



Lifetime memories forged

“Down Under” trip strengthens ties to breeders there

By John Crouch
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Contrast seemed just around every corner as the American Angus touring group sampled the powdery Australian desert and even experienced a snowstorm on the South Island of New Zealand.

Scene at the upper left fails to convey the greenery of Albury Hills in New South Wales while the sparse conditions at De Rose Hill Station near Ayres Rock

in the “outback” display Angus working in one of Australia’s harshest environments.

Australians culture easily combines a serene and fastidious game of lawn bowling with the province of the “buckaroo”—rough-hewn corrals, traildust, and legendary characters long before “Crocodile Dundee” became such a popular export.



For years Australia and New Zealand were closed as markets for U.S. breeding cattle. Today, all that has changed and Angus cattle and Angus semen are being used with increasing frequency in both countries, and with considerable success.

To help American Angus breeders study the market for Angus cattle, to explore the potential market in Australia and New Zealand, and to provide an interesting and exciting overview of these two countries, the American Angus Assn. in September sponsored a market inspection tour down under.

On September 24, 1987, some 69 Angus breeders and enthusiasts departed Los Angeles for a three-week tour of Australia and New Zealand. The plane ride was exhausting, nonetheless several of us were ready to begin seeing the sights of Sydney, a sprawling metropolis of some 3.1 million people. Sydney was founded in 1788 with approximately 1,000 people from Great Britain, 750 of whom were convicts utilized to establish a penal colony.

Our first activity was to tour the Toranga Zoo which houses many of the species of wildlife native to Australia, among which are kangaroo, wallaby, emu, Tasmanian devil, koala bear, wombat, and the elusive duck-billed platypus. After this short escapade, we were all ready for dinner and some much needed sleep.

The remainder of our activities in Sydney included a beautiful cruise in Sydney Harbor where our attention was directed toward the famous Opera House, topless beaches, World War II battleships, and beautiful homes on the waterfront.

We departed Sydney by motor coaches whose drivers were extremely polite and knowledgeable regarding government, agriculture, business, and Australian culture. Our destination this day was Cooma. En route we traveled to Sublime Point overlooking the seaside city of Wollongong, a major coal shipping center. The trip from Sublime Point through Illawarna Valley was filled with breathtaking scenery. Rich, fertile farmland dotted with beef cattle, sheep, and dairy cattle was abundant. The vegetation is unusual in that most of the trees are eucalyptus of which over 700 species exist. Our route took us through the Australian capital city of Canberra where we were given an excellent tour of the capital area and various embassies.

We were met at the Marlborough Motel in Cooma, NWS, by Jim, Peter, and Patrick Litchfield, principals of Hazeldean Stud, for an enjoyable cocktail hour and dinner. Since the weather had turned cold everyone broke out sweaters and heavy coats in preparation for farm tours the next day.

After an early breakfast, our first stop was at Brookfield Park, an Angus and Merino sheep stud owned by Julie Johnston and her mother. These gracious ladies operate on some 3,500 acres running 6,500 sheep and 150 Angus cows.

From Brookfield Park, we traveled to Hazeldean and were stopped at the entrance by a "buckaroo" (young cowboy) who informed us that they were running a herd of kangaroo across the field where we could see and photograph them; however, the wind changed direction and their effort was to no avail. At Hazeldean we were greeted by James Litchfield who related that Hazeldean comprised some 31,000 acres, 10,000 ewes, and 350 Angus cows. Hazeldean has been in the Litchfield family for five generations. A highlight of our visit to Hazeldean was a sheep shearing demonstration and an explanation of how they process and market the wool. After a grand lunch in the beautiful gardens at the Litchfield homestead, we bid them goodbye and left for our next stop at Sparta Stud.



Pictured top—Commercial man Bill Herbert told the group of his bouts with drought and kangaroos.

Pictured middle—Australian trait leader forgrowth, Summitcrest Power Play MO32.

