



## Field Day At Jenny & Rod Bell's Farm With The ANU's Sustainable Farms Project.

Whilst I was personally unable to make it to Jenny and Rod's wonderful farm due to my involvement in the preparations for the conference, Julia and myself, together with Elizabeth Grice picked-up the 12 seater, down from the original 50 seater, bus to take people out to the farm. All up, including the driver, Julie McKay, we had a total of four on the bus, with the rest of the 30+ on the trip travelling independently. If nothing else the bus was useful as it was used to take the excellent afternoon tea to the farm, some of which came back on the same vehicle.

Whilst not being the best weather, due to drizzly rain, the visit covered a lot of ground, both literally and as per the number of the farms features covered. This, under the expert guidance of Jenny and Tamara, such that, by loud acclaim, it was judged a significant success.



This photo looks like a significant but wet moment in the visit, but not sure which one?

Whereas the prior such event, held on 24<sup>th</sup> Feb at Mike Steketee's farm was somewhat, but not solely, dam-dominated, this was not the case at Jenny and Rod's although a revitalised dam did feature. As with Mike's event, a cup of tea was the starting point, followed by a run down of the planned activities. The event was, if nothing else, a long walk and, for those in gumboots, a particularly good workout. The vote for the most determined participant went to the lady, sorry I do not have her name, who had to use two sticks to walk.

The following account is based on an account from an unnamed but notorious member of our Landcare group who has a habit of falling asleep on farm visits and often only found the



next morning where he fell. That person is therefore highly unreliable so please bear that in mind when reading the following report!

First off was a visit to some shelter belts and then onto an under-grazed paddock that was not evenly eaten down due to an inadequate number of livestock. NB some photos were sent of that paddock a bit over a week after the visit, that showed how quickly that paddock had recovered.

Next there was a visit to some paddocks that had been in poor shape and previously set-stocked. Despite being sandy and saline soil, rotational grazing as described above had resulted in an increased amount of carbon and hence moisture levels and hence 100% ground coverage.

Then onto a dam that had previously been in a poor way due to set-stock grazing and a lack of fencing. Revegetating around the dam and rotational grazing resulted in a dramatic recovery in the dam's water quality. As a control dam it was left unfenced, but its water quality now rivalled the other fenced-off dams on the farm.



This photo looks like Dan haranguing the assembled group on the importance of fencing around your dam, control or otherwise. Did anyone dare to differ?

There was a very wet area around the dam where short term grazing was carried-out. In that same area were a very impressive stand of tall eucalyptus that were mostly aggregata, but also some ovata. The stand was planted some 20 years earlier by Rod.

After that the probably bedraggled and weary group struggled back to the shed for afternoon tea that had been done by the ever-trustee Harvest Café.

At some point in the proceedings, Jenny said that they were planning to put in more fencing to divide up one of their larger paddocks. So for those of you looking for the "take-out" short duration but intense grazing session, followed by long rest periods were one of the secrets to Jenny and Rod's impressive farm.



NB Jenny and Rod's farm has been using regenerative practices for some 20 years and work with their landscape as per Charley Massy's exhortation to that effect.

Sincere and heartfelt thanks to Jenny, Rod for their hospitality, for making their farm available and for the amazing work they have undertaken over the years that has made such a difference to their farm, in particular, but not only the building of biodiversity on the farm.

As always Tamara, Dan and Alice did a great job of facilitating the day and providing expert information on the flora and fauna that makes these field days of such value.



P.S. Final photo – This forlorn group is believed to have been left at the dam after disagreeing with Dan about the need to fence it off and were left to fend for themselves. However it is understood that they did make it back in-time to have afternoon tea.