

MBL membership opens to food manufacturers

In an incisive move to benefit all MBL members, eligible food manufacturers can now apply for membership of the co-operative.

Broadening the membership base will increase MBL's merchandise buying power and grow the co-operative, ultimately increasing the value for all members.

"We're further expanding what we're already doing. It's win-win for everyone," says MBL Chairman George Ujvary.

"What MBL Merchandising offers is useful for the wider food industry. We're leveraging over 100 years of experience in the merchandise area to give a greater offering to a wider base.

"Expanding our co-operative's membership base creates a bigger pot to be shared by all members through the annual rebate."

Diversification, innovation and remaining relevant to the membership have been keys to MBL's success over 117 years.

Membership of South Australia's oldest co-operative has been

restricted to processors, wholesalers and retailers of red meat, chicken and seafood.

MBL now welcomes membership applications from sizable general food manufacturers, after the Board passed a Special Resolution.

A selection of food manufacturers has lodged membership applications which will be scrutinised to ensure suitability before being considered by the Board.

MBL enjoys strong relationships with a number of food manufacturers who buy our merchandise as regular customers without the benefits of membership.

However, the prospect of membership is expected to attract new customers bringing new opportunities to the co-operative, boosting overall growth.

MBL CEO Jamie Higgins says, "It's an opportunity to expand our

Continued page 5



Vince lives the dream

Supplying his shop with premium beef from his own farm is a dream realised for butcher Vince Clemente, who opened a large purpose-built shop at Newton Village shopping centre early last year.

The second-generation butcher, who is training his son Dominic, 18, to continue a family butchering tradition, is battling to keep up with demand for expertly-prepared meat. See story on pages 4-5.

Showroom, warehouse, offices:
203-215 Hanson Rd, Athol Park SA 5012
PO Box 46 Mansfield Park SA 5012

Orders ph: (08) 8417 6000
Orders fax: (08) 8417 6001
orders@mblsa.com.au

Admin ph: (08) 8417 6002
Admin fax: (08) 8417 6003
www.mblsa.com.au

Chicken keeps growing

Chicken consumption in Australia has almost doubled in the past decade, says industry research firm IBIS World.

It says chicken represented 25% of Australia's total meat consumption in 1992-93 and is expected to top 47% this financial year.

The per capita consumption of chicken, Australia's most popular meat since 2004-05, is tipped to reach 46.9kg.

IBIS World says Australians typically consume more chicken than beef and lamb combined, due its versatility and affordability.

It says while many consumers are price-driven, others choose chicken because it's perceived as healthier than red meats.

MBL NEWS

Publisher

Master Butchers Co-operative Ltd
ABN: 588 742 45597

Editor

Peter Morgan
0410 633 414

Advertising

Bexley Carman
0499 110 005

Printer

Open Book Howden
(08) 8124 0000

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NEWS ON ADVERTISING

Advertising space is available in *MBL News*, presenting a golden avenue for goods and services suppliers to pitch to the butchery and general food service industries.

Multiple size options are available to suit the needs of any business wishing to advertise.

MBL's official publication has been produced, in different sizes and with different names, since 1912 as the time-honoured "voice" for spreading relevant news to the co-op's members.

Today's colour version is bigger than ever, regarded as one of the best trade magazines of its type in Australia.

Published every two months, *MBL News* reports the latest MBL and industry news and trends, as well as profiling successful individuals and businesses.

The print run is 1,000. Hard copies are mailed to all MBL account holders with monthly statements and digital copies are emailed to all subscribers. The current and back editions are posted on the MBL website.

Potential advertisers are invited to contact MBL - phone 8417 6000 or email sales@mblsa.com.au - to inquire about advertising options or to book spaces. We can forward a flyer with details.

Updated app rolls out for labels and click & collect

The new app for labels and click & collect is being rolled out, with the creators adding features after liaising with butchers.

MBL has teamed with Food Safe Australia co-founders Belinda Hanson-Kenny and Simon Horwood to launch the game-changing app, which is exclusively offered to MBL Members at the subsidised rate of \$30 monthly.

