



NUFG Bus tour of member plantations 17/08/07    Written by: James Williams.

The tour departed Bendigo D.P.I. en-route to Kamarooka on time with a full complement of passengers. With Paul Turnbull at the wheel they promptly proceeded past the waiting crowd at Kamo to save the lost Tim Bardon who had proceeded to Andy Hays. Upon rescuing Tim, they headed to Kamo to pick up the eagerly waiting crowd. Now with James at the controls and Ranx as his ever-encouraging co-pilot giving detailed instructions on how to drive a bus, we departed.

Our first stopover was at Lindsay and Glenda Cail's where we looked at his two impressive plantations of trees. Lindsay indicated he had carried out shape and lift pruning and minimal culling as he hoped to maximize his timber for firewood. Mal Brown as compere had people introduce themselves as several new faces where on the Bus.

Next stopover was Rob Comer's where we viewed his well-manicured trees. Rob indicated it had taken approximately a week to prune and cull his trees and that this had been carried out over a period of time. He had been experimenting with ladders and harness gear to lift prune and had manufactured his own adjustments to an extendable ladder to best suit his needs. Rob had put a lot of work into his acacias to try and get some reasonable form and this seemed to be paying dividends.

On to Jenharwill Baling, where we again viewed some well manicured trees. James indicated the spotted gum had done well and took minimal effort to maintain. Most people have little success with this species due to frost and early setbacks. Sugar gums were again the standouts although swamp yate, stenophylla and ironbark were doing well. Native pine, round wattle, salicina and myall were also planted. James indicated he was looking for multiple outcomes, seed, saw logs, firewood and biodiversity. Here we also viewed some thirty year-old ironbarks (*Sideroxylon*) that were quite impressive despite no early management.

Down the road to our prestigious leader, Ranx and Leanne's plantations. Ian indicated he was still in the process of pruning and thinning and again indicated his outlook for multiple outcomes as shown by the diversity of their plantations. Ian was keen to see a mechanical approach to pruning and harvesting as this would reduce time and labour. Ian and Leanne's latter plantation was of sugar gum and ironbark and he indicated the sugars were a standout. We also viewed their impressive dining table made out of timber cut by Lindsay (First Cut Sawmills) from a stand of sugar gum near Ian's house. The table has featured (like Ian) in several Brochures and articles and is a standout for the quality and look of the timber.

Off to Gunbower for lunch, and with Ranx still giving handy tips to the driver, we made all haste to Gunbower. Lunch was a light meal at the Local Hotel which was excellent and where we were able to view some red gum timber milled by Lindsay

on John and Greg Toll's that had been utilised in the refurbishment of the Hotel. Amanda McLaren from the N.C.C.M.A. gave us a talk on up and coming events and Zoe Toll spoke on her work with differing Flora and the opportunities she was pursuing.

Out to John and Greg Toll's to view their plantings. First stop was a site planted by John and Zoe with natives with unusual foliage and flowers to be utilised in flower arrangements, then on to his timber plantations and biodiversity plantings. John indicated that he too was looking for multiple outcomes and that saw logs were probably a secondary outcome. Biodiversity, land reclamation, shelter and wind breaks, foliage and flowers for Zoe's arrangements etc. were all outcomes they desired. John indicated one issue had been harbour for vermin but by utilizing the local shooting club he had made friendships and controlled the pests.

Tim and Anne Barden's Nursery at Echuca was our next stop and here we viewed a diverse range of plants and grasses. Tim first showed us his sandalwood plantation, which, despite using several host acacias had shown a clear preference for stenophylla. Tim indicated he would utilize the plantation for a seed source and with a huge price per tonne for sandalwood he saw this as potentially very profitable. Next we viewed his grasslands, which he had planted for a seed source. Tim indicated he had to overcome several issues to view their trees in regards to managing these and with changing practices eg. drip instead of flood irrigation to stop weed contamination and enlarging his seed harvester to stop compaction. He was overcoming these issues. Tim is targeting the commercial aspects of seed supply and associated opportunities as opposed to a plant supply for domestic use approach. With ongoing dry weather and climate change, Tim and Anne would seem to be on a winning approach with their native grasses.

Last but not least was Stuart and Megan Ayson's to view their trees grown on a ridge overlooking the Campaspe river. Probably the most picturesque site for the day, Stuart indicated Bob Spooner had done much of the pruning and his well-maintained trees had shown excellent growth. Stuart said the spotted gum had been badly knocked by frost and we wondered if the location at the base of the ridge was not ideal.

With the day dwindling and Ranx still muttering something about gear changes we cut for home. A big thanks to John Toll for organising lunch and the Gunbower Hotel. Mal Brown as compere for the day. Paul Turnbull for assistance with the bus. Rob Comer for the drinks and cheque book and Ranx for driver education.