

Chapter 5 HOW HAS THE AGRITOURISM INDUSTRY DEVELOPED FOR ECONOMIC BENEFIT IN OTHER AREAS ?

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the historical growth and development of the dairy industry in the Clarence Valley was analysed. It was the dominant economic activity in the Valley for over 70 years, leaving its mark on the landscape and the community. From humble beginnings in the late 1800s it reached its peak in the 1930s and 1940s and declined rapidly after 1970. Despite this fact the industry's former dominance over the landscape in the Valley is evident in the large number and range of 'physical assets' that can still be found in many areas. Over 300 dairy bails still stand in the Valley; two factory buildings still stand but are no longer operating and 15 dairy farms still operate with only 10 in the main valley between Seelands and Cowper. No creameries exist although the concrete foundations are evident in several locations in the Valley. The industry is just a shadow of its former self.

This chapter will focus on the advent and rise of agritourism as a strategy to support farming families in various parts of Australia and overseas. It will indicate how agritourism has developed as an adjunct to farming activity in order to maintain a disappearing rural landscape and lifestyle. Agritourism is a style of vacation in which hospitality is offered on farms which may include the opportunity to assist with farming tasks. It has been proposed as a way of diversifying the local agricultural economy where local farmers may no longer be otherwise economically viable(Wikipedia, 2004).

5.2 AGRITOURISM & CHANGES IN DAIRYING IN THE USA.

The traditional dairy belt of the USA - the north east - has seen the sun set on the industry over the last two decades (Johnson 1989:A16) as a result of falling milk prices and rising land values. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the State of Vermont. Of over 3,000 dairy farms in New England, nearly 1,700 are in Vermont, covering 20 percent of the State's land area(Barry 1999:B1).

Throughout the twentieth century tourism became one of Vermont's top economic activities as outsiders saw a landscape of gently rolling hills, grazing Holsteins and small towns; a world apart from an increasingly urbanised nation. However, this pastoral backdrop of well-tended farmland is no longer taken for granted. Farmland in the USA is being converted to urban development at the rate of 400,000 hectares per year and New England farms are the most threatened. Chitterden County in Vermont is now the home of sprawling subdivisions and 'high tech' factories where farms once stood(Vermont Family Farms 2003). The number of dairy farms in Vermont declined from 20,000 to 2,000 in the two decades to 1990(Bartlett 1990:69).

In New Hampshire over 190 working dairies produce 40 million gallons(183 mill.litres) of milk each year and the open farmland of pasture and meadows provide a buffer to residential and commercial development as well as scenic vistas for the state's tourist industry. However, each year there is a decline in the number of farms(*Granite State Dairy Promotion* 2003).

The Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact was created by the Federal Government in 1996 to support the dairy industry by setting minimum milk prices for dairy farms in Maine, New

Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. This increased the price of milk by 29 cents a gallon from what the free market would provide: 12 cents would go to the farmer and the remainder divided between processors and retailers.

However, the price fixing and preferential treatment provided to the north-east brought a backlash from supermarkets and dairyfarmers from the midwest, resulting in the expiration of the Compact on September 30, 2001. There are still moves by the north-east dairy industry to have the Compact re-introduced. On March 1, 2003 representatives of the six New England states met in New Hampshire to discuss the crisis in the dairy industry(NH State Grange Legislative Committee 2004). There was also an urging for a return to the Compact at the New England Grange Legislative Meeting in May 31, 2003 (NH State Grange Legislative Meeting 2003).

The increasing financial strains on the family farm, in particular since the expiry of the Compact legislation, have resulted in the farmers looking outside agriculture as a means to sustain their operations. One form of diversification has been to offer farm recreation to visitors, ie. *agritourism*. New York State provides advertising for agritourism along the 800 km. St. Lawrence Seaway Trail and Nickerson et al.(2001:19) have indicated that 61 percent of respondent surveyed had diversified for economic reasons.

The Adams Family Farm at Wilmington, Vermont, is open to the public from November to June, 10am to 5pm, with 'petting farm' activities, goatmilking demonstrations, sleigh rides and indoor hay jumps. Extra value is added to the enterprise by the provision of a quilt loft, farm store and tea room (Pieces of Vermont 2003). Shelburne Farms at North Danville, Vermont, is a working dairy farm but the bulk of its profit

comes from tourism rather than milk products. A cornfield maze has been built here to attract tourists. This 'entertainment farming' means that the technology and animals that initially earned income for the farmer now provide extra income simply by being there and contributing to the landscape(Vermont Family Farms 2003:5).

Kennett's Liberty Hill Farm at Rochester, Vermont, is a dairy farm offering bed-and-breakfast facilities and the opportunity to take part in on-farm activities such as helping at milking time, cleaning manure from the stalls and carrying corn silage from the silo to the barn. What began in 1984 as an overflow for guests at an adjacent farm, has continued offering not only a vacation but also an educational experience for the clients. The owner has also been named the state's top dairyman in milk production per cow(with 115 Holsteins) by the Dairy Herd Improvement Association(Bartlett 1990:69) indicating that the two activities are not mutually exclusive. In upstate New York the Hull- O Family Farm run by Frank Hull is also a working dairy but it is the taking in of guests for farm stays that keeps the farm viable(St. John, 2000).

In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts the bed and breakfast(B & B) industry dates back to the 1800s and now thrives in rural areas with over 1000 B & Bs in the State(Warnick & Klar 1991:17). The Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture produces an *Agritourism Directory* for farm stays on a county basis. This includes working dairy farms, some producing maple syrup and christmas trees, with walking trails and special programs for groups(Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture, 2001).

Outside the north-east, in Texas, A & M University has converted part of its 1,080 hectare ranch near Alice to train landowners and managers in agritourism(Adam 2002:14). The Missouri Department of Agriculture has established an Agricultural Innovations Centre at Jefferson City providing information on agritourism opportunities ranging from seasonal to year-round activities in order to enhance the profitability of the farm. Activities include the construction of corn mazes, bed and breakfast operations, farm stays and roadside stands(Agricultural Innovations Centre, 2003). Agritourism in Florida is either farm based or farmer managed with outdoor recreation the fastest growing segment of agritourism. Farmers offer entertainment such as cornfield mazes, birdwatching, educational tours of farms, cultural heritage tours and sport and recreation(Stapleton 2002).

In California, visitors from across the country are seeking ways to enjoy the state's agricultural areas simultaneous with small family farmers seeking to diversify their incomes in order to stay on the land and continue farming. At the same time rural communities have been seeking ways to attract tourist dollars. The combination of these desires has led to the growth of agritourism in this part of the USA(Malibu Water Resources,2003).

5.3 AGRITOURISM & THE DAIRY INDUSTRY IN EUROPE

While the USA is the largest single milk producing country in the world, the European Union is the largest milk producing region. Dairying in Europe has a long history with the Fresian, Jersey, Guernsey, Danish Red and Red Swiss breeds having a global distribution. However, since

the formation of the EU and the Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC, dairying has been highly protected and regulated.

The objective of EU dairy farmers, however, is to guard the price to the farmer and to have milk production seen for its social and community benefits as well as economic benefits. On July 1, 2000 the dairy industry in Australia was deregulated: on April 1, 2000, not only was a quota system retained in Germany but a new milk exchange system was introduced whereby quota trading could take place.

Nevertheless, there is a commitment in the EU to the gradual abolition of farm price support schemes and deregulation is now occurring. At the 2000 World Farmers Congress held in Hannover, Germany, the EU delegate indicated that there would be a fall in the support price of milk by 15 percent in three equal steps through to 2008 (International Federation of Agricultural Producers, 2000).

As prices for farm products decline, with an associated fall in farm incomes, farmers are looking elsewhere for income, redesigning their farms and taking in tourists. In the 7 year period between 1991-1998, the EU countries spent \$2 billion subsidising such activities (Tagliabue 1998:D1). Without such aid, government leaders feel that farmers will leave the land, threatening a heritage that goes back centuries. In Norway, which is not a member of the EU, dairy farmers account for 54 percent of farm employment (Flaten 2002:430) and farming systems, with farm communities, shape the rural landscape. Norwegian agricultural policy is to support small farms as a prerequisite for the maintenance of landscape values and the importance of rural tourism.

Farm tourism in Germany has been operating for many years as farmers who wish to diversify for a number of reasons

consider it as a second or third income stream. In a study of 176 farm operators in Southern Germany (Oppermann 1995:63) it was found that most operators began their farm tourism in the 1970s and 1980s with none before 1960. The older operators offered mainly bed and breakfast accommodation while the newer farm stays were in self-contained units. Guests were predominantly from urban areas looking for a calm and relaxing environment.

The Marsh family were dairy farmers in Shropshire, England but in December 1998 moved to a dairy farm in Charente, France to take advantage of a Young Farmers grant and a low cost loan from the French Government. Milking 70 cows, the farm also has two gites, or summer houses, which are rented out to farm tourists (Eurofarm Success Stories, 2003).

The Monts et Barrages region of France has no obvious tourist attractions save for its picturesque rural pastureland, wooded hills and dairy cows. The area has suffered from rural depopulation in the past but more recently there has been some in-migration from retirees and 'neorurals'- well educated urbanites seeking a simpler lifestyle. Most people now living in the area, however, belong to families that have lived there for several generations and either work family farms or are closely related to those who do (Rogers 2002:483).

