

DAY 1: Joseph Before – Malawi

The 6th Assistance and Understanding Mission to South Africa, Cape Town is from 29th August to 8th September 2017. The mission theme "Bridging the Gap between emerging and commercial farmers"

Day one of the mission was for leisure waiting for the whole team to arrive. Having many delegates arrived on 28th August 2017 thus Aled, Joseph, Michael, Maurice, Crystal, Sam and Tim the team were waiting the arrival of Emily, Jenny and Darren Ho.

But in the morning the delegates who arrived on 28th August 2017 had a walk soon after breakfast to the Museum village of Stellenbosch. They appreciated the history of Stellenbosch village before proceeding to a place near Stellenbosch Magistrate Court where they keep old things made from copper e.g. Pots, Iron. Thereafter the team visited the Stellenbosch University botanical garden which is the oldest university botanical garden in South Africa.

While in the botanical garden NG's visited:

- (i) Bonsai – the oldest and biggest public collection in Africa
- (ii) Aquatic plants like water Hyacinth, lotus
- (iii) Glass house plants from the wet tropics and arid regions
- (iv) Rockery plants, the succulents and drought-tolerant plants
- (v) Vegetables and herb garden as well as the shop

From the botanical garden, the team went back to the hotel to have some drinks while waiting for other members to join the team. Soon after their arrival the team went for a briefing session, whereby the CEO of Agri-Expo welcomed everyone to South Africa, more particular Cape Town. He encouraged members on the mission to share more knowledge and experiences as much as possible.

The CEO (Johan Ehlers) also said the theme for the mission "Bridging the Gap between emerging and commercial farmers" is good as it will give chance to NG's to share more experiences and also learn from what the farmers are doing.

- Breyton reminded the team about their roles and responsibilities they have to take when one is a team leader for the day.
- Aled Jones congratulated and also extended the congratulation message from RASC to delegates for making into this year's mission.

Stellenbrau Brewery Company

After the briefing session the team gets into business by visiting the Stellenbrau Brewery Company producers of Jonkers Weiss, Craven Craft Lager, Governor's Red Lager and Alumn Ale beers. Stellenbrau Company imports barley from Germany and do all the processes here. The barley goes into different processing stages before beer is being produced. The stages are malt crushing; water addition; yeast addition; fermentation; separation of yeast; storage (bright beer); bottling/canning. The whole process of producing beers took 32 days. The day ended with a welcome dinner at one of Stellenbosch Restaurant's.

DAY 2: Aled Jones – Wales

Day 2 began with an early start leaving Stellenbosch Hotel at 7:30am. We loaded all our luggage into the trailer and we were off. Our driver, Oupa, took us out of the urban area and into the productive farmland of the Western Cape. Stellenbosch is renowned for its vineyard, many of which surround this historic town. As we drove further inland, vast areas of fertile cropping land dominated our view, set against a backdrop of rugged and dramatic mountain ranges.

As we headed towards Clanwilliam and further away from Cape Town, the land became noticeably drier. South Africa is currently suffering one of the worst drought in over 100 years and it showed with river and dam levels at record lows. Despite the challenges, we were amazed by the variety of farming enterprises.

With Oupa doing such a good job driving, we arrived at Clanwilliam half an hour ahead of schedule. Breyton therefore decided to show us his former High School, Augsburg. This is a school which incorporates a farm with Livestock, cropping and vegetable operations. As we arrived, workmen were shearing Angola goats with hand shears and we were all impressed by how clean and tidy the place was kept.

Our next stop was the Department of Agriculture of the Western Cape Government, here we met Riana and Stewart. Riana gave an overview of her extension work and the way financial support is delivered through structured projects that she has to manage and inspect on a monthly basis. To assist her work, she uses a digital pen to complete forms and documents on farm.

The talk was followed by a visit to a communal farming area where the municipality would lease land on a 9 year and 11 month lease to local emerging farmers in order to assist them to develop skills of Livestock keeping, predominately sheep, goats and pigs. The land is offered at 100 Rand per ha per month and the intention is to encourage farmers to commercialise, however, there are barriers to this transition, most notably the high rand values, access to finance and expertise of running large commercial units.

A traditional lunch then followed at Rneinholds Restaurant and then we called to see 100 year old vegetable farmer. Cheerfully carrying a spade in one hand, he proudly showed us his vegetable plot where he grows pumpkins, watermelon, beans, maize and onions etc. Given his fine health and happy spirit, we asked him what advice does he have for young people like us to live long lives? He simply answered "Just Work Hard" He will be 101 in December and has no intention of slowing down. What an inspiration.

