

Hats off to Rural Women!



Hamilton 2006

*Hats off to
Rural Women*

19-21 May 2006

Hamilton

17th Women on Farms Gathering

Hats Off To Rural Women...



The old adage "If you want something done, ask a busy person" is especially true when that person is a woman.

The logo chosen for Hamilton's 2006 gathering - "Hats Off To Rural Women", reflects only some of the many roles women undertake in their respective communities. It would also portray a similar message if it read "Women Wear Many Hats". If we were to don a hat for all roles we undertake, including community service contribution or recognised achievements, the hat racks would be spilling over.

The four hats chosen describe the diversity in our daily lives and those fields we represent, including academic achievement, business, farming, and the ability to still manage time supporting emergency services.

Through further education and commitment to business excellence, women have become the voice through strengthening networks and provision of innovative programs within their environment.

There are many opportunities for women to involve themselves in a community. The choice is theirs to participate and move forward, often reaping the rewards of our dedicated and selfless forebears who thankfully were willing to wear those hats!!



Photo by Hamilton Spectator

Our Committee



Photo by Yvonne Jennings

Back row: Chairperson - Larree Monaghan, Linda Rook,
Convenor - Sally Stevenson, Jeannine Hanson, Dorothy Lewis,
Treasurer - Maree Robertson

Front row: Anne Slattery, Secretary - Katrina Rainsford
and Joan Rowe (Inset)

Our Program

Friday

Our Opening Welcome 'meet and mingle' was a feast of the senses with a wine and cheese tasting held in the Hamilton Regional Art Gallery. Local Henty Region Wineries showcased their award winning wines which were much enjoyed by guests.

Grampians Pure Sheep Dairy and Yambuk Shaw River Buffalo Cheese Farms provided a taste sensation with their locally produced cheeses.

Photo by Sarah Parker - Museum Victoria



Many varied Workshops were conducted until lunch including art and craft, walking, bootscooting, beauty workshop, fire protection, computer skills and history.

Tours to the surrounding district including visits to homesteads, ERA nursery, Iluka Mineral Sands, a cricket museum and not forgetting the cheese and chocolate stops.



Sunday

*Photos of Workshops
by Sarah Parker - Museum Victoria*

Moving into the Auditorium guests were treated to memorable performances by The Hamilton Singers and the Church Hill Singers. Their repertoire covered many old favourites and some that had us rollicking with laughter.

We then heard from wonderful speakers such as Tamara Irish a local vigneron and mental health worker, and Sabrina Watt, an American who married an Aussie farmer, who regaled us with stories about her induction into Australian rural life.

Photos by Sarah Parker - Museum Victoria



Those of us still walking after the night before joined in a Tai Chi class.

An Ecumenical Church Service followed and was conducted by the Rev Peter Cook. Soprano Jane Edwards delighted us with her beautiful voice accompanied by Lynette Tung on piano.



Rev Peter Cook

Saturday

Our first plenary session 'Wearing Many Hats' was sponsored by Australian Primary Superannuation with Gina Collins as their speaker. Georgia Richmond from Lifeline joined Gina in her presentation.

Anita Watt and Peggy Napthine then spoke about their venture in Glenelg River Rosemary.



Anita Watt



Jaime Carrigan



ABB Field Officer Jaime Carrigan spoke on Grain Futures.

The final part of the Gathering Program was attending the Plough and Seed Day at the Hamilton Pastoral Museum. After a very enjoyable barbeque lunch many of us joined the various tours around the museum paddocks. Shane Gould applied her champion ploughing skills to the horse drawn plough.

Workshops

The emphasis on our workshops was fun and to provide educational opportunities.

Fire Protection

Presenters: Joanne Brown, Jenny Neaves

I attended the CFA Workshop and was most impressed by the two girls who spoke to us. Firstly the talk was on what one would expect if a fire was approaching and the first important actions one had to take.

Dress in cotton clothing, sturdy shoes and woollen socks, sunscreen and hat. In the house close blinds and draw the curtains. Fill the bath with water and fill buckets.

Outside – collect the hoses and fittings and bring them inside. Clear anything that may catch fire around the house.

