

## MEAT THE STAFF: CHERYL LEE IS NOW HER OWN MASTER

Cheryl Lee sits at the reception desk in the Tongala office and says that part of her job is 'directing the traffic for the incoming calls'. In fact, Cheryl was the first female employee at Greenham's before the abattoir opened, so she would have been the only female voice you heard for quite a while.

She hails originally from Melbourne, and with her husband, Ken, spent quite a bit of time in Papua New Guinea. "We checked out PNG on a 6 month visa and ended up staying for 14 years. It was a great life. I worked as a seismogram reader for the PNG government based in Rabaul.



**"Peter Greenham is very caring. A lot of people don't realise how much H W Greenham look after the farmers, particularly in times of drought - it's not just profit!"**

"A seismogram is a record of the ground motion resulting from an earthquake or an explosion. The area is fairly susceptible to earth tremors and the occasional volcano, so the job had a fair bit of relevance up there."

When Cheryl and Ken moved back to Australia, they settled in Kyabram to be near her family.

Cheryl worked at the Kyabram Abattoirs for eight years, and then spent some time at East End Garage before joining Greenham.

"I began here in January 1993, and I believe that I was fortunate in getting a job at Greenham's. When I started in the office it was virtually bare, and I had the job of stocking it with all the required office equipment."

She has looked after the abattoir's wages records for 13 years, and WorkCare management for 15.

Four and a half years ago Cheryl ambitiously took on studying for her Masters Degree in Human Resource Management by distance education through Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. She needed to become adept at academic writing, expressing her own considered opinions on a whole range of issues – and she needed to resolve the time management problems associated with being able to do the study after hours.

It all came to fruition when Cheryl graduated in early April of this year, specialising in 'management of organisational change' which she says is required in most businesses these days, particularly with the economy being the way it is.

She was pretty chuffed when the university asked her to join their external Human Resource Management course advisory board to have a say in the future shaping of the studies. They meet regularly by teleconferencing to review and update the course units.

Cheryl says that it is hard to describe her current role with Greenham's - she is involved in occupational health and safety, and in the future hopes to take a greater role in human resources – "anything to do with people". But one thing is certain – she feels very lucky to be with the company she works for. "Peter Greenham is very caring. A lot of people don't realise how much H W Greenham look after the farmers, particularly in times of drought - it's not just profit!"

She and Ken live in Tongala where Ken has been handling the laundering of the company's Kevlar gloves over the last nine years. They have two daughters; the eldest, Bethany is in digital media in London and Nicole is teaching English in Tokyo.



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## MEATWORKS MESSENGER

GREENHAM



When Mick Keogh from the Australian Farm Institute was speaking at the presentation of our Dairy Scholarship he opened his remarks with the purportedly ancient Chinese saying "May you live in interesting times", adding that there is some dispute whether it is meant to be a blessing or a curse.

Irrespective of the intent, he said there is no doubt those involved in Australian agriculture are currently living in interesting times.

He went on to talk about the growing populations of middle-class consumers in nations like India and China who are moving from a predominantly rice diet to one that includes significant amounts of animal protein, and the enormous opportunity that presents for Australian agriculture.

But he also talked about the challenges of drought and depleted water resources, restrictive land management policies and the unknown impacts of emissions trading.

We are indeed in interesting times.

It's still hard to tell where the season is going. Reasonable falls over recent weeks in the Goulburn Valley and across the north are very encouraging. It does seem as though the pattern might be changing, especially when we look at what has happened in New South Wales and Queensland, but then Professor Toshio Yamagata and his team come along and tells us that spring is going to die in the backside!

Global economic news is still gloomy, although Australia does seem to be doing better than many other countries. Despite America's woes, our markets in the US are still holding up reasonably well. People still have to eat and sometimes you are much better off selling hamburger meat from old cows rather than prime steaks!

And even in these uncertain times, I think that is a key observation - the world population continues to grow while the amount of land available for growing food shrinks. And it does seem the importance of food production is gaining more notice.

A recent media report claimed that expenditure on agricultural research should be given the same priority as defence spending.

Let's hope the weather stays kind over the next few months and the Goulburn Valley can readily play its part in feeding the planet.

**Peter Greenham**



*Mick Keogh, executive director of the Australian Farm Institute presents the 2009 Greenham Dairy Scholarship to veterinary student, Simone Lee from Mathoura.*

## SCHOLARSHIP WINNER PLANS VET PARTNERSHIP WITH FARMERS

A third-year veterinary student at Wagga's Charles Sturt University, Simone Lee from Mathoura, is the winner of this year's \$10,000 Greenham Dairy Scholarship.

The 24-year-old has worked in hands-on roles on dairy farms since 2003. She has found the work challenging, demanding and very enjoyable, and has developed a real passion for the industry.