It was now time to visit Andries Singler. His family started as farm workers and they have now become commercial farmers in their own right, farming over 600ha of Rooibos Plants. Very few of us had heard about this strange looking bush which is used to make tea, but our visit with Andries gave a thorough insight into its planting, harvesting and drying process. With rooibos now being used in a variety of products from tea to beer and even cosmetics, its value has rocketed from 6 rand per kg when Andries started farming to almost 60 rand per kg today. This got us thinking within the group and 1 could see costs turning – could rooibos grow in Zambia or even Norfolk? Andries was quick to remind us that rooibos can only grow successfully in his part of South Africa. We left full of knowledge and a real thirst to try some rooibos tea.

The next leg of our journey took us to Wupperthal region, a remote set beautiful community. We arrived at nightfall and we were greeted by a rather dark looking lodge. Breyton got nervous and it looked bleak whether we would get a meal and a bed for the night. Thankfully, food arrived and all was well. After dinner, Sam gave samples of his award-winning goats cheese and talked through his business to the group. A fascinating end to an action-packed day!

Day 3: Tim Eyes (Tim the Team Leader) – Australia

We woke to a brisk spring morning in what felt like the heart of South Africa. It was extremely exciting as we had arrived in darkness the night before. We were lucky enough to be cooked up a lovely hot dinner from local produce and freshly baked bread, a true treat for an urban farmer such as myself.

We had some time up our sleeve so we headed out on a walk through the town of Wupperthal, where we met a local mited farmer letting out his sheep flock after being locked up for protection from local predators of the night. He had his trusted border collie by his side to help in many ways with the sheep.

The team wondered on further to see the local stream that fed a small but affective flood irrigation system comprised of drains through yards and pipes under roads.

On our travel back to the lodge we ran into a local legend, 85 year old uncle Oli. Farming since the day he could, he seemed to be onto things well and truly. He had his own rooibos tea seedling in the ground as they went through less shade being transplanted from familiar soil. He grew many mixed crops and once again working hard was the key to success and a long and prosperous life. I was excited to see how chuffed he was as he found out where we had all come from.

While we were at uncle Oli's, Gert greeted us again to show us his small Buchu plantation that was funded by the local Western Cape Government as part of a alternative crop production income. The buchu is used as oil and in other skin products. Its known to fix everything and after we past the cup around to try buchu water, I understood why as it would scare anything out of your body. An acquired taste to say the least.

It's time to hit the road.

As we set off under rally car driver Oupa's taxi service, it felt as if we were heading toward more rocks not farm land. Until one last narrow track between 3 story high rocks, we open our eyes to an oasis, a farm we were all impressed to see.

We are greeted by Leiveldt farmer Hendrik (uncle Henkie) a cousin of our other chirpy farmer uncle Oli. Their charismatic friendly nature ran through the family. We were treated to a ploughing demonstration using his two lead mules, Kimmy and Ben. Boy could uncle Henkie plough, he would give any tractor and operator a run for its money, GPS and all. Uncle Henkie has very bad knees from ploughing since he could long reign a horse he is 60 in October. We wondered the fields and admired the productivity and the change in the soil quality.

They had a lot of oats in and next we saw how they harvested the seed from the oaten plants. First uncle Henkie has to buy oaten hay, he cuts the bales and spreads them on a concrete slab and walks 2 mules on the hay to produce the seeds. He processes 50 bales to get 75kg of oats. I sure do take going to the produce store for my seed for granted. We walked back to the house for lunch via the small villages water fountain, the life blood of the villages crops, livestock and lives.

It was time to halter the mules and horses and hit the road. We drove away with the delegates on a mattress on uncle Henkie's cart, seeing life through a Leiveldt farmers eyes with one trip a year to town, taking 3 hours by mule. I pondered what on earth I would do

without a car or machinery. It also gave me time to appreciate the life uncle Henkie lives. On our travels we saw 3 other small villagers, non as productive as Leiveldt but they were all on the improve through government grants, mainly for irrigation.

We headed back to the lodge and treated the locals to a presentation about our farms and shows at home, although language was a barrier, Agriculture is an international language that through a few photos we understood all we wanted to say.

Day 4: Crystal Artango – Papua New Guinea

It was one of those cold mornings again at Heuningvlei Lodge. Oupa was up at 5am again in the kitchen making himself a cup of coffee.

We all sat for breakfast, had breakfast and got a move on to loading our luggage into the bus wagon. Got together for a group photo in front of the lodge's sign and found out someone was missing. We looked around amongst ourselves and saw that Darren was not present. So far so good we found him with the morning fragrance of Bochu and figured he was in the Bochu patch.

We all got in the bus and were on our journey to Wupperthal. On our way we had to make a stop and dropped off the wagon of bags for the time being in a nearby village, still within the Henningveldt area.

