

## Dancing in the Dirt

Almost 200 people turned out to support the 2019 Inaugural 'Dancing in the Dirt' Pre-Harvest Gala Ball' proudly presented by the Fitzgerald Biosphere Group.

The Black Tie event, held on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at the Needilup oval, was born out of the desire to support the community through what has been a difficult 18 months. Dry seasonal conditions and several severe wind events in 2018, followed by the continuing dry start to 2019 presented the FBG with the opportunity to bring the community together during this trying time.

Centred on the essence of farming, agriculture and where we live, our vision was to create an evening where those from far and wide could congregate, reconnect socially, laugh, enjoy some wonderful local produce that our farmers work so hard to grow, and enjoy a rare evening out full of live entertainment, in the hope this would encourage a boost in morale throughout the entire community.

The weather was perfect – not a breath of wind - and the scene was set during the sundowner, as people arrived en-masse in buses (kindly supplied by Bev and Kemp Brooks) from Bremer Bay, Borden, Pingrup, Jacup, Gairdner and Jerramungup. Live acoustic music and delicious canapes

were a great beginning to the evening.

MC, Nathan Brown got the crowd together with his own set of jokes, before comedian and television personality Peter Rowsthorn took to the stage with his own hilarious antics. When everyone had recovered from all the laughing, live music by Perth band Big Horn Trio got everyone up and dancing for the duration of the night.

The *Dancing in the Dirt* organising committee were thrilled to have Dan and Sarah from Wellstead Museum Café in Bremer Bay on board to cater for the event. We were determined to ensure as much local produce as possible was used, and they delivered. Guests were spoilt with a six metre long grazing table, lavish canapes featuring locally caught yabbies, fish and abalone, all topped off with lamb and gravy rolls, kindly donated by several local lamb producers.

A great feature of the night was the introduction of our specially brewed beer 'Biosphere Brew - Bay to Bush'. Malting barley was collected from around the Jerramungup shire and we worked closely with Lucky Bay Brewery in Esperance to produce our very own blend for the evening.

The beer was a hit with all who tried it and the one litre **Continued on page 3.**



# An overview of 2019

The highlight of our year for us here at the FBG was most certainly *Dancing in the Dirt*; our pre-harvest ball held on October 12<sup>th</sup>. The night was a great success with almost all of the 200 tickets being sold and comedian Peter Rowsthorn and band, Big Horn Trio, being tremendous crowd pleasers.

The Needilup oval was transformed on the night into a magical venue in the skilled hands of our organising committee: Jessica Bailey, Tina Parsons, Rachel Bibby, Kyran and Katie Brooks, Hannah Iffla, Laura Wishart, Jolene Daniel and Jenna Trevenon. Many thanks to them for the months and months of planning and hard work that went into making the night such a success.

The decision to hold an event that brings people together to celebrate agriculture in our region was made against the backdrop of last year's difficult farming conditions. As 2018 drew to a close and seasonal predictions for 2019 were looking unfavourable, we were approached frequently by government departments, state and federal, to be the conduit to help support our farming community. I'd like to thank our soil projects officer, Maddy Wylie, who stepped into the role of coordinating the myriad meetings, requests and initiatives that came our way, often at short notice. We are now operating in an increasingly tight and over-subscribed funding environment that is completely project focussed. Many of our 'business as usual' activities and costs fall outside of projects and it is becoming increasingly difficult to source funding for them. All of our staff are part time and over the course of the last year we have gone from an equivalent of just less than three full time staff to the equivalent of two full time staff. We have been fortunate to retain the same people working in the FBG office in 2019 and once again, we've achieved a great deal in that time.

## Our staff are:

Tash Brown: finance officer

Jess Brown: Communications Officer

Jess Bailey: Administration Assistant

Maddy Wylie: Project Coordinator for the One Paddock Challenge 2020

Therese Bell: Project Coordinator for our Bremer Projects and TEC Regional Land Partnership Program

Reaghan Shalders: Project Coordinator for the Regional Land Partnership program.

