

## MEAT THE STAFF: DANNY SINCLAIR

Danny Sinclair is back and working on familiar soil since his spell in Tasmania.

"Tasmania was good," he declares, "but it's great to be home!"

Danny has now been with Greenham for 15 years. He started at the Tongala plant after doing his 'bush apprenticeship' as a rouseabout and shearer, and served as a stock buyer under the experienced eye of Graeme Pretty.

He grew up around livestock and is continuing a long family tradition.

"I remember my father milking cows when I was a little tacker, and my grandfather was a cattle buyer in Scotland. So I've always been around livestock of some kind, mainly cattle and sheep, and it's what I know best."

Danny moved to Tasmania for four-and-a-half years to buy cattle from the north-east part of the state for the Smithton plant and based himself at Legerwood. But when the opportunity arose to head back to where the family calls home he grabbed it.

"You can't beat the climate and the people in this part of Victoria. It is the best it has ever been for fifteen years and it's interesting to see who's still about."

"There'll be lots of hay and silage around this year. I reckon that there is one-and-a-half to two years of hay feed available after this season."

"Farmers will be building up their cow numbers over the next four or five years. They are under half of what they should be at the moment."

"And it all means that cattle numbers for the Tongala plant have tightened up."

He lives at Rushworth with his wife, Sunny, and their children, while they're looking to buy in the Tongala area. Tori is 15, Madison 13, Ned is five and the youngest Ella is just three.

When he's not working Danny is keen to spend as much time as possible with the kids, and is always looking for the chance to catch up on some recreational fishing on the Murray or the Goulburn.

### TRY BEFORE YOU COMMIT

At the moment Danny is spearheading a new innovation to ease some of the concerns for farmers thinking about sending cattle off.

In the back of his ute is a set of portable liveweight scales that he takes around to properties to give farmers an idea of the weight and projected value of their cattle.



IN THE BACK OF DANNY'S UTE IS A SET OF PORTABLE LIVELWEIGHT SCALES TO GIVE FARMERS A 'NO OBLIGATION' INDICATION OF THE WEIGHT AND PROJECTED VALUE OF CATTLE, BEFORE THEY ARE COMMITTED TO THE TRUCK.

"We are encouraging farmers to ring us if they have cattle that they're ready to sell. I can go out and weigh the cattle in their own yards and quote them on the liveweight cost. There is no obligation and it doesn't matter whether there is one beast or 100."

"We can then arrange transport – and at no cost at all to them, except for the \$5 government levy – and they avoid the saleyard curfew."

"These scales are to be used as a close indicator only. But it is a very convenient service and takes out a lot of the uncertainty."



Victorian

## MEATWORKS MESSENGER

DECEMBER 2010

GREENHAM



### NEED \$10,000 FOR STUDY?

It's that time in the year for enthusiastic students of the dairy industry to buckle down and determine their plans for the years ahead. Because applications are open for the \$10,000 Greenham Dairy Scholarship for 2011.

Family, sharefarmers and employees of farmers who supply cattle to the Tongala plant can apply for \$10,000 to help them undertake further education related to any sector of the dairy industry. Applicants need to be between the ages of 17 and 45.

The scholarship encourages students to consider a future in the Australian dairy industry and allows for more mature students to make an impact. It can potentially help current farmers to continue in the business with new skills and confidence.

Peter Greenham said that the scholarship reflects the company's long-standing commitment to both the district and the Australian dairy industry.

"Ongoing education of the type offered by the scholarship is vital to the industry's future. It is 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."

Applicants can use the scholarship to undertake formal study, farming-related courses, or a recognised training program related to any other sector of industry that ultimately benefits dairying.

Past winners of the Greenham Dairy Scholarship have pursued their interests in large herd veterinary issues, soil and pasture management, business and environmental management, animal sciences, breeding excellence and dairy technology.