Stewardt then directed the van to a rasta man's house. Without much said, Michael gave a smile from cheek to cheek. After a good chat with the rasta man and his family, we were on the road again.

We arrived at Wupperthal, first stop was the shoe factory. The shoe factory started off in 1830's, 1834 to be exact. They started off with making hats at the factory and then they moved into making shoes and from then on they made shoes. The knowledge of making shoes was passed on from generation to generation, educated by the Germans. An example of this was the shoes factory owner Arnold, he was the second generation in his family line to make shoes and now he is managing the factory.

The shoes are made out of Kudu and Gemsbuck hides and the leather comes all the way from Namibia, the leathers are then farmed and bought in Paarl. The skin/hide itself is 1700 Rand, plus the transportation and freight cost would be another 2000 Rand, giving a total of 3000 Rand plus, for the hides to get to Wupperthal for the making of shoes.

The factory consists of 4 workers working. They make 10-11 pairs of shoes each day. The leftovers are used for making souvenirs shoes. Arnold quickly ran through with the team the processes involved in making shoes in Wupperthal.

First the leather is laid out on the bench and cut out and sewed then the mole fitted into it and is taken to the sewing machine and is sewed, with the sole glued to it and heated up again and sewed again and finally the heels are made.

After all the shoe making process and valuable information given and absorbed the shoe maker sold souvenirs to the team and the team gave many thanks to Arnold the shoe maker.

The team then had a walk through the town, curious of how the town came to existence and so we all wondered off to find ourselves in front of one of the oldest buildings, but the team did not know, until we met Inga. She works from the tourism office in Wupperthal and she is to tell us about the history of the town.

Wuppenthal was first discovered in 1830 by a German settler, Mr Leipoldt, he discovered Wuppenthal with the indigenous families existing on the land. Since the area did not have a name at the time, he gave the area a name. The area was called "Wuper" after a river in Germany. The town is still known as Wuppenthal. Towns like Wuppenthal are in the custodian of the church (Moravian Church) in which it is greatly involved in the town's

decision making. Tourists started coming to Wuppenthal in 1999 up until now, they still go to Wuppenthal. With that, the town has 500 plus population and 16 communities to this date.

After a brief history of the town we all had a group photo in front of the church and said our thanks and we were on the road again to Stewardt's farm (New Farm).

Arrived at New Town, the first person we visited was uncle Michael. Uncle Michael welcomed us with his wife Martha into their home and we were privileged to get an insight of how generations back they make flour from barley, rye and oats. Manual done with two large stones on top of each other and with a handle that is used to spin the stone on top while grinding.

The grains are added while the stones grind against each other, creating flour as the product. According to uncle Michael if he were to go on for another 13 days just concentrating on making flour, he could make a bag a flour within these 13 days. With that very interesting to some of us, Darren so curious and wanting to make sense of the flour making process back in the day, helped out uncle Michael with making flour. We spent quite a while waiting for Darren.

Next stop uncle Barrend's place the man who is famous for making the tin cups. 76 year old uncle Barrend is still single, according to Darren that is very wise of him. Back in the days their grandparents had to make tin cups because cups were expensive to buy. The team watched on with amazement of how skilful uncle Barrend was with making tin cups. When he was done he gave us all a tin cup to take with us.

Our journey went onto Stewardt's house/farm with all smiles and greetings. We were then led to his goat farm where he showed us his female goat that won overall winner in the show and his finest male goats , one was bought by the project and given to him, the other was his own breed and his other one was his champion male goat prize winner. Stewardt then led us to a plant not far from his house called a chicken beard, it is a medicinal herb used for curing diseases/illnesses of any sort, even cancer. Stewardt picked some leaves from the plant.

We went on to see Stewardt's vegetable garden where he plants potatoes and sugar beans with no added fertilizer to the crop to assist the crop to grow, it is growing very well, even no agriculture used for weed or insect control. For the potatoes, he sells them locally within his village or community and selling it at R50 a pocket. Stewardt also says he sells the best tasting potatoes. We headed back to Stewardt's house to have lunch, after a lovely lunch prepared by Stewardt's family. He then found his patient Tim and gave him the chicken beard dipped in hot water to test out.

We then took the bus back to Wupperthal and visited the cosmetic factory, saw the process of how they made soap and it took them 30 minutes to make soap. The main ingredients put together is rooibos, citrus blend and glycerine and is then put to shaped trays and to the freezer and soap is produced. They sell locally to lodges and hotels and have been exporting to Germany and China for 3 years now.

We were on the road again, Clanwilliam here we come. At Clanwilliam lodge where the team would stay the night. Unfortunately during the day the team was aware of the surprise during dinner at the Florist restaurant. We were all so impatient, yet Breyton said meet at the bar at 5:30pm, some came on time and waited while Breyton came 5 minutes later.