We then moved outside for a practical demonstration on the usage of fire hydrants. We all had our turn and this was my first attempt. I was so pleased and proud of myself.

I told my husband later that he had better check his expiry dates on the cylinder on his vehicles.

The girls were so informative and looked great in their 'combat' gear.

Jeannine Hanson

Line Dancing Workshop

Two groups of very enthusiastic workshop participants took part in a learning session of the basic steps in line dancing. Learning the right foot from the left and what steps come next created lots of laughs combined with some serious concentration.

Some of the first group enjoyed themselves so much they cancelled their second workshop to repeat it all again!!

An easy basic dance was practised and performed for the gala dinner, along with members of the Hamilton Bootscooters.

WFI donated pink peak caps for the "novices" and the grand finale of the line dance performed incorporated lifting the hats in the spirit of the theme for the weekend 'Hats off to Rural Women'.

Linda Rook



The Clinique Workshop

Photo by Sarah Parker - Museum Victoria

Tours

On offer were varied tours for our guests to enjoy ranging from gardens and homesteads to chocolates.

Mt Baimbridge Lavender

Mt Baimbridge Lavender, which is set on 12 acres, is nestled at the foot of Mt Baimbridge just north of Hamilton. The Mt Baimbridge Flower Estate, grow native flowers and bulbs for the cut flower market both in Australia and overseas.

Cheryl Storer and Deb Clarke established the business in 1997. Both have professional backgrounds but decided it was time for a change in direction. They now grow lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) organically for oil production.

The domestic garden is a drought tolerant garden with many paths, some which meander past a small aviary and show poultry. There is a shop and gallery which sells lavender products and art by local artists.

Glenelg River Rosemary

Four years ago, seeking a fresh challenge, Christina Hindhaugh began producing culinary and medicinal herbs on her farm at Balmoral. Two years later in recognition of her pioneer work in this industry Christina was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to study the herb industry overseas. Upon her return, she teamed up with farming neighbour Anita Watt, and together they established Australia's largest dedicated rosemary farm, Glenelg River Rosemary P/L.

Glenelg River Rosemary are producers of premium-quality rosemary products for domestic and international herb markets. There are 110,000 rosemary plants growing on 40 acres. They sell bulk or small quantities of fresh rosemary, dried rosemary and rosemary essential oil. Glenelg River Rosemary supplies fresh rosemary to supermarkets in four states, dried rosemary to medicinal processors both here and overseas, and essential oil of rosemary to aromatherapy and perfume-makers.

Murndal Homestead & Eucalyptus Discovery Centre

A visit to Murndal was the highlight of this tour with Marcus Winter Cooke giving an informative talk on the history of the property. The homestead has been in his family for four generations.

Arriving in Coleraine we visited the Eucalyptus Discovery Centre where Mrs Jenny Kane, a volunteer of the Arboretum spoke to us and showed a video about the Centre. After afternoon tea we moved on to the Glenelg Chocolate Factory where lovely chocolates were bought. We almost lost one of our passengers who wasn't leaving until she had bought up big!!!

We then travelled back a short distance to the Arboretum where Jenny Kane again spoke on the formation of this lovely native plantation.

Our bus driver Glen Campe was so informative and knew this area well delighting us all.
Jeannine Hanson

Iluka Mineral Sands Mine

Accommodating 20 "Women on Farm" delegates and Rod (of course) from Australian Primary Superannuation, our bus driver Greg was guided south along Portland Road to the Iluka Mineral Sands Separation Plant. The minerals processed at this mine have unique natural properties used

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for products which include sunscreens, toothpaste, paper coating, white goods, aircraft and surgical implants.

Next on our tour was the ERA Nursery one of the biggest seedling and revegetation nurseries in Australia. We were met by the Principal Owners, Ted Allander along with Peter Sandow who showed us through the procedures of how the nursery works.

Then it was off to the DPI for afternoon tea. We then had a look at the different trees they had growing and a tour around the property to look at pasture and cropping regimes and the stock carrying capacity.



Photo by Larree Monaghan

The kettle was boiling at our next visit, where Malcolm Anderson and Dr Rod Bird welcomed us to the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). It was a farm tour with a difference as we bussed around the laneways learning of the DPI's latest research projects, including Agroforestry.