Pictured bottom—Association Executive Vice President Dick Spader with one of the symbols of Australia and yet for the stockman, one of his perennial problems.



Pictured top-Mt. Cook, New Zealand's favorite landmark, was still bearing its winter mantle.

Pictured middle-The Maori culture is a fundamental slice of the New Zealand cultural pie.

Pictured bottom-The red deer in the background are considered and managed as a commercial crop.

Keith Murdoch, wife Kathy, and daughter Emma, principal owners of Sparta Stud at Jincumbilly near Nimmatabel, NSW, had an impressive display of cattle on exhibit. Running some 2,500 sheep and 150 cows on 3,000 acres, Keith is very conscientious of performance data in both his herd and flock. As always, these gracious people provided tea, coffee, and an array of cake and cookies that could not be denied.

Our last visit of the day was to "Yandra Station" owned by Bill Herbert. As twilight was nearing Bill perched himself on the corral fence and told us of his commercial operation. On 3,000 acres he averages running 1,100 head in summer and 750 in winter. Supplemental feeding in winter consists only of protein pellets. Open cows are culled without exception, as are cows experiencing difficulty in calving. Steers are finished on grass and sold at 20-22 months of age. Bill indicated that he constantly deals with two problems; one being drought, and the other, kangaroo (he estimates having 3,000 on his place). He can do nothing to change the drought, and the government will not let him do anything about the kangaroo.

The day was topped off with a social and steak dinner at the Tudor Inn in Nimmatabel where we were joined by many breeders from the Monaro Angus group. A good time was had by all; however, Association president Joe Neely made the mistake of leaving his Stetson on a pool table and some Aussie construction worker now has a good hat.

After a grand time at Cooma we departed for a scenic ride through the Snowy Mountains en route to Wagga-Wagga (a place of many birds), where we were able to see many wild kangaroo, emu, and native wildlife. Upon arrival at the RSL Club (Returned Service League, which is like our VFW), we observed a game of lawn bowling. Team members, both men and women, were dressed in beautiful white suits, shoes, and hats. (At this point, I left the group to go to Tasmania to make a talk at a field day and rejoined the group in Melbourne).

The tour, after lunch, proceeded to "Glen Elgin" owned by Jeff Scott. Glen Elgin comprises 3,000 acres, 2,000 sheep, 150 cows, and a feedlot where they finish surplus animals with grain and hay grown at Glen Elgin. All animals are sold at private treaty in a well-developed local market.

The evening was spent at a "bush dance" in the Pleasant Hills area with singing and feasting, after which the group dispersed to spend the night with Angus breeders in the area.

The following day en route to Melbourne, the group stopped to visit Tavistock Stud owned by Rodney and Janita Sellwood where a delightful lunch was served. We were beginning to wonder if our clothes would fit.

Friday was spent at leisure touring Melbourne and surrounding area.

From Melbourne we flew to Adelaide and split into two groups for a country visit to Hahndorf, a German settlement about one hour from Adelaide in South Australia. The vegetation is much different from New South Wales, being much more sparse due to the dry weather. Although we were split into two groups, the afternoon program consisted of visits to AGTEC, an embryo transplant facility owned by David and Bill Cornell and "Glen Bold Stud" owned by Colin and Graham Lyons. The Glen Bold herd has infused U.S. Angus in recent years and the Lyons family was very complimentary regarding American Angus Assn. programs. As always, we were treated to a gracious array of food and drink prior to our departure.

We gathered in the evening at the Old Mill Restaurant for a delightful and colorful meal with local Angus

breeders. Songs were sung by everyone between courses at dinner, and for dessert, a huge flaming baked Alaska was brought in to cap a very memorable evening.

