Europe he enlisted in the air force as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme.

Before he went overseas in 1940, he married Barbara Forwood.

Gwynne trained on Tiger Moths and Harvards in Canada and on Hurricanes in England. He was posted to a night-fighter squadron on the west coast of England and flew Defiants and twin-engine Beaufighters in night operations using radar to detect German bombers. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1942, Gwynne



was one of a handful of experienced pilots who were brought back to form six squadrons to operate from New Guinea. They flew Beaufighters from Port Moresby and Milne Bay in operations against Japanese supply lines and Japanese Zeros.

In 1943, Gwynne was deemed to have flown enough sorties and was "invalided" home from New Guinea, having picked up both malaria and dengue fever. He spent the rest of the war based at Laverton in Victoria, ferrying Kitty Hawk aircraft to New Guinea and Spitfires to Darwin.

After the war, he returned briefly to Goldsbrough Mort before joining the family

business and beginning what he used to describe as "over 30 years of living out of suitcases". The family pastoral business had been established by Gwynne's grandfather, Herbert Bristow Hughes, who took up Booyoolle Station at Gladstone in 1843. At various times, it has included the huge Kinchea run at Menindee, New South Wales, Nockatunga in southwest Queensland (which the Hughes family held for 118 years before its 1990 sale to Packer family interests) and Clifton Hills at the upper end of the Birdsville Track in SA.

In more recent years, Kars Station in NSW has been the family interest in what remains of Kinchea.

In SA, Gwynne was best known for his managerial involvement with the 17,300sq km Clifton Hills run, the second-largest contiguous pastoral holding in the state (after Anna Creek at Lake Eyre South). Bought in 1962, Clifton Hills contains almost entirely within its boundaries the 2000sq km of braided channels, flood-outs and swamps that comprise the productive Goyder Lagoon. This is regarded as valuable country for bullock fattening.

Gwynne recognised early the value of aircraft and helicopters to muster cattle out of Goyder Lagoon and the Diamantina flood-outs.

In recent years, he handed over the Clifton Hills reins to son John, but he was never far in the background.

Gwynne was pre-deceased by his wife, Barbara, and leaves three children, Philippa, Prue and John, eight grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

Leith Yelland