

**THE ILLAWARRA MEAT COMPANY.**

Outline history

by Richard Dallison Hutton (Dal)

***Early 1900s***

1912. 'Hutton Brothers' – Sydney Gordon Marshall Hutton (Gordon) and Wilfred Hutton (Fred) commenced a butcher business in Hoxton Park delivering meat by horse drawn cart.

The Hutton Brothers moved their business to Camden.

***1920s - 1930s Country Butchers - Vertically an integrated cottage industry.***

"The Illawarra Meat Company Pty Ltd." (IMC) was formed in 1921 when the 'Hutton Brothers' moved from Camden to northern Illawarra and purchased the abattoir (referred to as the slaughter yards) and grazing paddocks from J.J. Smale at Bellambi, as well as a butcher shop in Woonona and a delivery wagon drawn by three horses. At that time, Country butchers needed to be skilled to buy livestock, own resting paddocks, slaughter yards, town butcher shop/s, horse drawn delivery carts, simple hand operated tools (manual - no power tools).

The butchering trade provided a good foundation for many successful citizens. It developed a wide range of skills. Young apprentices were taught butchering skills, in addition to basic mathematics, hygiene, good manners and social skills. The meat industry remained male dominated as female employees were forbidden by law to use a knife (the basic tool) until about 1960s.

IMC business expanded mainly by forming partnerships with other butchers:-

1924 Ernie Hogben Partnership

1926 IMC purchased first petrol driven beef wagon in district.

1933 IMC purchased South Coast Meat Co Pty Ltd., in Crown St, Wollongong. The IMC developed this shop into one of the largest butcher shops in the district.

1935 J.H Lindsay Partnership, Port Kembla and North Wollongong shops, pig farm at West Dapto.

In 1928 Gordon Hutton was active in the establishment of the 'Master Butchers Association on NSW', later to be expanded 'Australia wide as the Meat and Allied Trades Federation of Australia'. He was Vice President of this Federation for many years.

### ***1940 - 1950 World War II***

Many staff members joined the armed forces and other war related industries resulting in labour shortages and the end of home deliveries.

Illawarra Meat Co, company secretary and family member, Gordon Edmondson, who was a Major in WW I and ANZAC Veteran, was appointed as the local commander of the V.D.C. Volunteer Defence Corps (Home Guard).

Gordon Hutton, Managing Director, played a leading role in fund raising and enlisting volunteer workers for community projects including the building of Bulli Police Boys Club, Slacky Flat Sports ground and improvements to the grounds of the Bulli District Hospital. When Gordon Hutton retired as Managing Director of IMC in 1957 the Lord Mayor held a public function to award him the Crest of Honour for the City of Greater Wollongong in recognition of his contribution to the city.

### ***1950-1960 Post War arrival of Dutch, English and Italian Migrants.***

In 1948 the Illawarra Meat Co. purchased the smallgoods depot and partly constructed factory at Woonona from George Thorburn and the IMC sponsored two Dutch smallgoods makers to work in the factory and introduce European style smallgoods making to the Illawarra.

IMC won contracts to supply meat and smallgoods to the migrant hostels located at Cringilla, Berkeley, Unanderra and Balgownie ( Fairy Meadow). Migrants were employed in the industries at Port Kembla or

travelled to Sydney by train to work. The hostels supplied breakfast and dinner in the dining halls, as well as sandwiches for lunch.

Smallgoods counters were installed in the IMC Port Kembla and Crown Street shops and many new 'city style' retail butcher shops opened in Illawarra towns. The IMC slaughter yard at Bellambi was expanded to produce wholesale carcass meat to supply these stand alone butcher shops as well as the company's own shops and range of customers.

IMC purchased a grazing property called 'Nandi' at Canyonleigh. The company ran a fleet of vehicles, delivery trucks and ran a maintenance workshop located at the smallgoods factory. Shops owned and leased by the company totaled about 16 throughout the Illawarra district.

Don Edmondson, the company's livestock buyer and family member, was a regular judge of the carcass section at the Royal Agricultural Easter Show.

### ***1960 - 1970 The Regional Shopping Centre: private cars, technology, rise of the supermarket.***

Food shopping now concentrated on out-of-town regional shopping centres with plenty of free car parking, adjacent to undercover air-conditioned shopping malls anchored by large supermarkets.

This marked the introduction of pre-packaged meat in self serve open cabinets in supermarkets. Supermarkets put huge pressure on individual main street shops through the use of heavily advertised special prices which were cross subsidised by their huge range of groceries. This resulted in hundreds of main street butchers shops closing their doors.

***1975 - 1985 Australian Meat became a world traded commodity and it marked the end of the local slaughter yard.***

In 1946 at the end of WWII there were 12 individual slaughter yards operating within the current boundaries of the City of Greater Wollongong. By 1970, population pressure and increasing government regulations had reduced the number to 3 – ‘Parrish Meat’ at Yallah, ‘Dorahy Bros.’ at Figtree, and ‘Illawarra Meat Co’. at Bellambi. Wollongong Council decided that all slaughtering and rendering must now be carried out in a new Noxious Industry Zone established at Yallah.

In 1974 the Illawarra Meat Company purchased 80 acres of land at Yallah and built an abattoir to export standards on this site. Dorahy Bros. also bought land and re-established at Yallah.

Illawarra Meat Company’s new abattoir supplied lamb and beef carcasses to the large supermarkets in Sydney and well as to Sydney butchers who had chains of shops located in shopping centres and larger urban suburbs.

Export markets supplied by IMC included frozen beef to South Korea and frozen mutton carcasses to Japan and Russia.

Many Turkish people were now immigrating to our district and we employed a number of Muslim men and women. Illawarra Meat Co. was Halal accredited and exported meat to Muslim countries. This, plus our proximity to Sydney airport, enabled IMC to airfreight chilled lamb carcasses to the United Emirates. The daily Qantas QF1 took off at 8am for London via Bahrain and regularly carried 140 or 210 chilled lamb carcasses in fibreglass igloos in its hold. That afternoon the chilled meat was distributed by air to Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

***1985 - 2010. The World of the Giants***

The Australian retail meat industry is dominated by a duopoly of retailers and our export meat industry is controlled by about 5 international giants. Present day longlife packaging materials, preservation methods, refrigeration and faster freight enables fresh meat to be distributed from Australia to anywhere in the world.

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This requires an initial investment of a huge amount of capital far beyond the reach of a private company.

Illawarra Meat Company was split up and sold off during the 1980s with the smallgoods part of the business remaining in the hands of two sons, now retired, a grandson and great grandson of Gordon Hutton. Illawarra Meat Co. is located in Fairy Meadow, and operates a modern factory with specialist computerised production equipment. IMC remains a national supplier of a range of products to a number of supermarket chains in addition to many individual businesses. IMC also operates an innovative factory shop selling their meat and smallgoods range to the public.