

## **EUROPEAN WORLD JERSEY CATTLE BUREAU TOUR 2015**

The World Jersey Cattle Bureau meetings and tour were held in Europe this year beginning on Sunday June 14<sup>th</sup> in Amsterdam followed by a tour of Germany and Switzerland, and culminating in Denmark on Friday July 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Fourteen countries participated, namely Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Jersey, New Zealand, the Netherlands, South Africa, Switzerland and the USA.

The tour began in Amsterdam with a lovely relaxed dinner cruise on board a canal boat that gave the group the opportunity to renew old acquaintances. Then after a good night's sleep the tour began in earnest with the first stop being at the organic Jersey herd of the Bokma family which included a visit to their cheese plant and shop. They served everyone a simple lunch of lovely fresh bread and cheese and then we were on our way to visit the herd of the Koers family at Kamperveen in North Eastern Polder (Polder meaning reclaimed land). This farm was built in the 1970's and has expanded in size since then.

On day two we called at the farm of Jan Dirk and Irene van der Voort who also have an organic farm and a cheese plant. The horns are retained on the cows and they are not fed concentrates, but rely on grazing supplemented by muesli that contains various herbs and fruits, a diet that Jan Dirk adjusts if he detects any health problems. After lunch, which included the world champion "Remeker" Jersey cheese, we enjoyed a tour of the Archaeological Park at Xanten and learned some interesting and amusing facts about the ancient Romans.

The following day we visited the herd of Heidrun and Robert Klinkhammer at Rees in the district of Cleves in western Germany. Heidrun drives a taxi by night and during the day looks after the cattle. Her husband Robert is a politician and he also lectures and sells eggs. They had set out a basketful of vibrantly coloured hard-boiled eggs for us to eat. This was followed by a delicious lunch of Goulash in the courtyard of the farm of Arno and Michael Leurs at Kerken. That evening, dinner was enjoyed in a restaurant at an old

working mill, which apart from a few small windmills was the biggest we had seen so far.

The next day the European Jersey Forum meeting was held at our hotel whilst an alternative tour took everyone else to visit Schloss Dyck, a historically important moated castle in the Rhineland. Both groups later met up for what proved to be a very interesting walking tour of Cologne, one of the biggest cities on the west bank of the Rhine. We were shown the inside of the beautiful cathedral which was hit by fourteen bombs during the Second World War and were able to admire many of the lovely original stained glass windows which had been removed for their protection prior to the attack on the city.

The following day's tour began with a visit to the Holstein/Jersey herd of brother and sister Manfred and Andrea Uhrig in Sulzbach. Their grandfather started this farm and he would be very proud of the way his grandchildren are managing it. They have a prize winning Holstein herd with about twenty Jerseys which were introduced to the farm after Andrea came home from working in Canada and had been impressed with the breed. They hosted us in their garden and fed us on Bavarian sausage filled rolls and wine, followed by a tot or two of Schnapps!

A coach drive followed, taking us south to Switzerland, finally arriving at our hotel in Merlischachen, which is on the north shore of Lake Lucerne. The area was so pretty with flowers cascading from balconies and the sound of the water lapping just below our hotel. We should have enjoyed the magnificent scenery as we were ferried across the lake and ascended the Rigi Kulm mountain by cogwheel train the next day, but it was not to be. It was cold and raining heavily, but we enjoyed the experience nonetheless and were warmed by a tasty lunch on the mountaintop. Later that day we attended the Swiss Jersey Night Show at Küssnacht. The cattle classes were ably judged by Anthea Day from our group, who did an excellent job of placing the many good animals paraded.

One week into our tour and still in Switzerland, we drove to Sörenberg and somehow our driver got our very long coach up an extremely narrow and winding road through the Alps to see the farm of Martha and Niklau Epp. We were greeted at the top by a herd of very friendly goats that promptly tried to

board the coach and then we were shown their cheese factory and treated to a delicious cheese lunch. Niklau explained that he takes his Brown Swiss cows up the mountain in the month of May and then walks them back down again in September – a journey of five hours each way. He also told us that instead of the traditional cowbells some farmers are considering introducing GPS to track their animals. After lunch we were driven back down the mountain for our dessert of homemade ice-cream at the farm of Martin and Corinne Zemp at Ebnet. The whole family of adults and children turned out to greet us and they displayed a group of their best Jerseys for us to inspect. They are also the producers of the finest and I mean finest ice-cream. Many of us overindulged, as we wanted to try as many different varieties as possible all flavoured by home-grown fruits. Whilst on the subject of food, dinner that night was held at Hotel Hammer in Eigental, which looked out onto beautiful meadows. Here an elderly gentleman entertained us on the terrace by playing the alpine horn and singing a prayer to the hills, animals and neighbours through an upturned wooden cone the size of a bucket. A speciality of the restaurant was a really tasty bowl of cheese soup, followed by a main course of Jersey beef ... delicious!

The following morning finally dawned sunny and warm and we drove to the shores of Lake Zug and to the farm of Patrik Unternährer in Friesencham. As well as his Jerseys, Patrik keeps horses at livery and he grows apples, peaches, apricots and cherries. I don't think we made too big a dent on his crop, but he did let us all loose on his cherry trees where we all gorged ourselves on the most delicious fruit. The remainder of the day was spent at the farm of Bruno, Rita and Martin Schuler in Hünenberg where we remained for the rest of the day. We freely wandered the farm and were later treated to a magnificent barbeque where everyone cooked his or her own meat on large conical barbeques.