I can't thank these tremendous ladies enough for the commitment and skill they bring to their roles and to the FBG membership and wider farming community.

## Current Projects

- Regional Land Partnerships Years 2-5 (South Coast NRM from funding jointly administered by Federal Departments of Environment and Energy and Department of Agriculture and Water Resources)
- Smart Farms presenters and trips (Federal funding through National Landcare Program)
- One Paddock Challenge 2020 (Lawson Grains and Viridis Ag)

We are particularly pleased to announce that the One Paddock Challenge trials will continue next year thanks to sponsorship from Lawson Grains and Viridis Ag. Maddy Wylie will continue on as the project coordinator.

## Projects completed in 2019

- Regional Land Partnerships Year 1 (South Coast NRM)
- One Paddock Challenge (State NRM)
- Subsoil Constraints (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development [DPIRD])
- Weed Action Plan for Bremer Bay (State NRM)
- Bremer Bay Community Foreshore and Estuary Protection Project (Coastwest)

## Pending funding applications:

- Back to the Farmer –strategic planning to implement best practice (State NRM)
- Strategic Weed Control in Bremer Bay (State NRM)
- Weed action Group in Bremer Bay (Communities Environment Grant through our federal member of Parliament, Rick Wilson MP)

The group coordinated 13 events throughout the year, in Bremer Bay, Boxwood Hill, Jerramungup, Jacup, Needilup, Gairdner and the Marra. We've published four *Sustainabulletin* newsletters, printed copies of which go out to all landholders in the Shire.

## FBG Board 2019 and 2020

I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the 2019 FBG Board - Damon Parker (Chair), Jolene Daniel (Vice Chair), Dave Turner (Treasurer), Mick Lester (Secretary) and Rex Parsons (Shire of Jerramungup Representative) - for the commitment, advice and the support they have provided throughout the course of the year.

At our AGM in October, Jolene stepped off the Board, having completed her term of office. I owe a special thank you to Jolene, who was the chair of the FBG when I started in 2016. She has been absolutely steadfast in her support of me, the staff and the FBG from that time to this.

Whether on the end of a phone, coming in to the office or travelling to yet another meeting, she has contributed a lot of time and expertise to us and we greatly appreciate her efforts.

We extend a warm welcome to Kyran Brooks who became our newest Board member, joining Damon, Mick and Dave who successfully renominated. In line with our new constitution, the executive positions will be decided at our first Board meeting following the AGM.

## Advisory Committee, members and funders

A big thank you too to our Advisory Committee and to the farmers who participate in our trials and host our events. We greatly appreciate your time, effort and involvement. Likewise, I'd like to thank our sponsors, supporters and funding partners for your commitment to the FBG. As always, we wish you a safe and successful harvest and a relaxing summer break.

**The FBG office will be closed from Friday 20th December until Monday 4th February.**

Leonie McMahon  
Executive Officer

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cans were a great talking point amongst those who bought them.

A generous donation in the form of an accommodation package from Beach House by Bayside in Albany was raffled off on the night, raising \$500. This money will be forwarded on to our local St. John Ambulance Sub Centre, without whom our community would be so vulnerable.

Of course, an event like this does not happen without the input and help of so many. Nine members of the FBG Advisory group each took on specific roles to get this event up and running. It took many hours and lots of organisation to bring this event to life. A special thanks goes to Peter Daniel and Nathan Brown, who were instrumental in cleaning up the oval and the setup in the days leading up to the event, and all FBG staff who helped set up and donated furniture and decorations. Thank you also to Paul Hicks from Pingrup, who generously took the time to fly Peter Rowsthorn to Jerramungup from Perth and back again. It was a great

thrill to be on the oval when the plane did a fly-over with Peter up there.