Well, after a few minutes of cooling off, we headed to the Florist restaurant. All curious to see what surprise is installed, we all walked with determination to the restaurant and met up with Riana and Stewardt's family and also found out that Darren was already there as well. We sat for dinner with live Afrikaans beats entertaining us. We had the privilege to see the Riel dances live, celebrated a birthday of one our team members, Joseph Before, and also, thanks to Riana's husband and son we had a round of traditional shots. All in all it was a wonderful day.

Day 5: Sam (Tim) Steggle – England

Following a long day yesterday and a fantastic evenings entertainment experiencing the amazing Riel dancers where some of the group even joined in, an early start was planned.

We took the short drive from our accommodation to meet a truly inspirational farmer, Willem Engelbrecht and looked at his Groenhol farming operation.

Willem explained that his aim was to develop a sheep system that is not labour intensive. With this in mind Willem explained how he decided to sell off a wheat farm to fund the installation of a paddock system to maximise resources this also included the installation of a center pivot irrigation system. Each set of 4 paddocks are home to 150 ewes of the 900 strong flock and are rotated every 8 days. Ewes will lamb outside and are then transferred to new lambing pens for a couple of days. Weaning occurs at 100 days and all fat lambs sold direct to slaughter house at a current price of 80 Rand/kg with the ewes attracting 62 Rand/kg. We were shown Willems prize winning SA Merino ram which was South Africa's Junior Champion last year and carried the hefty price of 20,000 Rand.

We then helped to load 3 of Willems Simbra Bulls. The Simbra is a breed in its own right now originating with a cross between the Brahman and the Simmental. Willem explained how they liked the milkiness of the Simmental and the meatiness of the Brahman. This has helped the breed develop with a target of 450-500kg live weight at 24 months old giving a carness weight of 250-300kg. All the cattle can be found on the breed plan site under the Groenhol herd prefix.

As if we were not already in awe of what had been achieved with a clear and decisive plan, attention to detail and finger on the pulse. We were shown round the Elandsberg Tea Processors factory, this was of particular interest as we had already seen a lot of Rooibos plants and learnt of the growing methods and how important the tea industry is to the farmer's and local economy. We were walked through the sifting/sorting areas onto pasteurisation, bagging, boxing, labelling and dispatch. Willem explained how 14 000 tons of Rooibos tea is processed annually and his factory makes 1.6 million tea bags per day.

We then visited the Shassberger factory where they make shoes on a larger scale than our previous shoe factory. The factory is a major employer in the area along with the neighbouring Rooibos factory. Tea is only processed here, it is now distributed to over 65 countries around the globe with Germany being the biggest importer.

It was now time to head to the West Coast where we had the most fantastic experience at Minisbos Sherm in Lamberts Bay. Minisbos Sherm was the first and original open-air restaurant in South Africa. Not only was it open-air but also a stone's throw from the sand and with the waves crashing as we ate some of the most delicious seafood dishes along with traditional South African cuisine all cooked on the wood fired braai in front of us.

We then took the short drive to WA Hugo to have a sheep dog demonstration. WA is one of only 25 South African farmers training sheep dogs and has had considerable success. This success has led to a successful business being developed training dogs for other people, last year WA trained 35 dogs and has sold a 4 year old fully trained bitch for 40,000 Rand.

We then jumped onto the back of his trailer and went to look at the Bushman's Caves. One of the caves opposite had been converted into holiday accommodation with views over looking the ocean.

We then headed to WA's new farm to see his goat operation where he is milking 50 goats and making cheese. The goats are yielding just under 5L per day. 3 different types of cheese are being made every day.

We said our farewell and left some of Sam's English Goat cheese to taste and headed back to Stellenbosch on the fun bus.

Day 6: Michael Miguel Chileshe – Zambia

Day 6 saw us heading to Cape Town for a historical cultural lesson. After a busy week in Clanwilliam and Wupperthal area, we headed to Robben Island.

Robben Island held the largest number of Black, Coloured and Mixed Asian prisoners that opposed the Apartheid principles. It was also home to Nelson Mandela, the first Black President in South Africa.

Robben Island was commissioned as a maximum prison facility in 1964. It was used up to the year 1991 when the last political prisoners were released and it was decommissioned as a prison. In 1994, South Africa has its first Democratic Election and Nelson Mandela was elected the first Black President.

In the year 1995 the first reunion of Robben Island prisoners took place and they decided to turn the prison facilities into a museum.

In 1998 the Robben Island museum was opened. Nelson Mandela visited the prison to remember all those that lost their lives for the struggle of freedom. Robben Island never ever housed white political prisoners and woman political prisoners.

