

# **GROWING UP ON A FARM**

**A SCHOOL PROJECT FOR NATALIE BALL**

**WRITTEN BY HER GRANDFATHER**

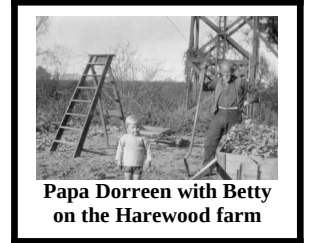
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# GROWING UP ON A FARM

Written to Natalie Ball by her Grandfather James Dine.

Well Natalie first of all farming goes back a long way on my side of the family, Great Grandfather Dorreen ,(your Great Great Great Grandfather), farmed with his Father land that is now part of Lower Hutt City after he emigrated from Scotland to New Zealand in February 1840. They were the first settlers on the land and built a farm out of the bush. My Grandfather Dorreen had a Dairy Farm he built out of the bush in Hampden in North Otago and later one out at Harewood in Christchurch (see picture above).. My Mother, (your Great Grandmother), like me grew up on a farm and although she trained and became a Plunket Nurse she wanted the farm life and a year after she was married she and my Father bought a small Dairy Farm called "Cloverdale" and Milk Round in Taradale 8 kilometres out of Napier and it was on this farm that I grew up.



Papa Dorreen with Betty on the Harewood farm



"Cloverdale" our house in King Street

Life on the farm was very regimented, things had to be done at certain times of the day or at certain times of the year, the cows had to be milked twice a day and the milk delivered at the same times each day. In the spring we planted the crops to feed the cows in the winter and in the summer made hay for feeding out in the winter. Autumn was the time we harvested the crops we had sown in the spring.

## **A Day on the Farm**

**A** day on our farm started very early in the morning my Mother and Father being woken by an alarm clock at **3.30am.** to get the cows into the cow bail and start milking at **4.00am.** With milking over at **5.30am.** it was time to tidy up and load the milk in 45L milk cans on to the Milk Truck ready to leave for town at **6.00am.** We had 2 High School boys, (milk boys), who used to help deliver the milk to our customers and they were met at **6.30am.** Because they had to have their breakfast and be at school by **9.00am.** they had to finish their deliveries by **8.00am.** and the remaining deliveries were usually over by

**9.00am.** and time for breakfast. Next all the cans, buckets and milk equipment had to be washed in hot water ready for the afternoon milking and the cowshed floor had to be washed, not with a hose like they do today but sloshing the water round with a bucket and scrubbing with a heavy yard broom; With 2 people these jobs would be over by about **10.15am.** It was time to start work around the farm, tending to crops, shifting cows to fresh pasture, or making hay. Lunch was at **12.00** and if there were no urgent jobs my Mother and Father were able to get an hours rest but that only lasted till about **1.30pm.** then it was "odd job time", for Mum it was preparing and cooking dinner or working in her flower garden while Dad looked after the vegetable garden or did work round the farm or house. Once a month he would have to go round his customers to collect the money they owed for milk. At **3.30pm.** the cows were collected and brought in for the afternoon milking at **4.00pm.** which was finished by **5.30pm.** when we had our dinner. After dinner my brother and I if we weren't playing outside were able to listen to the serials on the radio,(no TV. in those days), until our bedtime at **7.30pm.** Mum and Dad usually followed shortly after. In the summer time the sun would still be shining and we would hear other children playing in the street outside and we would have to be in bed, my brother and I were not happy but we had to do what we were told.

Another thing that I wasn't very pleased about was in the summer when we went to the beach, we wouldn't be able to leave until all the farm chores were done, about 11 o'clock and we would have to be back by 3.30 to milk the cows. We would be driving home when most other people were just going to the beach.

### How to Milk a Cow by Hand

**I** learnt to milk when I was about 6 years old but I didn't get good at it until I was much older. Our cows were all milked by hand, no milking machines like farms today have.

To milk a cow by hand the cow is usually put into a stall (bail) which holds her by the neck so she can't back out while she is being milked. Her right back leg is tied back with a leg rope so the milker can get at her udder and teats and also so she can't kick over the bucket that is used to hold the milk. Her tail is tied out of the way so she can't use it to hit the milker while she is being milked. The milker sits beside the cow on a stool and washes



Granddad with his

Uncle Neil in the  
Cowshed.

the cows udder and teats. Next a greasy ointment is put on the teats to make them soft and make it easier to milk.

To make the milk come out the milker puts his/her fingers round a teat and squeezes like you do when you are holding on to a bar of the jungle gym. This makes the milk come out then release your grip and more milk from the udder comes down into the teat and you squeeze again to get another squirt. You milk 2 teats at a time using both hands until no more milk comes out then you milk the other 2 teats until they are empty and the job is done. Cows like being milked and were always waiting at the paddock gate at milking times.