The 2010 winner, Daniel Bacon from Tennyson, had just commenced study for his Bachelor of Animal Science degree at Charles Sturt University. He plans to major in animal genetics, and is keen to include some business subjects within his course.

Daniel expressed the belief that breeding dairy cows with strong consistent type, high production and overall herd health is important for the future of the industry. He said that mastitis and fertility are major issues where he could make a contribution in the future. "To remain viable into the future, more emphasis will need to be placed on improved return on genetics, nutrition and overall herd health."

The 2009 winner, third-year veterinary student Simone Lee from Mathoura, said that her goal is to become a veterinarian who can fit in with an innovative and changing dairy industry, 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." *Continued on back page...*

In the last newsletter I reflected on our country of 'droughts and flooding rains'. At that stage of the year it was already evident that 2010 was definitely a very welcome 'flooding rains' year after such a long period of drought.

Well, it hasn't stopped raining since and I am now reading predictions that this might be Victoria's wettest year on record. What a contrast, and what a remarkable country we live in!

While we would prefer not to have had the floods, or the wet harvest weather, I don't think anybody is really complaining. The extraordinary pasture growth and a great soil moisture profile will lay the foundations for dairy farmers to rebuild their herds over the coming years.

It means that we will be hunting for cattle for a while yet, but there is a bright light on the horizon and we expect throughput at Tongala to gradually improve over time.

### FANCIFUL CLAIM

As you would have noticed, the saleyards versus live weight selling debate continues with recent claims of an advantage of \$100 per cow at the saleyards. All I can say about that claim is that it's fanciful and clearly designed to generate some cheap publicity, because it just doesn't stand up to scrutiny.

There is no question that cows can lose up to 50kg during the curfew rules that apply at Shepparton. We have done the experiment weighing cattle straight from the paddock and then again at the abattoir after an average curfew period.

### CURFEWS COST YOU MONEY

One cow lost up to 13% and the average was around 7-8%. That's a lot of dollars. Then you have selling costs at saleyards which can be up to \$50 per head for transport, commission and yard fees. When you sell to us there's none of that – you're paid on a live weight/kilogram basis with no extra costs, end of story.

We're now offering the opportunity to test us out for yourself, with no obligation. Give Danny Sinclair a call on 0428 384 484 and he'll come to your place with his scales, weigh your cattle and give you a price on the spot. Then you can decide for yourself.

Finally, our \$10,000 Scholarship is up for grabs again. Have a look at the adjacent article. Details on how to apply are on the back page.

Peter Greenham



L-R, 2010 WINNER DANIEL BACON, 2004 WINNER COURTNEY GRONOW, PETER GREENHAM AND 2001 WINNER LEO PHELAN.

## CHRISTMAS HOURS

**OVER THE HOOKS:** Reveal of over the hooks cattle to Tongala will cease on Wednesday 22 December, noon, and resume at 7am Tuesday 4 January 2011.

### LIVELWEIGHT BUYING

**Thursday 23 December**  
No Liveweight Scales

**Friday 24 December**  
No Liveweight Scales

**Monday 27 December**  
No Liveweight Scales  
Christmas Day Public Holiday

**Tuesday 28 December**  
No Liveweight Scales  
Boxing Day Public Holiday

**Wednesday 29 December 9am-noon**  
Tongala – Kieran Brennan 0438 590 260  
Bamawm – Kieran Brennan 0438 590 260  
Picola/Waaiia – Les Mitchell 0409 079 541

**Thursday 30 December 9am-noon**  
Tongala – Kieran Brennan 0438 590 260  
Sandmount – Les Mitchell 0409 079 541

**Friday 31 December**  
Tongala – Kieran Brennan 0438 590 260  
Toolamba – Les Mitchell 0409 079 541

**Monday 3 January**  
No Liveweight Scales  
New Year's Day Public Holiday

**Tuesday 4 January 9am-noon**  
All scales as normal  
Tongala – Kieran Brennan 0438 590 260  
Bamawm – Kieran Brennan 0438 590 260  
Invergordon – Les Mitchell 0409 079 541

