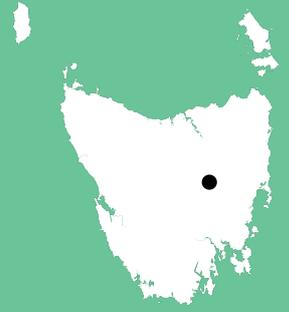


# 13. Beaufront: Enhancing productivity with native shelterbelts and riparian plantings



Balancing production with conservation and biodiversity in the northern midlands.

## AT A GLANCE

Owners	<b>Annabel and Julian Von Bibra</b>
Property	<b>Beaufront</b>
Location	<b>Northern Midlands</b>
Property size	<b>12,500 hectares</b>
Enterprise	<b>Merino wool</b>

## KEY POINTS

- Shelterbelt plantings have delivered promising early outcomes for stock protection.
- Inviting outside knowledge and support has been instrumental to project successes.
- The team promote conservation as a fundamental element of farming.

## Background

Beaufront is one of the largest wool farms in Tasmania, owned and operated by Annabel and Julian Von Bibra. Julian is a fourth-generation farmer with a focus on balancing production with conservation and biodiversity.

After decades of informal collaboration with the Von Bibras, conservationist and ecologist Kerry Bridle has worked at Beaufront since 2019 to advise on and lead conservation and native revegetation projects.



## Building on history

Annabel and Julian are dedicated to honouring the farm's heritage, while paving the way for fresh ideas and approaches.

'The native grasslands and bush have been strongly valued by the family for 100+ years,' says Annabel, 'we all love it for sentimental reasons and ecological reasons. It's protected and it's not going to be developed; that's always been an understanding in the family.'

'Now we're upskilling,' says Annabel, 'Kerry is giving us information that we didn't know we didn't know. We've come so far in seeing everything we do through a more environmentally conscious and ecosystem-conscious lens. We still have a long way to go, but we're getting there.'

'We know what we want,' adds Kerry, 'better biodiversity outcomes and better environmental outcomes.'

## Shelterbelts for productivity

The Beaufront team notes that the benefits of native vegetation are multiple and impossible to separate; yet the benefit of shelterbelts for livestock has been a key incentive for projects.

'Shelter and shade for stock is really important, so that's very high on my agenda,' says Annabel, 'when there's no wind break or protection from driving rain and you lose animals, that makes people stand up and think. It's a big motivator.'

'Once you fence it off, although it takes years for the trees to grow, the grass grows. That's a huge start, and we've seen some unexpected returns quickly.'

'Even before we'd planted anything, the grasses have gone up, the lambs have tucked into the fence and have windbreak,' says Kerry, 'so there have been unexpected wins.'





## Protecting vegetation

The Beaufront team always aims to support natural regeneration where possible. Where it's not, tree planting is paired with a management regime to protect from pests.

The property extends from the Macquarie River to the Easter Tiers; linking up the bush to the river through riparian vegetation corridors and creating stepping stones scattered through the landscape has been the focus of revegetation efforts.

'We fence old patches of bush that have the potential to regenerate naturally, that still have viable seed and all the species. It'll do the rest,' says Annabel, 'that's the cheapest way to revegetate.'

'We plant into areas that don't have any remnant vegetation,' says Kerry, 'we put in species we know should be there to mimic the natural landscape, whatever is relevant to the space.'

'We also cage trees because we have a big problem with deer. We've got these tall trees with no recognisable understory coming through. There are young trees there, but as soon as they get a metre tall, the deer smash them down. We got a grant and caged a lot of them, and they just doubled in size.'

'That was one of the most rewarding projects,' says Annabel.

## A collaborative journey

With new conservation approaches at Beaufront, one of Annabel's priorities is to bring farm staff along on the journey. Working together to share expertise also offers Kerry opportunities to integrate conservation activities into daily farm life.

'There was often discussion with crop and stock managers about what crops will go in where over the next year or two,' says Annabel, 'but not necessarily the environmental plan.'

'But if you want people to buy into it, you need to take them on that journey. I'd like everyone on the farm to have ownership of what we're trying to do.'

'There's a lot of people that work here and they have specific roles,' says Kerry, 'sitting around the table gives you a better idea of what may or may not work when you're putting suggestions forward.'

'There's often a singular practical reason for doing something on the farm, like boundary fencing. We can enhance that with a biodiversity component. If we can pick areas being fenced off and plant them, we get a gain from that too. It's a win-win,' says Kerry, 'there's plenty of opportunity to find those spaces within a project.'



## Open-gate policy

It's not just internal support that can lead to successful revegetation projects; outside expertise have been vital in guiding the team to develop their knowledge and approaches.

'It's been crucial to be open to help and outside ideas,' says Annabel, 'when I think of my father-in-law putting in plantations in the 60s, which failed one after another, what turned that around was getting help from outside.'

'Tasmania has a strong conservation community. There's help if you go looking. We've hosted all sorts of research projects and partnerships, and so much knowledge has come with that. The front gate is always open, and that has led to the successes we now experience.'

For resources and advice about establishing and managing trees on your property, contact Pierre Defourny at [pdefourny@tasland.org.au](mailto:pdefourny@tasland.org.au).

## Shared responsibilities, shared benefits

Conserving the land is part of the ethos at Beaufront. Supporting native vegetation and biodiversity is treated not only as a responsibility, but an essential part of operations.

'We've got past just enjoying this journey to recognising the environment needs a lot of support, recognising our historic role in its decline,' says Annabel, 'which is broader than just farmers, but we certainly have played our role. From a landownership point of view, we feel a really strong sense of responsibility to do what we can.'

'It would be a massive achievement if people would acknowledge restoration as a core component of farming,' adds Kerry.

'Your self-esteem, your wellbeing, your farm, your land, your staff, your kids, everybody else's kids, and the planet will thank you,' says Annabel, 'you won't regret it.'

For resources and advice about establishing and managing trees on your property, visit [treealliance.com.au](http://treealliance.com.au) or contact Private Forest Tasmania's free hotline 1300 661 009