The event would not have been possible without the great support of several generous funding bodies. A huge thanks goes to Southern Ports, the Shire of Jerramungup, CBH Grass Roots Fund, Rabobank, Kokoda Op shop and IGA Community Chest for sharing in our vision and supporting this community event. Our appreciation also goes to Campbell Transport for donating the truck trailer, Jerramungup CRC for donating advertising, and to all of those who lent generators, port-a-loos, lights, lamb, and yabbies and time to help set up. Your generosity meant that we could keep the cost of the tickets low allowing as many people as possible to attend.

We look forward to bringing you another community Gala Ball in the future and thanks again to everyone who attended or supported our event in any way – it goes to show even a small community can achieve great things.

Jess Bailey



# Gillamii Centre Productive Saltland Pastures Workshop

As part of their Regenerating saline and marginal landscapes in Southern WA Project, the Gillamii Centre with the support of both Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and CSIRO held a two day Productive Saltland Pastures workshop. With funding from Royalties for Regions the Gillamii Centre's project focuses on supporting farmers to regenerate saline and marginal areas of land through a farm systems approach to help manage on farm salinity.

The pilot workshop held in October at Cranbrook comprised of guest speakers from DPIRD and CSIRO, along with practical components, farm tours, farm case study and an infield site challenge. The first day began with presentations from John Simons and Ed Barret-Lennard from DPIRD, Hayley Norman from CSIRO and John Young from Farming Systems Analysis Service. In the afternoon practical skills were learnt and used on a local farm tour where participants visited landholders who had put regenerating saline areas into practice. The day ended with a visit to a saltland pasture trial site that was established with DPIRD in previous years. The visit entailed assessing piezometer readings and evaluating the plant species used in the saline area, looking at what had worked and what hadn't.

Day two involved a hands on approach where the group travelled to a site on farm that suffered from salinity and a challenge was set for the participants. Participants split into four smaller groups and travelled throughout the area within the property, assessing piezometers and EM

mapping, current conditions of the area, management history, drainage, soil types and the plant species currently growing. Each group had to use the information they gathered from the site to develop a plan and design of how the area should be used to combat the salinity problem. Each group gave a 5 minute presentation where plans and ideas were discussed with the presenters and landholder; and best practice management systems were identified.

The aim of Gillamii's workshop is to enable participants the capabilities to confidently plan and implement successful pasture grazing systems on their farm by providing the knowledge and skills required for positive outcomes. The workshop offers the latest information to participants in an interactive manner to provide the confidence to be able to

1. Select and prepare sites;
2. Establish relevant grazing and revegetation systems, and
3. Grazing utilization and management of improved pasture systems.

The workshop has been designed for anyone to attend but specifically is beneficial to landholders, farmers and advisors who are interested in the improvement of rehabilitating and the production potential of salt affected land. Topics addressed include what plants can grow in a defined salt affected area, agronomy of the different species and best practice ways to manage the plant species. FBG are currently working with the Gillamii Centre and DPIRD to hopefully bring the two day workshop to its members.

To express your interest in having this workshop brought to this area please contact Reaghan at [nrmprojects@fbg.org.au](mailto:nrmprojects@fbg.org.au) or phone the FBG office.

Reaghan Shalders



## Place your Tree Seedling order today!

**Order from a selection of approximately 200 native species plus a variety of fodder shrubs.**

If you would like to place a specific order you will have until mid December to do so.

**Call or email Janie at Katanning Landcare to order or for more information**

**Ph: 0428479623 or email: [nursery@katanninglandcare.org.au](mailto:nursery@katanninglandcare.org.au)**

# Spring Field Day Wrap Up

On a warm day in mid-September (Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup> to be precise!), we held our annual Spring Field Day. The day started off with an unexpected power outage at the CRC; a set-back which our presenter from Rabobank, Craig Matthews, was able to carry off with aplomb as he discussed rural land values.

From there, we headed out to the paddock at Trent and Tina Parsons, where we looked at the 2019 GRDC National Variety Trials for wheat and barley. These were presented by Georgia Trainor of Intergrain, and Dion Bennett of AGT Breeding, and supported by the Kalyx trial management team.