Currently tourist facilities in the area include 20 bed & breakfasts and 130 rural gites, mostly renovated farmhouses or outbuildings. One quarter of the B & Bs and one third of the gites in the area are on working farms (Rogers 2002:493). It is the nostalgic images of old fashioned farm life rather than the realities of a working farm that possibly attract the guests.

Agritourism is now also an important aspect of the tourism industry in southern and central Europe such as Italy, Poland and Romania (Italian Farm Holiday Guide 2003; Grootings, 2003; AgroRural 2003). In Western Europe, in order to ease the realignment of farmers to a more market orientated outlook, the EU has supplied finance from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF). For Central and Eastern Europe, funding from the EU's Special Accession Program for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD) has been made available to assist in diversification and agritourism.

However, in three countries due to join the EU in May 2004 - Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic - there is little evidence that farmers are interested in change. Following the demise of collectivisation there is a desire to re-establish the family farm. Off-farm activity is not high due to high rates of regional unemployment but there is a need to unlock farm assets, such as relic farm buildings, for use by other non-farm actors (Chaplin et al. 2004)

5.4 AGRITOURISM IN ASIA

Asia is not an important area for agritourism associated with the dairy industry although India is a large producer of milk. The Indian National Dairy Development Board, for example, was established in 1965 and it has seen milk production in the nation rise from 17 million tonnes (16,473 mill.lit.) in 1950-51 to 78 million tonnes (75,582 mill.lit.) in 2000 (International Federation of Agricultural Producers 2000). However, there has been no apparent diversification into agritourism.

While agritourism is available on dairy farms in the cool hills of Sri Lanka (Agro Tourism 2003), in Thailand most of

the agrotourism attractions accessible to tourists in the past have been government-run, such as the Royal Project Inthanon Research Station at Chaing Mai. These are more concerned with the growing of fruits and vegetables. The agrotourism industry in Thailand, however, does share a role with ecotourism and cultural tourism as farm life is inseparable from local culture and heritage (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2000a).

Rural areas in Thailand have a great variety of cultures, traditions and natural resources which make them attractive to tourists. Income from tourism is higher than agricultural income so the farmers embrace it willingly in spite of some negative impacts, such as a decline in traditional farming practices (Rattanasuwongchai 1998). Under the Seventh (1992-1996) and Eighth (1997-2001) *Development Plans for Thailand*, tourism was seen as essential for the economic growth of the country although the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) does not rate rural tourism for special mention. However, 65 percent of Thai tourists and 30 percent of foreign tourists are involved in ecotourism to remote rural areas. Thus farmers in the private sector of Thailand are gradually following farmers in other parts of the world in developing farm tourism activities. Examples include farm tours in Chiangmai province and farmstays in Kanchanaburi province (Rattanasuwongchai 1998:7).

In Japan, rural tourism and the establishment of farm inns has been promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries since 1995 when an Act was passed to support tourism in rural areas. The farm inn is a private farmhouse providing visitors with room and board and giving them opportunities to participate in activities involved in running the farm. It is strongly orientated towards urban visitors (Arahi 1998:1).

Farmers in Japan are confronting serious issues such as rural depopulation, aging of the rural population and stagnation of the rural economy with the liberalisation of the world trade in agricultural produce. Diversification of farm activity is seen as a way to revitalise rural communities. In Germany 'vacations in a farmer's house' are subsidised by the government but as yet public authorities in Japan have not given this level of support. However, the resource of a living landscape with the presence of plants and animals producing special products of the area all appeal to the Japanese city visitor. For these urbanites, who are surrounded by concrete high - rise and a polluted environment each day, nostalgic trips to the countryside to seek out cultural heritage are becoming part of the social calendar.

Rural tourism is not widespread in Indonesia even though more than six million tourists visited that country in 1997. Existing rural tourism projects have been mainly developed by government agencies and are found in the plantation areas of Java and Sumatra. One such location, *Margo Utomo* in East Java, was established in 1976. One third of the visitors are from Indonesia with the remainder coming from overseas - from the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Britain, Australia, the USA and Canada(Iwantoro 1998:2).

In South Korea, rural tourism began in 1984 as part of a government program to raise farm incomes. By 1997 there were 382 farms in South Korea associated with this activity. Promoted by the government, co-operatives have provided much of the financial support. From 1984, farmers engaged in rural tourism were offered credit to a limit of US\$22,000 and this was raised to US\$220,000 in 1997(Choi 1998:5). Farmland in South Korea is protected by law from being converted to other uses. However, in the case of homestay facilities regulations

concerning buildings and safety standards are as yet not well established.

5.5 AGRITOURISM IN NEW ZEALAND

The political and economic climate within which New Zealand farms operate has changed dramatically since macro - economic reforms and deregulation policies were introduced by the Fourth Labour Government in 1984 (Johnsen 1999:25; Cloke 1989:38). In the 1930s the New Zealand government adopted a policy of guaranteed prices for dairy products with import licencing and exchange rate controls - what has been called the policy of 'insulationism' (Cloke 1989:36). The 1960s saw the continuation of state regulation of the internal economy with interest free loans to farmers, tax concessions and fertiliser subsidies (Le Heron 1989:24). However, between 1984 and 1988 most state support for agriculture was removed. The level of assistance received by agriculture fell from 30 percent in 1984 to 5 percent in 1989 (Wilson 1995:419). At the same time increases in interest rates and severe droughts in 1985 and 1988 impacted on farming practice and the rural communities with farmers having to respond to these changing economic, social and environmental conditions.

In a survey of farms in Eastern Otago in 1997, for example, responses to these changes ranged from 'nil' to 'leaving the farm' while other pathways adopted were structural in nature, such as changes in the size of the farm and the diversification of farm activity (Johnsen 1999:26). Another response to the deregulation policy was to seek additional income from pluriactivity such as paid off - farm work, particularly in a local gold mine which began operations in 1990. This area had a pluriactivity rate of 66 percent compared to the national average of 37 percent.

The effects of restructuring, however, may not have been the sole cause of such pluriactivity as some of the off-farm employment may have been due to changes in lifestyle, particularly by women. Indeed, Fairweather (1992:56) stated that much of the off-farm work by women was a response to changing social roles rather than a movement of farmers permanently to other work. He did not, therefore, see temporary forms of off-farm work as a form of pluriactivity since as farm finances improved, the extent of off-farm work declined.

However, farming futures in New Zealand are now being seen in the context of many sources of income and not just the returns from a specific type of agriculture. Examples include off-farm employment and farm stay tourism (Joseph et al. 2001:20). In the Catlin area, south of Dunedin, for example, rural based tourism developed as an important sector in the 1990s (Coombes & Campbell 1996:15). In 1995, 15 of the 28 farms surveyed operated a tourist business on the farm either as farm stays (9), farm back packers (2), farm cottage rentals (3) or as a farm motel. All of the farms were pluriactive, the majority in more than one way such as farm stays and off - farm employment in nursing or teaching. In the Gore District of Southland and Otago half of the 65 farms surveyed were involved in off - farm income activity (Wilson 1994).

Most of these changes affected meat and wool producers rather than dairying as the dairy industry had not previously received government income support. Dairy products are now the major rural export earner for New Zealand and in South Taranaki milk products are the largest manufacturing employer (Willis 2003:75). However, government restructuring did result in dis-investment in infrastructure and rural services

such as hospitals, the post office and railways, indirectly affecting the dairy producers as many of these services were downsized or closed(Willis 2003:66).

The contraction of farm income and rural services has sometimes led to a de-coupling of the agricultural and community sectors as they split from the traditional forms of dependency. However, agritourism and associated rural heritage is now developing as a re-linking mechanism forming closer ties between the two sectors. Tirau, near Rotorua on State Highway 1 in New Zealand, for example, is now capitalising on its agricultural heritage. The construction of a twenty metre long corrugated iron 'sheep', which houses a wool shop, is helping to make Tirau a tourist destination rather than a 'passing through' locality(Joseph et al. 2001:22). The Rotorua District Council adopted a promotion strategy in the early 1990s to raise awareness of tourism locally using talk-back radio, newspaper columns, open days and visitor guides. This resulted in 95 percent of residents believing that tourism benefited their local community (Ateljevic & Doorne 2000:28)

Agritourism in New Zealand is considered to be of a very high standard being one of the oldest and most successful programs in the world(Hodgson 2002). Sheep, cattle, deer and kiwi farms are the most popular. The '*TrueNZ Guide to New Zealand Farmstay Accommodation*'(TrueNZ Guides 2004) has registered 30 sites in the North Island and 21 in the South Island. One such site is the *Our Farm Park* of 44 hectares, 30km north of Auckland. Based on organic farming they shear 'touchable' sheep, spin the wool, provide horse riding, milk cows and make butter, yoghurt, ice cream and cheese. New Caledonia, Germany, Singapore, Okinawa, Hong Kong and England are a sample of the tourist origins that have been catered for on this farm(Farm holidays in New Zealand 2004).

5.6 AGRITOURISM IN OTHER PARTS OF AUSTRALIA

Currently, over 70 percent of Australian domestic tourists visit rural areas with just over 20 percent of overseas visitors spending time in country areas. It is considered that domestic tourism will remain the backbone of the Australian tourist industry, particularly in rural areas (Department of Industry , Science & Tourism 1996:4).