On Sunday, October 4, our day began with a delightful visit to a winery where we tasted several wines. One tour member remarked, "Well, we didn't go to church, but we had communion seven times!" We left the winery for a visit to "Blackwood Park" owned by Sandy Waterman, a most gracious lady. She and manager Wally McGhee related that the stud consists of 4,000 Merino ewes, 100 breeder cows, and 200 steers. They also breed Thoroughbred horses and have produced a Melbourne cup winner in recent years. Blackwood Park is a beautifully scenic place; one that can only be visited upon invitation. After a sumptuous lunch of beef, salad, veggies, and dessert galore, we returned to our motel in preparation for our journey to Alice Springs.

Leaving the lush pastures of Blackwood Park, our arrival in Alice Springs was an eye-opening experience. We were finally in the great outback where red dirt, sand, and desert prevail. Alice Springs is very close to the true center of Australia and is somewhat of a tourist center.

We were immediately introduced to the outback flies; very small creatures with the energy and velocity of bumblebees. Their favorite targets are eyes, nose, and ears. We learned quickly that the Australian salute is a wave of the hand before the face to brush away the flies. After an enjoyable day touring Alice Springs, we departed for Ayres Rock at Yalara (place of the Howling Dingo).

Prior to our arrival at Ayres Rock, we stopped at a camel farm for pop and camel rides, then set out for De Rose Hill Station whose address is via Alice Springs. De Rose Hill is a commercial station in the middle of the outback which runs straightbred Angus cattle. The station consists of 450,000 acres, which is leased from the government at an annual cost of approximately \$1,400, and is operated by Doug Fuller, his son and daughter-in-law, Rex and Barb Fuller and their family, with only one additional employee. The station is divided into paddocks of 25 square miles, each having a wind-driven bore (well) surrounded by a corral with self-locking gates. Gathering cattle is not a problem: just set the self-locking gate, wait two days, and 95 percent of the cattle in the paddock will be enclosed.

Being so remote, education of the children is a problem. Until grade seven, children go to school by radio. In fact, Rex's daughter had been schooled with children seven years before she ever met them. Son Allan is now in advanced school in Adelaide and only comes home on holiday. I asked Allan what he wished to do when he finishes school. His reply was, "I want to come home and run De Rose Hill." A wonderful testimony to a way of life!

As we viewed the cattle on display in the corrals, I surmised that if straightbred Angus could work there, they would work anywhere. What a wonderfully adaptable breed we have!

After De Rose Hill, on to Ayers Rock with a pit stop at a tourist store where the aboriginal people were displaying their wares. These consisted of small wooden animal carvings of snakes, wombats, dingos, etc. We were told not to photograph them because if their picture was taken, their soul was captured, and could never get to heaven. We honored that request.

Then, on to Ayers Rock and we arrived tired and irritable. Next morning, we relaxed by the pool, some going to Ayers Rock and climbing it to the top. Ayers Rock extends 1,100 feet above ground and the climb is about two miles. The rock is iron oxide and changes colors at sunset, becoming blood red. Our pictures were hampered by hazy skies.

Upon the completion of our visit to the outback, we



Pictured top-At the photo's center are: Colin Williams (left), president of the New Zealand Angus Assn. and Fred Saunders (right), New Zealand Angus breeder, welcoming the segment of the party staying over to tour New Zealand.

Pictured middle-TeMania Stud near Nelson, New Zealand.

Pictured bottom-At Hazeldean, where "Jackeroos" are an indigenous form of transportation.

boarded our plane en route back to Sydney for a day and a half of sightseeing. Everyone was glad to return to the Mensies Hotel and the sights and sounds of Sydney.

A leisure day was spent by all followed by a delightful farewell dinner at the Coachman Inn in Sydney. For dinner we were graced by the presence of Enid Fisher, secretary of the Australian Angus Society. The following day approximately one-third of the group returned to the USA and the rest of us went to New Zealand.

After spending the night in Auckland, we arose early and toured Waitemata Bay, which means "Sparkling Water." Waitemata Bay is the largest port for sailboats in the southern hemisphere, having some 600,000 boats moored there.

