



THIS 2½ YEAR OLD CHAROLAIS WEIGHED IN AT A HUGE 854KG CARCASS WEIGHT.

## BIGGEST BULL EVER

Earlier this year we received and processed the biggest bull ever to come through the Tongala facility. Weighing in at a whopping 854kg carcass weight, the 2½ year old Charolais came from one our long standing suppliers, Charles R King at Cohuna. According to Brock Fletcher from Charles R King, "he was a great looking guy and had done a good job but was getting a bit hard to handle and too heavy to join". His live weight would have been around 1,430kg and fortunately the plant has the capacity to handle these big bodies since the renovation in 1997. The Tongala facility remains the go-to processor for bulls in the Goulburn Valley and beyond.



AUTUMN 2015

## Victorian MEATWORKS MESSENGER

GREENHAM



## GREENHAM SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS REDIRECTED

The autumn edition of the *Meatworks Messenger* would normally celebrate the success of another recipient of the Greenham Dairy Scholarship. This year however, we were not able to award a prize and have decided to redirect the funds to not one but two study tours in Victoria in the second half of 2015.

HW Greenham & Sons, Joint Managing Director Grant Ryan says the company believes it is extremely important to be contributing something back into dairy and agriculture.

"Even though the scholarship won't be awarded this year, we still wanted to contribute to an educational endeavour and happily we found two suitable recipient organizations," Mr Ryan said.

Discover Agriculture, based in Launceston, is about inspiring young people (years 9-12 and VET students) to imagine a future for themselves in agriculture. Facilitator, Roger Tyshing explains that he usually runs a Victorian tour every year but with limited resources, it has been difficult recently.

"We are so pleased that Greenhams are contributing funds to the Victorian tour. It means we can offer our six-day program to 20 students in September. Ultimately, the aim is to introduce students to people who are positive and innovative in their approach to their industry, by challenging their thinking, demonstrating the possibilities and opportunities and through hands-on participation," Mr Tyshing said.

Participants in previous Discover Agriculture tours include the winner of the 2015 Greenham Tasmania AgriTas scholarship, Ms Emily Jones. "Previous winners are invited to attend and 'lead' the tours, providing valuable experience, advice and enthusiasm for those looking to embark on careers in agriculture," Mr Tyshing said.

The National Centre of Dairy Educations (NCDE) based at GoTafe (Shepparton) is



the other recipient of educational funding for 2015.

In July this year, 30 dairy farmers from the Murray Dairy 'Young Dairy Network' will participate in an 'Innovation and Sustainability Tour' of the Northern Victorian dairy region.

Ian Carkeek from GoTafe says the funding for the tour will expose participants to some of the latest innovations and sustainability practices within the dairy supply chain across northern Victoria.

"With this generous funding from Greenham, we can provide a wonderful opportunity to share experiences of dairy farmers and also understand opportunities that come from the early identification and implementation of future best practices", Mr Carkeek said.

Both groups will also have the opportunity to visit the Tongala processing facility where participants can understand the issues surrounding supply chain logistics, animal husbandry and industry best practice in meat processing.

The Greenham Dairy Scholarship will again be offered for students studying or intending to study for the 2016 calendar year. It is open to students 17-45 years.

For more information, please visit [www.greenham.com.au](http://www.greenham.com.au) or call 03 96446514

## STAFF PROFILES

*Meatworks Messenger* had the chance to sit down with staff at Tongala and find out about what makes them tick.

### KYLE ACKROYD

**Where are you from originally?**

I grew up in Melbourne (South East suburbs)

**How long have you been working at Greenham for?**

I started 2½ years ago. I was originally hired for a spot on the kill floor but got poached on my first day for the yards and I've never looked back.

**What's the best thing about working in the yards?**

Being outside and the people I work with are good. Stu Fleming is always good for a laugh. (he paid me to say that!)

**What footy team do you follow?**

St Kilda. (a rebuilding phase in 2015?)



KYLE LOVES WORKING IN THE GREENHAM YARDS

**When you're not at work, what do you like to do?**

I really enjoy relaxing with mates and hanging out with my family. I've got three children – 5 years, 2 years & 3 months – so life is pretty busy.

**Your favourite cut of beef?**

Scotch Fillet cooked medium rare – Cape Grim of course.

### TANYA GREENSHIELDS

**Where are you from originally?**

Originally from Geelong, I have lived in Tongala for the last 26 years.

**How long have you been working at Greenham for?**

I've been working at Greenham for 13 years – firstly on the slaughter floor and then in the Quality Assurance Department.

**What's the best thing about working in QA?**

Every day is different and you encounter new challenges in different areas of the plant.

**What footy team do you follow?**

Collingwood is my team. (Respect from



EVERYDAY IS DIFFERENT IN THE QA DEPT

*Meatworks Messenger* is high on this point)

**When you're not at work, what do you like to do?**

Hobbies are playing netball for Girgarre and riding my horses.

**Favourite cut of beef?**

I don't eat red meat but if I could the first cut I would try would have to be a piece of porterhouse cooked medium.



GARY & ANNE HAVE BEEN AT 'HOMEBLOCK' FOR 16 YEARS



THE MILKING HERD HAS PLENTY OF SHADE AND ONLY A SHORT DISTANCE TO THE DIARY.

