

HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL



BACK TO BACK WOOL CHALLENGE

THE BEGINNING:

IN **1811** AT NEWBURY IN BERKSHIRE, ENGLAND, A ONE THOUSAND POUNDS WAGER WAS MADE TO MAKE A COAT FROM THE SHEEPS' BACK TO MANS' BACK IN ONE DAY.

WATCHED BY 5000 PEOPLE THE COAT WAS COMPLETED IN 13 HOURS. THE SHEEP WAS EATEN WITH MUCH QUAFFING OF BEER TO CELEBRATE THE EVENT.

THE STORY CONTINUES:

IN SCOTLAND THE STORY BEGAN AGAIN IN **1992** WITH RICHARD SNOW, A KEEN YOUNG SPINNER AT THE SCOTTISH WOOL CENTRE, WHO DEVELOPED THYROID CANCER. HIS DESIRE TO **RAISE FUNDS FOR CANCER RESEARCH** SPARKED THEIR **BACK TO BACK WOOL CHALLENGE** COMPETITION. IT WAS TO HAND SHEER, SPIN AND KNIT A SWEATER/JUMPER FROM THE SHEEPS' BACK TO YOUR BACK. A FIRST YEAR DISPLAY DEVELOPED INTO A RACE AGAINST THE CLOCK THE SECOND YEAR AND THEN INVOLVEMENT WITH THE GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS (THIS LAST ITEM FINALLY CAME TO FRUITION IN 2005.)

THE EVENT CREATED ENORMOUS INTEREST IN THE UK BECAUSE OF THE WAY IT CLEVERLY PROMOTED WOOL AND RAISED FUNDS FOR CANCER RESEARCH.

THE SAME YEAR (1992), AUSTRALIA HELD ITS OWN CONTEST, WHEN INDIVIDUAL BLADE SHEARERS, HAND SPINNERS AND KNITTERS REPRESENTING FOOTBALL TEAMS FROM GEELONG IN VICTORIA AND THE WEST COAST EAGLES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA COMPETED IN A RACE TO CREATE A FOOTBALL SCARF. A TROPHY WAS DONATED BY THE **GEELONG WOOL CENTRE** AND THIS HAS NOW BECOME THE **AUSTRALIAN CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY** FOR THE BACK TO BACK.

IN **1994**, *AUSTRALIAN WOOL SHOWCASE* MEMBER, **WENDY DENNIS** TOOK PART IN THE FOURTH WOOL CONGRESS ON COLOURED SHEEP IN THE UK, AND WHILST IN THE UK WENDY VISITED THE **SCOTTISH WOOL CENTRE** IN ABERFOYLE AND IT WAS THERE THAT PLANS WERE MADE TO DEVELOP AN **INTERNATIONAL** COMPETITION.

WENDY HAS BEEN THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND ALL THE SUBSEQUENT CHALLENGES. HER ENTHUSIASM AND FRIENDSHIP HAVE BEEN ADMIRER AND ENJOYED BY ALL COMPETITORS THROUGHOUT THE YEARS. WITHOUT HER EFFORT THE CHALLENGE WOULD POSSIBLY HAVE WITHERED AND DIED.

AN **INTERNATIONAL SET OF RULES AND PATTERN** WAS DEVELOPED AROUND A TEAM OF 8 PEOPLE, CONSISTING OF A BLADE SHEARER, SEVEN HAND SPINNERS/KNITTERS AND ONE SHEEP. THE TASK FOR THE TEAM WAS AND STILL IS – **CAN YOU KNIT A JUMPER IN UNDER 8 HOURS?** TIMEKEEPERS AND ASSESSORS MONITOR EACH TEAM. TEAMS MUST COMPETE ON OR BEFORE THE 2ND WEEKEND OF JUNE AT VENUES GENERALLY CLOSELY LINKED TO THE WOOL INDUSTRY. THE **SCOTTISH WOOL CENTRE** DONATED A TROPHY TO BE PRESENTED TO THE TEAM WHO COMPLETED THE GARMENT IN THE SHORTEST PERIOD OF TIME. THIS IS NOW THE **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY**, WHICH CURRENTLY IS HELD BY THE TEAM FROM TORONTO, CANADA.

IN **1995** ELEVEN TEAMS FROM 3 AUSTRALIAN STATES, SCOTLAND AND THE SHETLAND ISLES COMPETED USING THE SET RULES. THE **SHETLAND ISLES** WON IN THE TIME OF **5 HOURS 57 MIN 58SEC**. THE AUSTRALIAN CHAMPIONS WERE THE **YOU YANG YARNERS** FROM VICTORIA IN THE TIME OF **7HRS 15MIN 47SEC**.