We toured the different sections of the prison and went over to where Nelson Mandela was held for 18 years.

Our tour guide Ntando Mbata explained to us what went on during their trying times in prison. We thanked our prison guide for an insightful tour and leapt to tour the prison grounds.

Robben Island had a Leper graveyard where condemned Lepers were sent to die. The men and the woman were separated, but 41 healthy babies were born and adopted on the mainland.

Robben Island had a village that accommodated at least 200 people, mainly the prison stewards and their families. Today it is used as a worker's compound. There was a church a school and a clinic to tend to the needs of the community.

We left the Island by midday and went back to the city for lunch. After lunch the team headed on a City Bus tour around Cape Town. This tour took us to historical sites, beaches, old residential areas and to the 7th Natural Wonder of the world (Table Mountain).

It was there when Noble Breyton Milford handed the team the opportunity to cable cart up to the top of Table Mountain (1637m above sea level). The scenery was amazing and it was just surreal.

After Table Mountain we headed back into town for dinner and we were on our way back to the hotel after an amazing day.

Day 7: Jenny Mckerr – Scotland

Monday 4th September 2017

The team left Stellenbosch sharp to begin the journey to Bredasdorp, where new commercial farmer, Andre Cloete, farms successfully on land leased from the Government.

We received a warm welcome from Andre when we arrived and he began telling us about his business. The farm is 871ha and was purchased by the Government in 2007. He produces apples and pears for the local packhouse, Two A Day (TAD) and has 52ha of water rights, and he also keeps some South African Merinos. The farm employs 18 permanent staff and 36 casual workers to look after the trees through preventative spraying, tree manipulation and pruning.

In 2014, the Government set a target that 30% of land must be farmed by black farmers. 90% of the population in South Africa are black yet only 1% of the fruit industry is produced by black farmers. The Government took an aggressive approach and purchased farms to gift to black farmers, however the majority failed. The Government now purchases farms and leases them to black farmers to ensure the farmer is able to manage the business. Farmers must have a lease agreement to be able to secure finance from the bank and to be able to apply for Government grants to support with infrastructure and equipment.

Andre started with a one year lease on a Caretakers Agreement which was then reviewed and updated to a three year then five year lease, then eventually 30 years. This process was not simple and Andre had to work closely with the Government to prove he was able to manage the farm business. The most significant point about the thirty year contract is that Andre now has the right to buy the farm (at the farm value minus the asset value that he has invested over the years). On this basis, he has been able to secure finance with the bank to hopefully complete the transaction by the end of the month. This is a massive success as traditionally the Government support for black farmers fails due to the lack of business knowledge or in Andre's words "Not backing the right jockey".

Andre is a qualified irrigation designer, former farm manager, classed as a black farmer, soon to be land owner, successful businessman and he is also involved in several Boards to ensure he is at the forefront of driving change and supporting more black farms to be successful. His personal ambition is to farm commercially and create a good business for his three sons to manage in the future.

All of the apples and pears are produced for Two A Day (TAD) packhouse which has brands as TruCape and Tesco Natures Choice. 60% is exported to countries such as the UK, USA, EU, Africa and Middle East, 20% for the local market and 20% into the juice market (mainly grade 3 fruit). Export is currently the most profitable option with profitability with highly dependent on the exchange rate and quality of fruit. Often the fruit can be stored for up to 12 months with grading being completely on sale, however TAD does offer advanced payments for farmers. Andre is the only black farmer on the TAD Board of 13 Directors and farms in a predominantly white area (farmed).

Andre is very proud that he can be so proactive in the industry away from the farm whilst his farm workers continue to run the daily farm operations. He ensures a team brief is delivered to his workers on a Monday and Friday, runs a suggestion box and maintains open communication with his employees. He believes in leading by example and showing the workers the correct way to work in the field. The Government scores businesses and there

are more points if black workers are employed. One of the main challenges facing Andre, like many other farmers, is the drought. He is investing heavily to try and open up two boreholes on the farm.

Andre was very straight talking and believed the biggest challenge for South Africa was that the gap between rich and poor is too great. He said "You can't speak to a man when he has nothing in his tummy. We should stand together as farmers, not as a colour. A man alone on an island, won't go far. He believed strongly in working cooperatively within the community by helping each other.

I left Andre's farm feeling inspired by his determination and persistence to succeed, not only on his own farm, but in the wider industry all whilst contributing to his local community.

We then travelled an hour to Agri Dwala group at Larsrivier. Here we learned about how Kosie and Lisa van Zyl were fortunate enough to be given a chance to farm when a farmer gave them a loan to buy his farm in 1995. They felt strongly that they should create opportunities for others to pay it forward and develop the community for all to develop from.

