



## W. J. SPAFFORD

### — an appreciation —

Walter John Spafford—Roseworthy College diplomate; sometime Acting Principal; Director of Agriculture; Chairman of the Australian Barley Board; successful wheat breeder and outstanding agriculturist—died, aged 78, on

31st May, 1962, and South Australia lost a man who had for nearly 60 years been friend and helper to South Australian farmers.

“Spaff” was a student at Roseworthy from April, 1900, to March, 1903. He came back

on the staff in 1905 as Assistant Experimentalist, and from 1907 until 1914 he was Demonstrator in Agriculture. For four months in 1932 he was Acting Principal of the College.

While at the College he not only bred some of Australia's most popular wheats in Ford, Sultan and Felix, but he started on a lifetime career which led to him becoming one of the best-known lecturers on Agriculture we have ever had.

Some of his stories of early travel around the State in a buggy and pair, and some of the stories of the evenings at the local hotels, are remembered by all who heard them.

In later life as Director of Agriculture from 1936 to 1949 he had all the work worries of the later years of the “depression” and of the Second World War to contend with. His official duties were heavy and responsible. The loss of his son came as a tragic blow. But through it all he considered the welfare of the Departmental officers. He wasn't an easy man to work for. He worked hard himself and he demanded much of the people under him. He always tried to put them into the picture about what was wanted, and then let them go on their own. If everything went well he let the officer

know he had done a good job, but if things didn't go so well, his comments were terse and very much to the point.

Briefing one of his new district Agricultural Advisers, and being asked by the new Adviser what his duties were, “Spaff” looked at the Adviser and said, “You've got to help South Australian agriculture and its farmers in any way you can, even if the only thing you can do yet is mind the baby”.

He not only worked hard—he played hard—and many a poor judge of capacity found himself lamenting before the night was over. This relief from tension undoubtedly helped to keep “Spaff” going. No matter how late the night, early next morning he was up and about. He learned much about South Australia's towns from his before breakfast walks, and not infrequently came in to breakfast with some new knowledge about the weeds growing in the town, or of what the townspeople were thinking and doing.

During 1934-35 Mr. Spafford was sent to look at agriculture in South America and South Africa, and his reports of this trip contained much interesting and valuable information.

In recognition of his work for agriculture during the war, Mr. Spafford was awarded the Imperial Service Order, and just after his retirement as Director of Agriculture he was further honoured by being made a Commander of the British Empire.

A member of many Agricultural Boards and Committees, he was a member of the Australian Barley Board from 1942, and chairman from 1947 until his death.

For many years he was on the Council of the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society of South Australia, and helped judge the cereal sections. Busy to the end, he inspected the proposed site of the cereal exhibits for this year's Adelaide Royal Show the day before his death, and was keenly looking forward at that time to seeing more shows.



With a wide knowledge, sound judgment and long experience he was ever ready to help and advise. His passing cost South Australian agriculture something it could ill afford to spare. At the recent Adelaide Royal Show many of his former colleagues and friends found themselves looking over their shoulders, particularly around the cereal grain section, wondering where "Spaff" was.

Roseworthy College has had few, if any, sons who did more for South Australia than Walter John Spafford.