Wagga Wagga, even the name suggests the 58th Australian Cereal Chemistry conference was going to be an adventure, and Charles Sturt University were the welcome site for the 2009 conference. The city, second largest in inland New South Wales (NSW), Australia, according to the gentleman at the tourist information center, is located in the Riverina region on the Murrumbidgee River of NSW, just 455 kilometers south of Sydney. Just to the west of Wagga lies the Murrumbidgee irrigation area and the town of Leeton—the center of the Australian rice industry. The local dilemma is that there’s been very little rain for many years and the irrigation systems have not delivered much in the way of useful water flows. In fact, it’s been seven years since the rice mills have been able to purchase locally grown rice (the rice crop fell to as low as 2% of previous harvests); however, rice research and quality programs have continued and were the focus of the after-conference visits. One highlight of the post-conference tour to Yanco Agricultural Institute and SunRice Mill was the local announcement that there would be some water released for rice crops this growing season. Along with a local winery, the Willandra Estate Winery, (Did I mention that the conference was, after all, in Australia?), these were just a few of the week’s memorable highlights.

Charles Sturt University hosted the conference and the local conference organizers, led by Chris Blanchard, did a wonderful job of bringing it all together. There were too many individuals to mention all of them here (but they know who they were) and their efforts were much appreciated by all of the attendees.

The theme of this year’s conference was “Quality Science for the Country.” The 2009 conference showcased some of Australia’s highest quality scientists and grain producers. In addition, there were many international visitors in attendance; among them, some of AACC International’s most well-known and favourite speakers, Ravindra (Ravi) Chibbar and Grant Campbell. The Technical Program Committee, headed up by Les Copeland, provided a forum for papers covering the most current topics in grain science: grains and health; GM grains; new technologies; environmental influences on grain quality; and the future of food grains. The conference room was well populated throughout the meetings with attendees eager to hear the numerous leading-edge presentations. The grains and health subtheme included discussions on coeliac friendly malting barley and gluten as a cause of gastrointestinal symptoms in patients who do not have coeliac disease. The industrial technologies session covered how the flour milling process produces multiple flours with distinctive properties and stock feed nutrition and feed formulation and utilisation of NIR applications. A session focused on looking to the future addressed genetic advances in agricultural crops and included talks on the prospects for GM wheat and genetic modification of cereal grain carbohydrates for food, feed, and improved human health. In addition to the conference room presentations, there was also a large poster program where authors were able to present their work in more detail in perhaps a less stressful setting. Prizes were awarded for the best overall poster and best student poster.

Welcome reception. (L-R) Bronwyn Elliott (Perten), Royal Australian Cereal Chemistry Division Chair Chris Blanchard (Charles Sturt University), and Conference Chair Robert Cracknell (AACC Intl. Downunder Section chair).

Conference dinner. (L-R): AACC Intl. members Graeme Crosbie (retired, Western Australia Department of Agriculture), poster price winner Larisa Cato (AACC Intl. Asian Products Technical Committee cochair), and Vicky Solah (Curtin University of Technology).
The AACC Intl. Downunder Section booth presented demonstrations of the new, online AACC Intl. Approved Methods of Analysis 11th Edition, a chance to win a copy of the newly published Wheat: Chemistry and Technology, Fourth Edition, and an opportunity for members to set up an online Cereal Chemistry profile, which was very popular with the attendees.

Conference sponsors allowed the very popular tea and coffee breaks and “free lunches” to be held in the exhibit area. Lively intersession discussions presented the usual challenge for the chairs to get participants back into their session audiences. The social functions, again thanks to very generous sponsorship, brought all of the usual suspects out to play and a special event, the presentation of the Guthrie Medal, which is the Royal Australian Cereal Chemistry Division’s highest award. It is presented every three years to an individual in recognition of meritorious services to cereal chemistry in Australia or New Zealand in honor of F. B. Guthrie. This year, the medal was awarded to current AACC Intl. board member Rodney Booth, Perten Instruments AB (formerly Newport Scientific, Sydney).

The complete proceedings for the 58th conference will be available through the AACC Intl. Downunder Section (past conference proceedings are also available). Contact Phil Downie (pdownie@tca-online.net.au) for information.

The 60th Australian Cereal Chemistry Conference will be held at the RACV Club in Melbourne, Australia, September 19–23, 2010. Make travel plans now to visit Melbourne in 2010!

Anne Bridges received her academic training in Australia and Canada. She is chair of the Approved Methods Technical Committee and a member of the AACC Intl. Downunder Section. She is based in Australia and shares her time between consulting for food quality assurance and food biotechnology issues and humanitarian relief work. She can be reached at annebridges001@earthlink.net.