



shellfish culture

shellfish culture newsletter Winter 2012

Investing in growth

Shellfish Culture Ltd (SCL) has successfully negotiated the acquisition of significant new water resources and associated infrastructure at Pipeclay Lagoon, close to SCL's current operations.

The acquisition sets the scene for future expansion by SCL, with major benefits for its customers.

Included in the purchase is a marine farm lease in Pipeclay Lagoon together with shore facilities that provide a depot area for packing and distribution. SCL's current farm operations will move to the new site.

"The acquisition addresses the intent of our recently adopted strategic plan," says General Manager of SCL, Kerry Wells.

"It will create significant efficiencies in our operations, and we shall be able to over winter more stock to meet the busy spring market



period, boosting SCL's ability to meet customer demand on time. It also physically separates nursery and farming operations, minimising any risk of cross contaminations".

Access to greater water resources also gives SCL the ability to plan for a larger oyster product range to offer to domestic markets.

SCL Chairman Greg Goodman and General Manager Kerry Wells at the new Farm Operations centre

Upcoming conferences

Shellfish Culture is travelling to two important industry events in the coming weeks.

We shall look forward to catching up with colleagues and sharing ideas at the SA Oyster Growers' Association seminar (SAOGA) on August 9 and 10 at Coffin Bay. This two day conference covers some fascinating topics, including an update on the latest in the fights against POMs.

The Tasmanian Shellfish Futures conference follows on August 17 and 18 at Port Arthur where our own Scott Parkinson will be one of the speakers. It's a full program which covers everything you need to know about our industry in Tasmania, both current and future.

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Bicheno hatchery upgrade

In a major capital investment project, SCL has substantially upgraded its primary hatchery at Bicheno on Tasmania's East Coast. Staff at the hatchery were closely involved in the project, from design aspects right through to painting the new look hatchery.

SCL has owned the facility, perched on the shores of the picturesque Gulch, for more than 30 years.

The upgrade involved structural reinforcement of the building, a redesign and upgrade of work areas, a complete electrical re wiring of the hatchery, new cladding, and redesigned and rebuilt seawater pipes used for production.

"The result is a more efficient and reliable operation," said Michel Bermudes, Bicheno Area Manager of SCL. "Because our staff were so closely involved in planning and executing much of the project, they now have a comprehensive knowledge of the hatchery and all its systems."

As well as some office and laboratory space, the hatchery includes a large tank room for larvae, a set room for larvae and spat, and separate rooms for the production and preparation of algae.

"Contamination of sea water, especially if oyster farms are located nearby, can be a real problem when you're producing spat," said Michel. "That's why Bicheno is such a unique location for us. We are physically far removed from other oyster production sites, and enjoy natural bio security."

"It's a great asset and strategically very important to our business, especially given the potential dangers posed by POMs (Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome)."

Five SCL staff work at the hatchery. French born Michel now lives in Bicheno with his wife Debbie and two young children. Further stages of hatchery redevelopment are planned over the next three years.



Michel Bermudes with Elise Wilson and Kate Bowle (right) at Bicheno Hatchery



Natural bio security: The Gulch - water source for the Bicheno hatchery



Inside the hatchery – Blooming algae to feed larvae and spat

Chairman's Report



Chairman, Greg Goodman

I am very excited by recent developments at Shellfish Culture. As you will read in this edition we have significantly upgraded our farm access to water resources at Pipeclay Lagoon through our acquisition of Marine Culture facilities in the area, and we have completed our work to upgrade the Bicheno hatchery.

Our negotiations to acquire Marine Culture's marine farm lease and associated facilities – located almost next door to our Pipeclay Lagoon – were customer driven.

It allows us to grow more stock which we can over winter to meet the spring demand. More stock in store bolsters our ability to meet our customers' requirements through on time delivery of quality products.

It has another benefit too. This acquisition allows us to consult with our customers on the sort of oyster products they would like to see in the future so that we can plan and develop accordingly.

So you should expect to see as a result of this acquisition a greater degree of reliability in supply and distribution, and the development of new product lines.

A by-product of this acquisition will be a minimisation of risk. There is always a risk of cross contamination when a hatchery is in close

proximity to a farming operation. In future at Pipeclay Lagoon, these two operations will be physically well removed from one another.

At Shellfish Culture we're very customer focused, and the acquisition of Marine Culture assets at Pipeclay Lagoon gives us the ability to fulfil our Company's mission statement: Shellfish Culture Ltd will create value by producing premium quality oysters that meet customer needs.

My thanks to our staff at Bicheno who really took ownership of our hatchery upgrade over the last few months. Staff showed tremendous enthusiasm and commitment to the refurbishment project both in terms of the planning and the execution of the work.

Last year I spent time in the USA, visiting a great number of hatcheries and at Bicheno we can now be proud of a world class hatchery which is as good as any I've seen anywhere else in the world.