With thanks to our timely itinerary we returned rested and ready to prepare for a fun filled night ahead. Anne Slattery & Larree Monaghan

Harrow & Warrock Homestead

The intrepid travellers on the tour headed out to Warrock Homestead and then on to Historic Harrow and the Johnny Mullagh Cricket Centre.

Harrow is known in Australian history books as the home of Johnny Mullagh. He and other Aboriginal men from surrounding stations were taught to play cricket by district station owners. In 1868 they formed the first Australian sporting team to tour England and were the first Australian International Touring Cricket Team.

In 1879 Mullagh was invited to join the Victorian team to play a touring English team at the MCG. The Centre was opened as a tribute to Johnny Mullagh and the Aboriginal Cricket Team of 1868. It is an exciting and interactive, innovative and educational multimedia experience.

Warrock Homestead

The original cottage was constructed during George Robertson's first year on the station in 1843. The other buildings, in the Gothic revival style, feature hand sawn timbers from Tasmania, hand split blackwood shingles and studs and rafters from locally grown red and Manna gum. The handmade bricks were made from clay taken from the nearby Glenelg River.



Photo by Sarah Parker - Museum Victoria



Photos by Lizza Dale-Hallot

A Night of Mayhem & Fun

The Gala Dinner was a moving feast of music, dancing and high jinks. A lively band Eucalypto had everyone tapping their feet or reeling around the dance floor! The Harrow Sound & Light Show players caused havoc amongst the unsuspecting guests and the Bootscooters had us all clapping. The women who had done Bootscooting as a workshop showed us all that we are women of many talents.

Shane Gould MBE was our Guest Speaker for the evening and gave us a glimpse into the world of swimming in the '60's and the trials and tribulations of being a very young champion. She also spoke of her journey after life as a world class swimmer with its many ups and downs, joys and triumphs.

Yvonne Jennings the Victorian Rural Woman of the Year gave us a quick analogy of W with much humour and affirmation of what it is to be a woman in rural Australia.

Dr Potts and The Judge from Harrow Sound & Light Show chose the winning hat creation.



Doreen Bruton, Katrina Rainsford and Jenny Patterson.

Photo by Sarah Parker - Museum Victoria



Convict getting into the act.

Photo by Yvonne Jennings



Margaret Murphy and Ruth Murphy. (Margaret's winning hat)

Photo by Sarah Parker - Museum Victoria

Guest Speakers



Tamara Irish

Tamara was born in Echuca, raised by the mighty Campaspe and Murray rivers of that country, and accompanied by people who measured themselves and others by their capacity for honest work and determination in the face of adversity and challenge. Her early professional years saw her work as a general nurse, and midwife. Since around 1984 public adult psychiatry has been the pre-occupation. In 1991, along with Dianne Nagorcka, Tamara purchased the small farm of "Gosford" at nearby Tarrington, where a vineyard and winery have been established.

As a wine maker, Tamara has grown a range of skills and now enjoys substantial critical acclaim for the wines grown by "Tarrington Vineyards". As wine skills grow, select markets have been identified to secure a position in the high value end of the market, both within Australia and abroad. The Vineyard now exports to the UK, Scotland and Korea. Tamara spoke Friday elaborating on the influences and forces at work that have shaped her view of the world, as a farmer, as a woman, and as a citizen of a dynamic and exciting world, about which, she is supremely confident.



Shane Gould MBE

The only person, male or female, to hold every world freestyle record from 100m to 1500m simultaneously, Shane Gould burst onto the scene as a 13-year-old and retired 11 world records and four years later. Now a successful businesswoman, author, speaker and swimming commentator, Shane inspires others to achieve their best.



Josephine Natban

Josephine graduated from R.M.I.T in 1995 with a B.A in Textile Design.

She then spent two years working as a hand knit designer for Australian Country Spinners developing new yarns and knitwear ranges for the Cleckheaton and Panda labels.