Her goal is to become a "veterinarian who can fit in with an innovative and changing dairy industry". After graduation she envisages providing a service that represents more of a partnership with her farmer clients.

"I would like to be involved in creating a total dairy services practice that takes a whole herd health approach, and specialises in areas such as nutrition, reproduction and product quality," she said. "I also have a real interest in improving the management of mastitis."

The award was presented by Mick Keogh, executive director of the Australian Farm Institute. He said there was a bright future for agriculture but taking advantage of the opportunities would depend on the knowledge, skills, and experience of people working in the sector.

"It will depend on agriculture's ability to attract the best and brightest young Australians. That's why it's really important for our industry to provide encouragement through programs such as this Scholarship.

"I commend Greenham for its foresight and commitment," he said.

Executive chairman of HW Greenham & Sons, Peter Greenham, said the Scholarship was designed to identify students and younger people with the potential to make a significant contribution to the dairy industry, but who may find it difficult without financial support.

## YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE TOO – TAKE CARE TRANSPORTING CATTLE

The chain of responsibility principle now applies to the transporting of all livestock which means that farmers can also be liable if their actions contribute to a breach of regulations.

John Beer, president of the Livestock Transporters Association of Victoria, says the main issues for farmers are facilities and scheduling.

"If cattle aren't ready when a truck is scheduled and the driver then runs over his permitted driving hours, the farmer can also be held accountable for the offence.

"The same situation could apply with substandard loading facilities that cause a delay because cattle won't run."

Mr Beer said WorkSafe approved plans for loading ramps were available on the LTAV website at [www.ltav.com.au](http://www.ltav.com.au). "Please feel free to download and use them."

Further information on chain of responsibility obligations is available at [www.vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au)

RGW/GRV3753



L-R. Peter Quinn, managing director GWV; Minister Jennings; Darren Maloney, Tongala plant manager and EPA chairman, Mick Bourke.

## DOING OUR BIT TO SAVE WATER

Water - it's been the word on everybody's lips across the Goulburn Valley now for more years than we care to remember as farmers have battled to maintain production in the face of dwindling allocations.

Lots of innovative thinking has come to the fore and it's been quite remarkable to see how much has been achieved with so little of the vital liquid.

At Tongala we've been doing our bit to reduce water consumption and were delighted to learn recently that our abattoir is now operating at a level very close to world's best practice.

It isn't easy to reduce water consumption in an abattoir because cleanliness and good hygiene are obviously central to maintaining meat quality.

About two years ago we teamed with Goulburn Valley Water and the EPA in a partnership that jointly funded the employment of an expert consultant who developed a cleaner production program designed to reduce water consumption, trade waste discharge, and also the amount of salt in the waste water.

Water usage is now running at approximately 4730 litres per tonne of meat processed. That is about as good as anybody, anywhere in the world can achieve.

The milestone was recognized on April 9 at a gathering in Shepparton where the Hon Gavin Jennings, Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Innovation, presented a certificate of recognition to plant manager, Darren Maloney.

Also present were Peter Quinn, managing director of Goulburn Valley Water and Mick Bourke, chairman of the EPA.

Peter Greenham said the company had always seen itself as part of the Goulburn Valley and wanted to play its role in supporting the community.

"We have a responsibility, along with everybody else, to keep our water consumption to a minimum."

## A FAMILY AFFAIR

Greenham is very much a family business that expounds family values. Executive chairman, Peter Greenham, is well-known to Victorian clients. Perhaps less well known is his son, also Peter, who manages the Tasmanian operation and represents the sixth generation of continuous involvement in the meat industry.

That alone is an impressive story but another family thread also weaves its way through the company with the Pretty family claiming three generations of involvement. Graeme's long association is well known along with that of his son Adam who has now chalked up 16 years, but *Meatworker* only recently discovered that Graeme's mother, Eileen, had also worked for Greenham in the distant past packing meat at a boning room in the Melbourne suburb of Moonee Ponds.

Graeme Pretty is often regarded as having a rather extraordinary knowledge of the livestock game which isn't at all surprising when you find out what he has done during a 40 year career - it amounts to virtually everything!

Graeme started on the bottom rung in 1968 when he was employed by RJ Gilbertson to wash out yards at their Altona abattoir. A stint as a labourer on the kill floor followed before he was appointed supervisor of the offal room.

### Twenty-seven drovers

His next position was supervisor of the 27 drovers employed at that time. The daily kill was 1500 cattle, 7000 sheep and lambs, and 1000 pigs, which explains why so many drovers were needed.

The association with Greenham started when Gilbertson Greenham was formed with Peter Greenham Snr in charge of the operation.

