

Part 5: The story of first groundwater well for irrigation in Canterbury

Interviewee: Dr Hugh Thorpe

Interviewer: Dr MS Srinivasan

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“When people started to show interest in groundwater as a source of irrigation, they went to the local office of the geological survey who said – these were the geologists – “Oh, no, no good, no groundwater, apart from Christchurch, there’s no groundwater under the Canterbury plains”.”

“And the man who started it all from an irrigation point of view was a man called Brian Cameron. He farmed down at Pendarves, which is between the Rakaia and the Ashburton. He really needed water down there, and this would've been in the 1960s. He thought, “Damn it, I’m going to ignore the experts,” and drilled a six inch well. He found good water and it all started from there, from that one well in Pendarves. Great credit for having the courage to risk his money.”