As reported in the last *MBL News*, the app was designed in Adelaide for butchers to streamline compliance to complex and time-consuming food labelling requirements.

At the urging of MBL, a major bonus allows individual butcher shops to create their own click & collect service on the app at no extra cost.

"Since we soft launched a few months ago, we've been building on the app, making updates and improvements such as adding an automatic label template," Belinda says.



App creators Belinda Hanson-Kenny and Simon Horwood.



SCAN TO BOOK A
FREE DEMO

"There is strong interest. So far, about 25 butchers have signed up."

The app promises to save butchers time in making compliant labels but first they

need to insert data on their products.

The app accesses and applies information collated by Food Safe Australia on 750 single ingredient raw materials. MBL has loaded details of a similar number of our food products.

Belinda says, "Creating a full label from scratch takes well under an hour with our app compared to three to five hours per label manually."

For more information, visit www.foodsafeaustralia.com.au



MBL stands out at trade show

MBL's successful promotion at South Australia's only dedicated food and beverage trade show attracted potential new business and cemented relationships with existing customers.

The offerings of MBL's Packaging, Custom Blending and Machinery divisions attracted wide interest at the South Australian Food, Bev & Tech Trade Show over two days in May at Adelaide Showground.

The show, jointly hosted by Food SA and GaP Solutions, was billed as a "one-stop place" for retail, food service, catering, bakery and butchery sectors. About 90 exhibitors showcased assorted products and equipment.

MBL operated a standard-size stall at last year's show and, encouraged by the results, opted for a triple-size stall this year to promote products and services from across all three of our divisions.

"We picked up some pretty good leads for new business with a fair variety of companies in different sectors," says MBL General Manager of Sales and Marketing Bexley Carman (pictured above).

The mix included sizable food manufacturers who, after MBL's charter was adjusted, can now apply to become MBL members.

"The exercise at the show was about brand awareness, mixing with other players in the food industry and making more people aware of what we do and what we offer," Bexley says.

"As well as making contact with potential new customers, we had extra communication with people who already buy our products.

"It's important for us to have a strong presence at South Australia's biggest trade show. We are South Australian and, as a co-operative, our profits are shared around South Australia."

AMIC, with MBL support, promoted the meat industry with a masterclass in sausage making and tastings of winning sausages from last year's SA Sausage King competition.



MBL's Mackenzie Beames with an eco-cane compostable tray.



Butchers Jeff Luxton (Port Elliot), Damian Holmes (Henley Beach) and Chris Chantrell (Kidman Park) showed their skills by breaking down beef and lamb into value-added products.

A second masterclass on centre stage featured butchers showing their skills in breaking down beef and lamb into a range of quality value-added products.



LIVING THE DREAM

Prime beef from Vince's farm realises his dad's grand vision

Dominic Clemente achieved much in butchery but he passed away before being able to realise his dream of his three Adelaide shops being supplied by his own cattle farm.

However, his butcher son Vince has proudly turned his father's cattle dream into reality with a prime 236-acre (95 hectare) property on the shores of Lake Albert at Meningie.

"We bought the farm to supply the best meat to our customers. It works – people come from everywhere," says Vince, 50, pictured, of booming Taste Quality Meats at Newton Village Shopping Centre.

About 70 head of cattle, a cross between Speckled Park and traditional Black Angus, are produced each year on the farm.

"We keep what we need for meat and sell the rest. It's great meat – milky and tender. We are looking to expand with more shops to take our meat," Vince says.

"It was always Dad's dream to run his own cattle and I'm pleased that I've made it happen.

"I started working with him when I was 14 and what he taught me, much of it commonsense, remains the cornerstone of my business today.



A great team... Vince and wife Amanda.

"Everything we do here is based on old-fashioned rules with modern twists for modern shops.

"We don't need specials because we always have good meat at good prices, and the customer is always right.

"If there is a problem, I fix it with customers and make them feel like a king or queen. They leave happy, leaving with a spring in their step, and they talk about us.