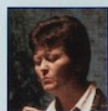
From 1998 to 2001 Josephine spent time travelling through Central America and Asia, undertaking independent studies of traditional textiles and costumes. This developed Josephine's deep love for handcrafted fabrics and the expressive qualities of colour in design.

Returning to Australia Josephine reconnected with her rural heritage, the Australian landscape, and discovered the unique character of Australian Merino.



Christina Hindhaugh

Christina Hindhaugh is a farmer and writer and lives on a sheep farm in western Victoria with her farmer husband Chris. They have three grown children. Christina is the author of four best-selling books; *It Wasn't Meant to be Easy*, *I Love a Sunburnt Torso*, *For Better, For Worse* and *For Lunch*, and *The Great Herb Tour*. She has also written two plays and is co-producer of a documentary film called *The First Eleven*, which tells the story of the Aboriginal cricket team who toured England in 1868.



Sabrina Watt

Sabrina was born in the USA and now lives on a farming property in Gringegalgonna. She was a former legislative aide/speech writer at the US Senate. Her articles have appeared on Radio National and The Age.

Tamara's Presentation

I have been truly fortunate indeed to be surrounded for my life by exceptional women.

Reared by a Midwife, who practised her noble craft when working women were often criticized and condemned for daring to be professionals in a time when thought was often narrow and restrained healthy professional energy, my mother was and remains a quiet hero. A woman of profound strength and resilience, yet always behind the scenes, as is the lot of so many of her generation.

And when I too became a Nurse Practitioner I was influenced by many women who shared human kind's greatest hours, as new souls entered this world safely because of women folk.

And we as Nurses are so often there when the mortal journey closes the final chapter. So often it is women folk who share the silent moment at the end, again privileged to be there at a time of profound human experience.

As time passed a diversity of interests emerged so that wine growing and a love for the gift that the earth offers us each and every day, tolerating as she does the limitations of our knowledge. Throughout this journey, knowing women, have continued to be inspirations for their achievement and performance.

The likes of Anne Claude Leflaive, Lalou Bize-Leroy stand independently strong, as wine growers of exceptional breed.

And closer to home, great performers, again, peppered across the stage of achievement.

Catherine Thomson of Crawford River Wines growing one of this nation's finest Rieslings, and setting the tone for her daughter Belinda, an emerging winegrower in her own right.

Bobbie Hryckow of Muntham farm, co-managing a beautiful mixed farm and producing an exceptionally fine olive oil, a true gift in any dining room that prides itself on the use of the best of works grown with a sincere integrity.

And most certainly, the sage like Cecily Fenton. A woman of profound and diverse natural enquiry who as a farmer historically and more recently champion of that primal source of life, water.

A key feature that unites all of those I have mentioned, something that labels them as critical value as mentors, is that they are achievable achievers.

They have not simply accessed the opportunity that a modern world offers, they have taken that opportunity and made it their own, consistently reliable in their performance.

The time has long passed when we contemplated our options to contribute powerfully to, in particular, rural and agricultural endeavours.

We are compelled, if not obliged to set in train those activities and considerations that will allow this good earth to not only survive but to restore and replenish as the world progressively destroys the earth and climate.

There is no time to waste, for each of us, according to our measure must take the world forward.

In no small part, a thankful tribute to those who gave us permission to think, challenge and be challenged. Those who have laid the foundations for us to build upon.

In part, to make our own mark, to satisfy our own needs for achievement and success as internal and evident experiences.

And most certainly for those women who are to follow, who cry out in

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disbelief when they understand the implications and meaning of the reality that in living memory, we can recall a time when women could not borrow money without the guarantee of a man's signature.

These are times for us to recognize the unique and powerful inputs that women of the rural sector can and are making.

Not simply as gender equals, but rather, thoughtful to the considerations central to the unique talent that women bring to conversations of endeavours that progress all in the business of rural life.

And thus to close. We have moved past the time that allowed us to stand up and be counted. Now we must begin to measure our performance and achievements with a view to continual further development and sophistication of our hopes, plans and ambitious dreams for a stronger, dynamic and powerful rural sector.