**On Farm Buying Liveweight**  
Peter Shellie 0428 579 087

**Gunbower, Cohuna, Leitchville and Kerang**  
Thomas Mackenzie 0408 500 311

**Cohuna and Leitchville**  
Colin Ibbs 0427 349 648

**Numurkah**  
Danny McNamara 0417 541 320

**Stanhope**  
Nev Mackrell 0428 570 523

For more information on selling cattle liveweight other than times stated please contact Danny Sinclair on 0428 384 484, Bruce Child on 0428 579 884 or HW Greenham office 5859 0912.

...from front page.

The Scholarship is awarded on a range of criteria including:

- How the applicant will use the money to improve their skills and knowledge
- The scholarship's importance in helping them realise their ambitions
- Potential benefits to the dairy industry or farm enterprise and
- Previous academic, industry and/or personal achievements.

The winner will be selected by an independent panel, comprising representatives from education, community and the dairy industry.

Applications close on Friday, January 28, 2011.

Greenham Dairy Scholarship application forms and information sheets are available by phoning Rivergum Marketing on (03) 5445 6103, faxing a request to (03) 5442 5301 or emailing to [greenham@rivergummarketing.com.au](mailto:greenham@rivergummarketing.com.au)

Tips for applicants, further information and application forms can also be downloaded from [www.greenham.com.au](http://www.greenham.com.au)

RGM/GRV/35032

# ALL KEEN ON DAIRYING AT TONGALA FARM



JULIAN BRENNAN AND HIS DAD JOHN ENJOY DAIRYING AT THEIR TONGALA PROPERTY AND SEND THEIR CULL COWS OVER THE HOOKS TO GREENHAM BECAUSE OF THE EXCELLENT SERVICE.

John Brennan grew up at Arthurs Creek, just north-east of Melbourne, as a fourth generation farmer. He and his wife Alana were the last to milk dairy cows at Arthurs Creek before moving in 1979 to what was then a 200 acre dairy farm at Tongala, a few kilometres north of the town.

At the time the place had a ten-a-side swingover shed, but John turned that into a 15 double-up 'straight in- straight out' shed by the time their eldest son, Julian, left school to start milking.

Julian lives in Tongala with his family, Damien is site manager at CopRice just up the road from the Greenham plant and Alicia is married and lives in Kyabram.

Next in line, Liam, is a cabinetmaker – but Alana says he would love to be at home milking cows – and the youngest, Kieran, worked at neighbouring Gary Grant's dairy farm for ten years, before he went travelling with his fiancé, including working on a mango farm in Katherine NT.

Kieran now works for Greenham and has been running the Bamawm liveweight scales while Les Mitchell has been away with a hip operation.

In 1985 the Brennans bought an additional 93 acres and they lasered over the 'back half' of the place in 2002 – just in time for the drought.

They had built up to 270 milkers with plans to go to 320 when the drought hit. Like lots of others they have had to scale back and now milk 170 Holsteins, "with a splash of Jerseys".

The cows are giving about 31 litres at the moment. "I like bigger cows," says Julian. "We get a lot of breeding advice from Brian Vallance and we base a lot of our cows on his selections."

Julian does his own AI and has a lot of his own ideas about breeding. "We'll gradually phase out the cross-breeds in favour of bigger cows." The AI bull 'DONOR' has been a favourite and played a major role in the make-up of the herd.

The herd is generally spring calving with 40 to 50 cows calving in autumn. "We have about 60 milkers during the winter," says John, "you can't afford not to."

"We always seem to have late calvers; you're pushing them so hard that a few will usually come in late."

John says that it's an enjoyable business to be in: "All I know is dairying, but I don't enjoy the frosts."

They feed 4-5kg of CopRice in the bail and this year they have baled 800 rolls of rye and shaftal silage and about 50 ryegrass hay bales. "Plus we've bought in 300 bales of oats."