We had pet cats on the farm and two I remember, one named Togo and the other Rosa, and they used to come and watch us milk. Sometimes we would give them a squirt of milk straight from the cow, we would try and get the milk into their mouths but if we missed and got it all over their faces they would run off and lick the milk off then come back for more

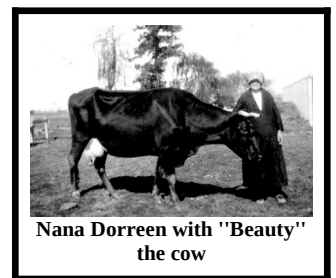
Like the cats I liked milk straight from the cow too and sometimes I would fill a glass and drink it. It was warm and tasted different to the pasteurized milk we drink today

### The Cows.

All the cows had names and some I can remember were **Beauty**, (pictured), **Milly**, **Nobby**, **Diamond**, **Beatrice**, and **Junior**.

Part of the farm was 1/2km.in Meeanee Road and when I had to go there to collect the cows for milking,they would be waiting for me and when I opened the gate they would be out on the road and

headed for the cowshed, they all knew the way home, **Beatrice** usually leading the way and **Milly** and **Nobby** bringing up the rear, they were both old. If I was tired or just lazy I would sometimes ride on **Milly** or **Nobby's** back but I didn't let my Father see me because he would not have been very pleased.

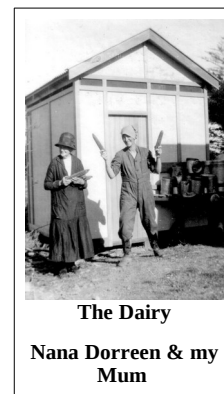


Nana Dorreen with "Beauty"  
the cow

When in the cowshed each one knew to go to their correct stall and if a cow forgot and went to the wrong stall the cow who's stall it was would let the other know and tell her to get out and would wait until she did. They were given hay in their stalls in the winter and in the summer they had a big block of salt to lick.

## What Happened to the Milk ?

When the buckets were full of milk they were brought up to the Dairy, (pictured), and the milk was poured into a vat which fed it slowly over a water filled cooler to cool it down from 37°C to 13°C. The milk then went into the 45L milk cans which went into a cold water trough which kept them cool till they were loaded onto the milk truck for delivery.

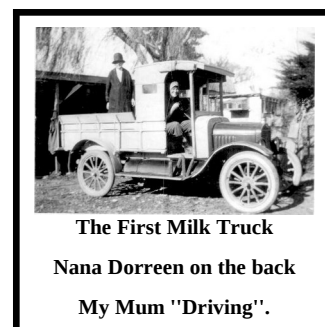


The Dairy  
Nana Dorreen & my Mum

This is very different to what happens today. Now the milk is cooled by refrigeration and kept in a refrigerated vat until the milk tanker collects and takes it to the processing plant where it is processed and then sent out to the Milkman for delivery.

## On the Milk Round.

**O**n the way into town my Father would collect more milk from another farm, meet the Milk boys and start delivering the milk to the customers. He used to drive the truck slowly along the street with the boys standing on a step at the back, as they came to a delivery on their side of the road the boys would step backwards off the step with a 10L container called a "server" and run in to the



The First Milk Truck  
Nana Dorreen on the back  
My Mum "Driving".

customers property and make a delivery then run back and jump onto the truck again. If there were several customers close together he would do them and then catch the truck up.

The "server" the boys carried had a pint (.57L) measure hooked on the inside to measure out the milk into the customers containers, either a billy or a pot with a lid. The boy would fill the measure to the top then pour it into the container plus a little more for "good measure". Very few people had refrigerators then so they kept the milk in a ventilated cupboard on the south (shady, cool) side of the house called a "safe" A pint (.57L) only cost 2.5 cents compared to up to 2 dollars now.

Some Milkmen used horses and carts to deliver the milk instead of trucks and the Taradale Milkman Mr. Atkins, was the last Milkman in New Zealand to use horses to deliver milk. Your Mummy will tell you how if she woke up when the milk was being delivered she would hear the horses hooves going clip clop clip clop on the road outside.



The Second Milk Truck

If we had lots of milk left over we would use a milk separator to separate the cream to

sell and use in the house. I often had cream on my porridge, it was "yum". The leftover skim milk was fed to the neighbour's pigs.

### **Making Hay**

**M**aking hay was a regular summer job. It was quite different to what it is today, firstly we used a horse instead of a tractor and secondly the hay wasn't made into bales or rolls and the machines used were more primitive.

