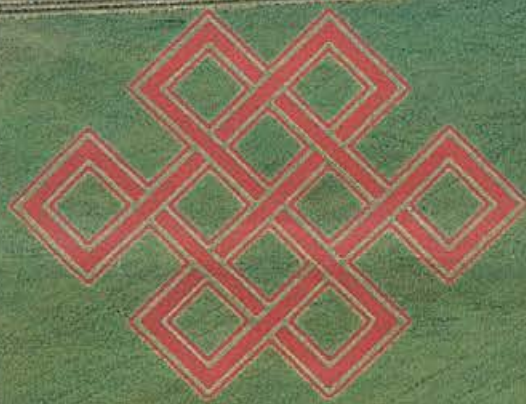




Australia's Largest Hay Exporter

Eight page special liftout



GILMAC

Growing with you

GILMAC, Australia's largest hay exporter, has massively expanded its Balaklava site, with two huge storage sheds now constructed.

It is a huge investment for Gilmac's South Australian operations, doubling


its production capability and drastically increasing its storage capacity.

The expansion at the Gilmac site on Adelaide road, just south of Balaklava, vastly increases storage space from 25,000 to 40,000 tonnes in anticipation of a

second press being installed which will double production capacity from 55,000 tonnes to 110,000 per year.

The new sheds, each 160 metres long and 45 metres wide, were constructed at ground level then lifted into place by

10 cranes. They were built by Victorian company, Swan Hill Engineering.

 **READ** more about Gilmac's expansion and the companies involved in the construction process in this special eight-page feature.

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"All we need now is the hay"



Gilmac keen to welcome new growers on board

Les Pearson reports:

LEFT: Gilmac site manager, Mark Heaslip keeps a close eye on the expansion.



WITH more storage and production capacity, more hay will be needed and Gilmac is keener than ever to welcome new growers on board. Gilmac site manager, Mark Heaslip, said the company was always looking for quality hay. "It's always nice to hear from prospective growers pre-seeding, as we do our contracting in April," he said. "We still have phone calls this week from people who have a hay paddock sitting there, waiting to be cut, to see if we're interested. "We go out and have a look at it and come up with a quality and a price, then get back to them. "Any time, people can ring and we can accommodate but ideally if they can get in touch with us pre-seeding, it works best. "We like to know the paddocks they are going to put in and how many hectares they are putting in as it helps our system, we know exactly what's happening."

From grower to manager, Mark has the know-how for export hay

THERE are few aspects to the export hay business Gilmac site manager Mark Heaslip has not experienced in his extensive involvement with the industry.

Mark was born and bred on the Owen family farm and went on to become a primary producer himself, both locally and on the state's west coast.

He left the land aged 32 after drought took its toll, taking on a job in engineering and fabrication.

Mark first came to Gilmac in 1993 as a plant operator and 18 months later was made a supervisor at the site.

In 1996 he was asked to manage the

major processing plant in New Norcia, Western Australia.

He held that management position for two years before becoming a farm manager of a property that grew export oaten hay, which he did for eight years.

"We grew 2200 hectares of export oaten hay, which is ironic when people talk to me how difficult it is to grow oaten hay," Mark laughed.

He came back to manage the Balaklava site in 2006, bringing wife, Marie, a Bordertown girl, and their three children.

"It's worked out really well and we've been here for six years now," Mark said.

"I'm a lot more comfortable now than I was 15 years ago when I went to WA, it was all a bit awe-inspiring back then.

"Now, when I'm talking with the growers, I've got hands-on experience.

"I'm not some bloke who doesn't know anything about hay.

"I've been there, done it, I've been that bloke on the other side, growing hay for an exporter.

"Marie and I also have our own block of land we grow hay on.

"So I feel like I can relate to growers quite well."

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Expansion a boost for hay growers

An aerial view of the shed erection on Tuesday October 2. Since the photo was taken both sheds are up with the wall frames in place ready for the iron which should near completion in October.

Shed expansion and second hay press will double exports from Gilmac's Balaklava plant

THE expansion of hay exporter, Gilmac, at its Balaklava site, is a huge investment in its local operations, doubling its production capability and drastically increasing its storage capacity.

Gilmac site manager, Mark Heaslip, said the expansion was a long time coming.

"We've been limited by storage because we've never had enough sheds for the hay coming in for us," he said.

Despite running out of hay during the drought season of 2006, Mr Heaslip said the company picked up again right where it left off.

"From that point on, we've had to limit the number of growers and the number of tonnes those growers could produce," he said.

"We've lifted our tonnage by 30 per cent this year and we hope to do the same in the next three years.

"We're going to put in a second press and we've increased our storage from 25,000 tonnes to 40,000 tonnes, so that's a pretty big jump.

"We believe South Australia has a lot of potential to grow more hay and we have always been curtailed by a lack of storage on-site.

"We were expanding in other states previously, so we increased capacity in two other sites and now it's Balaklava's turn.

"Balaklava has performed very well in the last four years, so the opportunity has now come for Balaklava to reap the rewards from that work."

The inclusion of the second press will lift production capacity from 55,000 tonnes to 110,000 per year.

Gilmac have been busily constructing the new storage sheds over recent months, as well as asphaltting roads and upgrading to an increased power supply to accommodate the demands from the second press.

Mr Heaslip said the company had an excellent local reputation and rapport with growers. "Gilmac has a great name with growers, we

make our payments on time, every time and what we say is what we do," he said.

"We've probably changed the culture, improved the plant's performance, we've got very good staff morale and it's all coming together nicely.

"We will have our ups and downs with the new system going in but I think our culture will stay the same and we have a good structure in place and that should follow on."

Mr Heaslip said it was an upgrade that would bring benefits to the wider community.

