

## Done deal Stud, sheep and station sold

# New era dawns for Collinsville

By CATHERINE MILLER

**T**HE iconic Collinsville sheep studs and station, east of Burra, have been sold.

Soon after the stud topped the Adelaide Merino Ram Sale last week at \$66,000 – the highest price paid there in 17 years – the deal was completed.

George and Sophie Millington and their children Rupert and Alice, who live at Cappeedee, Hallett, are only the fourth custodians in Collinsville stud's nearly 120-year history and they are enthusiastic about making it a leading supplier of Merino genetics.

The family bought the operation from prominent rural identities Paddy and Helen Handbury, who had owned it for the past 19 years.

The Handburys rescued the stud from the hands of receivers in 1995 when it was in danger of being dispersed and have guided it through some turbulent times in the sheep and wool industry.

The deal, negotiated by Ray White Clare Valley, includes the 56,093-hectare Collinsville Station, 49 kilometres north east of Burra, and the two sheep studs comprising about 7000 Merino and Poll Merino ewes and lambs.

Mr Millington, who has had significant success in Adelaide business, said it had been a goal to run a Merino stud on Cappeedee since buying the Mid North property in 2010. Cappeedee had previously been home to a successful Merino stud for 135 years until it was dispersed six years ago.

"It is fantastic to have the opportunity to buy one of the best sheep studs in Australia and bring it back to SA owner-

### Key points

- Entity remains intact to support customers
- New owners enthusiastic about Merino genetics
- Possibility of on-property ram sale next year

ship," he said.

Mr Millington said his family had been among the original bidders during the sale of land last year, but struck a deal during the past three to four months on the sheep and station.

"It was very important for Paddy and us that the stud and station were retained together because Collinsville has a lot of station customers who need to be confident sheep will survive in their conditions," he said.

Another key consideration in the sale was securing the knowledge and experience of stud manager Tim Dalla, who has been with the stud for six years, and long-time Collinsville Station manager Tony Connell.

"These key people will be accompanied by existing Cappeedee staff member Tyson Battersby," Mr Millington said. "As long as you have the right people in the right places the potential is immense."

Mr Millington's first business venture was Monjava Coffee, in Kent Town, which he sold to San Remo in 2007.

He then bought APD Parcel Delivery with a business partner and has grown it into Adelaide's biggest parcel delivery network, handling about 10,000 parcels each day.

Mr Millington has the same confidence about his next business move: agriculture.

"Agriculture is one of the few industries where Australia has a natural advantage because of where it is located and what it is producing," he said.

"A whole generation of people have gone through a lot in the sheep industry – shooting sheep or having to sell them for only a dollar – but now the surplus bales are gone and there are no external barriers.

"(And) we are seeing increased demand for protein from Asia.

"There are only half the number of Merinos in Australia



**TOP PRICE:** Luke Ledwith, Kolindale stud, Dudinin, WA, bought the top-price ram at the Adelaide Merino Ram Sale last week for \$66,000. Pictured holding the ram – Collinsville Regal 242 – is Collinsville stud manager Tim Dalla.

as (there were) 20 years ago and wool prices are reasonably buoyant."

Mr Millington said the stud would continue to breed the large-frame, plain-body, 21-micron Merino for which SA was renowned.

"We would like to go back to holding an on-property ram sale next year and continue to sell in Adelaide, striving to do it the best it can be done," he said.

Mr Handbury said the decision to sell the studs was made easier by the lack of a natural successor.

"There was an emotional attachment saving it from the banks, but none of my children were interested in taking over the stud so it was a family decision to sell it," he said.

"George is a really enthusiastic and very capable man, so it was a lot easier to part with it knowing it is in good and capable hands."

## Significant to sell piece of history

**MORE** than 70 enquiries from around Australia – and from international interests – were received for Collinsville Station, one of SA's most highly regarded pastoral properties.

But following considerable negotiation, it was sold to Mid North locals George and Sophie Millington, from Cappeedee, Hallett.

The 56,093-hectare station was put to auction in November last year by Ray White Clare Valley to enable the Handbury Group to pursue further pastoral interests in the north of the state. Despite a number of bidders, the property was passed-in.

Further interest was received early this year, but it was the inclusion of the studs that ensured the deal was done by agents Geoff Schell and his son Daniel.

"We had three or four people

genuinely interested in the station but couldn't get it over the line until George approached us again a couple of months ago about buying the stud too, which we put to Collinsville," Geoff said.

"Paddy (Handbury) has been passionate about seeing it remain in good hands and could see the passion and enthusiasm George had for the Merino industry and stud industry."

Geoff said it was a "perfect result" with the stud remaining locally with the one owner.

"It is not the most money we have sold a property for, but it would be our most significant sale given it included the Poll Merino and Merino studs. Selling a piece of SA history makes it more important," he said.

He said the family remained committed to breeding Merino sheep commercially.

"I love breeding Merino sheep and the challenges that genetics of Merino sheep put to you," Mr Handbury said.

"We will be looking to expand our operations and that will be

based on the Collinsville-type Merino."

"I have really enjoyed being part of the Collinsville journey and the great stud that it is."

The station had been valued at more than \$5 million, but full details of the sale were not disclosed.

### Behind the headline

**FORMER** Collinsville general manager Peter Whittlesea said Handbury Ag, which also had properties in the South East western Vic, would continue to operate 2024 hectares in the Booborowie district and another 219ha of leased country. The sale would enable Handbury Ag to pursue its northern pastoral interests. It owns the 3505-square kilometre Collinsville Station at Woomera.