"New customers often say, 'I've heard you have great meat here.' Old customers from years ago have followed us here."

The family's butchering tradition is continuing to the third generation, with Vince's son Dominic, 18, who was named after his grandfather.

Young Dominic is learning the ropes from Vince who says, "He's enthusiastic and doing well, developing a very strong work ethic." 

➤ “When we’re at work, Dominic is not the boss’s son but the apprentice. I have a nickname for him - The Future, for obvious reasons.

“I lead by example and treat all workers equally and with respect because I value what they do.”

Vince’s father made a name for himself as a smallgoods maker, setting up Dom’s Fritz at Croydon Park. He also owned butcher shops at Smithfield, Munno Para and Hindmarsh, and was a strong supporter of MBL.

“Dad’s idea was to get as many shops as he could to sell his own fritz and to buy his own cattle farm to supply the shops,” Vince says.

The Hindmarsh shop, Clemente’s Meat Store on Grange Rd, enjoyed a strong reputation. Vince began his apprenticeship there with his father in 1984.

When his father died, Vince inherited the Hindmarsh shop while the shops at Smithfield and Munno Para passed to Dominic’s long-term offsider Graham Drier.

After a total of 25 years at Hindmarsh, Vince sold the shop and took over Taste Quality Meats at Findon, building a strong business over seven years with his wife Amanda.

The couple retained the name Taste Quality Meats for their impressive purpose-built shop which opened in February last year in a busy spot at extended Newton Village Shopping Centre.

Across from Coles and with a counter display covering two standard shop fronts, they were joined by Baker’s Delight on one side and Tony & Mark’s greengrocers on the other.

“At Findon, Amanda and I worked to develop the right display to attract passing people. Our aim here is building a bigger and better version of Findon,” Vince says.



‘Everything we do is based on old-fashioned rules with modern twists for modern shops’ - Vince Clemente

Two months ago, Vince accepted an offer to take over the butchery within Tony & Mark’s at Glenunga. He has also had discussions about running small butcheries within several planned Tony & Mark’s stores.

“We want shops for our meat but with good staff in short supply across the industry, I need to keep training people before we can expand,” he says.

Vince says Amanda is his rock. “I couldn’t do this without her,” he says.

“I look after the butchery side and Amanda is in charge of the servers. She insists everything is presented perfectly – she’ll send trays back to the butchers if she’s not happy.

“She does all the paperwork as well. We try hard, we don’t stop. We work seven days a week, often well into the night.

“Our reward is customers saying our meat is great. We have something good here and we’re very happy.”



Butchers keep contact with servers and customers via a “glassless window” through to the shop.

MBL extends membership

From page 1

market to meet the strategic objectives of the co-operative.

“We’re expanding all our services to existing members and broadening our offer to food manufacturers.

“We want to continue to expand for the greater good of the co-operative while staying relevant to the needs of the membership.

“By expanding our business, we’re expanding the co-operative’s wealth for the benefit of the entire membership.”

General Manager of Sales and Marketing Bexley Carman says potential new members may be among MBL Blending’s customers, including Spring Gully, Beerenberg and Ultra Fine Foods.

“Our acquisition of Medani Foods in 2020 brought some sizable customers over to MBL for custom blending,” Bexley says.

“We blend bases for mixes and make flavour blends for some sizable manufacturers, blending their recipes under licensing agreements.

“We already have excellent relationships with these companies, opening the prospect of them becoming MBL members.”

This is only the third time in MBL’s 117-year history that our charter has been changed to expand the membership.

Membership was restricted to red meat processors, wholesalers and retailers from 1905 until the chicken industry was admitted in the 1990s.

Then in 2010, the seafood industry embraced the opportunity for admittance, with MBL accepting 26 new seafood members within the first 18 months.

TAKING THE DEER BY THE ANTLERS



How Hahndorf Venison survived Covid to take control of its future

When the going got tough with Covid-19, the De Laine family of Hahndorf Venison got going.

The three generations rose to tackle multiple challenges to not only survive the dark days of Covid but create a more robust business model for the future.

