History and development of the Australian cotton industry

Dave Anthony
Key factors in the industry’s history and development
Australian cotton & wool 2016-17

- 208,000 tonnes (clean)
- 1760 cents / kg (clean)
- $3.7 billion

- 887,500 tonnes (ginned)
- 250 cents / kg
- $2.5 billion (includes seed)

Australia’s two major natural fibres
Average Australian Lint Yields (kgs / ha)

USDA data

11 bales / ha
Total Area of Cotton planted by year in Australia (Hectares)

Data compiled from Dr Greg Constable; Cotton Australia; and Aust Cotton Grower Year Books
Note: 400 pts on a 12 b / ha crop = $300 / ha increase in revenue
Cotton was a major catalyst & driver of the Industrial Revolution

England was hungry for raw cotton
The Australian cotton industry emerged in Queensland in the 1850s.

Early areas included:
- Emerald
- Theodore
- Capella
- Townsville
- Carrara
- Ipswich
- Beaudesert
- Beaudesert
- Thornton
- Laidley
- Rockhampton
- Wowan
American Civil War 1861-65 disrupts supplies

Minor boost to Australian production
Industry in decline.
Turning the corner 1950-60s

The “modern” industry arrives.
Mechanical harvesting available from 1949
Irrigation, government encouragement & the pioneers.

1959 - 1963

Keepit Dam

Auscott Limited
An Act to provide for the Payment of Bounty on the Production of certain Raw Cotton sold for use in Australia and for other purposes.

[Assented to 31st October, 1963.]
[Date of commencement, 28th November, 1963.]
Getting started in the 1960s had its challenges

Weeds
Grubs &
Floods
Materials handling was a key to industry expansion.

The era of cotton trailers.

Proximity to a gin important
The cotton module innovation – late 1970s
The round module revolution in 2007

Yield mapping
Improving efficiency of field operations

1964
High field efficiency - 12 metre wide gear is common

GPS Guidance; Controlled traffic; crop and field monitoring; etc.  
Now looking to robotics.............
Insect management

Science in action
• GM & IPM

GM
Non-GM