New Zealand has a land area somewhat the size of Arizona, with three million people, 70 million sheep, 15 million cattle, and 4,000 domesticated red deer. After touring Auckland and visiting the incredible museum of New Zealand history, we learned that the Maori people have existed since 750 A.D., their exact origin unknown.

En route to Rotorua we stopped at the establishment of Fred and Mary, Doug and Liz Saunders. We were met by a large contingent of New Zealand Angus breeders and officials, namely Colin Williams, president of the New Zealand Angus Assn., and his wife Jackie; Shona Bosomworth, secretary of the New Zealand Angus Assn., and her husband David; and many more. We viewed the cattle and were impressed with a grandson of PS Power Play who was grand champion at the recent National New Zealand Show and Sale.

Then on to the farm of Dennis Petullo, a former president of the New Zealand Angus Assn., who showed us a beautiful farm, Angus cattle, and sheep. After an enjoyable tea we departed for Rotorua, which means "Rotten Waters," the Maori capital of New Zealand.

In Rotorua, we toured the Maori Institute and observed a Maori native settlement as well as young people learning to carve Maori totems. The boiling mud and hot springs and geysers were fascinating, and the sulphur gas they emit accounts for the name of the city.

From Rotorua we journeyed back by plane to Invercargill on the South Island where we were met by William Mitchell and Jim Marshall, members of the New Zealand Angus Assn. Mr. Marshall accompanied the group to the farm of Don and Margaret Jukes. En route, Mr. Marshall related that land values have decreased from \$5,000-acre to \$1,800-acre within the past five years in New Zealand. Agricultural well-being in New Zealand depends on a good export trade with the Middle East, Europe, and the USA.

Upon arrival in very cold weather at the Jukes, we boarded a hay wagon and were given a grand tour followed by good refreshment and food. Leaving the Jukes stud, we traveled through snowy weather to Queenstown, and were glad to get into warm hotel rooms.

After a day at leisure in search of rare opals and jade in Queenstown, and a dinner on top of a mountain at which we arrived by ski-lift, we traveled to the highest point in New Zealand, Mount Cook. Snow was in abundance, prohibiting plane rides over the mountains, so we spent a relaxing morning by the fire at the hotel, departing in the afternoon for Christchurch.

The weather was balmy upon our arrival and we rested in the afternoon anticipating a wonderful trip to "TeMania" the next day.

Prior to our departure we were met at the hotel by Peter Silby, a journalist, and Bruce McLachlan and his son, Sandy, who accompanied the group to "TeMania Stud" owned by Frank and Jo Wilding and son, Tim, near Nelson, New Zealand.

TeMania Stud began with a gift of Angus heifers to



pictured top-Gathered for a group photograph.

pictured middle-Association President Joe Neely was presented an authentic Australian drover's hat. Details can be found in accompanying article. Shown making the presentation are: Janet Deroche, Franklin, N. Y.; Bob Watson, Campbell Hall, N. Y.; Dr. and Mrs. Curtis Long, Butler, Md.; A. F. Burkhartsmeier and Elsie Hansen, Chinook, Mont.; and President Neely, Franklin, Ky.

Pictured bottom-The Australian leg of the tour held its farewell dinner in Sydney with best wishes expressed by Enid Fisher, at right, secretary of the Australian Angus Society.

Frank's grandmother decades ago. Since this initial gift, no other females have been added. TeMania consists of 1,000 acres reaching from the mountains to the sea. In fact, TeMania has oceanside beaches on which one can ride horseback. TeMania's annual bull sale is among the best in New Zealand and we were joined for lunch by many of TeMania's commercial customers. The meal was a fitting tribute to the hospitality of the New Zealand people and the Wilding family. Our tour could not have finished on a better note.

Upon our return to Christchurch, we had a final farewell dinner in the Cashmere Hills at the "Sign of the Takahe" Castle. While we were ready to return home, we all were reluctant to leave, knowing that this trip was a once in a lifetime adventure.

(Some information in this article was taken from a detailed journal compiled by fellow tour member, Cynthia Reid from Alabama.)