IN **1996** THE NEW SOUTH WALES TOWN OF **MERRIWA** IN THE HUNTER VALLEY STAGED ITS' FIRST CHALLENGE ON THE JUNE LONG WEEKEND. THE CHALLENGE COINCIDED WITH THE **FESTIVAL OF THE FLEECES**, AND WAS HELD AT **BRINDLEY PARK WOOLSHED**, A BEAUTIFUL HISTORIC WOOLSHED THAT AT ITS PEAK WAS THE BIGGEST SHED IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE. THE **PEMBROKE MERRIWA JUMBUCKS** MANAGED TO COMPLETE THE TASK OF SHEARING/SPINNING/KNITTING THEIR GARMENT IN **7HRS 58MIN**. THE THEN GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES, HIS EXCELLENCY MR. GORDON SAMUEL "CLICKED" THE SHEARS TO START THE COMPETITION. THE 2ND TEAM COMPETING IN MERRIWA WERE THE **MUSWELLBROOK MATILDAS**, WHO WERE UNABLE TO COMPLETE THEIR GARMENT IN THE ALLOTTED TIME OF 8 HOURS. ONCE AGAIN THE **WORLD CHAMPIONS** WERE THE **SHETLAND ISLES** IN THE TIME OF **5HRS 18MIN** AND THE **YOU YANG YARNERS** FROM VICTORIA RETAINED THEIR **AUSTRALIAN TITLE** IN THE TIME OF **6HRS 46MIN 46 SEC**. THE TOTAL TEAMS COMPETING WORLDWIDE THAT YEAR WAS **22**.

IN **1997** THE NUMBER OF TEAMS GREW TO TWENTY FIVE (25), ONCE AGAIN **SHETLAND ISLES** RETAINED THE **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY** WITH A TIME OF **5HRS 9MIN** AND SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED THEIR RETIREMENT. THIS TIME STOOD UNTIL **2004** WHEN THE **PEMBROKE MERRIWA JUMBUCKS** BROKE THE RECORD WITH A TIME OF **4HRS 51MIN 14SEC**. – STILL THE CURRENT WORLD RECORD.

THREE TEAMS COMPETED IN MERRIWA, THE **MERRIWA JUMBUCKS**, THE **MORISSET CRAFTY CRAFTERS** AND THE **ARMIDALE TWISTED SISTERS** WHO BOASTED OF HAVING THE YOUNGEST TEAM MEMBER – AGED 10 YEARS. THE OLDEST THAT YEAR WAS THE SHEARER FROM ONE OF THE VICTORIA TEAMS – AT 80 YEARS OF AGE. THE **YOU YANG YARNERS** REDUCED THEIR TIME TO 6HRS 40MIN 07SEC.

IN **1998** TWENTY SEVEN (27) TEAMS COMPETED WORLDWIDE WITH THE **WORLD CHAMPIONS** BEING THE **GRAMPIANS GUILD** TEAM FROM DEVON, ENGLAND WITH A TIME OF **6HRS 7MIN**. AN UPSET OCCURRED IN AUSTRALIA WHEN THE **MORISSET CRAFTY CRAFTERS** – COMPETING IN MERRIWA – BEAT THE REIGNING AUSTRALIAN CHAMPIONS – THE **YOU YANG YARNERS** BY 33SEC IN A TIME OF **6HRS 31 MIN 47SEC**.

IN **1999** THERE WERE TWENTY FOUR (24) TEAMS COMPETING WORLD WIDE - ENGLAND/SCOTLAND/AUSTRALIA/USA & CANADA AND ONLY 4 TEAMS MANAGED TO COMPLETE THEIR JUMPERS WITHIN THE ALLOTTED 8 HOURS. THE **GRAMPIANS GUILD** TEAM FROM DEVON ONCE AGAIN BECAME **WORLD CHAMPIONS** WITH A TIME OF **5HRS 54MIN**, FOLLOWED BY A TEAM FROM SCOTLAND WITH A TIME OF 6HRS 12MIN. THE MAJOR UPSET WAS THAT OUT OF 17 AUSTRALIAN TEAMS ONLY 2 MANAGED THE TASK OF COMPLETING THE JUMPER IN 8 HOURS AND ACTUALLY FINISHED UNDER 7 HOURS – **THE MORISSET CRAFTY CRAFTERS** IN 6HRS 24MIN 37SEC – AN AUSTRALIAN RECORD – AND THE **PEMBROKE MERRIWA JUMBUCKS** IN 6HRS 48MIN 42SEC. BOTH TEAMS WERE COMPETING IN MERRIWA AT THE FESTIVAL OF THE FLEECE.