The property has an irrigation licence on the Goulburn system of 447 megalitres of high reliability water and a further 230 MG low reliability. They currently have 100% allocation.

John makes the observation that farmers have learnt how to get by on a lot less water than they used to use. "Our water procedures have changed. We'll water the millet but hold the water back on the permanent pastures until autumn."

They send about 15 cull cows, plus some bulls, each year 'over the hooks' to Greenham. During the drought there were some empty cows sent off that that they would persevere with under normal conditions, but there was just not enough feed to keep them.

"It's handy that Greenhams are close by, plus there's no cartage cost and the prices are competitive," explains John. "Through the drought Peter Greenham could have dropped prices, but he didn't. He helped farmers – there's no two ways about it. I get on well with Graeme Pretty – he's a good bloke."

Alana chips in: "They are very good to the community through the local clubs – our kids are all involved in football or netball."

The district was drought declared in 2002 and they have gone through thirteen years of tough conditions. "Over the last few years we haven't been able to get the cows off the farm for agistment. They've all been back home here now for years. It's been basically a lot-feeding set-up."

For the future the family is currently going through the succession planning process.

"We think that we could build back up to 260 cows with the current shed and land. That depends a lot on the milk price and if you can buy feed in."

John's family has long been involved in the trotting industry and there are still a number of trotters to be found in the paddocks.

## BIGGEST AND BEST AT BAMAWM

We caught up with livestock buyer Les Mitchell at the Bamawm liveweight scales, in mid-November, on his first day back at work after his hip operation. He tells us that the footy training may have to wait a while longer.

This location is the major liveweight cattle buying centre in the Greenham operation, and one of five operated by Greenham staff. The Bamawm scales operate only on a Monday morning and Les says that it will stay that way for a while.

Kieran Brennan, from Tongala, has been looking after the Bamawm scales while Les has been incapacitated. He started with Greenhams just eight months ago with Les 'teaching him the ropes.' When Les went off for eight weeks Kieran took over.

"There has been a constant flow of cattle during that time, but it is quieter now," explained Kieran. "It should pick up again after Christmas."

"A fortnight ago we processed 75 cattle through the scales."

The Bamawm scales service was well-established and operated for many years by local identity Brian Malone. When he looked to retire in October 2007, Greenhams bought the yards, his two cattle trucks and the business from him.

Gerry Pentreath was recruited from Malones to operate the trucks and he offers the local farmers a great free transport service to bring cows, bulls and steers to the scales. He told us that his area includes Toolleen, Mitiamo, Dingee, Nanneella and Rochester West, so he gets about a bit, and the Monday morning demand for his services keeps him on the go.

Les Mitchell says that Gerry brings in 80% of the cattle that go through the Bamawm scales. "Farmers just ring us on 5486 5331 and we arrange for the cattle to be picked up. It is a beaut service and Gerry is an important part of the operation – but don't tell him I said that!"

Bernice Mackenzie from Cohuna looks after the calf sales for Rodwells at the Bamawm site, "We were getting 150 each day a month ago, during the spring calving, but it has slowed down now."

While we were there everybody was telling Les what he should and shouldn't be doing to look after his hip. "Come back out of the yard!" orders Bernice, and when Danny Sinclair pops in, he tells him to get down off the truck ramp.



KIERAN BRENNAN JOINED GREENHAMS EIGHT MONTHS AGO AND HAS BEEN WORKING AT THE BAMAWM LIVELWEIGHT SCALES EACH MONDAY.

"All the family love dairying", Alana told us. "Julian has been working on the farm since he finished school at Year 10 and all the other boys love to help when they can."



GERRY PENTREATH, AT LEFT, PROVIDES LOCAL FARMERS WITH A FREE TRANSPORT SERVICE TO BRING COWS, BULLS AND STEERS TO THE BAMAWM LIVELWEIGHT SCALES. HERE, HE AND LES MITCHELL DISCUSS THE LATEST LOAD.