From there, we moved to two of the Landmark trials being run in the Shire this year. The first was hosted by Nathan and Wendy Brown, on land adjacent to the aerodrome. This very interesting trial looked at different grazing options and how much food could be produced from a given variety. The other trial was hosted by Viridis, Tantanoola, just to the west of town and looked at some new pre-emergent chemical options which will add to farmer options. Both trials were enthusiastically presented by Kyran Brooks, and Landmark trials coordinator Brad Westphal.

We then travelled to South Needilup to look at Pete and Jolene Daniel's RM4 vetch, as well as their K-Hart disc seeder and some reveg which was seeded in the same paddock earlier in the year. The RM4 was seeded in early April and had kicked into gear with some impressive biomass evident on the day. The Daniels had been very happy with their seeding program this year, and the performance of their newly purchased disc seeder. They have found it hugely beneficial in seeding directly into pasture paddocks in particular. Native plant agronomist, Geoff Woodall, took us through the reveg site which is aiming to rehabilitate some salty country along a creekline. One of the aims is to plant native options that may also have some strategic grazing opportunities, particularly in drier years.

After a delicious lunch provided by the Jerramungup DHS P&C (particular thanks to Tina Parsons, Nikki Carthew and Jess Bailey), we headed out to look at a different vetch option at Wade Browns. Wade has been a fan of vetch for many years, predominantly to fill a feed gap and because of its reliability in their mixed farming system. From there, we looked at Nathan Brown's sheep feedlot set up (very efficient!) which provoked lots of discussion and tyre kicking.

It had been a pretty warm day (around 29-30C), so we were then glad to head back to the Needilup Pavilion for our afternoon session.

We were lucky enough to have a presentation from Owen Hayes-Thompson, a farmer from Bruce Rock who runs a mixed farming enterprise and faces many of the same issues as our farmers in his low to mid rainfall environment. It was fantastic to have an outside

perspective and to hear how similar (and different) problems are approached.

In keeping with this year's livestock focus, we then heard from Mark Allington who presented on behalf of AWI The Sheep's Back, looking at what the top sheep producers are doing.

We ended this part of the day with a farmer panel which concentrated on the future of farming and opinions on different technologies, social media, animal activists, and many other topics.

Finally, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation arrived to give an update on community water storages in the area, particularly as we have still not received significant run-off rain events. Also, they updated us on the Emergency Farm Water Rebate Scheme, and assured us that the applications from the previous financial year were being finalised.

After a day jam-packed full of information, we ended with a sundowner sponsored by Lawson Grains, with a keg of FBG's own Biosphere Brew (Bay to Bush) being supplied as a taster of what we could expect for the keenly anticipated *Dancing in the Dirt* Pre-Harvest Gala Ball. The sausage sizzle was sponsored by CBH.

Maddy Wylie



# Foreshore vegetation assessment training day

Many people will recall the Wellstead Estuary Management Project run by the FBG from 2006 to 2009. One of the first actions from that project was to carry out a vegetation assessment of the Wellstead Estuary and Lower Bremer River foreshore.

Jack Mercer from Marlak Environmental was the man who did this work. In addition to rating the overall condition of the estuary and river foreshore vegetation, he also identified and listed native plants and weed species. The survey extended 19 km up the Bremer River and included both banks.

On Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October the FBG invited him back to Bremer Bay to provide us with some professional guidance on assessing the condition of foreshore vegetation along the estuary between the fish cleaning station and Main Beach.

Jack was a wealth of information and was keen to speak to our group of volunteers. It was a huge benefit to us to have him back. He described his assessment technique, which uses a combination of descriptive and numeric rating systems to evaluate the overall condition of the vegetation. We then walked parts of the estuary using these techniques to reassess them under Jack's trained eye. He also helped us to identify key native species and provided us with recommendations for managing the weeds that compromise parts of the verge vegetation. We assessed:

- Bank stability
- Foreshore vegetation cover and litter
- Verge vegetation
- Stream cover
- Habitat diversity

- Overall stream condition.