With hospitality making up the vast majority of sales, Hahndorf Venison's income tumbled when Covid restrictions saw restaurants, cafes and wineries close, followed by prolonged limits on customer numbers.

More bad news came with the sudden closure of Strathalbyn Abattoir in December 2020, forcing the De Laines to find a new place for post-Covid slaughtering of their venison.

"We had a choice – to sit around, moan and close-up, or get moving and put things in place to survive. We got moving," says John De Laine, who runs the business with his father Des and son Lachlan.

With Covid putting venison production and sales "on ice", the De Laines had the time to implement three strategies. They:

RELAUNCHED and promoted their deer velvet-infused mead liquor, which they had been quietly selling for 20 years. They

renamed it *100 Years – Spirit of the Stag* and created a dedicated website.

BEGAN on-farm 4WD tours to see the deer, learn about deer farming and enjoy a three-course venison lunch with wine and a dessert using the liquor.

BUILT a specialist on-farm deer slaughtering unit to complement their existing boning, packing, storage and distribution operation.

John says the liquor and farm tours got the dollars flowing and will be on-going features of the business.

The liquor, which is drunk neat and used in

cocktails, comes in a 500ml bottle with a numbered and signed certificate. It sells for \$139, with postage and handling extra.

John hosts the \$245-a-head Sunday farm tours for six to eight adults. He says the tours and chef-inspired lunches have been well received and good for PR.

However, the key advance for shoring up the business has been introducing on-farm slaughtering.

"By taking control of slaughtering, we've taken control of our destiny. We now have a seamless production model which gives us full control of the process from farm to plate," John says. ➤



John and wife Katrina with elk at their Highland Valley farm in the Adelaide Hills.

➤ “Previously, we had control of everything except the slaughtering. The only outside ‘risk’ was the slaughtering; we now control that, too.”

“These days, people increasingly want to know where their food comes from and talk about food miles. We can now say we do everything ourselves on-farm.”

The De Laine family has been butchering for more than 130 years, operating a slaughterhouse at Parkside from 1884 and a string of butcher shops.

The family has a long tradition of supporting MBL. Hahndorf Venison buys MBL machinery and assorted merchandise, including sausage skins and seasonings for their venison sausages, made for assorted eateries.

Des, sprightly at 91, says his father Roland, who at one time had two butcher shops in Adelaide city and others on Unley Rd and Goodwood Rd, was a founding Member of MBL in 1905.

“I remember, when I was about 15, riding my bike to pick up supplies from MBL in Light Square,” says Des, who has been an MBL Member since starting Hahndorf Venison in 1978.

He continues to help John, 64, with the business. John’s son Lachlan, 31, is deeply involved with an eye to eventually taking over.

The family has farms at Hahndorf and 20km away at Highland Valley. They run 400 red, fallow, hog, sika and chital deer, elk and black buck antelope.

Des says he began deer farming at a time



John with his father Des, holding a photo their ancestors' Parkside slaughterhouse in 1884. The De Laine family's rich butchering history is a story in itself – see page 11.

when deer were described as “gold on four feet, because a pound of deer velvet was worth an ounce of gold.”

Many farmers across Australia branched into deer farming but the practice declined. “Other operators have come and gone. We’ve kept going because we’ve always tried to control as much as possible,” Des says.

The De Laines see the recent investment of about \$100,000 to allow full on-farm processing from slaughter to packaging as vital for long-term security.

“During Covid downtime, we had the time to work closely with the Meat Hygiene Unit to comply with all requirements for field harvest,” says John, a former refrigeration

mechanic and qualified meat inspector.

“We developed a specialised stun facility and a mobile chiller. Back at base, my refrigeration background was handy for building an extra processing area.

“Previously, the deer had to be rounded up the night before slaughter, fasted and then taken to Strathalbyn and back. Now with field harvesting, there is no physical or emotional stress and no bruising.

“It has been a big investment which will some time to recover but we’re thinking of the long term.