Our next stop was Rothenburg ob der Tauber in Germany, a well preserved medieval old town in Bavaria and it was a long journey, but it was made enjoyable by Birgitta who persuaded each of us to say a little about ourselves on the coach microphone and then to tell a little joke or sing a song. One or two people refused to tell a joke knowing full well that their punishment was to drink a tot of Schnapps. Some much preferred the punishment! We still

had a long drive ahead of us to our next destination of Fulda and finally arrived after a total of nine hours on the road since we had left Switzerland.

After a good night's sleep we were up and ready to visit the herd of Thomas and Elke Scholz in Gersfeld-Mosbach on what proved to be a bitterly cold day. Thomas farms organically using no fertilizers on his land. After a walk around his field looking at the cattle, he and Elke kindly hosted us with various cuts of smoked beef and bread all set out on tables under a group of trees. By the time we re-boarded the coach everyone was ready for Birgitta's bottle of Schnapps to warm us up. Later that afternoon the WJCB held its Council Meeting at our hotel. It was thrown open to everyone and there was a good attendance.

Our second day in Fulda was very relaxed and with no herd visits. Instead we were taken on a city tour of historical Fulda and the birthplace of St. Boniface, an English Benedictine monk who devoted his life to the conversion of the Germanic tribes. We visited the historical castle Wartburg in Eisenach and then went on to Erfurt, which was the junction of the trade routes in the middle ages. This evening we all enjoyed the last of the season's large white asparagus at dinner.

We had an early start the following morning to drive to Potsdam and on the way we visited the Sanssouci Gardens and the former palace of Frederick the Great, the King of Prussia. We finally arrived at our hotel in time for the Council to have a second meeting.

The main tour was almost at an end and our final herd visit in Germany was to the co-operatively owned farm formerly managed by Gebhard Rehberg, and now managed by Rainer Schmitt. It is Germany's largest registered Jersey herd. After a delicious meal of Goulash we were driven to the Spreewald (Spree Forest), which is a protected UNESCO biosphere reserve and famous for its pickles. We clambered aboard two punts propelled by men with poles and despite the sudden downpour of rain we thoroughly enjoyed a wonderful two-hour tour of the small waterways, which meandered through meadows and forests. That evening everyone enjoyed a wonderful barbeque followed by music and dancing sponsored by Agrargesellschaft Schoebendorf. All the farmworkers and neighbours had been invited and it was with great reluctance

that we had to leave. Before we left presentations were made to Gebhard and Rainer and also to the World Wide Sire team and we also said goodbye to our bus driver Joe who had been with us for the past eleven days.

We were driven by our new driver to Berlin for the final day of the main tour and we were given an interesting tour of the city which included a visit to the Brandenburg Gate, the monument to the Jews who had lost their lives and the remains of the Berlin Wall, accompanied by our guide Monika. This was followed by a cruise on the river Spree before we checked into the Winters Hotel at historic Checkpoint Charlie. At our evening meal we said goodbye to a few people who were returning home next day and the following morning some of them came to wave us off on our way for the post conference tour in Denmark.

For the last leg of our journey we were driven to Puttgarden where we boarded a ferry to Rødby in Denmark and then drove on to Mern where we enjoyed a visit to Aagaarden the farm of Nels Poulsen. He owns five hundred Jerseys and milks them robotically. We had another 105km ahead of us to reach Copenhagen and arrived just in time to walk to restaurant Hercegovina where we piled up our plates at their barbeque buffet.

Sightseeing on day two in Copenhagen included a very nice visit to Dragør, a fishing village with its pretty cobbled streets and ochre yellow houses with roses and hollyhocks growing against the walls; a walk around the large courtyard to view the buildings occupied by the much loved Queen Margarethe the Second and the obligatory visit to see the statue of the Little Mermaid, we then proceeded on to see the herd of Sophia and Palle Bjerggaard Hansen at Ullerslev. Hans Norgaard, who is the co-writer of The Dairy Queen book with Derrick Frigot, joined us here. He told us that the Jersey cow was first introduced to Denmark from Sweden in 1890. From here we drove on to Odense via Kvaerndrup. Odense is the main city of the attractive island of Funen.

Next morning staying on Funen, we visited the Juulsgaard herd of Niels Ulrik Andersen, which was another robotically milked herd. Everything here including the spreading of straw in the barn was controlled automatically and adjusted accordingly. From here we drove on to Ribe in Jutland to see our final

herd of the tour, the Ravinggaard herd. Ole Sørensen kept a very neat farm and he too milked robotically. Ribe is the oldest town in Scandinavia founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and was another very attractive and interesting area to visit. Whilst in the vicinity we visited the marshlands and clambered up a grassy dyke to view what used to be, before 1912, a great cattle-grazing area.

Our final day was spent at the Danish National Show in Herning, the biggest show in Scandinavia where on arrival the majority of the tour party made a beeline to watch Bent Oleson, a young Danish man judging the Jerseys. Danish Jerseys completed the 2015 tour by hosting a very enjoyable barbeque at the Herning showground during which a copy of The Dairy Queen was auctioned off for 70 Euros.

It was a marvellous end to what had been an extremely well organised trip by Dr. Hubertus Diers and Birgitta Brentrup of Worldwide Sires, Germany who also represent the Verband Deutscher Jerseyzüchter, the German Jersey cattle association.