Caroline Gully and Audrey Dreschler
Photo by Liza Dale-Hallot



Allison Barwick, Heather Saunders and Bev Close
Photo by Liza Dale-Hallot



Margot Colson, Helen Guilfoyle and Ann Jarvis OAM
Photo by Liza Dale-Hallot



Dot Brown, Maree Ryan and Yvonne Jennings
(Victoria Rural Woman of the Year)
Photo by Liza Dale-Hallot

Excerpts from Sabrina's presentation

Did anyone else here ever utter "I'll never marry a Farmer?" When I was about 11 on my parent's cattle ranch in the Nevada desert, I said to my mother, "I'll never marry a farmer. I'm not having dusty cowboy boots by my door I'm going to be a writer in the City"

Ah, yes, the Gods mock us. In my case those twisted Gods of Fate must be chuckling like they are watching non stop Faulty Towers replays... because 30 years after I said "I'll never marry a Farmer", I'm living on a sheep farm in Gringegalona, an aboriginal word that means "To urinate on Tussock of Grass". My fridge frequently houses sheep poo samples to take to the vet, my windows are dirty. There aren't dusty cowboy boots at my door, they're muddy Blundstones dumped in the laundry. Did anyone else ever say "I'll never marry a Farmer"?

When I immigrated to this fine country they gave me a book called Living in Australia. It told me about the dangers of blue ringed octopus, and where I could tap into Vietnamese language translation. In 16 years and I haven't sighted a blue ringed octopus. What I really needed to know was not to ask my mother - in - law which football team she "rooted" for, to understand the role cups of tea play in farm life, how to get stubborn sheep dogs to work, and how to smile brightly when my husband invites seven people for dinner when I know I only have 3 stale snowballs and a doubtful stick of kabana in the fridge. Gee, I wish that Living in Australia would have a chapter on backing grain feeders in a straight line.

But of course it is always the things that catch you by surprise, the things you stumble and bumble thru that mark your impressions of a place. It's the things that delight you that stick in the memory bank and make you fall in the love with a place. With me, the early years when I came to our farm just near Balmoral always seem to find their way into things I write. Tonight I'd like to share three such pieces that have found homes on the printed page or on Radio National. All of these pieces are inspired by life here, on a Victorian farm and I know that each of you will have similar tales.

What a lovely spread

We all know tea and coffee are staples here in the Sunburnt Country but can you spare a moment to hear about the country baking? When I first came to the Australian bush there seemed to be a lot of older Australian ladies in aprons. Well-loved ladies with names named Doreen, Kathleen and Olwyn; they were of the proud and much respected clan of "ladies bring a plate" brigade. They baked, whipped, boiled and provided country Australians with tables that groaned with delicate sausage rolls, high airy sponge cake that had the golden tan of farm eggs, cream puffs as big as a man's fist, and delicate dainties known as snowballs, butterflies, matches and yo-yos.

But one lovely spread at the Pigeon Ponds Memorial Hall doesn't brace you for the Farm tea ritual. This one is called:

The tea script on the farm

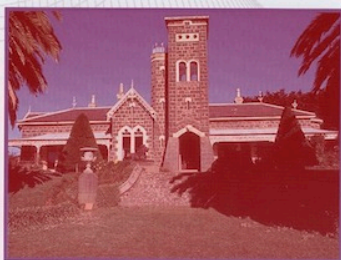
As you can see, I was as green as Chinese tea about the ritual when I moved to Australia as a bride. I came from coffee country. But knowledge of the "all things tea" would be essential to me. I realized after being nudged by my husband often enough that if someone rolls up to a farm between 9 and 11 or 3:30 and 5 it is kind of an unspoken code. Some sort of liquid refreshment must be offered. I also learned—eventually NO THANKS TO MY LIVING IN AUSTRALIA BOOK—that there is somewhat of an unofficial script that goes with the ritual of tea. You are absolutely marvellous for listening to me tonight.

Thank you AND ---I FEEL THIS SHOULD BE SOME SORT OF SECRET HANDSHAKE - HAT'S OFF TO WOMEN ON FARMS!