## PUSHING FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Some of the gems of the dairy world are at our doorstep and Gary & Anne Budge of Nanneella, 20kms from Tongala, are no exception. The *Meatworks Messenger* had the chance to catch up with them back in March.

With the average age of dairy farmers about 60 years, it's refreshing to see a younger and ambitious operator giving it a go in the sector. When he was 18, Gary Budge knew he wanted to work a dairy farm. Coming from the 80 acre family farm and as the second of three boys, he understood he would need to go his own way if he wanted to get ahead.

As was pretty common at the time, the young Gary Budge got his start share farming with a one third share of 120 cows for the first three years and cut his teeth in dairying before moving to

a 50/50 deal later on. Twenty eight years on and Gary has seen changes to the model.

"Whilst the share farming model was my opportunity, these days, younger guys will more likely do some study, gain their experience on dairy operations before possibly managing a farm but drawing a good salary at the same time."

"Now, it just wouldn't work - we can't offer up one third of the revenue - dairy businesses are too heavily geared, but we can afford to pay good wages to our guys. For a similar cost to share farming, we're able to employ more labour and keep productivity up."

The consolidation of dairies from many smaller operations to scaled-up versions has been a natural progression in the industry. Likewise at Nanneella, with more cows to milk

comes the need for labour to operate these dairies efficiently. Gary and Anne's four full time staff (including their son), are good team and they think they have hit the right balance.

The aptly named 'Homeblock' is the base of the Budge's operations which they have owned since 1998. Beginning with a modest holding of 120 cows, they have built things up to 600 cows and have also acquired more land from neighbours to bring the total land holding five hundred and fifty acres.

"It's only now we can aim at using our land to create an almost fully self-sufficient dairy farm", Gary says. "We grow 90% of the lucerne ourselves and produce 100% of the Maize which represents a cost saving of \$50 per tonne if we were to buy it in - and when we produce 1,300 tonnes of Maize, every bit helps".

Gary & Anne have been growing Maize for four years and through experience as well as the help of an agronomist, have improved yields substantially. "Growing maize is a no brainer - no other crop can yield 20 tonne to the hectare in four months, it's sensational, it just jumps out of the ground", Gary says.

"But I must admit - you can't be an expert at everything... I know how to milk cows but it's been great get some outside help from the agronomist with the crops so I can concentrate on what I'm good at. Like all dairy farmers, I can't do anything about the milk price, but what I can do is work to reduce the costs coming in by growing our own feed".

The milking herd is kept on 150 acres that sits next to the dairy. Gary explains that the feed ration consists of canola and wheat of approximately eight kilos per head per day while they receive supplemental feed of Lucerne and Maize to reach 22kg of dry matter per head per day. "I want them to be looked after and also maintain their energy levels so everything is pretty close by and there's plenty of shade as well", Gary says.

Recently the milking shed has received an upgrade from a 22 Swingover to a 44 Swingover and as a result, has cut milking time in half and also increased capacity to 320 cows per hour. "We were lucky to be able to purchase the second Swingover set from our neighbours - all we needed to do was lengthen the existing shed and pour some new concrete - it couldn't have been a smoother transition", says Anne.

The Budges are also active in selling calves to the dairy market in China. Whilst it has cooled off recently, the market has been strong for Friesian calves and they have done some good business in this area. Anne takes the time to milk feed them and give them a good start before the next calving begins.

Whilst other operators might be calving up to five times per year, Gary is happy to keep things a bit simpler with drops in Spring & Autumn but also a smaller drop in December/January. "The China job like all other things was all about 'seeing the opportunity' and we always need to have our eyes open for them.

The only ongoing worry is for Anne - the engine room of the book keeping - to keep Gary from spending money on what he terms 'projects' which is code for equipment or automation. "He is always coming up with ideas" says Anne, "there's always a want list and I'm the one that puts the hammer on the want list - If I let him have it all, we'd be broke"!

One area where Gary reckons some more automation would really make a difference is in the irrigation. "We've got a few Padman Stops but the time it takes to maintain the current irrigation takes me away from other things. The backbone channels are great and there's never an issue with water but further automation could let me ramp things up a bit more".



MILK-FED CALVES BEING PREPARED FOR EXPORT TO CHINA



THE BUDGES HAVE RECENTLY INSTALLED A SECOND 22 SWINGOVER TO INCREASE PRODUCTION AND REDUCE MILKING TIME.



GARY PRODUCES 1,300 TONNES OF MAIZE PER YEAR AND THE OPERATION IS ALMOST FULLY SELF-SUFFICIENT.

On selling to Greenham, the Budges note they send about 80 cull cows to Tongala every year. "We love that the service is good and we receive the money quickly - and you don't have to pay extra fees to the saleyards". They note Greenham's Les Mitchell as a real character and always happy to help when the Budges have a few cows to send off to Tongala.

As soon as the *Meatworks Messenger* drove up to the Budge property, the sense of a well-run operation was clear and spending some time Gary and Anne showed they are proud and very happy with what they have achieved even through some tough times. Gary agrees, "if you love what you do, you never work a day in your life".