

## CHAPTER VIII

### Commercial

#### The Fanfare Angora Goat Stud

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Prior to 1980 we were living in Canberra and as a result of researching various income producing farming possibilities, we started breeding angora goats in that year. After having satisfied ourselves that we could manage goats, we committed ourselves to moving to Tasmania.

Here, we looked for land comprising at least 200 acres, with views, close to Hobart and on the western shore of the River Derwent.

Chance, aided by Judith's Father, led us to the top of Churchill Road, where we found what appeared to be vacant land which met our demanding requirements. The place was overgrown with blackberries, the fences had mostly collapsed and the buildings were all but razed. However it had marvellous views over the Derwent from Droughty Point to the entrance of D'Entrecasteaux Channel. In 1982 we purchased 250 acres.

In November of 1982, while on leave, I came to Taroona to build the first paddock. Ten days of struggle with blackberries, post holes and wire resulted in a 5 acre paddock for the goats which we would bring with us when we moved from Canberra. On the 5th December, a truck carried 69 goats to Melbourne. Judith followed in her car which was crammed with buckets, goat food and first aid equipment. Two miserable days were spent in Melbourne, waiting for the goats to be loaded onto the "Brisbane Trader". Torrential rain and inadequate shelter meant working day and night to keep the animals in good enough condition to last the journey. During the stormy crossing of Bass Strait, the goats shared a container on deck with several sheep, two cows and a pig.

All the animals survived the crossing and after landing in Devonport the goats were loaded onto a truck and set off for Hobart. On the afternoon of the 8th December they arrived at the top of Churchill Road where they were met by a small band of helpers and new neighbours, including Dennis and Sybil

Hunt. With their assistance the goats were walked the last half mile to their paddock. We were able to rent a house in Taroona and settled in to developing the property. One of our greatest fears when we arrived was fire as the land had been vacant for many years and was very overgrown.

During 1983, in between office hours, we slashed the worst of the blackberries on the original two cleared paddocks. We then had them ploughed and sown to pasture, and built a large shed and many fences with the assistance of the labour of a number of local people. We also purchased an old landrover and a young donkey named "Cha-Cha", the former for general farm work and the latter as protection for the goats against dogs.

The landrover has since spent much of its time being repaired and "Cha-Cha", was returned to her previous owners after she took to kicking the goats because she didn't want to share our attentions. The landrover doesn't have a printable name. Perhaps we should have sent it back and put "Cha-Cha" into harness.

Our first kidding in September 1983 was one of the worst experiences of our lives. Nearly 5 inches of rain fell that month and the only buildings we had were two small goat shelters and a garden shed crammed with tools and



*Goats at the Fanfare Angora Goat Stud, 1985.*

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hay. We slipped and slithered in ankle-deep mud for two weeks while attending to the numerous chores and crises involved in kidding. Our efforts were rewarded by 52 kids and only one death, which in the circumstances, was remarkable.

We now had about 120 goats on 70 fenced acres. Over the next couple of years we slowly developed the property. When walking the paddocks I have come across many old, overgrown fences, of varying ages, indicating extensive farming over many years.

We sold, bought and bred more goats, built more fences and repaired the landrover. By now we had developed an annual routine for the goats:

April-mating,  
July-foot clipping and drenching,  
August-inoculations,  
September-kidding,  
October-shearing adults and inoculating  
and tattooing kids,  
November-foot clipping and drenching,  
January-weaning and inoculations,  
February-sales,  
March-shearing, foot clipping and  
drenching.

In January 1985 we moved into a caravan on the property during the seven months it took to build our home. In November/December of that year we made our first big sales. This was at the end of the "goat-rush" when New Zealand buyers seemed intent on buying every Angora in Australia. 1986 was a relatively quiet year, except for the work involved in sending the goats to New Zealand, and our biggest ever kidding-103 kids, including 3 sets of triplets. We now have about 120 goats on 100 fenced acres.

It might sound from the foregoing narrative that we have had a hard, unprofitable struggle, but this is not so. There has been much hard work, we have learned a great amount and to a large extent achieved what we set out to do. What is more, for the most part we have enjoyed doing it.

Much of our success is due to support from relatives and friends including people we have met since coming to Taroona. As part of the history of establishing the farm we would like to mention some of the people who have contributed to it.

Dennis and Sybil Hunt, our nearest neighbours, were the first we met. They cheerfully helped Judith unload the goats when they arrived and not just because the truck was blocking their drive. Dennis has also often given valuable advice on local conditions and matters agricultural.

Deirdre and Ron Martin have provided a haven and moral support many times, particularly when we were struggling in the mud and existing in the caravan. In fact they were the first to welcome us into the caravan, with a bottle of champagne. We first met Ron one wet evening in January in 1983 when he came to welcome us. Margaret Eldridge has often rescued our goats from the blackberries and warned us of marauding dogs.

The man who has physically contributed most to the development of the property is John Fry, a Hobart Builder who will have a "go" at anything. He helped with most of the fencing, built the main shed and the hay shed and even delivered kids. I have learnt a great deal from him about practical building.

Craig Coombs, the local publican and part-time fire officer, willingly and cheerfully gave us his advice and help to reduce the fire hazard. Lastly, since we have been here, we have employed many people to labour at fences, sheds, goat-minding and general farm work.

As a finale, the indigenous population of our piece of bush deserves a mention. We call them the "night-shift". After dark, possums, bandicoots and rabbits descend upon the paddocks, sheds and feed troughs, cleaning up anything the goats leave. If it weren't for them we might be able to run twice as many goats, but they were here first. Bill Wilson, an ornithologist and another near neighbour, tells us that we host also one of only two colonies of Forty Spotted Pardalotes. The wide variety of other birds helps contribute to the beauty of this lovely place in which we have come to stay.