THE SYDNEY OLYMPICS YEAR OF **2000** BROUGHT THIRTY TWO (32) TEAMS TOGETHER AND CREATED A MAJOR UPSET. FOR THE FIRST TIME THE **WORLD CHAMPIONS** DID NOT COME FROM THE UK BUT FROM **AUSTRALIA**.

THE **MORISSET CRAFTY CRAFTERS** – COMPETING IN MERRIWA ONCE AGAIN – BROUGHT THE **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY** ACROSS THE SEAS. THEIR TIME WAS **6HRS 17MIN 19SEC**. THAT YEAR THE **PEMBROKE MERRIWA JUMBUCKS** HAD A “LAPSE IN CONCENTRATION” AND CLOCKED IN AT 7HRS 13MIN 33SEC.

IN **2001** THIRTY SIX (36) TEAMS COMPETED WORLDWIDE AND THE **WORLD CHAMPIONS** THAT YEAR WERE THE **WOOLLY CHAMBERMAIDS** FROM MURRAY BRIDGE IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA IN THE TIME OF **5HRS 58MIN 01SEC**. THE **PEMBROKE MERRIWA JUMBUCKS** CAME SECOND IN THE TIME OF 6HRS 6MIN 56SEC, WITH THE **MORISSET CRAFTY CRAFTERS** COMING IN 3RD AND ANNOUNCING THEIR RETIREMENT.

IN **2002** TWENTY SIX (26) TEAMS COMPETED WITH THE **PEMBROKE MERRIWA JUMBUCKS** WRESTING THE **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY** FROM MURRAY BRIDGE. THE TIME WAS **5HRS 42MIN 07SEC**. THE ATTEMPT AT BREAKING THE WORLD RECORD WAS BECOMING VERY SERIOUS BUSINESS.

2003 SAW THE **PEMBROKE MERRIWA JUMBUCKS** HOLDING ON TO THEIR **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP** POSITION WITH A TIME OF **5HRS 33MIN 30SEC**. THE ELUSIVE **5HRS 9MIN** SET BY THE SHETLAND ISLES IN 1997 WAS COMING EVER CLOSER.

2004 BECAME A MILESTONE YEAR FOR THE **PEMBROKE MERRIWA JUMBUCKS** WHEN THEY RETAINED THEIR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP POSITION AND **BROKE THE WORLD RECORD** SET BY THE SHETLAND ISLES IN 1997. THE RECORD TIME OF **4HRS 51MIN 14SEC** IS NOW THE BENCHMARK TO BE ACHIEVED BY OTHER TEAMS WORLDWIDE. AFTER A STRAIGHT 9 YEAR RUN WHERE THEY NEVER WENT OVER THE ALLOTTED 8 HOURS THE JUMBUCKS ANNOUNCED THEIR RETIREMENT STATING THAT "THERE WAS NOTHING MORE TO ACHIEVE".

THEY ARE THE ONLY TEAM WHO HAS COMPETED IN NINE (9) CONSECUTIVE COMPETITIONS AND IT BECAME TIME TO ALLOW OTHER TEAMS TO HAVE THE PLEASURE OF WINNING A WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP. TWO MEMBERS OF THE JUMBUCKS COMPETED IN ALL 9 CHALLENGES.

THE JUMBUCKS AND VISITING TEAMS TO THE **MERRIWA VENUE** HAVE **RAISED \$40,500** OVER THE 9 YEARS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE BACK TO BACK AND HAVE WON THE **MOST MONIES EARNED** TROPHY FOR 4 YEARS.

IN **2005** **HITSUJIKOUBOH MASAKO** FROM CHIBAKEN JAPAN BECAME **WORLD CHAMPIONS** IN THE TIME OF **6HRS 9MIN 24SEC**. THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY WAS ONCE AGAIN TRAVELING ACROSS THE SEAS.

IN **2006** **HITSUJIKOUBOH MASAKO** RETAINED THEIR **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP** POSITION WITH A TIME OF **5HRS 33MIN 46SEC**.

IN **2007** **THE TORONTO SPIDERS** FROM **ONTARIO CANADA** BECAME THE WORLD CHAMPIONS IN A TIME OF **6HRS 00MIN 18SEC**. WHO KNOWS WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BRING!

IN **2008** **THE TORONTO SPIDERS** RETAINED THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY IN THE TIME OF **5HRS 55MIN 50SEC** — **THE WORLD RECORD IS STARTING TO BE IN DANGER!**

IN **2009** **THE NEWCASTLE SPINNING KNITWITS** BECAME THE WORLD CHAMPIONS IN THE TIME OF **6HRS 3MIN 20SEC**....WHO WILL EVENTUALLY BREAK THE WORLD RECORD WHICH HAS NOW BEEN HELD BY THE MERRIWA JUMBUCKS FOR 6 YEARS!