The beginning of Agri Dwala was in 2005, when Kosie called a meeting of the thirty members of the community to discuss the vision to work together. 29 of the 30 farmers agreed to the principles and in 2006 they moved forward, farming crops (barley, wheat, granola) cattle and sheep on the principality land surrounding Napier. The community saved money from the sales of their produce for 3 years which enabled them to approach the Government to show they could sustainably manage the farm as a community. They were gifted two farms from the Government totalling 548ha and they set up a shareholder structure to ensure all contributors benefited from the farm income whilst reinvesting profits to purchase machinery such as harvesters, to reduce reliance on contractors, 948ha of common land continued to be leased from the Government resulting in a total of 1432ha of farming for the community of 20 households.

The community renovated the farmhouse on the second farm to become a guest house and wedding venue which proves to be popular. They also set up an orphanage (Kingdom Ambassadors Children's Village) for local kids that have been abused or came from traumatic backgrounds. They currently have 35 kids aged between 8 weeks and 17 years. Going forward, the vision would be to have the kids as shareholders in the community farm to ensure they always have a connection with their homeland.

We visited both farms and they were kept in immaculate condition. We were also privileged enough to spend some time with the kids in the orphanage which brought about the reality of the third world country we are touring. Agri Dwala are farming well, not just for profit but to support and develop their community and genuinely make a difference. A real example of cooperation working well in a small community.

The common thread we have seen between the farmers today is their attitude. They have experienced Apartheid and know how it feels to be in a society with divisions. They have found the strength to look forward and create their own opportunities whilst maximising support from Government schemes.

It's not all spirit and religion, there's also the business knowledge required to optimize opportunities, which at Agri Dwala, comes in the form of Kosie, who is seen as a mentor.

The community has a strong belief of equality and sharing wealth with those who contribute. You just need to make a start.....

We left Agri Dwala and made our way to Paarl for dinner and to check into the Pontac Manor Hotel, where we will spend the next 5 days.

Three words to summarize today:

EQUALITY

INSPIRATION

PERSEVERANCE

Day 8: Darren Ho – Singapore

Tuesday 5th September 2017

Our day began just like any other, done breakfast and then pray that it will rain, even if it is just for a little bit. The clouds looked very threatening as the forecast suggests, but it was really only a slight drizzle, still it was better than nothing. With that, we took a drive to our first destination.

Our first stop was to see the Phillippe vegetable farmers. Leon and his wife gave us a brief history at how back in 1877, the British soldiers brought some German immigrants here on the sandy marshy soil to start growing vegetables. Soon, they started the Phillippe Agricultural Area to focus on growing plants. Up until today, the entire farming area of 1800 hectares is producing up to 80% of the Western Cape's leafy green consumption. Not only do they grow vegetables such as kale and cauliflower, they also have a big export market for carrots and beetroot too, as seen in our 2nd farmer, Johann's packing facility.

A few of the challenges they face is the on reaching urbanized built up areas caused by the rural migration settlements. Now the farmers have a short supply of workers of 2 to 1 hectares from the regular single worker. It is still nice to see how a community has formed at every stage of the vegetable cycle from Garth's seedling company to Florbax's flower farm.

The next farm we visited was more than a farm. De Grendel is an internationally acclaimed brand name, farmed for its wine and sheep with colonial history. All 820 hectares of land is fully utilized, 220 of which is for the game reserve, where the owner wants to focus more on indigenous species such as the Eland of Red Hartebees. Farm manager Rob, brought us to see the common Springboks around the compound. We look forward to the day when Rob is able to introduce natural predators such as cheetahs or hyenas into the ecosystem.

Other aspects of the farm include the blue berry plantation of the reverse ammonia water purifier as part of their efforts to make De Grendel sustainable. Agri tourism is a big feature here and it cannot be better represented by their award winning restaurant. We were treated by an exquisite pork belly dish that certainly had the coloured carrots of Phillippe in it.

After which, we were introduced to the winemaker, Charles Hopkins who took us on a very informative history of South African wines and what it means to carry the flag. His lesson on how to appreciate wines were peppered with stories of the industry and how his true passion is teaching proteges and spreading the old world values of winemaking.

Our final stop was the Fairview Farm, where farm manager Donald, gave us the low down on his property. In this farm, diversity is king. From goats to cattle to slivers of beer brewing, they even have free-range chicken. Whatever it takes to adapt to the market condition. It is astonishing to know they not only managed to diversify their produce selection, but also went into value added products such as cheese, oils and wine. It was heartening to know that one of their key pillars is to generate employment for the coloured community and that is keeping to the South African way of life.