“Our turnover has slimmed down because of Covid. We have a long way to go but we’re seeing good signs of recovery.”



A keen taxidermist, Des takes pride in deer specimens he has assembled as part of a large and diverse taxidermy collection.

Sensing a new business opportunity, Maurie Mezzino headed to his home kitchen to “muck around” cooking crumbed fish and chips in two small friers.

But there was no mucking around once he came up with the right cooking time and crumb mix, using MBL’s lemon pepper sprinkle.

Maurie quickly put takeaway fish and chips, in MBL packaging, on the menu at Port Pirie seafood specialist SD Caputo and Sons, although he could not have imagined just how important his innovation would soon become.

Within weeks, in March 2020, Covid-19 hit our shores. Wholesale sales, representing half of Caputo’s regular income, were decimated as pubs and restaurants closed and later had dining limits.

With more people cooking at home, Caputo’s retail sales of fresh seafood rose by up to 20%, helping counter the wholesale downturn. “We were like butchers – it seemed like Christmas every month,” Maurie says.

The surprise “hero” through the peak Covid years was fish and chips, sold at Caputo’s shop on the Port Pirie waterfront on weekdays between 11am and 2pm.

Demand peaked at 150 orders one Friday and has now bedded down to a satisfying average of 70 daily, boosted by the recent introduction of a delivery service to Port Pirie businesses and homes.

Caputo’s has twice won local

Caputo’s great fish and chips really hit the spot (with a little help from MBL)



Maurie Mezzino... on a winner with deluxe fish and chips.

radio polls, in 2020 and 2021, for having the best fish and chips in the region, which covers the Copper Coast, Clare, Port Augusta and Whyalla.

“While we lost wholesale sales during the Covid period, we were lucky that retail and

takeaway were able to stay open as essential services. We were overwhelmed by the community’s support,” Maurie says.

Within a month of introducing fish and chips, Maurie knew takeaway food had a long-term

role in the business, on Port Pirie’s main drag.

He installed a new kitchen and added an alfresco area overlooking boats at Fisherman’s Wharf. Three extra staff were hired.

Quality is the key to Caputo’s takeaway success. In-shop customers can view the display and pick their own fish, as well as other seafood like prawns, squid and scallops, for cooking by chef Kerry Caputo.

“About 80% of what we cook is crumbed in house and on display in the showcase. People like to choose their own fish and maybe add four prawns or some scallops,” Maurie says.

The orders are packaged in environmentally-friendly Eco Board Snack containers from MBL, which has supplied Caputo’s with a vast variety of merchandise and machinery for over 30 years.

Looking to value add, Maurie experimented with fish and chips in early 2020. “I started by mucking around at home with two small friers, one for fish and one for chips,” he says.

“On our first day of selling to the public, we sold just four or five meals but the number grew each day. We cracked 100 meals one Friday. Our record is 150, also on a Friday.

“We still laugh at how we coped at the start with just small friers which would short-out the power.”

The takeaway range now includes four varieties of pies – curried prawn, curried scallop, garlic prawn and surf & turf, which has prawns, scallops and scotch fillet.

Maurie is the fourth-generation at the helm of Caputo’s which celebrated 70 years last year.

He began at the business in 2003, taking over as managing director seven years ago from his father Sebastian, who continues to lend a hand a few days a week.



MBL’s environmentally-friendly Eco Board Snack containers ready to go at Caputo’s.



➤ Like preceding generations, Sebastian and Maurie have shown great ability to adapt the business to survive in changing circumstances.

This entrepreneurial flair dates to the early 1950s when Sebastian's fisherman grandfather Salvatore Domenico (SD) Caputo looked at ways of getting the best possible return for his catch.

Instead of selling to the local Port Pirie fish buyer or the Adelaide fish market, he cut out the middleman, buying a ute to deliver fresh garfish, King George whiting, snook, snapper, tommy ruff and squid in and around Port Pirie.

Salvatore then decided to value add but he needed extra labour for processing. So his son Domenic and son-in-law Mauro Mezzino (Sebastian's father) joined the business, with SD Caputo and Sons formed in 1951.