IN THE 16 YEARS OF COMPETITION WELL OVER ONE HUNDRED TEAMS HAVE COMPETED — FROM CANADA, USA, JAPAN, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, ENGLAND, SCOTLAND AND IRELAND, SOUTH AFRICA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC. IT HAS BROUGHT MANY PEOPLE TOGETHER EVEN WHEN NOT COMPETING AT THE SAME VENUE.

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IN 2010 THE TORONTO SPIDERS REGAINED THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TROPHY WITH A CREDITABLE TIME OF **5HRS 52MIN 48SEC** AND FOR THE 1ST TIME SINCE 1996 THERE ARE NO AUSTRALIAN TEAMS IN THE TOP 3 PLACINGS. THE TEAM FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC – COMPETING ONLY FOR THE 2ND TIME CAME 2ND WITH 6HRS 52MIN 10SEC WITH JAPAN COMING 3RD WITH A TIME OF 7HRS 14MIN 04SEC. **A TRULY INTERNATIONAL RESULT.**

IT IS TRULY AN **INTERNATIONAL** COMPETITION AND A WONDERFUL WAY OF RAISING FUNDS FOR CANCER, PROMOTING WOOL AND IN THE PROCESS HAVE A WONDERFUL TIME “MEETING PEOPLE” EVEN IF THE LATTER IS ONLY THROUGH THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA.

THE CHALLENGE IS NOW ALSO RECOGNIZED BY THE **GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS**, WITH THE WORLD RECORD TIME OF **4HRS 51MIN 14SEC** ACCREDITED TO THE **PEMBROKE MERRIWA JUMBUCKS**.

THE PERPETUAL & ANNUAL TROPHIES ARE:

- **SCOTTISH WOOL CENTRE** – FOR THE WINNING TEAM WORLD WIDE
- **BRIGADOON TROPHY** – FOR THE GREATEST DONATION TO CANCER RESEARCH FOR A GROUP ASSOCIATED WITH AN INTERNATIONAL WOOL CHALLENGE VENUE
- **CITY OF GEELONG** - FOR THE WINNING AUSTRALIAN TEAM
- **CANADIAN CO-OPERATIVE WOOL GROWERS LTD** - FOR THE WINNING CANADIAN TEAM
- **SHIPWAY TROPHY** – FOR THE WINNING NEW SOUTH WALES (AUSTRALIA) TEAM

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1996 – 2004

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INTERNATIONAL WOOL CHALLENGE
WORLD CHAMPIONS & THEIR TIMES

1995	SHETLAND ISLES	TIME: 5HRS57MIN 58SEC
1996	MERRIWA JUMBUCKS SHETLAND ISLES	TIME: 7HRS 58MIN 00SEC TIME: 5HRS 18 MIN 00SEC
1997	MERRIWA JUMBUCKS SHETLAND ISLES	TIME: 7HRS 43MIN 47SEC TIME: 5HRS 09MIN 00SEC
WORLD RECORD		
1998	MERRIWA JUMBUCKS GRAMPIANS GUILD, SCOTLAND	TIME: 6HRS 45MIN 43SEC TIME: 6HRS 7MIN 00SEC
1999	MERRIWA JUMBUCKS GRAMPIANS GUILD, SCOTLAND	TIME: 6HRS 48MIN 42SEC TIME: 5HRS 54MIN 00SEC
2000	MERRIWA JUMBUCKS MORISSET CRAFTY CRAFTERS AUSTRALIA	TIME: 7HRS 13MIN 33SEC TIME: 6HRS 17MIN 19SEC
2001	MERRIWA JUMBUCKS WOOLLY CHAMBERMAID S AUST	TIME: 6HRS 05MIN 56SEC TIME: 5HRS 58MIN 01SEC
2002	MERRIWA JUMBUCKS AUST.	TIME: 5HRS 42MIN 39SEC
2003	MERRIWA JUMBUCKS	TIME: 5HRS 33MIN 30SEC
2004	MERRIWA JUMBUCKS	TIME: 4HRS 51MIN 14SEC
NEW WORLD RECORD		
2005	HITSUJIKOUBOH MASAKO JAPAN	TIME: 6HRS 9MIN 24SEC
2006	HITSUJIKOUBOH MASAKO, JAPAN	TIME: 5HRS 33MIN 46SEC
2007	TORONTO SPIDERS, CANADA	TIME: 6HRS 00MIN 18SEC
2008	TORONTO SPIDERS, CANADA	TIME: 5HRS 55MIN 50SEC
2009	NEWCASTLE SPINNING KNITWITS	TIME: 6HR 3MIN 20SEC
2010	TORONTO SPIDERS, CANADA	TIME: 5HRS 52MIN 48SEC