"There will be more containers going out the door, so that will make more work for the Bowmans Intermodal site.

"Local transport companies will also have extra work through that and increase the size of their operations to keep up."

The increased production capacity has not only created four new local jobs but also opened up greater opportunities for farmers

to diversify their enterprises.

"Growers in the district will all be able to expand their hay growing areas," Mr Heaslip said.

"Districts from Eudunda, to Maitland, to Orroroo are all suppliers for Gilmac.

"Growing hay also helps as a bit of a management tool for weed control, it helps provide an opportunity for diversification."

The hay market is predominantly stable, although prices will fluctuate like most agriculturally based commodities.

"It does move around a bit but at the moment, the hay industry is having a very good time," Mr Heaslip said.

"The market is solid, short of hay, Australian hay has a great name in the export market and all our markets want more of our hay.

"There's certainly room to move, so why not take the opportunity to expand when we can?"

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Shed built from the ground up

IT was January this year when Gilmac announced the expansion of its Balaklava site, including the introduction of a second press and substantially increasing storage room.

Gilmac site manager, Mark Heaslip, said the expansion had been a lot of work to date, with more to come.

Included on the 'to-do list' was finding someone to construct the huge 7,000 tonne storage sheds and do the relevant site works, get a site design and plan for the new press, upgrade the electricity transformers and increase local staff levels.

Mr Heaslip said Swan Hill Engineering quickly emerged as an ideal option to build the storage sheds, having erected similar structures for the company in Victoria previously.

A GPS system was used to survey the proposed site, provide various level data and the position of shed locations.

The footing holes were also marked out using the GPS system.

The foundation pads were then raised to relevant specifications to ensure adequate drainage, before the footing holes were bored and the footings were cemented in soon after.

Several trucks carted the 500 tonnes of steel on site, not including the iron for the shed walls.

Engineers then built the shed rooves first. "They did the whole roof, gutters, ridge capping, flashing, it was all done on the ground," Mr Heaslip explained.

The wall columns were bolted on the bottom of the roof, which a crane then lifted up, the columns sliding into place underneath the roof, before cross braces were added to keep the shed standing.

The columns were also then bolted to the footings.



Mr Heaslip said it was not a common construction technique seen locally.

"It's quite common in Victoria but it's probably something new in South Australia," he said.

"For OH&S reasons, it's just brilliant as people are working no higher than three metres off of the ground.

"It also reduces the time it takes to build a shed because you don't have people going up

and down scissor lifts all the time, so it's the way of the future, no doubt at all."

He expected both sheds would be finished this week with the asphalt floors following next week.

"I would say we will have the use of them in about three weeks' time," Mr Heaslip said.

"We have other storage anyway, so we will use that first and then move into the new sheds after.

"Our next project is to start on the cess of getting the press in, so we have double press.

"We should be up and running with presses before the start of next season.

"Our production capacity will double although we won't have the hay in the few years but that's our plan.

"It will take a few years to get more ground to come on board."

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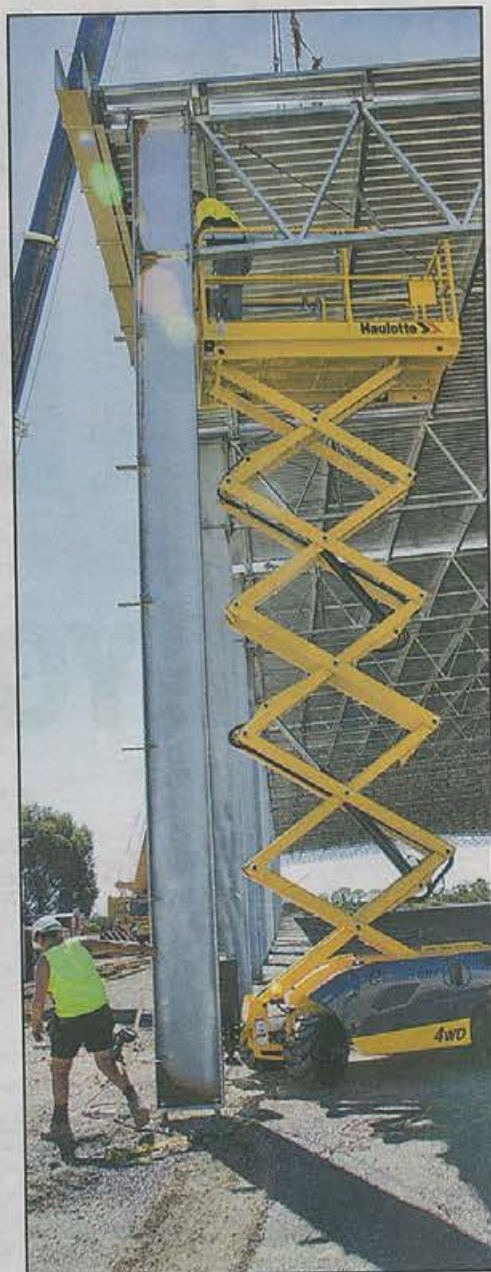
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Gilmac Hay Special Feature – October




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Up she rises

TOP LEFT: The roof trusses constructed at ground level. **TOP CENTRE:** Balaklava plumber Robert Hore lays storm water pipe. **LEFT:** The team from CKC L-R: Peter, Ryan, Simon and Clinton Kirchofer. The legs were connected by one bolt and swung into place when lifted into place. Once up, the legs were bolted to the footings which consisted of four bolts, the remaining three bolts at the top of columns were then added. **RIGHT:** Clinton Kirchofer from CKC on top of the scissor lift adds the cross braces to keep the shed standing before the cranes could disconnect.



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Congratulations to Mark and staff at Gilmac on the impressive new storage facility

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