Pluriactivity has become increasingly important to the survival of Australian farms as the external pressures of rationalisation, globalisation, deregulation and technological advances place growing pressures on farm income. Such moves broaden the micro economic base of the farm and allow links to be maintained with the land. It also helps maintain the thresholds required to keep essential services such as hospitals operating in rural areas(Epps 1994:39). That is, it results in a economic flow - on effect. Rice farm tours in the Leeton area of NSW, particularly by Japanese tourists, for example, increased 600 percent over a two year period, injecting further income via the multiplier into the local economy(Department of Industry, Science & Tourism 1996) .

Farm Stays of varying types are now common throughout the country. Examples include the 300 hectare dairy farm, *Blue Haze*, at Crows Nest west of Brisbane and the 150 hectare dairy farm, *Locheilan*, milking 220 head at Shepparton in Victoria(Australian farm tourism 2004).

Australian Farm and Country Tourism Inc.(AFACT) was established in 1987 as the national industry association to represent farms and country tourism across the continent. The

NSW association provides a booking service for farm stays through the Countrylink rail and coach network to 352 destinations.

Closer to the Clarence Valley one example of such a farm stay is *Dairy Flat Farm Holidays*, located at Dairy Flat on the Upper Richmond River between Kyogle and Woodenbong(See Plate 16).

PLATE 16. Dairy Flat Farm Holidays, west of Kyogle, NSW



The dairy farm, owned by Phillip and Mary Lever, covers 250 hectares and milks 200 Friesians with the milk sent to the Norco factory at Lismore. Visitors for the farm stays are accommodated in four renovated mill-hand cottages originally constructed for the old timber milling industry in the area. The tourists stay for an average of three days and come mainly from Brisbane and the Gold Coast, just two hours drive

away(Leaver,P.pers.comm.10/11/2003). Very few overseas tourists come to the farm. The visitors enjoy milking, calf feeding and horse riding as well as bushwalking and bird watching(see Appendix 5a).

Carey and Denise Mackieson (*Maca's Farm*) operate a dairy farm along the Great Ocean Road in Victoria, milking 120 Fresians. Only 2.5 hours drive from Melbourne, the farm has three self-contained lodges and offers on-farm activities such as milking, hay cutting, feeding calves , collecting eggs and hayrides(see Appendix 5b). The average stay for the tourist is 4 days but it can be quite demanding on the farm operators trying to co-ordinate the two aspects of the farm (Makieson,C. pers.comm.1/8/2003).

Andrew and Rhonda Brooke have operated *Oxley Farm* at Kangaroo Flat near Gawler in South Australia since 1993(see Appendix 5c). The 25 hectare farm carries 65 milking goats producing 400 litres of milk per day. The goat milk is marketed through a local cheese manufacturer with half of the cheese being returned to the farm. The cheese is sold mainly in the Barossa Valley under the farm label with some also sold to guests on the farm. The farm has now diversified into pigs, alpacas, Dexter cattle and donkeys with the dairy herd reduced in size because of the time involved in milking - up to 6 hours a day(Brooke,R.pers.comm.30/7/2003). The emphasis is on children and 90 percent of guests help on the farm with the majority of them staying two nights. Activities include helping with the milking, hand feeding sheep, collecting eggs, feeding pigs and patting the alpacas. The majority of guests are from Adelaide with the remainder from interstate and overseas. Bookings have increased from 154 nights in 1997 to 408 nights in 2002. School holidays and Easter are the most popular times although there has been an increase in the number of mid-week customers.

Charles and Anne Phillott own the working sheep and cattle station *Carisbrooke* 85 km south west of Winton in Queensland's outback(see Appendix 5d). Agritourism has been an integral part of this property since 1968 (then called 'ecotourism') with over 500 visitors a year, mainly from the south-east corner of Queensland but also overseas visitors from Germany, USA and Britain. Originally, visits were for one night but now the average stay is 4-5 nights. Accommodation is provided in three cottages and the shearers' quarters with an airstrip constructed close by for those who wish to fly in(Phillott,C., pers.comm., 23/6/2003).

Paul Eggert manages the 160 milking herd of Fresians at *Redbank* , a 200 hectare dairy farm, 3km from Wauchope in the Hastings Valley of NSW. The farm has been in the Eggert family for over 100 years and they ventured into agritourism

PLATE 17. Agritourism near Wauchope, NSW. The 'Big Bull'



in 1986-7. After constructing the 'Big Bull'(see Plate 17), the agritourism side of the business ran for 13 years and included an animal nursery, tractor tours around the farm, milking, a restaurant and gift shop. No farm stay was involved with only day tours operating from Port Macquarie(Eggert,P.pers.comm.29/12/2003).

With the introduction of the GST and the proposal to deregulate the dairy industry the 'Big Bull' closed in 1999. The farm has now changed its direction to organic farming, producing milk and fetta cheese for the Coffs Harbour and Sydney markets via the Hastings Valley Co-Operative Dairy Company at Wauchope. The owner is, however, looking to farm stays in the future as part of an educational process to explain organic farming to visitors. Some re-adjustment finance was available to the farm via DERAP(Dairy Regional Adjustment Package) and Natural Heritage Trust finance was obtained for tree planting.

5.7 OVERVIEW OF RURAL HERITAGE PROGRAMS

In many areas of the globe agritourism at the farm level has been developed along side the growth of rural heritage trails at the regional level.

For example, associated with farm stays in the Monys et Barrages area of the Limousin region of France heritage trails have been developed based on the long history of the area. These include safaris to Romanesque churches, abandoned mills and displays from the Resistance movement(Rogers 2002:488). Occasionally, guided tours are offered to some of the old mill sites in the area such as a paper mill. This mill was abandoned in the early 1960s after five centuries of paper manufacture on the site using water power from the river. Using grants obtained from regional, national and

European public agencies, the mill was resurrected into a self-financing museum of paper manufacturing.

In Iowa, the restoration of relict farm buildings is providing the basis for an agritourism industry focussing on rural heritage. Using grant money from the Iowa Barn Foundation to offset costs and taking advantage of federal and state tax credits for barn repairs and with help from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, farmers are restoring older barns for new farming uses. 'Barn Again' barn tours are then added to the tourist trails(Walter 2003:36).

In the same way, European governments are helping preserve local heritage via 'bed and barns'. The 15 nation members of the EU spent US\$2 billion in seven years (1991 to 1998) subsidising these programs(Tagliabue 1998:D1). It is argued that farms are multifunctional in that they produce food, protect the environment and help preserve the rural cultural heritage. Much of the subsidy goes towards restoring old farm buildings in Tuscany(Italy), Provence(France) and Bavaria(Germany), thus helping prevent their gradual disappearance as well as providing a basis for an agritourism industry.

In Britain, too, old farm buildings are considered a distinctive part of the historic landscape and grants have been made available from the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food(MAFF) under the Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme to carry out repairs to traditional buildings(Darley 1990:64). The aim is to preserve the rural cultural landscape and indirectly aid the farming sector through agritourism.

In the USA, a Rural Heritage Program dedicated to the recognition and protection of rural historic and cultural

resources operates as part of the National trust for Historic Preservation. The primary concern of this program is farmland preservation - to address the loss of farmland to urban sprawl with 13 million hectares lost since 1970(National Trust For Historic Preservation 2004b). The Program is also involved in developing cultural heritage tourism inventories in various parts of the country(National Trust for Historic Preservation 2004a).

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) program has been in operation since 1977 and in three of the last four years has protected more land for agriculture than has been lost for other uses(Wilson 2003). Associated with this land preservation action is the *Rural Legacy Program* begun in 1997 to help preserve the cultural heritage of the state by providing income, estate and property tax reductions for the preservation of rural historical features on farms(Maryland Department of Natural Resources 2004).

5.8 CONCLUSION

Key Research Question 2 outlined in Chapter 1(page 6) asked how agritourism had developed outside the Clarence Valley both in Australia and offshore. It is clear from this chapter that both agritourism and the use of cultural heritage assets associated with the rural past are playing increasingly important roles in many parts of the globe - in North America, Europe, Asia and New Zealand. In Australia, too, agritourism in particular is now associated with various forms of the rural industry, including dairying.

Clearly all forms of pluriactivity, including agritourism, are being seen throughout the world as essential to support the financial viability of farms in an increasingly

globalised society. In many areas rural heritage tourism is also seen as a way of re-linking farming enterprises with their rural community after de-coupling following the rural economic downturn associated with globalisation and deregulation.

The question now arises as to how well the relatively rich and reasonably well preserved built heritage associated with the dairy industry in the Clarence Valley has been incorporated into agritourism as a local 'survival strategy' for the farmers and the local community in the competitive world of the 'new economy'.

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Chapter 6 AGRITOURISM IN THE CLARENCE VALLEY: RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter it was shown that agritourism and rural heritage conservation programs have become important activities in several parts of the globe including Australia. Many of these examples are associated with a declining dairy industry. Farm tourism is providing a form of diversification for farmers and offering a degree of economic viability for the immediate future.

