

THE 2018 NHMA NATIONAL

# TRACTOR TREK

20<sup>TH</sup> - 22<sup>ND</sup> SEPTEMBER

ARTICLE BY  
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Update 3

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Often when lineage is discussed, a degree of snobbery usually accompanies any such discussion and it is sometimes felt that those in a 'superior' position look down their noses at the more common folk. This is not the case with tractor royalty, and Neville Thompson is a good example, though he has orange, not blue blood pulsing through his veins.

Neville hails from Young, NSW, and is a long-time member of The Chamberlain 9G Tractor Club. He lives, breathes, and sleeps orange tractors and to fit all of his journeys and adventures into one page is near impossible, but I will attempt to generally cover just some of his exploits.

Walking around his yard, there are literally dozens of Chamberlain 9Gs, some in bits and some will probably never go again, but there are just as many that are up and running. Some have bigger engines and truck gearboxes, and there are even some rare ones including a 3-wheel Canelander (tricycle) and a Crusader. There are some with blades fitted and some with cranes. There are just lots of orange tractors and tractor bits.

**USA Trip 2009:** This trip saw five Chamberlain tractors shipped across the ocean to the States, followed by 14 hardy souls to form the travelling group. The guys bought secondhand caravans over there, though one guy splashed out on a brand new caravan for \$13,000 (to buy the same in Australia at the time was around \$70,000). They used them for their three months of travelling and sold them before they came back home. During their three month trip they travelled approximately 11,000kms and there was not a single problem with any of the tractors.

**Highlights** – Everywhere they went, people were offering to buy their tractors, with some offering big money. They were actually personally welcomed into most of the smaller towns they went through and one collector showed them his private collection of 193 tractors stored in four massive sheds. He wanted one of the Chamberlains right or wrong – needless-to-say, he never got one.

**New Zealand Trip 2012:** This was nine tractors and 15 diehards on a three-week trip clockwise around New Zealand. They were joined by some members of COG (Chamberlain Owners Group of NZ) for various parts of the trip. An overall highlight was how friendly everyone was wherever they went, with the only downside being a tractor casualty suffering a major engine problem, requiring shipment back to Australia. From what I hear,

there were lots of hijinks and someone came home with the new nickname of Pebbles!

**2017 NHMA National Rally at Hamilton, Vic.** Neville, together with good friend (and fellow orange-blood), Claude Fuller of Temora, hooked up their caravans and headed off to the rally. They picked up Mark Buchannan of Leeton along the way and, after three days travelling, with stops at Urana and Ballan, they arrived at Hamilton on the Thursday afternoon, and set up camp with the rest of the Chamberlain Tractor Club guys. Like everyone else, they had a good but wet weekend.

**Neville's latest trip to Far North Queensland:** Two tractors and their drivers set off from Young, NSW, picking up another tractor and a pair of drivers as they went through Brisbane. They were up near Kuramba in north Queensland (Gulf of Carpentaria) when one tractor had trouble with a towbar. They had just dropped it off at a welding shop for repairs and were on the way back to the caravan park when Neville's tractor had a heart attack. They managed to get it back to the park, took the cylinder head off and found it to be un-serviceable. Lindsay Crowe, a good mate of Neville's, offered to drive up from Young with another head, but Neville insisted it be freighted up. Would you believe it got lost in transit - Lindsay organised another head to be sent by a different freight company and, unbelievably, they both turned up eight days later. With the tractor back together, they finally set off on the rest of their trip to Darwin, Katherine, Kununurra, and across the Gibb River Road where the tractor guys, in first gear and towing their caravans, were passing the 4WDs and caravans. They said it was the roughest road they had ever been on! It was then onto Derby, Broome, Fitzroy Crossing, and Halls Creek, then across the Tanami Desert onto Alice Springs, Broken Hill, and Dubbo before arriving home two and half months later. Would you believe that when Neville got home to Young, he was presented with a freight bill of \$4,328.90 for the two cylinder heads - yes that's right...four thousand, three hundred and twenty-eight dollars, and 90 cents!



▲ Cape York where everyone parked up to take a picture of the Chamberlains on the beach. There was no water for a 100 metres when they parked the tractors - by the time the picture was taken, the tide had come surging in and there was a panic to get the tractors quickly back to terra firma.

Anyway, it was all paid up and he was able to move on.

**Other trips the Chamberlain guys have been on include:**

The 2007 Biloela National Tractor Trek;

In 2008, there was the Chamberlain Tractor Trek around Darwin, where they based themselves in Katherine for a month and travelled to all the Northern Territory's major attractions;

Tasmania;

Cape York, which was interesting.

Las Vegas, USA;

Around Birdsville.

In the main picture, Neville's Chamberlain was captured as it came back from its last adventure pulling up underneath his flagpole. The tractor is affectionately named *The Old Girl*.

These guys are not afraid to jump in their tractors, hitch up their caravans, and drive to any part of Australia, or overseas. I think their next trip is to the Elvis Festival at Parkes, NSW.

If you see the mighty orange tractors out on the road, give



▲ Outside the Birdsville Pub on one of the many treks.

them a wave - they are out there enjoying themselves on their pride and joy.

**The 2018 NHMA Tractor Trek would like to thank some of their major sponsors:**

Fullers Earthmoving, 3595 Young Road, Temora NSW.

Phone Claude on 0427 300 457 or (02) 6977 1593;

Hilltops Meat, 3 Scenic Road, Young NSW.

Phone (02) 6384 1900

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