Within a few years, 90% of Caputo's filleted fish was being sold to SAFCOL in Adelaide and in 1953 the business moved to bigger premises at its present waterfront location.

Many fishing boats with assorted catches would unload at the wharf, drawing spectators in what Sebastian describes as "exciting times."

In 1970, the business diversified into the prawn industry. Initially, Caputo's unloaded-prawn trawlers in Port Pirie,



An advertisement outside Caputo's features Maurie's children Declan, Skyler and Archie with their favourite fish and chips.

Wallaroo and Port Broughton and delivered prawns fresh in fibreglass containers to SAFCOL.

This changed in 1972 when Caputo's began processing prawns which were cooked, graded and tailed before being frozen and delivered to SAFCOL in 10kg cartons.

"We were processing between 50 and 70 tonnes of prawns a year, and then the trawlers started their own processing about 24 years ago," Sebastian says.

After each trawl, the prawns were graded onboard and cooked or left raw before being snap-frozen and packed in

10kg cartons. The time from landing to freezing was about 30 minutes, by which time the next 50-minute trawl was well advanced and the process began again.

As a result of this speed, Sebastian says the eating quality of prawns was far superior to the days of processing back at port.

With Caputo's no longer processing prawns, Sebastian and Maurie had to reposition the business by developing retail and wholesale.

Sebastian doubled the shop's size in 2005 and Caputo's already-strong name was further boosted by winning the prestigious SA Seafood Retailer of the Year award.

With Sebastian's encouragement, Maurie looked to expand sales to the wider region.

"We had been doing a little business sending fresh seafood, boxed in ice, on buses passing through Pirie but there had to be more customers out there so I went on the road to test the market," Maurie says.

He realised Whyalla and Port Augusta didn't have specialist seafood retailers at the time, and he saw potential in supplying fresh product to hotels, clubs and restaurants.

"We didn't have a delivery van of our own so we purchased one in 2006, followed by another," he says.

Caputo's was soon supplying fresh seafood to Whyalla, Port Augusta, Clare and the Copper Coast towns of Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta.

Today, weekly deliveries continue to these centres, along with daily deliveries in and around Port Pirie.

Sebastian praised MBL's support over three decades as a trusted supplier of merchandise, from ingredients to packaging.

"All the reps have been really good over the years. MBL's service is very good," he says.



Sebastian Mezzino.... praises MBL's support as a trusted supplier of merchandise for over 30 years.

HOME COMPOSTABLE hero!

MBL's Home Compostable Hero promotion is nearing conclusion.

Since September, monthly winners have been chosen from Members and customers who buy any two products from MBL's Home Compostable packaging range.

Our June Hero - Drakes Supermarkets - is the final monthly winner. The 10 monthly winners now go into the mix for a weekend away in an Airbnb Eco Getaway of their choice to the value of \$600.

The lucky winner will be announced in the next MBL News.

MAY HERO: Brighton City Meats

Demand for MBL's home compostable packaging can only get stronger, driven by customer sentiment to protect the environment.

So says butcher Mark Richardson, *pictured*, of thriving family business Brighton City Meats, where MBL's eco-cane trays and compostable roll bags are increasingly appreciated by customers.

"Many people like the compostable trays and bags; they are pleased to hear we have them," says Mark, who reports solid year-on-year sales growth.

"If we all do a little bit to protect the environment, it becomes a big bit. People are concerned that if you put plastic in

landfill today, it will still be there in pieces in 100 years.

Mark agrees with MBL's assessment that the cost of compostable packaging will come



down as demand increases and manufacturing costs decrease with the higher volume.

"We've been using the 8 x 5 and 11 x 5 eco-cane trays for quite a while, using them for things like burgers and kebabs," he says.

"We use the compostable bags for people who we know like them or ask for them, and use standard bags at other times. We'll use a lot more compostable bags when the price comes down.

"We bear the cost of compostable bags; we don't charge extra for them.

"We understand from MBL that compostable wrapping film is on the way and we'll get right into it."