This chapter will look firstly at examples of rural tourism and heritage trails that are currently operating in the Clarence Valley, although few are associated with the dairy industry in this area. With the decline in the dairy industry throughout the Valley, as shown in Chapter 4, the remaining dairy farmers may now have to look to pluriactivity and diversification in order to survive. A failure to do this could result in the productivist landscape passing from dairying into other forms of production, such as beef grazing, with the consequent loss of dairy heritage assets. A failure to preserve the heritage assets of the once important dairy industry will in turn be a serious loss to future generations.

The aim of this thesis is to discover to what extent a viable agritourism industry might be able to be developed around the remnants of this once extensive dairy industry and whether the cultural heritage assets of that industry might provide the foundation for a tourist industry.

The chapter will then present the findings of the research program which was outlined in Chapter 3. The results will be analysed in three sections based on the separate aspects of the fieldwork. Initially, the focus will be on the responses from tourists to see whether or not there is a demand for agritourism and safari tours to dairy heritage sites. This will be followed by an overview of farmer opinions as potential suppliers of the service. The final section will present findings in terms of where the Local Government Councils stand on the issues involved.

6.2 FARM STAYS IN THE CLARENCE VALLEY

Farm Stays in the Clarence Valley are not very common. The Valley covers an area of over 22,000 km.sq with 10 per cent of the estimated 29,953 workforce in the four Local Government Areas of the Lower Clarence employed in agriculture (ABS 2001a:38). Clarence River Tourism has registered only 16 'farm and home stays' and some of these are not farm stays in the real sense but rather non farm 'bed and breakfast' accommodation such as the *Maclean School House B & B*. Only 7 of those registered could be regarded as farm stays associated with rural tourism (Clarence River Tourism 2003a). This section will examine the characteristics of some of these ventures into agritourism.

See View is a fully operational cattle property (150 Murray Grays) operated by Mona Ibbott at Seelands, 12 km west of Grafton (see Plate 18). Originally a dairy farm, this 83 hectare property diversified into farm tourism in 1994. Visitors are catered for in the farm house and usually stay for one night but occasionally stay for up to 3 nights. It is regarded as a good day drive from Sydney where most of the visitors originate but it is considered too close to Brisbane; people from there preferring to drive further south

PLATE 18. See View Farm Stay (with old dairy at rear), Seelands.



to Port Macquarie. International visitors come from Germany, New Zealand, the UK and the Czech Republic. Some animal feeding and petting, as well as tractor and horse riding around the farm, is provided.

Wave Hill Station covers 5,000 hectares and is located 63 km west of Grafton at Fineflower, north of Copmanhurst. In the 1930s this was a dairy property but it has since converted to beef, diversifying into agritourism in 1988. Guests stay at the homestead or in a constructed pioneer farm cottage(see Plate 19).

Most guests stay at *Wave Hill* an average of two nights. They come from south-east Queensland and number about 50 guests a year. Few overseas visitors come to the farm as the

owners do not advertise. Public liability insurance is considered a major problem by the owners as rates have risen 10 per cent a year over the last two years, thus restricting activities such as horse riding.

PLATE 19. Wave Hill Station visitor cottage in middle distance.



Another example of diversification including agritourism is the Ensby family property at Lawrence. This family originally migrated from Cambridgeshire, England, to the Clarence in 1856 and began dairying at the turn of the century. John Ensby worked the farm from the 1960s using Australian Illawarra Shorthorn cattle and later Fresians.

With the decline in dairying the farm operations have changed to the growing of sugar and cattle fattening using stored silage in large 'Harvestors' built in 1980. Tourism has been a part of farm management for the past decade with a dozen tourists visiting every Friday for a one hour

walking farm tour organised through the Clarence River Tourist Association. Schools and colleges also visit the farm. Farm walks are popular, particularly with overseas tourists from countries such as Germany and Switzerland, who are often associated with the dairy industry themselves. No farm stays are involved at this property.

PLATE 20. Farm Stay accommodation at Clark's dairy farm, Lawrence.



The Clark family selected land at Lawrence in 1865 and began dairying in the 1890s. Until recently, Frank Clark milked 120 head of Australain Illawarra Shorthorn cattle on the 80 hectare property. The family exited the dairy industry in 1992 due to the forthcoming deregulation and moved into sugar cane farming associated with the expansion of the local sugar mill at Harwood. In 1973, to supplement income, the family diversified their activity by venturing into agritourism. The farm stays were advertised by brochure at the local Tourist

Information Centre and advertisements were placed with the NRMA and *New Idea* publications. Accommodated in stationary caravans (see Plate 20), the visitors came mainly from southern Queensland and the NSW south coast with a sprinkling from overseas - the Solomons, France and Switzerland.

Catering for six families at a time, most came during school holidays and stayed for a week. During this time they helped with hay cutting in the winter, milking, tractor driving and enjoyed horse riding. These farm stays ceased in 1989 due to difficulties with the increasing costs associated with public liability insurance for horse riding activities.

Trevor Jones at *Riverstone, Seelands*, operates a 113 hectare property and until 2002 was milking 40 Friesian cows producing 600 litres a day. With the deregulation of the industry in 2000, farm income fell dramatically from 54 cents per litre of milk produced to 19 cents per litre. Trevor was not dependent on farm income as off-farm income from an engineering company provided 50 percent of his total income*.

Prior to exiting the dairy industry, Trevor planned to diversify into agritourism but development plans and appeals through the Land and Environment Court delayed this project for several years. In 2003, however, approval was given for a 50 site camping ground to be established above the 1 in 100 year flood level. A Management plan was submitted, the road upgraded and two cabins constructed. Public liability insurance was obtained via the NRMA (Horticultural Policy)

* Barrett & Gargett (1981) noted that exiting farms due to restructuring in the 1970s, tended to have lower incomes from dairying compared to those remaining in the industry and to have higher 'off-farm' incomes than those who continued.

and advertisements placed in Lismore and Gold Coast newspapers. Visitors for the farm stays are predominantly families with the children keen on farm activities such as milking.

The Winter family provide farm stay accommodation at The Gorge(see Plate 5), 50 km west from Grafton. This ex-dairy farm now converted to beef cattle, provides a modern version of a pioneer retreat at 'The Shack' and camping sites are also available.

Rural tourism, then, does occur in the Clarence Valley but it operates on an 'ad hoc' basis with the quality and nature of the farm stay accommodation varying quite significantly. The Ensby's provide no accommodation and offer only day visits; Clarks offered stationary caravan sites; *See View* provides accommodation within the farmhouse; *Wave Hill* has constructed a pioneer farm cottage while at *Riverstone* accommodation is provided in two pre-fabricated huts and camp sites. It has been suggested that while farm stays are popular in Australia, many of the farms are not up to the standards of other parts of the world(Australia/New Zealand Down Under Travel 2002:1) and this may apply to some of the farm stay facilities currently operating in the Clarence Valley.

6.3 HERITAGE TRAILS IN THE CLARENCE VALLEY

The Clarence Valley was settled in the middle 1800s with Grafton gazetted as a municipality in 1859 and declared a city in 1885. The city itself has a grand past with heritage trails and bus or walking tours of the urban area freely available. A large number of sites such as the Cathedral, courthouse and many residences date from the late 1800s. Clearly the heritage assets of this urban area in the Valley

have been identified for some time(Clarence River Tourism 2003b;Grafton City Council 1988). In a similar way both Maclean and Ulmarra have developed urban heritage trails.

The Lower Clarence Tourist Drive, which focusses on Maclean and Yamba(Randall 1996), began as a project in 1992 in order to inform visitors of the importance of Aboriginal culture within the Lower Clarence. This self-guided drive opened in 1996 with 13 sites clearly mapped and information signs displayed at each site(see Plate 21).

PLATE 21. Aboriginal Tourist Drive Site No.3 at Maclean.



Closer to the heritage of the dairy industry is the tourist drive '*Sheds Along the Highway*'(Clarence River Tourist Association 2001) covering the 40 km from Grafton to Maclean. This was based on research by Derrett and Welch(2001) who suggested that the rural culture of the region should be shared by visitors in a landscape regarded as authentically Australian.

While the project outcomes were to identify the 40 sheds in 40 km, suggestions for the future were also indicated, such as the designing of riverside heritage interpretative signs at designated picnic spots (Derrett & Welch 2001:15) and the development of a 'living museum' representing life on a turn of the century dairy farm. The authors noted that the sheds are on the brink of disappearing from the landscape but their age and condition makes them extremely attractive to the 'drive tourism' market.

At Tucabia, in the Lower Valley, the *Squatters Rest Museum* opened in 1998 displaying features of the colonial past. Featuring such attractions as a blacksmiths shop, timber cutters camp and geriatric farm machinery, the museum offers bush poetry and camp oven lunches for coach groups. It was visited by 202 coach groups in 2002 and voted the best tourist attraction in the Clarence Valley for the previous three years. It also won the Northern Rivers Tourist Award for 2002. Very few foreign tourists visit except those with a particular interest in agriculture, such as groups with a special interest in antique dairy machinery from Germany and Japan. This project is in many ways quite kitsch and removes many of the artifacts from their authentic surroundings. It is not a 'living museum' and it is not a 'working' farmland landscape. Currently, the major difficulty for the proprietor is the high rate of public liability insurance.