First we would close off a paddock and let the grass grow till it was about  $\frac{1}{2}$  a metre high then we would harness up the horse onto the mower and cut the grass. The mower was not like a lawn mower, the driver sat on it and it had a long blade out of the side which cut the grass and laid it neatly on the ground.

After 2 days when the cut grass had started to dry the horse was harnessed up again but this time onto the Buck Rake to rake the grass into long rows called "Windrows" for another 2 days of drying. The Buck Rake was about 3 metres wide with 2 big wheels on either side and a seat in the middle for the driver, it had big tines between the wheels to rake the hay and they were able to be lifted up when enough hay to make a "Windrow" had been collected. You can see examples of mowers and buck rakes in Farm Museums. Granddad got the job of mowing and raking when he was about 9 or 10 years old.

After another 2 days or when the hay was properly dry it was placed into piles called "Cocks". The hay was placed so if it rained the water would run off and the hay inside wouldn't get wet, just like the thatch on old houses protects their insides. The hay could now be left until we had time to stack it.

The hay was brought in to the barn or haystack either with a horse and dray or on the back of a truck the "cocks" being picked up with a pitchfork and packed on the dray or truck till it was piled high. My Brother and I used to like to ride on the top of the hay, it was fun.

To make a Haystack the "cocks were taken off the dray/truck and piled on a layer of sticks, (to keep the bottom hay dry), then built up to make a big oblong block about 3 metres high with a rounded top. The last thing to do was to thatch the stack, to make it weatherproof, this was done by getting a pitchfork and scratching the top and sides so the strands of hay pointed downwards.

In the winter when the hay was to be fed to the cows the stack would have lost  $\frac{1}{3}$ <sup>rd</sup>. of its height and the hay would be packed down hard. We would have to get a big long hay

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knife and cut the hay out in blocks. The hay was either put in the cow's stall feed bin or put on the sledge and fed out to the cows in the paddock. It was fun to see the cows following the sledge trying to get the freshest hay.

Hay making is hot work and one of my early jobs, I would be about 6, was to make an oatmeal drink up and take it down to the men working in the paddock. The drink was made with oatmeal sugar and water and was a good thirst quencher I liked to drink it too.

### **Crops we Planted**

**C**rops were planted to supplement the grass which didn't grow much in the winter and so that the cows gave plenty of milk at that time because having a milk round we had to have a constant supply year round.

**Maize:** Maize (corn) is a plant like sweetcorn but it grows much taller, about 3 metres; It was planted in the spring and fed out before the leaves started to dry out. It was planted in rows and when the plants were about 300mm. high one of my jobs was to heap the soil up round each plant with a hoe at the same time I would have to hoe out the weeds. I also had the job of "feeding out", this was done with a horse and sledge. This was done first by cutting the maize off just above the ground and laying it on the sledge with the stalk end at the back. When the sledge was loaded it was driven to the feeding paddock and the stalks were pulled off the sledge one at a time making a trail around the paddock. The cows liked maize because it was sweet and they would all run to get it as soon as they were let into the paddock.

When I had finished feeding out I liked to hop on the sledge and make the horse gallop round the paddock and if I stood right on the back of the sledge I could make the front lift off the ground. It was fun but I did fall off a few times.

**Mangles:** Mangles are like big turnips or swedes and I don't think they are grown now. Like maize they were grown in rows and like maize had to be weeded, between the rows was done with a horse pulling a cultivator but they then had to have the weeds removed between the plants which was sometimes my job. Mangles were left in the ground till winter then they were pulled out and placed in little piles, 3 to a pile, round the feed paddock the day before. They were fed out in the middle of winter when the frost was thick on the ground and my job was to go down bare footed early in the morning with a spade and chop the mangles up into pieces so the cows could eat them. I didn't like that job much it wasn't fun.

**Pumpkins:** Yes we used to grow pumpkins for the cows, not like the ones you grow in the garden or buy in the shops, but great big ones that were so big a man could hardly lift them. They were called "Cattle pumpkins" and they were grown just like normal pumpkins but with 2 metres between each plant. They were left till the first frost which killed the foliage then they were stored in a big pile to be fed out later in the year. Feeding out was the same as for mangles, out in the paddock the day before and chopped up the next morning with an axe. Pumpkins could be fed out in a paddock with cows in it because they couldn't eat them unless they were chopped up.

**Willows:** There were several willow trees round the property and although they were principally used for summer shade we sometimes chopped the branches down and let the cows feed on the leaves, some also used to eat the bark. One time your silly Granddad stood on a branch and chopped it on the side closest to the tree, he learnt a lesson the hard way. The branch crashed down with Granddad flat on his bottom. Wood from the willows was used for firewood.