A fresh burst of the ocean

A two hour drive north of Coffin Bay in SA brings you to Turners Oyster Farm, on the remote Franklin Harbour, Cowell. The farm sells 1.5 million Pacific oysters each year into the Australian capital city market.

Simon Turner, owner and manager of Turners Oysters Farm, has spent 23 years farming oysters in Cowell and Coffin Bay. He is the son of one of South Australia's pioneering Pacific oyster producers, Geoff Turner. "When I was young we had an agricultural farm as well as one of the first oyster farms in the region. As oyster farming took off here between the late 80's to early 90's, we sold out of the agricultural side to concentrate on aquaculture."

Simon grew up as the local industry developed. He was involved in the development of the family owned BST basket system for growing oysters from inception and predominantly uses this system on his farm.

When the family business sold the oyster farm in 2007, as a retirement strategy for his parents, Simon stayed on with the new company as a



Turners Oyster Farm: photograph courtesy Darren Clark, photographer

bay manager for three years. This gave Simon an insight into the running of a large corporate company that owned ten oyster farms in total. When the company that bought it went into receivership in 2010, Simon and his wife Meagan bought it back, plus some more.

Turners now employ two full time farm hands and one part time. "We run 15ha of inter tidal water and half a hectare of sub tidal. It's a good mix of high and low energy water which grows about 2.5 million oysters." Simon is a big

believer in low stocking densities to achieve a high quality product and maintain good healthy oysters year round.

Franklin Harbour is a unique eco-system for growing oysters. It has an extensive network of mangroves surrounding the harbour, and considerable seagrass beds. "We are fortunate to have a low annual rainfall, resulting in very little freshwater or sediment entering our seas. Our salinity sits around 35-40ppt." The result is a saltier tasting oyster with a lingering depth

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Megan and Simon Turner with farm hands Jason and Mitchell

of flavour. "Market feedback tells us that people like them because our oysters present a fresh burst of the ocean in the mouth."

Simon has had a relationship with Shellfish Culture spanning some 25 years. He utilises spawnless oysters for up to 70 percent of his harvest. "The spawnless oysters give us the ability to produce a premium product just at the time of year when the Australian appetite for shellfish is very strong. Between our standard and spawnless oysters we can provide top quality oysters year round."

"Our industry has been very healthy for many years now. We didn't notice much of a drop off through the GFC and sales are now very buoyant. We sell everything we grow."

The farm includes a retail outlet which Simon says is very popular on the tourist trail. "People like to have an oyster experience. They want to see where the oysters are grown and how they are processed and graded. It all adds to the enjoyment of eating this wonderful shellfish."

Busy work experience

In May this year two grade 10 students studying aquaculture at Cowell Area School in South Australia undertook a week of work experience at Shellfish Culture in Tasmania. The two boys, Ben and Hayden, were accompanied by their teacher, Michael Barker and his wife Lynn.

Each student spent time at the Pipeclay hatchery south of Hobart, Little Swanport on the Tasmanian east coast where they worked in the nursery, and Bicheno where they studied algae, looking at different growing techniques and different species.

Shellfish Culture ensured they received a thorough experience. Early starts, lots of mathematical equations in the lab, and extensive travel within Tasmania between Shellfish Culture facilities, meant even their teacher was weary by the end of the week.



Ben and Hayden enjoyed their work experience with SCL

The Cowell Area School has its own oyster farm run by a manager and staffed by the students. Last year the farm returned a profit of some \$80,000 which is being re-invested into the farm. Shellfish Culture has donated seed to the school to assist its work.

"I want to thank you all sincerely for the fantastic support you have given our school. Michael and the boys have come home so excited and it has rippled down into the rest of the school. They have all learned so much and have memories for a life time." Jan Potter, Principal, Cowell Area School.

Our People



Michael Riley, Nursery Team Leader

He's been called Chumpy since his primary school days. He's also the newest recruit at Shellfish Culture's Pipeclay Lagoon facility. Meet Michael Riley, SCL's Pipeclay Lagoon Nursery Team leader.

Michael has spent his working life in the aquaculture sector. "After school I got a job at Pipeclay Lagoon with Clifton Pacific Oysters and I've worked on and around the shores of Pipeclay Lagoon ever since."

Few people would know Pipeclay Lagoon better. "It's got good water flow, a good bottom to work on, and good flushing tides," says Michael.

While he worked his way up in the industry Michael took out various industry certificates and is now about to complete a Diploma in aquaculture. "At my last job I started at the bottom and worked my way up to farm manager."

"At Shellfish Culture, I'm in charge of the Nursery Team undertaking functions that range from working on and off the water, to grading and team management. It's a great industry for a young bloke who likes a team environment and an outdoor life. The industry is also full of really interesting people who do interesting things and I love being a part of it all."

Laid back but highly professional, Chumpy is a popular staff member at Pipeclay Lagoon. There's just one thing: "it's my hat. I don't take it off for anyone or anything. So if you want to take my picture it will be with my hat on."