Two heritage drives have been developed north and south of the Clarence Valley which could be incorporated into a third heritage drive through the Clarence in the future.

- The *Rainforest Way* had its origins in 1994 as an ecotour route through the Northern Rivers of NSW and South East Queensland. Centred on the World Heritage attractions of the

Central Eastern Rainforest reserves of Australia, the loop road links the towns of Lismore, Nimbin, Murwillumbah, Beaudesert, Kyogle and Casino(see Figure 4). Associated with the rainforest theme are secondary loops and trails looking at heritage and rural landscape. The themes are interwoven into the self-drive visitor experience.

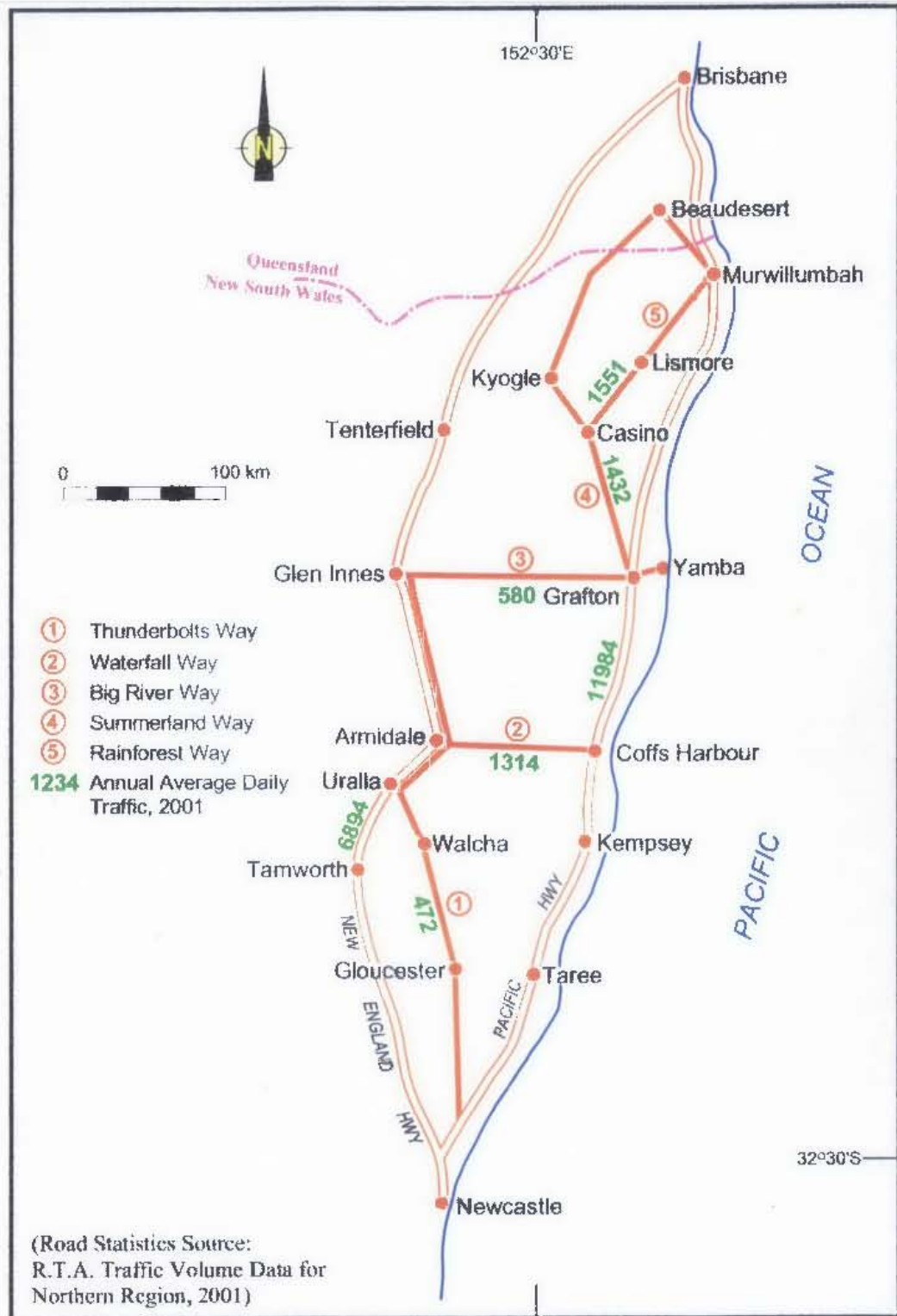
- The *Thunderbolt's Way* is also a self-drive route. This route links the coast to the Tablelands through Gloucester via Walcha to Uralla(see Figure 4). Named after the bushranger Fred Ward(alias Thunderbolt), who was killed in 1870 and buried in the Uralla cemetery, the touring route, like the *Rainforest way*, provided an alternative for tourist traffic which has congested along the Pacific Highway. Figure 4 indicates the Annual Average Daily Traffic Flow along the major routes shown with the Pacific Highway figures given for Macksville.

By linking both of these tourist routes through the Clarence Valley from Glen Innes via the Gwydir Highway, dairy heritage clusters and agritourism along the *Big River Way* could provide supplementary themes to the rainforest and bushranger experiences. Figure 4 illustrates the connectivity between each of these tourist drives.

Currently then, agritourism and heritage trails are only evident in the Clarence Valley to a limited extent. Individual farmers have shown some initiative in developing agritourism while Councils and tourist authorities have initiated tourist trails based on urban area assets and Aboriginal sites.

There has been no development of the heritage assets of the dairy industry while agritourism associated with dairy farms

Figure 4 'Big River Way' Tourist Linkage Routes



has not been a widespread attraction in the Valley. It would therefore appear that there may be potential for rural tourism development, such as that occurring in other areas of Australia and overseas, based upon the assets that are currently available.

6.4 RESEARCH FINDINGS (1) Tourist Surveys

Tourist responses regarding the demand for agritourism services and interest in tours of dairy heritage sites were obtained by the use of a questionnaire(see Chapter 3 and Appendix 1). The results of the tourist surveys are indicated by Tables 10 and 11 below.

The source of the largest numbers of tourists visiting the Clarence Valley was Queensland, a fact already acknowledged by farm stay operators at Wave Hill Station, the Clarks at Lawrence and Trevor Jones at Seelands(see pages 85-88). The high 'local' percentage indicated by the survey was probably due to a local area conference being conducted at the time at the Visitor Centre where the survey was being undertaken. The high 'European' figure is in part due to coach tours involving European tourists passing through the area at the time of the survey. In a similar survey conducted by the Clarence River Tourist Association during September / October 2003 with only 88 responses, Sydney was the origin of most tourists(20 percent) with Western NSW and Queensland ranking equal second at 17 percent each. Overseas visitors were quite negligible in this survey at only 2 percent.

In terms of age groups responding to the survey, the 'middle age' group of 21-60 was clearly dominant. The 'grey' group of over 60s ranked almost 10 percentage points behind either the 21-40 or the 41-60 groups. This is perhaps surprising in

terms of preconceived notions of retirees and the concept of the 'grey nomads'. It has been suggested that older tourists would seek out heritage sites in disproportionate numbers(Richter 1999:110).

Of the 108 responses received, 78 percent stated that they were not holidaying in the Clarence Valley but were tourists in transit to other locations. However, 82 percent recorded that they would like to stay in the Clarence Valley in the future. Similar responses were recorded by the Clarence Valley Tourist Association in their survey during September/October. This suggests that the survey responses for this thesis were not a result of any abnormal circumstances. It also indicates that the Clarence Valley offers a potential market destination for tourists in the future. Given that the Clarence Valley could be a magnet for future tourist activity the question then remains as to whether 'agritourism' would form an economically viable part of the tourist menu.

When respondents indicated their preferred holiday experiences, 'Farm Stays' scored very poorly, coming in second last on the scale and only slightly ahead of 'bird watching'. However, while 53 percent stated that they had never heard of the term 'agritourism', 58 percent recorded that they were interested in holidaying in rural areas.

In terms of accommodation 60 percent recorded that they were interested in 'bed and breakfast' on farms or even in 'Farm Stays' to relax. Only 39 percent were interested in 'Farm Stays' where work was involved, such as helping with the milking. This seems to contradict experiences from the USA (Bartlett 1990;Go Nomad 2000;Pieces of Vermont 2003) and from the Clark's Farm Stay in the Clarence Valley(see page 88) suggesting that there is a demand for actually helping out around the farm during the farm stay.