It was fascinating to identify the variables that had made a difference to the condition of the estuary foreshore in the 12 years since the original assessment. Two such variables are the fencing of the estuary for bird habitat, and lower water volumes in recent years. It was also wonderful to have observations from our local volunteers about estuary history to contribute to the data that was collected.

The process does teach you to be observant and perhaps see a little more clearly the types of things that negatively impact the estuary.

A template for the process we used is available for anyone wishing to practice these skills. Electronic copies of Jack's 2007 report: *Wellstead Estuary and Lower Bremer River Foreshore Vegetation Survey* are available from the FBG. Please contact me to get one.

Therese Bell



Photo above: This special lot are some of the participants who engaged in this training session. They were able to ask any question and it was incredible what was noticed when time was taken to just see!

The day happened thanks to the generous funds from Coastwest. Of course it doesn't happen without our **brilliant volunteers**. We also enjoyed salad rolls for lunch from Cheryl's Café, thank you.



## Coastwest Project Wrap-up

This is the final outcome to our project, *Bremer Bay Community Foreshore and Estuary Protection*, and the FBG wishes to thank Coastwest for the project funding, which achieved amongst other things;

- Dieback awareness for all the schools in the Shire
- Installation of a boot cleaning station and signage at John St Reserve, Bremer Bay
- Victorian Tea Tree Management at Mary Street, Bremer Bay
- An active Weed Action Group in Bremer Bay



**Left:** Installation of a boot cleaning station and signs, John St Reserve, Bremer Bay.

**Right:** Weed and dieback brochure highlighting the importance of Biosecurity for our region.

## Damon Parker Profile FBG Chairperson

Born in Cummins South Australian, Damon moved to Western Australia when he was two years old after his dad bought a war service farm on Devils creek Road in Gairdner.

He completed primary school at Gairdner Primary and went on to attend year ten in Jerramungup before finishing year 12 at Albany Senior High School. After leaving school Damon completed an apprenticeship as a heavy duty diesel mechanic in Perth and Kalgoorlie. He also spent 13 years away as an underground drill fitter. He then returned to his family farm in Gairdner in March 2005 where he continued to farm for 14 years before moving to Kalgan in March 2019.

Damon is currently farming on 1150 acres with his family in Kalgan just out of Albany, where his main focus is red meat production. He has 230 Murray Grey breeders and 500 Dorper Ewe breeders. He is turning off feeder calves and fat lambs from grass pastures with no grain assistance. All of his stock is owner bred, as he is not currently trading stock. He hopes to invest in farming infrastructure to irrigate pastures over the summer months, allowing for more carrying capacity.

Damon Joined FBG to see what everyone else was up to and also to share what he was doing in his own farming operation. He said “as farmers we don’t collaborate enough like most other companies/businesses do,

maybe we are all too busy”.

Damon can see FBG continuing to focus on NRM outcomes. He believes our farms lose value if we don’t look after our natural capital (ie: soil and water quality). He also takes great interest in looking for new and innovative ways of doing things. “I am excited by how data can help drive livestock operations as much as cropping enterprises and I am looking forward to the future with fenceless animal management” he said. In his spare time he enjoys drenching cattle and riding the bike to check stock as he seems to get busy farming to fit it in to work hours.



### 2020 GRDC Grains Research Update Albany Zone- Jerramungup

**End of February 2020**  
(Date and venue to be confirmed)

For more information contact Maddy Wylie at the FBG Office  
Ph: 98351127 or email: [soilprojects@fbg.org.au](mailto:soilprojects@fbg.org.au)

#### FBG STAFF

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**Reaghan Shalders– NRM Officer**  
nrmprojects@fbg.org.au

#### FBG BOARD

**Damon Parker**

**David Turner**

**Mick Lester**

**Kyran Brooks**

Board member executive positions to be allocated at next meeting.