Homesteads

Narrupumelap Homestead

Narrupumelap, considered one of the most significant examples of the French Gothic style in Rural Victoria, was built in 1873 by the wealthy pastoralist John Dixon Wyselaskie. The mansion stands as a testament to both the original owner's eccentricity and the obsession of early Australians to recreate the grandeur illusions of their homelands. The unique and exciting aspect of the mansion is the completeness of this vision. The entrance to the property is through perhaps the finest wrought iron gates gracing a country property - providing the visitor with an elegant example of 19th century casting. The gates are hung on massive blue stone columns. The nearby gate-house in the Gothic Revival style sets a mood of anticipation. An elm-lined carriageway winds through a 20 hectare park of specimen and decorative trees. The first glimpse of the homestead is a partial view of the dramatic tower only just discernable amongst the canopy trees. Another small blue stone entrance leads the visitor up a further drive enclosed by garden to finally confront the French Gothic fantasy of the architects Davidson and Henderson.



Murndal Homestead

Originally part of a larger squatting run known as Tahara, Murndal was first begun in 1836 by an Irish-English family. The family continued to build the house over the period 1836-1906, and, at the same time, they developed the grounds, recreating some of the styles from their European homeland.

An avenue of oaks marked the crowning of British monarchs, and was a further evocation of the Old World landscape. The homestead illustrates common land settlement styles (that is, squatting) during the early years of European settlement in Victoria.

Warrock Homestead

The original cottage was constructed during George Robertson's first year on the station in 1843. The other buildings, in the Gothic revival style, feature hand sawn timbers from Tasmania, hand split blackwood shingles and studs and rafters from locally grown red and Manna gum. The handmade bricks were made from clay taken from the nearby Glenelg River.

Of the forty original structures on the property, 33 have been classified "A" by the National Trust.

The importance of working dogs to Australia's farming community has always been known. Australia's quintessential working dog, the Kelpie, had its beginnings on Warrock Homestead, where George Robertson imported a pair of black and tan collies from Scotland in the 1870's.



Photo by Lisa Dale-Hallor

Affected by Fires

Heather Thewlis ~ Willaura

The Organising Committee for the 2006 Women on Farms Convention in Hamilton, fortunately organized funding and support through the Department of Primary Industries for farm women affected by the fires in January this year. This funding and support enabled me to participate in the convention.

The fires had created yet another challenge for my family, with 100% of our land affected by the fire, many kilometers of fencing that needed replacing, many hundreds of lost stock, no feed, machinery sheds, a wool shed and workshop to replace and no tools with which to work. We managed to retain our sense of humour despite the many challenges that faced us. At many stages however, I wondered when life would ever return to "normal".

It was a delight in the midst of all of this to receive an invitation to attend the convention and whilst I was concerned about leaving my family for a weekend I was encouraged by them to attend.

I was so glad I decided to attend, as it was an experience not to be missed. From the start of the event with the delightful wines and cheeses in the glorious setting of the arts centre to the friendly manner of all the participants, I immediately knew this was going to be a pleasant and interesting conference.

The speakers on the first evening set the scene and were inspiring along with the divine singing voices of the people who entertained us. Both Jan Laidlaw and I were privileged to be able to stay for the weekend with Ann Slattery and her husband. Ann was on the organizing committee and provided us with a wonderfully relaxing and comfortable setting in which to stay.

The rest of the weekend flowed as smoothly and pleasantly as it had started and I was fortunate to participate in the workshops on writing women's stories and fire prevention. A glutton for punishment you may ask with attendance at this last session however it provided me with some good information that will help support a group of farm women interested in developing effective fire plans. The session on writing women stories has helped me to decide how to ensure that the stories about our farm are told as many of the physical historical aspects of the farm were lost in the fires.

I thoroughly enjoyed the visit to the lavender and rosemary farms and continued this by reading Christina Hindhaugh's book, "The Great Herb Tour."

Some other highlights for me over the weekend were tai-chi, the ecumenical service and the speakers on the Sunday morning. I was both inspired and delighted. Alongside of this and a very important part of the weekend was the way in which everyone was included.

I went home to my family happy, relaxed and inspired to continue on despite the changes in journey we may have along the way.

Thank you for a wonderful experience I hope to be able to attend many more Women on Farms Gatherings in future years.

Thanks to our Sponsors

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support received from our sponsors.