Table 10 TOURIST QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS (1)

(Total Responses equals 108)

Month of Survey (%)	<u>Oct.</u>	<u>Nov.</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>
	6.5	6.5	5.6	7.6	73.8
Origin of Respondents %	Qld 23 ; Local 18 ; Europe 16 ; Sydney /Hunter 15; North Coast 9 ; North America 6 ; Rest NSW 6 ; Other States 6 ; New Zealand 1.				
Age Groups %	<u>11-20</u>	13.6			
	<u>21-40</u>	31.4			
	<u>41-60</u>	32			
	<u>Over 60</u>	23			
Holidaying in Clarence %	Yes 27	No 73			
Consider it in future %	Yes 82	No 18			
First visit to Clarence %	Yes 40	No 60			
Preferred Holiday Experiences (based on aggregate ranking figures.Lowest score = most preferred)	nature walks 208; national parks 209; whale watching 234 ; restaurants 249; museums 294; fishing 296 ; shopping 307 ; farm stays 331; bird watching 335				
Interested in holiday to rural areas %	Yes 58	No 42			
Heard of Agritourism %	Yes 47	No 53			
<u>Interested in staying at:</u>					
B&B on farms in Clarence %	Yes 60	No 40			
Farm stays to relax %	Yes 57	No 43			
Farm stays to work %	Yes 39	No 61			
Self drive tours to dairy heritage features %	Yes 62	No 38			
Guided tours to dairy heritage features %	Yes 49	No 51			

Holiday experiences in terms of heritage drives relating to the dairy industry suggest a preference for 'self drive tours'(62 percent) when compared to 'guided tours'(49 percent). Clearly, tourists in this early part of the 21st century are self motivated, preferring the flexibility of independent activity associated with some supplied literature to guide them.

In a breakdown of the rural responses by 'age group'(see Table 11a), it is clear that the younger people(ages 11-20) have little interest in agritourism. The age group with the highest interest shown was the 41 - 60 year range with very positive results for three of the four rural questions asked. This group, too, showed little interest in 'guided tours' to heritage sites. The same cannot be said for the 'over 60' age group where there was little interest in farm stays but positive responses to tours of dairy heritage sites either self drive or guided. Perhaps this suggests that the middle aged with children see the farm experience in terms of education while the more elderly prefer some high degree of comfort, relying on others to organise their tours.

Respondents' preferences, when cross-tabulated by their places of origin, have produced mixed results(see Table 11b). Sydney, North Coast and local respondents expressed a quite strong interest in almost all the farm tourism questions, although only slight support was given to the guided heritage site tours. Interstate travellers, including those from Queensland, appear quite indifferent to the rural questions although the Queenslanders' responses indicate a more than 2:1 response in favour of 'self drive' tours to observe dairy heritage. Responses from overseas travellers also indicated an indifference to the rural questions although they were slightly more positive in the desire to holiday in rural areas.

Table 11 TOURIST QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS (2)

(Total responses equals 108)

Table 11a

Responses to Rural Questions by Age Group (%)								
Age Group	Like to Holiday in Rural Areas		Interested in Farm Stays		Self Drive to Dairy Heritage		Guided Tours Dairy Heritage	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
<u>11 - 20</u>	1	3	1	2	0	4	0	4
<u>21 - 40</u>	15	14	18	10	13	15	15	14
<u>41 - 60</u>	33	11	37	8	31	13	19	23
<u>Over 60</u>	12	11	8	16	18	6	16	9
Total	100		100		100		100	

Table 11b

Responses to Rural Questions by Place of Origin (%)								
Place of Origin	Like to Holiday in Rural Areas		Interested in Farm Stays		Self Drive to Dairy Heritage		Guided Tours to Dairy Heritage	
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
QueensLand	11	11	13	13	16	7	12	10
Sydney/ Hunter	9	6	9	4	11	4	6	10
North Coast	6	3	9	1	7	2	6	3
Local	12	6	11	7	11	8	8	11
Rest NSW	3	4	3	4	5	2	4	3
Interstate	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Overseas	13	10	10	10	10	11	10	11
Total	100		100		100		100	

In summary, the tourist questionnaire results indicate an anomalous situation whereby farm stays are considered one of the least favoured holiday experiences desired by tourists yet there is a strong desire for farm stays in the Clarence Valley. While responses do vary, the demand is particularly high for the 41-60 age group and tourists from within the region and from Sydney. Highest interest was for 'Bed and Breakfast' on farms and for 'Farm Stays' to relax. In terms of dairy heritage there was a very positive response to 'Self Drive' tours rather than 'guided' tours.

6.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS (2) Dairy Farmers Surveys

Clearly, there is some scope for agritourism and its promotion in the Clarence Valley from the viewpoint of tourist interest. The question now arises as to whether the dairy farmers in the Valley are interested in supplying such a service as a supplement to their milk producing activities.

Currently there are 10 dairy milk producers in the Clarence Valley, distributed from Whiteman Creek in the west, down river to Cowper in the east(see Figure 3). Each of these was personally interviewed during this study. Eight of the farmers market their produce through the Norco Dairy Company at Lismore while two send their milk to the Dairy Farmers factory at Toowoomba, Queensland. An eleventh dairy farmer only recently exited the industry and he too was interviewed. The results of the interviews have been tabulated in Table 12.

Most of these farmers have been in the dairy business for over fifty years with one farm at Ulmarra being in the family since the beginnings of the industry in 1892.(The Pioneer Butter Factory at Ulmarra was opened on the 19th March,

Table 12 RESULTS OF INTERVIEWS WITH DAIRY FARMERS

<u>Farm No.</u>	<u>Family Owned Farm Since</u>	<u>Area (ha) of Farm</u>	<u>Herd Size</u>	<u>Production (lit / day)</u>	<u>Supplementary Income</u>	<u>Interest in Agritourism</u>	<u>Comment on this Interest</u>
1	1920	120	70	1000	pigs;rent 10%	Yes	Planning
2	1935	100	150	2650	nil	No	Insurance cost
3	1910	61	62	700	beef 20%	Yes	Planning
4 *	1970	113	40	600	engineering 50%	Yes	Have begun
5	1900	180	150	2700	nil	Yes	Planning
6	1930	123	95	1300	beef 10%	No	Insurance cost
7	1920	65	100	1500	silage 10%	Yes	Planning
8	1952	80	100	1400	nil	No	Insurance cost
9	1954	100	110	1900	beef 40%	No	Time problems
10	1892	200	150	2700	cane 45%/beef 10%	No	Insurance cost
11	1967	137	72	860	cane 40%/beef 20%	Yes	Have begun

* exited the industry in 2002

1892). The average farm holding is 100 hectares but they do vary considerably from 61 ha to 200 ha. With deregulation and the fall in the farm-gate price of milk, it has been suggested that to maintain income levels herds must increase in size. Currently, herd size varies from 62 to 150; the farm with the lowest herd size of 40 exiting the industry in 2002. In this way deregulation has led to some rationalisation.

After deregulation the farm-gate price for milk fell from 52 cents per litre for quota milk to 18 cents per litre but has currently stabilised at 32 cents per litre. With the abolition of quotas, however, all milk produced can now be sold at this price. The highest producers in the Valley are therefore earning a gross income of over \$800 per day. Needless to say, most of these farmers have shown little interest in agritourism as a supplementary form of income. Indeed, for one farm (Table 12, No.10) milk provided only 45 percent of the farm income with diversification in terms of beef and cane producing the majority of the income.

Most interest in agritourism seems to be from the smaller producers (with the exception of Farm No.5, Table 12). Each of the smaller producers has some diversifying activity in order to supplement income, varying from renting cottages, to beef fattening and cane growing. They are all, however, interested in diversifying even further into agritourism and most have plans in that direction. One farmer was highly excited at the possibilities but would need some outside investment funds, perhaps on a 50/50 shared formula. His plan would be to reduce his herd size in order to allow more time for the agritourism side of the operation.

A major concern expressed by many of the farmers was the high cost of Public Liability Insurance. Since the September 11th terrorist attacks in the USA and the collapse of the HIH

insurance company in Australia, Public Liability Insurance rates have risen by at least 20 percent (Public Liability Insurance 2003). The Yarramalong Outdoor Recreation Centre in south - west Brisbane has had a 500 percent increase in its premiums for horse riding with a \$6,000 annual premium for adventure tourism. While 'consent forms' can be signed to waive possible litigation, these have yet to be tested in Court. The Victorian Government has introduced *Code of Safety* standards for such activities (Public Liability Insurance 2003), but as yet there is no national code and farmers considering agritourism involving farm activities are therefore somewhat hesitant.

All farmers interviewed indicated a positive response to the question concerning the preservation of relics of the old dairy industry and most were in favour of tourism safaris associated with these relics. One suggested moving the relics to a central site to form a heritage park called *Dairy Town*, operating along the lines of *Timbertown* at Wauchope. Another suggestion was that the safari tours should also include a visit to a working farm and that farmer would like to be part of such an undertaking.

6.6 RESEARCH FINDINGS (3) Shire Council Surveys.

Until amalgamation in February, 2004, the Clarence Valley encompassed four main Local Government Areas - Grafton City with 34 percent of the population, Maclean with 36 percent, Pristine Waters with 22 percent and Copmanhurst with 8 percent (see Figure 1 page 7). The former two were predominantly urban areas covering just 10 percent of the total area while Pristine Waters alone covered 61 percent of the geographic area and Copmanhurst 29 percent.

· **The Two 'Urban Shires' - Grafton and Maclean**

Whilst there are some relics of the old dairy industry in the two urban shires, urban heritage rather than rural heritage has been the focus of cultural heritage studies in these two areas. Heritage Inventory Sheets were completed by Maclean Shire for two silos as part of the rural heritage while no Inventory Sheets have been completed by Grafton. Neither Council had committed to the use of historic signage plaques for important sites associated with the dairy industry yet both Councils regarded cultural heritage tourism as an important contributor to economic growth in the area. Maclean Shire had been involved with an aboriginal tourist drive and with the restoration of buildings along the main street of the town. A Community Advisory Heritage Committee has been recently established in Grafton and Maclean but the work is still at the planning stage.