**Rex Parsons**  
Shire of Jerramungup Representative

#### FBG ADVISORY

**Brett Dal Posso (SC NRM)**  
Craig Hall

**Hannah Iffla**

**Jenna Lester (Rabobank)**  
Kyran Brooks  
Laura Wishart  
Mitchell Bell  
Nathan Brown

**Nathan McQuoid**  
Noel Keding  
Rachel Bibby

**Ron Masters (DPRID)**  
Rick Carpenter  
Stuart Bee  
Tina Parsons

# Expressions of interest for Grazing Naturally workshops 2020

Are you are interested in learning more  
about rotational grazing?

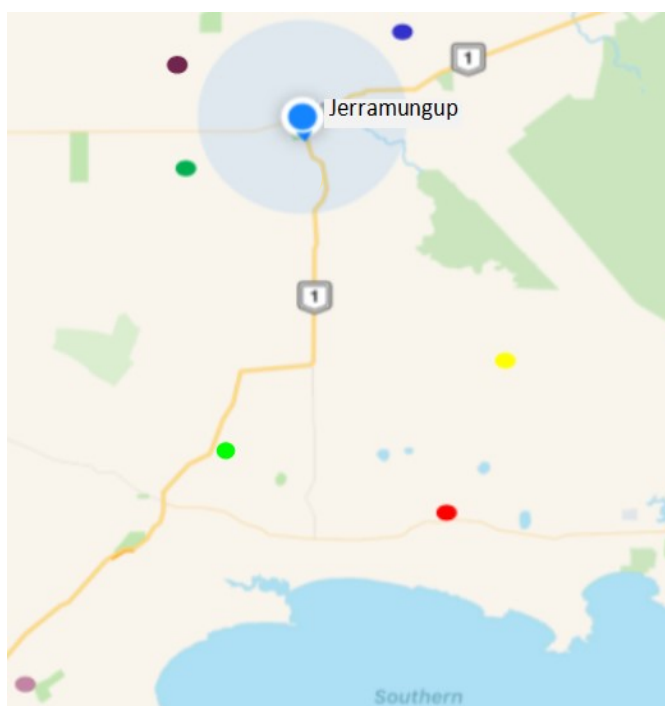
If so, please let us know by emailing the FBG office [admin@fbg.org.au](mailto:admin@fbg.org.au)

If there is sufficient interest, we will host an introductory field day followed by a two-day grazing planning workshop by Dick Richardson, founder of Grazing Naturally, in early 2020.

The field day gives an overview of rotational grazing methods and the Grazing Naturally system. The first day of the workshop covers the theory and the second day is practical. People will create grazing plans based on their own farming enterprises, work out stocking rates and feed demand for growing and non-growing periods, work out stock flows and use stock units, calculate carrying capacity and discuss drought planning.



## Jerramungup district rainfall



Location		Jan- July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Total YTD
Jerramungup		194.9	48.2	17.2	24.3	284.6
Needilup Nth		179	46	16.5	12	253.5
Needilup Sth		149	60.5	9	31.5	250.0
Jacup		162.5	52.5	11	15	241.0
Bremer Rd		185.5	80.5	50	53	369.0
Gairdner		152	51	27	46.5	276.5
Boxwood		172	22	18	45.5	257.5
Mettler		257.5	79.9	30.6	29.2	397.2

## FBG office hours over the Christmas break

The FBG office will be closed from  
Friday 20th December until  
Monday 4<sup>th</sup> February.



## MARK THESE DATES IN YOUR CALENDAR

### UPCOMING FBG EVENTS

- 2020 GRDC Grains Research Updates, Albany Zone– Jerramungup, Late February 2020

### REGIONAL EVENTS

- Gondwana Link presents the film– Breathing life into Boodja Albany 3rd December 2019
  - Summer Sesh Open Forums (GRDC)– Albany 20th January 2020
  - 2020 GRDC Grains Research Updates Perth 26th-27th February



Contact FBG for more details ph. 9835 1127

Email: [admin@fbg.org.au](mailto:admin@fbg.org.au)

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