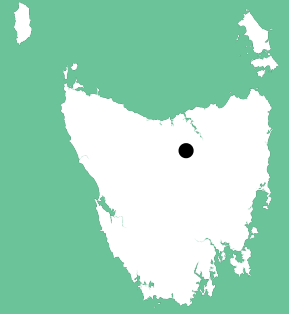


15. Chester: Utilising non-commercial rough sandy banks with trees for livestock shelter



Chester, Westwood, is one of seven successful Integrated Farm Forestry Demonstration Sites receiving funding to plant 70,116 *Pinus radiata* seedlings across 49.6 hectares of a former *Eucalyptus nitens* plantation. The Archer's have been planting shelterbelts for a number of years, Andrew is now running the livestock on the farm while Sam looks after the crops which includes poppies, peas, potatoes and onions. Sam notes the importance of protecting both the livestock and the crops on the farm and says that trees provide the perfect wind barriers.

AT A GLANCE

Owner	Sam and Andrew Archer
Property name	Chester
Location	Westwood, Northern Tasmania
Property size	2,600ha
Enterprises	Beef cattle, sheep and irrigated cropping
Rainfall	650-750mm
Soil type	Large variation across property from red basalt soils to black cracking clays
Forested area	About 800ha of native forest, 50ha of <i>P. radiata</i> plantations, both managed for production, and 30-40ha of mixed biodiversity plantings for waterway protection

KEY POINTS

- Trees provide essential shelter, directly improving livestock welfare and farm productivity.
- Well-managed plantations can create a valuable long-term income stream alongside other primary production.
- Managing trees is much like managing crops — the principles are the same, only the timelines are longer.
- The long-term goal is to shelter every paddock, protect waterways, and reduce evaporation from water storages.
- When planted in the right locations, trees deliver multiple on-farm benefits — economic, environmental, and aesthetic.

About

Andrew and Sam Archer run the extensive Chester property in the Meander Valley. The brothers run the 2,600-ha property that is a cattle, ewes and irrigated cropping enterprise aiming to increase productivity and build capital for future developments.

Sam sees the role of trees on the farm as critical to increasing productivity of both the livestock and cropping components of the enterprise.

His plan is to plant pines in the bigger areas at Chester, which includes rough sand banks that are uninhabitable for commercially viable crops to increase his farms profitability and to improve the appearance of the land.

Sam said the importance of protecting both the livestock and the crops on the farm and says that trees provide the perfect wind barriers. Planting trees increases lambing percentages.

"We keep lambing percentages from each paddock and have recorded a far better lambing percentage in the areas with trees, with a 10% increase in survival rate."



Previous land use

- Agriculture use (pasture) / ex-plantations.

Site preparation

- Clearing of harvest slash.
- Areas were heavily grazed prior to cultivation to control weeds.
- The sites were fenced off from stock.
- Pre-cultivation spraying conducted.
- Ripping and mounding conducted following pre-plant spray on areas that were converted from pasture to trees.
- In the ex-plantation areas, the ground was spot cultivated.

Planting date

- Originally planted August 2021.
- Refilling Autumn 2022.

Species and area

- *E.nitens* & *P.radiata* - 51.43ha

Stocking

- 1,100 stems per hectare.
- Survival rate as at January 2022. *E.nitens* = 68% and *P.radiata* = 49.6%.

Management to date

- 20g of Multicote at planting and weed management.
- Fencing and browsing control.

Challenges

- Trees have struggled with blackberry infestation along with game pressure (possum).
- Taking on the crop management side of the enterprise, Sam has seen building his management knowledge of tree plantations as a key challenge when he first started.
- Working with forestry consultants, seeking advice and gaining first-hand practical experience has given Sam confidence with managing the trees into the future. When actively managed, tree plantations on a farm are just another crop, with their own requirements growing over a longer timeframe.

Planned management

- At this stage, while the trees are young, future management of the crop has not been fully determined. The two main options are to consider pruning and manage the plantations on a clearwood regime (with pruning and thinning) or to manage without pruning.

"Pines are the perfect choice as they are hardy and good to use for fencing off the poorer areas of the farm that crops can't grow on. They're thicker and tougher and they also don't get the blackberries and weeds growing around the trunks, so they require less maintenance."

"Planting the pines as fencing between paddocks and using the trees as shelterbelts will be beneficial for our stock and crops. We also want to use the trees as fencing around the perimeters of the farm for added biosecurity, especially along the roadside."



Watch Chester's video here

Sam explains how plantations have been established on steep and rocky unproductive farmland and how he has seen a 10-15% increase in lamb survival in well sheltered paddocks.