Both Councils supported the Clarence River Tourist Association but had no policy on agritourism. Maclean supported the establishment of bed and breakfast accommodation while in Grafton there has been little interest in such with only *three* bed and breakfast places registered. Grafton is about to support an aboriginal safari tour around the town but no thought has been given to dairy heritage safaris. Neither Council gave any consideration to rural assets associated with the dairy industry as a tourist attraction, but focussed rather on the river, urban areas and ecotourism resorts like Angouri Rainforest Resort. Appendix 2 indicates that there are potentially 14 dairy heritage sites in Grafton City, four of which may be regarded as *highly significant* while in Maclean Shire there are 44 sites, 5 of which are *highly significant*. Perhaps the heritage advisors and the Heritage Advisory Committees may consider these in

the future. Certainly, the Maclean 'sub-branch' of the newly amalgamated Clarence River Council is currently venturing along this path.

On the other hand the more rural shires of Copmanhurst and Pristine Waters were highly motivated towards agritourism and the preservation of a rural ambience in the face of continuing development pressures.

· The Two 'Rural' Shires - Copmanhurst and Pristine Waters

These two Shires covered 90 percent of the area of the Clarence Valley but supported only 30 percent of the resident population. The catch-cry for the Pristine Waters Shire was '*from the mountains to the sea*' and while Copmanhurst Shire did not reach the coast it too extended from the mountains to Lawrence, just a few kilometres from the eastern seaboard(see Figure 1 page 7).

Both of these Local Government Areas(LGAs) had established Cultural Heritage Committees, with the Copmanhurst Shire well advanced in this work, investigating over 170 items in the Shire. Of the 73 items considered significant enough to warrant some form of heritage listing, only two related to the dairy industry - McKees dairy and bails at Stockyard Creek and Foley's Butter Factory at Lower Southgate . This is surprising as there are some 110 sites in the Shire associated with the old dairy industry(see Appendix 2) and at least 20 of those listed could be considered as 'highly significant'. These include the Keybarbin Cheese Factory north of Baryulgil(see Plate 10) and the Copmanhurst Butter Factory(see Plate 14).

The Pristine Waters Shire had established a Community Based

Heritage Committee of nine but this group had not undertaken an inventory study of items in the area. Appendix 2 indicates that there may be 115 heritage items in the Shire associated with the old dairy industry, 15 of which could be considered as 'highly significant'. Examples include the Pioneer Dairy Factory at Ulmarra(see Plate 13), the Bailey family bails at Ulmarra(see Plate 9) and the Coutts Crossing Creamery site (see Plate 12).

The four Councils which administered this section of the Clarence Valley have been involved in joint valley planning for several years. A 'social plan' for the Valley, for example, was developed five years ago. With amalgamation in 2004 all future planning will be on a valley-wide basis and the various anomalies that existed between Councils in terms of heritage and tourism at the time of this survey should soon be alleviated.

6.7 CONCLUSION

There has been very little development of agritourism in the Clarence Valley to date and very little interest has been shown in the preservation of the dairy heritage assets of the Valley as a basis for tourist safaris in the area.

The results of this research, however, indicate that there is a potential demand from tourists for agritourism and dairy heritage safaris in the Clarence Valley. This demand is particularly evident among the middle aged tourists with only minor interest in these activities shown by the younger and older age groups. The questionnaire responses indicated little demand for farm stays involving work on the farms although anecdotal evidence suggests otherwise.

While the number of operating dairy farms in the Valley is

now quite small, just over a half of the farmers(54 percent) are looking at ways to diversify including catering for agritourism. As perhaps would be expected, all the farmers are in favour of preserving the dairy heritage assets of the Valley and the establishment of tourist activities associated with these assets with some highly motivated to be a part of any such undertakings.

The local government framework within which such activities could be undertaken is currently in a state of flux with the recent local government amalgamations. Prior to these changes each LGA was undertaking some form of heritage study but only one of these, Copmanhurst, was fairly well placed in terms of an inventory of items even though the list contained few items associated with dairying and the dairy industry. At the time of the interviews all local government representatives were very positive in their responses regarding agritourism and tourist safaris to dairy heritage sites. This thesis will provide them with research data upon which to base future planning by the newly amalgamated Clarence River Council.

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Chapter 7. CONCLUSIONS, OPTIONS AND PROJECTIONS

7.1 OVERVIEW - *What Has Been Achieved*

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the extent to which agritourism activities could be developed around the remnants of the once extensive dairy industry in the Clarence Valley of northern NSW. From its beginnings in the latter part of the nineteenth century, dairying rose to be the dominant economic activity in the Valley during the 1930s and 1940s but rapidly declined after 1970 and has continued to do so following the deregulation of the industry in 2000.

In some areas of the globe, such as the United Kingdom, the decline in agriculture has led to the development of a post-productivist landscape whereby land resources have been taken out of economic production and replaced by motorways, housing estates, water production reserves and other non-agricultural uses. In the Clarence Valley this scenario has not occurred to any large extent except for some adjustments on the rural/urban fringe of settlements. Rather, farms in this Valley have adjusted to the new economic environment by changing direction to other forms of production such as beef cattle grazing and sugar cane farming.

Some dairy farmers have, however, persisted in their dairying activities and indeed one farmer in the Clarence Valley has entered the industry since deregulation. With the abolition of the milk quota system that prevailed before deregulation these farmers are taking advantage of the free market conditions that allow them to sell all the milk they can produce, albeit at a lower price per litre. At the same time, they are making structural changes on the farms to adapt to

the altered economic conditions. The smaller scale producers in particular, are diversifying their production into such activities as cane growing and beef cattle fattening depending on their location, and all of them have indicated an interest in entering agritourism associated with farm stays.

In the United States, New England dairy farmers have had to diversify following the collapse of the Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact in 2001. New York State, for example, provides advertising for agritourism right along the 800 km. St. Lawrence Seaway Trail. Shelburne Farm in Vermont is a working dairy farm but the majority of its income comes from tourism rather than milk products. In Germany, where price support schemes are gradually being abolished, farmers are looking elsewhere for income, redesigning their farms and becoming involved in agritourism.

Government policy is subsidising these changes in order to keep farms operating and helping to avoid the problem of farmers leaving their land and threatening a heritage that goes back centuries. The contraction of farm income and rural services in New Zealand has led to a de-coupling of the agricultural and community sectors as they split from their traditional forms of dependency. Here, however, agritourism and associated rural heritage is being seen as a re-linking mechanism, forming close ties between the two sectors.

In Australia, farm stays of varying types are common throughout the country. Pluriactivity has become increasingly important for the survival of many farms as the effects of globalisation, rationalisation and technological changes place pressures on farm incomes. Carisbrooke Station in Queensland, Oxley Farm in South Australia, Maca's Farm in Victoria and the 'Big Bull' in NSW are examples where

agritourism has been incorporated into the farm management program in order to supplement the farm income.

Associated with agritourism and farm stays in various parts of the world is the development of programs to protect rural historic and cultural resources. In Europe and the USA, the restoration of old farm buildings, the development of cultural heritage tourism inventories and the adoption of farmland preservation policies are playing an increasingly important role in the preservation of the rural past in the face of increasing pressures from urban expansion and development. In comparison with many other areas of the globe, such as Europe, the USA and New Zealand and indeed with other parts of Australia, agritourism along with other forms of tourism has not as yet been well developed in the Clarence Valley of NSW.

Nevertheless, tourist survey research for this thesis suggests that there is a demand for agritourism activities, such as farm stays, in the Valley. The age group showing greatest interest in this form of holiday was the family orientated 41- 60 years olds coming mainly from urban south-east Queensland and Sydney. Over 82 percent of respondents showed an interest in holidaying in the Clarence Valley in the future although only 27 percent were currently doing so. It is not surprising then that employment in the tourism industry in the Clarence Valley is currently quite low compared to other areas of the Mid North Coast and the number of tourist establishments is the lowest in that statistical division(see page 9).

All the stakeholders involved in the agritourism industry, such as farmers, tourists, tourist information centres and Local Government Councils, have indicated an interest in

developing the agritourism form of holiday. The smaller milk producers in particular were eager to diversify into agritourism with some currently in the planning stages for such an enterprise. There is then a potentially strong demand for farm stay accommodation in the Clarence Valley. However, most of the survey responses indicated little consumer interest in taking part in farm activities such as milking. The high public liability insurance premiums associated with these activities have been a major factor in many of the farmers also not pursuing this form of agritourism as a pluriactivity.

Associated with the changing rural productivist landscape this research has indicated that there is also a potential demand for cultural heritage tours to some of the dairy heritage sites in the Valley. A large number of such sites have been identified in this study with a potential for development associated with self-guided tourist drives. However, there appears to be little interest from tourists for guided tours of these sites.

The assets identified range from various types of dairy bails formerly used for milking, to foundation remnants of several creameries dating from the 1890s, cheese factory buildings and sites as well as several butter factories still standing although not currently being used for milk industry activities. Very few of these sites are currently being considered as heritage sites by the local government authorities. Cultural Plans, required to be submitted by each of the local government councils to the State Government in the near future, however, may lead to some form of recognition of these heritage assets. Copmanhurst Council and, more recently (June 2004), the Maclean Branch of the

newly formed Clarence River Council, have begun this inventory process of the heritage assets within the old shire boundaries.