All in All, South Africa is a melting pot of people and farmers, but the more I heard the most were words like 'communities, bridging the gap and working together' so that gives us a very good idea of how the potential of this country can be fulfilled in time to come.

Day 9: Stewart van Rooy – Wupperthal

Wednesday 6th September 2017

We left Pontac Manor at 8:15am to Rhodes Food Group farm where they were herding dairy cows. There, we met Barty and Edmund. They began to explain to us about their operations and breed of cattle. There are a handful of varieties, but particularly the Ayrshire breed is renowned for their rich but smooth milk, as compared to others which is the Jersey, where they are creamier.....

Edmund is part of the Ayrshire Association and is an international judge. He began to explain what he looks for in a dairy cow, for example, a strong back to support the weight, skinny, like a girl in a bikini with deep long middle length and high udders. They also mentioned about the pedometer which tracked the number of steps the cows took to understand its behaviour to make better farming decisions.

Then we were brought down to the sheds where he explained to us on what he fed the cattle's. It was a mix of food and straw, supplemented by pellets made from Nova Group. This "ration" then provides the bedding for the cows to sleep on, and this was what made the farm special. The technology could turn the manure fly free. It was designed by the Germans but successfully implemented here on Barty's farm. We could see the entire process of throwing the sludge into 3 by products (compost, grey water and bedding), making this a farm a model for a zero waste facility.

After that, we were led to the calves to learn that they were only fed pellets and dry straw. The calves were only about 8-9 months old and are growing at a healthy rate. The youngest ones were only 4 months old. Subsequently, we went into the milking parlour and were told that contrary to popular belief A2 milk is better than A1.

It is amazing to see how only 84 hectares worth of farmland can produce so much milk. That is made possible through the advancement and successful implementation of technology today, where the cows are happy and the milk is great.

Our second stop is the Moorreesburg Agricultural Show. This was where we realized what a celebrity Breyton was. It was heartening to see so many kids proudly showing their farm animals and being so confident and capable in handling them. I feel that there is no better time to start teaching children about the importance of this industry and expose them at a young age so that there is continuity for younger generations to be part of this industry.

After doing our round in the different kids show categories, we were given a brief tour of the entire show. We passed by the main showground where the horses were in action and where we met the judges of the various horse categories. We were very fortunate to bump into the show's president and organizers as we exchanged stories about each of our own home countries shows

Although we were there for only 2-3 hours, we managed to see most of the grounds and will be looking forward to coming back on Friday to get into the thick of the festivities.

It was a short day but everybody had a good time!

Day 10: Maurice Mantchombe – Malawi

Thursday 7th September 2017

After attending a youth show at Moorreesberg Show grounds on Wednesday afternoon, the 2017 RASC Next Generation members were again on Thursday morning on the road to finalize field visits.

We took our breakfast at the hotel at 7:00am and left for Ceres at 7:40am. We arrived at our first destination for the day which was at Source Home Made Foods PTY limited after a one and a half hour drive from the hotel.

We were welcomed by Henri Conradie and his business partner, Anton Erwee. In his presentation, Henri mentioned that At Source Pty limited was established in 2002 as a separate entity from Koelfontein farm to process and add value to fruits such as apples, peaches, pears and vegetables. We learnt from Henri that Ceres Valley has an average of 5 degrees warmer than the upland region. Over the past 5 years, there has been a mechanisation drive in the fruit industry because of its efficiency and effectiveness.

It was also noted that as a commodity based business, value addition is done through canning and drying which increases the shelf life of the fruits. Previously, only 1 South African company was able to export fresh fruit but after the country joined WTO in 1997 and the liberalization of the market through National Agricultural act, more companies are now able to export. We also learned from Henri that his father did a lot of work in the fruit industry through innovations in farming and this earned him a good reputation. He got the Industry award each year and won it 10 times and was referred to as the Fruit King.

It was amazing to note that the coming in of Anton who studied fruit science enhanced the company's profile. At Source Pty limited has both local and international markets and the Middle East. Since the area does not produce all types of fruits, the company gets pineapples from the Eastern Cape and mangos from the Northern Cape. The company also imports dry fruits and repackaged them for sale. For instance, plums are imported from Chile and apricots from Turkey. To prolong shelf life of its products, the company uses foil packaging which is expensive. The company has 130 permanent staff members and processes 1000 tons of fruits per year.

We were then taken by Anton to view the factory and appreciated the enormous work that is involved in fruit processing. The first area we visited was the reception area where fruits from farmers are collected with a content of less than 18%. During processing, fruits are cut, sulphur added to enhance oxidation and metabolic processes for colour and preservation. Once sorted and graded, moisture content is increased to about 22%-26% for easy storage and increase shelf life. Temperature for room storage is supposed to be 3 degrees.