JUNE HERO: Drakes Supermarkets

In another win for the environment, Drakes Supermarkets has ditched plastic produce bags for home compostable roll bags from MBL.

The compostable bags, featuring Drakes' logo, are being rolled out across Drakes' 65 supermarkets in South Australia and Queensland.

"We worked with MBL, as an aligned strategic supply partner, to ensure the bags met all requirements," says Drakes General Manager Fresh Foods Tim Cartright.

Drakes, Australia's largest independent grocery retailer, also uses home compostable eco-cane trays from MBL.

"Switching to compostable produce bags from MBL is another step towards Drakes moving all packaging to 100% recyclable rPET by 2025," says Tim (*pictured*).

"We are guided by the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals and we are on track to reach these objectives."

Drakes has made significant changes to packaging used over the last few years as part of a strong environmental sustainability program.

"The sustainability program is continually improving and evolving. FY21 saw us remove another 20 tonnes of non-recyclable packaging from our ecosystem," Tim says.

"Every employee at Drakes plays a crucial role in the initiatives that we have in place. We work on a simple philosophy of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle."

Tim says Drakes' sustainability program has strong support from customers concerned about the environment.

"Increasingly, customers share our desire to help the environment by diverting plastics from landfill and the oceans," he says.





A slaughterhouse of 1884

This captivating photo of George De Laine's Parkside slaughterhouse in 1884 holds pride of place at Hahndorf Venison (see story pages 6 and 7).

Hahndorf Venison founder Des De Laine, still sharp at 91, proudly identifies his ancestors in the framed photo from the days when butchers had to first shear sheep before butchering.

His stern-looking great, great grandfather George is pictured on the far left with hands on hips. The boy on the far right is Des's father Roland, who later had a string of shops and was a founding Member of MBL in 1905.

"I come from a family of butchers. Dad worked at Parkside with his five brothers, and once there were six De Laines working on the sheep line at Gepps Cross abattoirs," Des says.

George De Laine built his slaughterhouse in Porter St, Parkside, at a time when most butchers had their own basic slaughterhouses.

The photo from 1884 was published in 1940 in MBL's newsletter *The Master Butcher*, accompanied by this fascinating report:

"Sheep were bought at the North Terrace market and driven to Parkside.

No deep drainage facilities existed; sheep were struck and bled over a blood-hole which had to be bailed out periodically and the blood put on a manure pit.

HISTORY

This pit was emptied weekly by market gardeners and the stench that arose during this process can be imagined.

Wages were low and, in contrast, hours were long, the day's work being from 6am to 9pm or 10pm in the summer.

With no ice or refrigeration available, all unsold meat was stored in a cellar, hoping that some would be saved.

More often than not, the meat was green next morning - almost inevitable after it had been hawked round city and suburbs for hours.

Butchers' duty called for some adaptability. There were harnesses to be cleaned, pigs fed, and polony and sausages to be made in a rocker - few butchers today (1940) would be able to use such a device, whilst a good many have never heard of it.

Mr George De Laine combined horse dealing with butchering and his employees helped to break in the colts.

In despite of demands made on them and comparatively low wages, employees were happy and contented, and stayed with their employer for long periods."

SAUSAGE KING Tim snags four wins

Mt Gambier butcher Tim Von Stanke knows his sausages but he surprised himself by winning four of six regional Sausage King crowns in AMIC's combined Riverland and South-East competition.

He entered the competition for the first time last year and had no success with his sausages, although he collected two bronze awards for his burgers.

Undeterred, he entered again this year and the judges were impressed.

"I would have been surprised if I won just one category, let alone four. It's very satisfying and a great way to promote the business," says Tim, 47, the owner of Swallow Drive Meat Supply.

A recent edition of *MBL News* carried a story of how Tim quit his career as a South-East crayfisherman to become a mature-age butcher apprentice at age 41.

His Sausage King success came in the categories of Lamb, Beef, Poultry (with his Butter Chicken sausage) and Gourmet (with Spicy Pork).