### Our Hens

**W**e used to have hens on the farm and one of my jobs was to feed and look after them. They were fed wheat or a mixture of bran and pollard and for something green silver beet. The food was kept in big oil drums with the tops cut out and the mice would get in and not be able to get out so Granddad would get a piece of string and tease the mice by letting them climb up the string till they were nearly at the top then he would shake the string and the mouse would fall back down. This was lots of fun until one day a mouse was too quick for me, it climbed up and bit my finger. That was the last time Granddad played that game and I was kind to the mice after that, leaving a piece of wood in the drum for the mice to climb out on. Our cats weren't so kind though they would jump into the drum and catch the mice.



The Hens  
My Mum & Nana D

### What we Did as Children on the Farm.

**W**e were very lucky living on the farm we had wide open spaces to fly kites, paddocks to dig holes in or make running tracks in, we could have a fire and no one complained. We had trees to climb and build houses in and we could have pets. It was a



good life.

We used to go catching eels or carp in the "open drains" and also frogs. Frogs would be kept for a while then let go, eels would be fed to the hens. The carp we would keep in the cow troughs. Carp kept the troughs clean and saved us having to clean them.

We used to make our own kites out of brown paper, sticks and string and see how high we could fly then and we would "borrow" Mum's ball of string and Dad's garden line to get the kites flying higher. We also used to send messages to our kites. A square of paper with a hole in the middle would be fed onto the string and then we would watch it run up the string till it reached the kite. When our kite was flying I used to like to lie on my back and watch the skylarks flying and singing as they climbed into the clear blue sky.

Another thing we liked to do was light a fire out in the paddock and make toast. It was the best toast I ever tasted and we ate it without anything on it. It was lovely.

I don't know how many holes I dug, big ones and small ones, I even tried to make a swimming pool but that didn't work it was just a big "mud hole". Holes were never open for long they all had to be filled in after a few days.

We had the horse to ride too. The horse's name was **Paddy** and we used to put a bridle on him, and a sack on his back then gallop him round the paddocks. Because we didn't use a saddle, we had to use a fence or gate to get on his back and when he had had enough racing around the paddocks he would go close to a fence or gate in the hope we would stop and get off.

If we wanted a little peace and quiet or wanted to hide for a while we could climb a tree or go and hide in one of the tree huts we built. One tree had a big hole in its trunk that we could climb into and it made a really good hiding place.

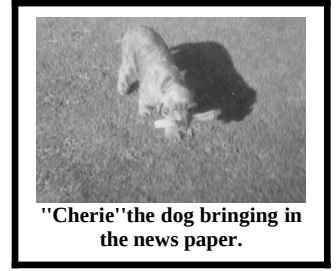
## **Pets**

**W**e always had cats around the farm, usually they were strays that would come round the house and we would take pity on them and feed them then they would stay and make their home with us. The 2 cats I remember most were **Togo** and **Rosa**, both were pure grey I think they must have had the same mother.

We had a dog, a Golden Spaniel called **Cherie**, (pictured), she was a house dog and

never did any work on the farm.

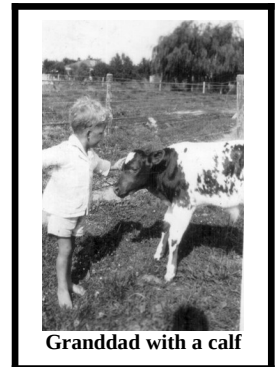
At one time we had a goat that we used to clean up the weeds and blackberries around the farm but I didn't like him much he used to but me if I got too close to him and he didn't smell very nice. After he died and for a long time afterwards if we went near his grave after it had rained we could smell him.



Nearly every spring a sheep farmer would give us an orphaned lamb to look after and feed till it could eat grass and go back in the paddock with the other lambs. We would feed the lamb with a bottle of milk with a rubber teat on it just like a baby is fed with a bottle. While the lamb was being fed its tail would be wagging flat out.

One of my pet lambs didn't make it back to the paddock, it was at the time of the Hawke's Bay Earthquake in February 1931. Because there were no butchers shops to buy meat at my pet lamb was killed for food. My Mother, (your Great Grandmother), couldn't bring herself to eat any of the meat because she had looked after it since it was very small.

We also would sometimes keep one of the cows calves to fatten and sell as a yearling heifer. It would become a pet and it was usually my job to feed it with the left over milk or the skim milk after we had separated the cream.



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Life on the farm really was good, even though we had to learn to do various jobs at what would be regarded today as a very young age. Lots of jobs we would make into a game to make them fun and despite having the jobs to do we had lots of time for play. I am pleased I grew up on a farm.

4/9/05

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