We were then shown how packaging is done for various fruits such as apricots, apples, pineapples and other mixes. We finally visited the laboratory where all tests are done. Fully satisfied with what we saw at At Source company, we headed to our next destination which was Du Toitskloof fair trade project. We had lunch at Du Toitskloof Wines which is also part of this project. We were welcomed by Tienie and Bernard who explained to us what the project is all about. The project started in 2005 and serves 1600 people from the surrounding community. The project has a current budget of R4.2million per year and it started with 3 day care centres.

We were taken around to see kids most of whom were sleeping at that time. The school comprises of grades 1 up to 7, after which students go to high school. It was fascinating to note that 1 student who studied at the school will be graduating at the University this year. The school has a library and computer centre. There is also a clinic at the premises which provides health care, family planning, HIV/Aids testing. Every year auditors come to audit the project to ensure that they don't lose the accreditation and maintain standards.

The computer centre has 31 computers which were donated by Richard Branson of Virgin Wines and normally each student spends 30 minutes learning English, Afrikaans, puzzles and some computer basics three times a week.

It was also noted that the project purchased a mobile media centre amounting to R 2.8million and it uses R 500 000 from premiums to run it per year. Other projects activities include selling of wine and other fair trade products and premiums obtained are ploughed to the community.

We were very impressed with how this project is impacting on the lives of people from this area. It was now time to go back to the hotel after a successful field trip. Since it was raining, everyone quickly ran to the vehicle and our driver Oupa, safely drove us back to Pontac Manor Hotel in Paarl. What a day!

Day 11: Emily Craven – England

And so we made it to the end of the tour/mission not a holiday! and the final morning was upon us. Clearly for all of us the best was saved til last with the leadership of the great Doctor Emily, the vet, Craven; chief orange peeler by royal Breyton appointment and related to the great international rugby superstar and of course the original inspiration behind the finest brew in South Africa – Craven craft beer (me not him, just to clarify) Welcome to my ramburbs.....

The morning started with some of the team being selected for their Afrikaans radio debut with an interview for Sondergrense. I'm sure Stewart, Aled and Breyton will be available for autographs once the broadcast has gone out on World Food Day. There were rumours of a champagne breakfast but coffee was good enough for the mere mortals such as myself!

The pace of today was set to be more relaxed with a leisurely breakfast and then back to the show for a proper look at it in full swing before our final farewell dinner.

The weather was perfect for a show day, our chief exec would take the dry and sunny conditions any day even if the locals would probably rather have the rain given the current drought conditions. The show was much more alive today with all the stalls open and the public coming in. There was a fantastic line up of cattle, the Herefords and Angus being particularly well represented. I know Jenny was particularly impressed with the Santas and I do wonder if a different kind of Santa will be visiting chateau Mckerr on Christmas Eve next year? Many also took a few moments to buy some presents and souvenirs for their loved ones at home.

The final part of the mission was the farewell dinner, a chance for us to share the magic with everyone involved in the trip and all of those that had worked so hard in the background to make it happen. The backdrop was amazing, The Aquarium. We were allowed to walk around during the drinks reception before being served dinner with the ocean exhibit backdrop.

The team at Agri Expo had done an amazing job in preparing the venue and the presentations. There was something very special about seeing the highlights of our trip played out in front of us and sharing it with others. We were honoured that some of the farmers came, especially those from as far as the Wupperthal region. For some it was their first trip to Cape Town and I hope they had as much fun as we did.

The evening was about celebration and we managed to celebrate but we also managed to express our thanks and gratitude to those who made it happen. I hope those key players will always think of us when they use their bag (Breyton), halter (Riana) and multitool (Oupa) and smile, thinking of that special few weeks that we shared together.

And so the final chapter draws to a conclusion but I hope it is only final in the sense of our immediate trip. I know the conversations will continue and the friendships that transcend continents will last a lifetime. There is already talk of plenty of return trips and I for one am keen.

So thank you all for a wonderful few weeks. A big shout out to the team.

Breyton - 'the real chief' Milford

Aled - 'our sheepdogs are better than yours' Jones

Tim - 'DJ' Eyes
Stewart - 'best laugh' van Rooy
Darren - 'where are you' Ho
Sam - 'I've got cheese' Steggles
Maurice - 'shake that salt' Mantchombe
Michael - 'smiling' Chileshe
Joseph - 'birthday boy' Before
Crystal - 'its too cold' Artango
Jenny - 'Dr Pepper' Mckerr or should I say Dr Jenny Pepper?

And of course our legend that is Oupa Schumacher, the greatest driver in history!

Baie dankie dat ek hier kon wees. Julle is die beste.