



FROM MIKE COONEY & THE KEEPERS OF THE VINE

JULY 2009

## FIELDAY FUN!

**The glares from my wife said it all, as we stood in the rain on 'E' Street at the 2009 Agricultural Fielddays® at Mystery Creek. Our kids were gleefully bounding from puddle to puddle, now soaking wet and blissfully unaware of the silent argument I was having with their mother. Our annual family outing was beginning to turn to custard ...**

As a kid, I spent a good chunk of my yearly holidays at my uncle's dairy farm, not far out of Cambridge. It was one of my most memorable times growing up - and one that had a big impact on me.

One of the highlights was our annual trip to the Fielddays®, when I'd don my redbands and swannie and get to hang out with my uncle for the day. For a keen, young, wannabe farmer, it was fantastic! There were tractors to ogle at, cockies to yarn to and enough interesting things to keep us occupied until the afternoon milking.

Occasionally, my uncle would see an old mate and they'd end up yarning for ages, standing on the dusty roads that weave throughout the event. In my youthfulness, I remember wishing he'd hurry up so we could go and check out some more tractors! But back then, country life moved at an even slower pace ...

It was a great day out, and despite the sore feet at the end of it all, it was a special time - and a tradition that we continue to enjoy today.

We've been going to the Fielddays® for a few years as a family, and it's something our kids look forward to every year especially now they're getting older. For Donna and I, it's a pretty full-on day keeping our four excited rugrats under control and un-lost in amongst the thousands of people. And as it rolled around again in 2009, we were prepared for more of the same - except for one small thing. The rain.

The weather forecast wasn't looking too good for the few days of the event. We had four days to choose from and after putting my meteorological skills to use, I proudly figured that the first day, Wednesday, was going to have the least chance of precipitation.

On our chosen morning, we woke at 6am to rain. Heavy rain. And as I rushed around the house waking the kids, my wife wasn't looking convinced that my carefully selected day was the winner I thought it'd be.

"Don't worry" I consoled her. "We're on the Coromandel and its blowing nor-east so the Waikato should be all good ..."

Anyway, the kids were excited and keen, I was excited and keen and my wife was, well ... let's just say she was outnumbered!

**I**nterestingly, it was the first time there'd been rain on the opening day of Fieldays® for seven years.

And as we stood there in the wet, it was a fact that Donna was strangely *uninterested* in. Still remaining upbeat, I tried suggesting that we were on a family adventure and that the tractor races will be even better in the mud! The kids got excited, but it was yet another fact that my lovely wife didn't seem to appreciate ...

It wasn't until the hot coffee and West Coast whitebait fritter that things started looking up. And it got even better when we discovered the 'Kiwi's Best' pavilion - a display of some of the loveliest food our country produces. What with the free samples of Cathedral Cove macadamias, Marlborough mussels, Hawkes Bay wines, ice-creams and olive oils ... I literally had to drag my wife and kids out of there! And best of all, lunch didn't cost us a thing!

In the end, we ALL had a great day - rain included! The tractor racing was great, we saw plenty of diggers for the boys, lots of animals for the girls and generally absorbed the sights and sounds of the largest agricultural event in the southern hemisphere. We finished off where we always do - at the model tractor

stall, where the kids got to buy a small toy to add to their collection, before wandering back to the truck.



On the way home, and in the few minutes before they fell asleep, they were already counting down to the next Fieldays®.

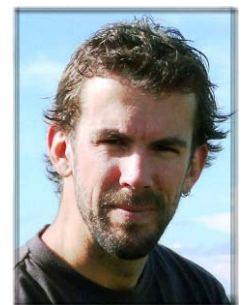
**T**his year marks Grapevine's 28<sup>th</sup> year in operation, and like the Fieldays® (which just had its 41<sup>st</sup> year) we've continued to do what we do - despite the weather! There've been times when the 'rain' has fallen so heavily, that we've wondered if our heads would stay above water! Times when things looked so dull and the clouds so ominous, that we've considered packing up and

going home.

But, thankfully we didn't! And it's thanks to **supporters like you**, who helped us remain upbeat and positive, despite the weather!

In our current 'climate', the 'R' word continues to bombard us from all quarters - and it can get a little depressing, if I'm honest. Yet many of you have generously dug deep regardless, so thank you.

**For us, a generous July donation would be just the ray of sunshine we need, and would go a long way to beating off these winter blues.** So, if you're in a position to do so - we'd love to hear from you! **Your gift of \$20 ... \$200 ... \$2000 (or more!)** would be wonderful. Whatever you can manage WILL make a difference ...



Mike ...