In 1985 Graeme moved to a 750 acre property 50 km north-west of Melbourne where he managed a Hereford stud while still spending three days a week at Newmarket picking up and droving cattle for Gilbertson.

When the property was sold three years later he went back to Gilbertson Greenham until the lure of farming struck again in 1990. This time it led to a dairy farming operation at Womboota north of Echuca which he ran with two partners.

They increased the herd from 220 cows to 400 and won the Weekly Times Dairy Farmer of the Year Award.

Three years later the partnership dissolved. Coincidentally Peter Greenham called to ask what he was doing. Graeme explained he was taking a break before looking for a job. Don't look for a job, you've got one, came the reply.

### Ground up at Tongala

Graeme joined Peter in building what was then the new hot boning plant at Tongala and has been with the family ever since.

He and Adam swapped places last year, and he now manages the livestock side of the business in Tasmania. But he still plays a major role in livestock procurement on both sides of Bass Strait and maintains regular phone contact with many of his long standing Victorian clients.

Reflecting on his career, he says he wouldn't have changed anything. "I can honestly say that work has never been a chore. I've loved it, am passionate about it, and still get great pleasure from going off to work every day."



Adam and Peter Jnr.



Graeme and Peter Snr.

## CASH FOR CATTLE AT MERNDA

Mernda saleyards, just north of Melbourne, is an interesting and lively place on a Monday morning.

The biggest poultry sale in Victoria is just getting underway, sheep and cattle are arriving for the afternoon sales, there's a regular 'trash and treasure' market going on just over the other side of the fence, a young lady is selling vegies off the back of a truck right in front of the selling ring and hundreds of people, many of them local Italians, are milling around. And in the middle of it all is the office of Andrew Wilson & Co, livestock sales.

Andrew set up his business at Mernda four years ago and now is the local liveweight buyer for H W Greenham & Sons in this area.

"This saleyard has been here for 120 years," Andrew tells us, "In fact, Peter Greenham told me that he used to come here as a boy with his father."

"We take cattle here for Greenham's on a Tuesday and we usually average 30 to 40 a day. Some days when it's busy, we've processed up to 90.

"We also offer a free pick-up service within 25 kilometres of here - that includes areas like Whittlesea, Romsey and Yea. When I pick up the cattle, I like the owners to follow me down to the scales, so there's no fuss with the prices, and they get their cheque on the spot."

Andrew says that the vendors in this area are mainly "Collins Street cockies and lifestyle farmers. They like the fact that there is no commission taken and there are no fees, fuss or dramas.

"My biggest problem at the moment is the lack of cattle.

"Dealing with Graeme and Adam at Greenham's is a real pleasure. They are great payers and true to their word. If they tell you something it's fact! Plus they are always trying to do the right thing by the farmer."

Andrew runs his own stock truck and carts the cattle up to Tongala on the same day. The sellers love it that the trucking is at Andrew's cost, and not theirs.

"We auction the sheep and cattle that come in here on a Monday and I auction the chooks at 11.30am, so it's a pretty mixed bag. This is the biggest chook sale in Victoria, we sold 4800 birds last week."

Andrew grew up at Mont Albert in Melbourne, went to Scotch College and always had horses and cattle. "It's what I always wanted to do, so when I left school I went to work for Dennys Lascelles in the mailroom. They became Dennys Strachan Mercantile Limited and were later absorbed into Elders. I worked as a stock agent at Newmarket and Dandenong yards."



Andrew Wilson checks the calibration on the liveweight scales before the cattle arrive at Mernda Saleyards.

After ten years running his own real estate agency, he came back to where his heart was in the livestock game to run his own business. Andrew also runs the fortnightly Echuca horse sales which have now developed into the largest in Australia.

The urban development is rapidly encroaching on Mernda with lots of new residential estates that have changed the face of the landscape in the time that Andrew has been here. The Mernda yards will move within three years to a new location up the road at Whittlesea, and Andrew will continue his operation there. He says that it will be a good thing for this area. The saleyard site is marked down to be the new police station.

He also runs the liveweight scales at Coldstream for Greenham's on Thursdays. "The bushfires sent a lot of cattle out of the Yarra Valley. Even then Greenham really looked after the people affected. I took a load of cattle up to Tongala on the day after Black Saturday and they were processed as soon as I got there to avoid further suffering."

Andrew is full of praise for the support that he gets from the team at Greenham, and says that he sees them as a great company.



Simone Lee with Peter Greenham

Continued from front...

Simone will use the funds to help pay for textbooks, veterinary equipment and a reliable car that is essential for attending clinical practical rotations on farm.

The Scholarship also gave Simone a big profile boost when the Wagga Daily Advertiser ran a large article on her success featuring no less than five photos! Charles Sturt University also recognised her success with an article in their newsletter that has a circulation of several thousand.