The two other categories were won by former National Sausage King champs Shaun Watson, of Tender Cuts at Naracoorte, and Nigel Rollbusch, of Rollbusch Quality Meats at Waikerie.

Shaun won the Pork section with his Traditional Pork sausage while Nigel won Continental with his Bratwurst sausage which won the national crown in 2019.

Shaun also won the two burger awards and three smallgoods awards, and Nigel won four smallgoods awards.

Variety is the spice of life for Chris Rowe, a former retail butcher who has made every post a winner since joining MBL four years ago.

Chris impressed with his work ethic and enthusiasm in assorted roles at MBL's Athol Park base, resulting in his appointment as an on-the-road sales rep.

His experience as a butcher at several country locations made him a natural for the sales role. He says he has found his niche, loving the variety.

"Every day is different," says Chris, 35, whose round covers Adelaide's eastern and northern suburbs, the Barossa, and the Adelaide Hills through to Murray Bridge.

"I love getting out and seeing all the butchers, learning where they have come from and how they are moving forward.

"No two shops are the same, often with different products aimed at different customer bases. Displays are different, set up and tweaked in different ways."

As the evolution of butcher shops continues, Chris says he enjoys advising butchers on the latest trends and products from MBL.

"Dry aging and the slow-and-low movement are part of many butcher shops stepping up from basic cutting in the days of steak, chops and sausages only," he says.

"Much has changed in butcher shops relatively quickly. Ready meals keep getting bigger.

"When I started, butchers didn't dream of doing coffee and pastries like some on my round.

"I enjoy seeing how shops on my round are evolving but most of all, I enjoy the easy-going people. There are a lot of characters who love a joke."

Married to Amanda, Chris is a busy family man with four young children – Coby, eight; Cooper, six; Sienna, four; and Hudson, two.

His ability as a young footballer initially led to him becoming a butcher.

"I grew up in Elizabeth and got an offer to play football in Whyalla where it was organised for me to do a butchery apprenticeship," he says.

He began his apprenticeship at Azzopardi Butchers in 2004 and completed it at Carve N Cut, leaving Whyalla in 2008 to take a job at Menzel's Meats in Kapunda, where he continued playing football.

Chris took extended leave after enduring a

"Meat the Team"

Profiles on MBL staff members



Chris Rowe creates an order with Stuart Martin at Sean Kenny's Golden Grove Butchers.

personal family tragedy in 2010, eventually returning to Menzel's boning room in a part-time capacity.

"The boys at Menzel's were terrific in helping me get through but I needed a change," he says.

MBL sales rep Mark Rosewarne mentioned a job was available in the MBL warehouses and Chris successfully applied.

Chris says, "MBL is a good place to work, 100%. The people here have been positive and encouraging all the way through. There's a sense of family here.

"I started in the warehouse. I got a forklift licence and things progressed from there."

His initiative and work ethic impressed MBL's Bexley Carman who saw Chris as a rising star, asking him to move to the showroom and learn about sales.

"As a butcher, I was always moving so I was used to a fast workplace. I kept on being busy at MBL," Chris says.

"I initially had no ambition to do sales but I was happy to make the move."

He revived his old customer service skills in the showroom. He also worked in MBL Machinery.

By now, Chris had gained a solid grounding in the varied operations, products and services of MBL, accumulating knowledge that helps him today as a rep.

"I started filling in for reps who were on holidays before Bexley made me a rep nearly two years ago," he says.

Q & A

Do you have a special interest or hobby? I enjoy going fishing every chance I get with mates and family. We don't always catch anything but it's nice just relaxing.

What would you do with a spare \$50,000? I would move my father-in-law and his family back to Australia from Ukraine.

If you were a car, what would you be? I would be a 4x4 so I could cover more ground than a sedan.

What food can't you live without? Beef and chicken schnitzels.

If you could meet anyone, living or dead, who would it be? American psychic medium John Edward.

What's the best thing about working at MBL? Definitely the people, making MBL an enjoyable workplace. Everyone is willing to help one another and work as a team.