

Tasmania 09!

We saw the sights, had a lot of laughs, came home and then we slept! Many members of the Northern District Jersey Breeders Club attended the state AGM formal dinner in May 2008, where we made the decision that Tasmanian members had come to Victoria many times and it was time for us to visit them. It took us a while to get around to it, but over the Labor Day weekend in March this year, eleven club members were joined by members from the Goulburn Murray Club in Grant & Ron Baker and Jon Pearce & Shareena Flynn, members from Queensland in Darren, Jeanette and William Grevett and club sponsors Andrew & Kara Parkinson of Wellbred Genetics and made our way down under. We arrived in Launceston on Thursday night, ready to check out the local sights, but not before having a little trouble with the terrain. Most of us are well used to wide open *flat* spaces. Travelling in three eight seat vehicles, one vehicle had severe trouble negotiating the very steep carpark after stopping half way up the drive to look for a parking spot. With all wheels trying to rotate forwards, the vehicle going backwards towards the rooms, some passengers were seen to be fleeing from the van.

Leaving early on Friday morning for Ringarooma to visit Minstonette Jerseys of John & Katrina Sykes and family. With a little sight seeing along the way as well as much friendly rivalry between vehicles, we arrived to outstanding hospitality and we're sure most of us will have to visit Weight Watchers following this visit. Morning tea was a spectacular in its own right with scones, jam & cream, sponge cakes, sandwiches, savouries and the list goes on. First visiting the farm where the young stock are reared, it reminded all the Northern Victorian's why we are still farming. Green grass as far as the eye could see and lots of it, across rolling hills. Their stock were in great condition and extremely quiet. Moving onto their home farm we split into two groups. Some took the opportunity to sight see around the area with Katrina while the majority looked through the milking herd with John and daughter Jane. Inspecting their great herd of cows, it was good to see some of the latest young sire daughters. A passionate farming family, pedigrees could be quoted for generations back. We were in awe of their irrigation system, with all water gravity fed from the surrounding rain forest, supplying the travelling irrigator and stock and domestic supply, and all at an extremely low cost. If we could have packed it in our suitcases, it would have been the first on the plane home!

Following an impressive lunch with the Skyes family, we continued to Meander Dam sightseeing and picking up another passenger. This passenger (pictured complete with hat & boots) became an important member of the red car group, used at various times as a loudspeaker, group member complete with seatbelt, abducted by the gold car, held captive and subjected to torture, eventually returned home to his rightful owners on Sunday. Meander Dam is an impressive structure. Partly funded by farmers by way of purchase of permanent annual water right, this dam will ensure the delivery of water for farm and township use into the future and was the envy of we northern vic farmers.



The trip's special passenger

Staying the night in Carrick and Westbury, we met for dinner and drinks, afterwards retreating to our respective accommodation for a long night of fun, pranks and laughter.

Saturday saw us visit the large operation of Nathan & Amanda Chilcott's. Again we were treated to rolling hills of green grass and it would be fair to say that for most of us, this abundance of pasture is something we will remember about Tasmania. The views of magnificent rolling river flats, from the house and dairy were something very few of us would have the pleasure of at home. After inspecting the springing herd, the convoy left the dairy to see the milkers, but not before the gold car had a problem with their wheels, courtesy of the red car. Nathan and Amanda's Riverview Ridge Jerseys is a young herd that has spent money very wisely on some top animals that will breed well for them. This family has a bright future in the industry and are switched on young breeders.

A visit to the Christmas Hills Raspberry Farm for lunch was followed by a visit to Ashgrove Cheese in Elizabeth Town. This featured a number of decorated full sized cows completed by the schools in the area. The raspberry farm is highly recommended to visit for a meal. The tour visited Geoff and Anne Heazlewood's Merseybank Jerseys in the afternoon. This property is a wonderfully sheltered farm and very peaceful. We were fortunate to view the dam and grand dam of their consignment to the upcoming Northern Lights Sale, very impressive, this animal will be an outstanding young cow. Their herd is wonderfully consistent and well established with Geoff and Anne highly regarded within the breed. What more can we say!

When leaving the property, they suggested that we visit a shop in town and what a remarkable place it was! Regardless of your interest in shopping, if you are ever in the area you should make the time to call in. It has several rooms, literally full of the most amazing things, you must really see to believe.

Staying in Davenport, on Saturday evening we had dinner at the Axeman's Hall of Fame at Latrobe, where we were joined by state secretary Max McCormack and his wife Peggy. A short talk was given on the hall's history before we were given the opportunity to look at the extensive displays prior to dinner. Thank you to all involved for the opportunity to view the area's history and your generous hospitality.

The tour headed for home on Sunday, but not before stopping at Anvers Chocolates in Latrobe. Well worth the stop, it's sure to be visited again when any of us are in Tassie.

While there were many friendly battles, trickery and general fun encountered between the rival cars in Tasmania, some won by each of the cars, it was agreed that the gold car won the war with their final masterpiece. In the wee hours, the red car was, amongst other things, wrapped in 120 metres of gladwrap, topped off with some pretty balloons, only to need its third and final bath on Sunday morning.

A huge thanks to Nathan & Amanda Chillcott together with their helpers John & Katrina Sykes, Geoff & Ann Hazelwood and Max & Peggy McCormack for their organization of our visit. We sincerely appreciate all the time and effort you put to in making this a great trip away and your generous hospitality. We hope that you and others will join us in our trip to Queensland at the same time next year. We recommend to all, that if you are visiting Tassie, you take the opportunity to visit the great Jersey herds and hospitality of the area.

Thankyou to our drivers, Nathan Chilcott (the silver van), Andrew & Kara Parkinson (the gold van), Pat Nicholson and Carmen Patterson (the red van). To Nathan for leading the way, we would have been lost numerous times without you and we would have been late *all* of the time. The Parky's, it's unanimous, it wouldn't have been as much fun as it was without you, and Pat & Carmen, your van was the cleanest in Tasmania, washed every day thanks to the antics of the gold van but taken very well.

When we first met at the airport in Melbourne on Thursday evening, many did not know one another. Over a short space of time this changed and we certainly got to know one another's less serious side. All that came along thoroughly enjoyed themselves, saw some great herds and fantastic scenery. We came home totally relaxed although we're sure that there were some early nights following. Much good old fashioned fun took place and tears of laughter were commonplace, with future trips guaranteed. Thanks to those that organized the trip and those who attended, it is considered a great trip to be remembered for years to come.



Above – some of those attending the NDJBC Tassie 09 trip.