

The Sunderland Connection - (Richard) from his diary -  
- and reminiscences

I was left with splendid people in Hawkes Bay just after my 15th birthday, commencing my farming life employed by Mr. John (Jack) Lane, who was farm manager for Nelson Bros. at Mangatepetere. Here I was most fortunate in being left as a boy to work under 3 wonderful men of those years. They were Mr. William Nelson, the financier and philanthropist, John E. Lane, a most talented, progressive farmer, and Mr. William Richmond, then a wonderful stockman.

So begin Richard Sunderland's detailed memoirs of his farming life, working from 1896 to 1908 as farm cadet to farm manager and later farm owner. He was one of a number of young men who benefitted from association with William Nelson - his advice, wisdom and generosity.

One can deduce from Sunderland's writings that he was a no nonsense sort of man of strong character, hard working, determined and loyal - just the sort that would appeal to William Nelson - not unlike W.N. himself.

(Perhaps we can admit to a degree of nepotism in the relationship. George Sunderland, secretary for Nelson Bros, then living at Mangapapa (at Mangatepetere) was Richards uncle. In later years John Lane, married William's eldest daughter, Ida, and Oswald, Williams fifth son, married George Sunderland's daughter, Gladys.)

Richard started as a cadet at Chesterhope and records that " Mr. Lane was a wonderful friend, giving me 3 months to find my feet, then paying me 5/- (five shillings) a week. My first rise in pay came in September 1896 from 5/- to 7/6 (seven shillings and six pence) a week.

As well as Chesterhope, William had considerable land on the plains - Tomoana, Pakowhai, Brookfields, and hill country stations - Hukanui (6,000 acres), Waipuna (5,500 acres) and a lease of Lochinver (30,000 acres) Richard was promoted to manager of Hukanui and Waipuna and by 1901 was paid £2 (two pounds) a week - the Chief's (W.N.'s) standard pay

for any manager. Our farming object at that time was to keep Tomoana supplied with stock for killing when the works were short of supplies.

Richard's parents had returned to England in 1895 with the rest of their children, and in 1906 he determined to visit them. "I went to talk it over with the Chief" he wrote.

He chewed it over for an hour, talked all round the project, then nearly knocked me flat by saying "Mrs. Nelson and I are leaving on the Corinthic on 17<sup>th</sup> March. You can come with us and will give you a second class return ticket." (Cost about £75 I think.) The Chief of course was travelling first saloon and I only saw him at odd times to talk to - over the barrier on deck.

His trip to England unsettled Richard and he became somewhat disenchanted with his job. The cranky old house keeper was a constant annoyance, the Leicester-cross sheep were delicate and difficult, and Mr. Lane had not visited Waipuna for two years. He had reached a stage when he wanted to be independent. Land in Hawkes Bay and Poverty Bay was expensive, and his limited resources would make it difficult for him to fit in with the lifestyle of his friends and relations there. So, he settled for a 450 acre Govt. leasehold at Makakaho, thirty miles inland from Waitotara, remote and rugged country. Paying £400 to the previous occupier for goodwill he left his job at Waipuna in the Autumn of 1908.

By 1913 he was back in Hawkes Bay, where his old friend Alex Millar, who had been, for many years, employed by Mr. Lane in an executive roaming position, had suggested he might buy 'Paveroa' a station East of Waipawa. 'Paveroa' was 1329 acres of good easy low hills. It had been part of 'Blackhead' and sold to Tom. Groome at, I think £10 per acre, by Mr. Leslie McHardy, who retained a £10,000 mortgage on it. The asking price was £11.10 an acre; land & stock would cost about £18,600.00 and Richard, with only £2,500 to contribute

felt he could not entertain the project. However his friend Alex Millar was most insistent that he should approach William Nelson. He writes "I was most opposed to going to our old Chief, because whilst working for his firm (Nelson Bros Ltd) under Mr. John Lane - the Chief had twice made me good offers, which I had refused, not relishing the idea of being tied down for the rest of my life - particularly at Waipuna which I disliked. Anyway in the end Alex went to the Chief, who agreed to look in to it. -- Then the Chief sent for me and I went to see him in his study at Waikoko.

The first thing William Nelson wanted to know was - "Would I do as I was told?" - of course I would. anyway I had no option. The Chief sat in his chair with paper and pencil, and then I learned much more about a great man financing a job without any available cash.

William's plan, was to put his eldest son Harry (W.H.N.) in to partnership on half shares with Richard, and ask Williams + Kettle to pay off Dalgetys (Stock and Station Agents) for stock and Chattels. The next thing was that I was to meet W.H.Nelson in the Chief's study at Waikoko, when the Chief gave me my instructions. I was to draw £2 per week as manager, (in fact Richard drew only £1 and had the other £1 credited to his account.) - half profits would be credited to me annually by Mr. McCulloch - who would keep the accounts. I was to only stock with one ewe per acre, sufficient ewe hoggets to maintain ewe numbers, and enough cattle to keep the feed in order, and pay everything by orders on Williams + Kettle - Waipuna. William would also supply half-bred Cheviot - Leicester cross rams bred on land round Waikoko.

Richard took possession of Pareroa on 8th Sept. 1913. The partnership must have been amicable and successful, although W.H.N. (partner) never saw the place and only had a hazy idea of its situation.

In October 1913 Richard Sunderland stayed the night at Waikoko to report progress to "The Chief," going to Woodville the next day to meet W.H.N. Together they went by train

to Wellington, to see Harrys (W.H.N.'s) lawyer, Sir Francis Bell, about drawing up a legal partnership agreement.

Later, he records that he stayed three nights at Waikoko for the Show (H.B. Agricultural & Pastoral Spring Show) when Mr. and Mrs. Nelson usually entertained a full house of young people - he writes - and I was very proud to be one of them. Among others was Walter Tripe, manager of the Gear Co - (a freezing works at Petone.) - who collected all the good stories before his visit to entertain the old Chief. --- Miss Thompson (who later married Len Drummond) was "lady-in-waiting" to Mrs. Nelson and more or less acted as hostess.

In January 1916 Richard became engaged to Norah - daughter of Joseph Heathcote Williams - owner of Te Apiti station. Norah and I went straight off to tell the Chief and Mrs. Nelson, "and then I discovered that Norah was a great young friend of theirs" he wrote. After their marriage Richard was appointed manager of Te Apiti.

In the last paragraph of his reminiscences, as he reviews his progress through his life - Richard Sunderland writes - --- through the influence of John Lane and William Richmond (both of whom were outstanding men) I came to be well known and to some extent - a favoured young man' of Mr. William Nelson who was an excellent 'father' to me.

8/2000.  
Postscript from Margaret Walmsley. Jack Lane (John) was godfather to my mother Joceline Nelson (Gilbertson). He was a kindly & generous man of whom she was very fond. Ida was a fairly awesome person, <sup>to a child,</sup> but my personal memories of Uncle Jack as we called him, were of a thin dark man, quietly spoken and pleasant. As a very shy child I was not overawed by him. It was he who allowed us to spend wonderful summers in his cottage at Te Awanga & for which he charged no rent. I never saw him away from his home in Lane Rd, Havelock Nth - named after him.