As a first stage in this recognition process, *Heritage Site Inventory Sheets* must be completed for each location in order to establish their significance. This thesis has begun the process. Secondly, *public signage*(see Plate 21) must be produced to display at each significant site to indicate its historical significance in the development of the local cultural landscape. Thirdly, a *booklet* in some form should be produced to be made available for tourist safaris and the local community outlining the historical importance of the dairy industry, providing maps to indicate significant sites and a short commentary on each of the sites listed including an illustration, such as an historical photograph. The publication could be made available for sale at a tourist information centre, historical society, local bookshop and council office.

In this way, dairy heritage trails could be developed into significant sites on a cluster or linear basis(see Appendix 4), culminating in a visit to, and possible farm stay at a working dairy. In this research project all the stakeholders involved have indicated an interest in bringing this to fruition and making it a reality.

The need now is to establish strategies which would have to be adopted by the stakeholders in order to achieve satisfactory outcomes relating to the development of agritourism on farms and the implementation of dairy heritage tours.

7.2 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

'In the Clarence Valley dairy farming is extinct, forestry is in decline, grazing is marginal, sugar is always in crisis and fishing survives on high prices and demand for limited supplies. Only land subdivision, housing construction and homegrown tourism are growth indicators' (Evitt 2003:2).

'National Foods, including stakeholders Dairy Farmers, Parmalat and Fonterra, did not rule out further rationalisation of the dairy industry' (Hopkins 2003:35).

The first quotation is from a letter to the editor of a local newspaper written by a disgruntled reader, while the second is from a business media release made by the marketing arm of the milk industry in Australia. The message from these statements is that the dairy industry is in need of some form of stimulation if it is to survive. Re-regulation is, of course, out of the question as a panacea for the low prices and ills of the industry as it would not be allowed by the National Competition Policy and international trade obligations (NSW Farmers Association 2004).

Market growth in the future, however, may hold a glimmer of hope for farmers. As population increases and new dairy products, such as long-life flavoured milk are marketed, there may be an increasing demand for milk. The dairy 'good health' campaign may also be a step in this direction. In this case, milk is being marketed as an active factor in the prevention and management of osteoporosis and diabetes (Coastal Views 24/7/2003:9). Dairy products may also be a key to curbing weight and obesity as calcium-rich dairy foods in a calorie-controlled diet appear to promote weight loss (Dairy Australia 2004).

There is also the potential of A2 milk reducing childhood diabetes, schizophrenia and autism. A2 milk contains less than 0.1 percent of beta casein A1, with Guernsey and Jersey

breeds producing a high proportion of A2 milk. *Fairbrae Milk*, a small dairy company operating near Kyogle in the Richmond Valley north of the Clarence, is the first processor in the world to supply Jersey Gold A2 milk on a commercial basis, with markets throughout the northern rivers of NSW, Action Supermarkets in Queensland as well as markets in Adelaide(White Mischief 2003; Roberts 2003; A2 Corporation Ltd. 2003; *Talking Turkey* 2003).

The industry may also be helped in the future by the technological development of a silk-like fibre made from casein, a protein found in milk(Newman 2003). New product and marketing developments impact upon the local environment but are generally initially instigated from external sources. However, more immediate coping strategies need to be deployed at the local level if the rural ambience associated with the dairy industry is to survive. If the goal is a viable and sustainable rural landscape then two models offer possibilities(Troughton 2003:32):

(a) **The Alternative Agriculture Model:** there is a growing demand for food based on alternative means of production such as organic grains, vegetables and livestock raised under less intensive conditions. There is a shift away from the chemically supported industrial farm to an environmental ethic(Day 2004). The Watson family dairy farm on the Atherton Tablelands in tropical north Queensland produces milk for *Dairyfarmers* at Malanda. Perceiving a possible downturn in the dairy industry after deregulation in 2000, they switched to a biodynamic organic farming system and diversified by marketing their own brand of Mungalli Creek yoghurt and soft cheese(Blackwood 1999). The Eggert dairy farm at Wauchope in NSW has also moved in this direction(see pages 79-80).

(b) The Countryside Model: this model combines traditional primary production with the preservation of the natural and built environment associated with the development of rural tourism focussed on these features. It is this model that is being proposed in this thesis. Tourism as a service industry has long been seen in some developing countries as a way to address problems of poverty and underdevelopment (Leung 2002:10). Recently the World Bank in conjunction with UNESCO and the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) have undertaken 36 separate projects which focus on heritage tourism in developing countries, reflecting that heritage conservation, tourism and economic development are mutually supportive (Evans 2001:20).

On a more regional scale, 'geotourism' is a concept marketed by the American Travel Industry Association since 2002 which focusses on the factors attracting consumers to an area. The local customs and architecture help provide a geographic identity to that area.

In this way, *Northern Rivers Tourism*, in association with the *Northern Rivers Development Board*, is undertaking a Strategic Plan 2003 - 2005 for tourism and economic growth in the area. This will include the development of the 'Big River Way' (see Figure 4) using the Clarence River itself as a focus. As a tourist driving route it is hoped to encourage developments away from the coastal areas. The Master Plan for this concept includes possible incentives such as taxation relief for development initiatives to encourage such a project (St Lawrence 2004). The Northern Rivers Region is recognised as presenting excellent opportunities for tourist development with visitor numbers to some of the World Heritage Reserves in the area, such as Nightcap National Park, at 70,000 a year (Fletcher 2001:5).

At the farm level, guidelines for intending developers interested in agritourism, including the various types of legislation involved and development application requirements, have been made available in a user friendly form(Fletcher 2001:10). Three key points have been suggested for the farmer to consider when thinking of entering agritourism activities(Stapleton 2002):

- be sure you have something for the visitors to see
- have something for visitors to do and
- have something for visitors to purchase as a souvenir.

The University of California Small Farm Centre also offers agricultural tourism operation 'Fact Sheets' to help farmers anticipating becoming involved in agritourism. The 'Fact Sheets' include *Assessing Your Asset, Adding Value, Creating a Business Plan, Personalising Your Services* and *Marketing Your Enterprise* as well as *Guidelines For Farm Stays*(University of California 2004). In NSW, the State Government has also issued a kit(Tourism New South Wales 2003) which contains a variety of resources and information for those interested in establishing or developing a farm stay or country holiday tourism product. TAFE Colleges also conduct courses to meet industry standards for operators, providing them with a form of accreditation. In addition, the Commonwealth Government conducts a very succesful 'Aussie Host Course' for prospective operators(Department of Industry, Science and Tourism 1996).

On the regional scale, Local Government Councils need to become involved in 'asset auditing, the cataloguing of the areas cultural heritage assets, as an important first step in evaluating the cultural tourism potential of the district (Department of Industry Tourism and Resources 2004:46). The audit could take the form of a matrix of tourism potential

based upon market appeal and robusticity (McKerchner & du Cros 2002:185). The second step should involve the transforming of the assets that can be consumed by tourists. The Australian Government has recently released a *Tourism Impact Model (TIM)* for local governments (Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources 2004) to help local communities gain a better understanding of tourism in their area. The TIM includes 'default estimates' of the loss in income and employment to the local community in the absence of a tourist industry. The model also suggests ways by which the local authorities can aid private developers to become established in the industry by providing signage, publications, help with events and festivals.

In the Niagara Region of Ontario, Canada, the St. Catherine's Municipal Council Agritourism Committee was established in 1999 comprising representatives of various interests covering regulation, promotion and development including farmers, planners, tourism and economic development boards (Gayler 2003:193). Their guidelines are to:

- promote and support available agricultural industry;
- promote and enhance tourist development but respect the primacy of agriculture; and
- strike a balance between encouraging agritourism developments but not jeopardising the appeal of an area for tourism.

Perhaps this could be used as a prototype for a similar organisational structural development in the Clarence Valley.

This thesis has indicated that there is potential for the development of an agritourism industry in the Clarence Valley of NSW. There is a demand for such activity from the consumers - the tourists - and with the production

difficulties experienced by dairy farmers in recent years, income diversification in the form of farm tourism is a viable outcome. While there is some potential for increased dairy production for the Valley in the future, in a worst case scenario, it is possible that a price/cost squeeze may result in the disappearance of this once extensive industry, leaving reminders of the past only in the form of decorated metal (see Plate 22).

However, the promotion of agritourism and the establishment of tourist dairy heritage trails would help maintain the rural ambience of the Valley. At the the same time it would contribute to the economic development of the region and help preserve dairying as an active industry in the Region.

PLATE 22 Tin Cows for Sale - Orara Valley at Nana Glen 2003.



In terms of heritage, the relics of the past glory days of the dairy industry in the Valley also need recognition and preservation for future generations. They could provide the basis of an important tourist attraction in the form of linear or cluster tourist drives. These assets are disappearing quickly from the landscape(see Plates 23a and 23b) with action needed now in order to preserve what is left of this important rural heritage.

PLATE 23a Bert Simpson's dairy bails (1920 - 1950) at Nymboida (2002).



PLATE 23b Bert Simpson's dairy bails. Demolished July 2003.



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