

A Story to Tell

SEMBOKA DAIRY HISTORY



Year 5 and 6
Bemboka Public School



Enviro Stories

This book has been published as part of Enviro-Stories. Developed by environmental education consultants from Peekdesigns, Enviro-Stories involves students learning about their local area and passing this knowledge on to others through storytelling.

www.envirostories.com.au

BEMBOKA PUBLIC SCHOOL is a small rural school situated at the bottom of the Brown Mountain on the Far South Coast. The family oriented school has close links with the local community where we support many local events and the local community supports us by participating in our school activities.



At Bemboka Public School, we are preparing our students for a complex, rapidly changing world.

www.bemboka-p.schools.nsw.edu.au

A Story to Tell

BEMBOKA DAIRY HISTORY

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Lousie for all the wonderful information she shared with us.*

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and Bega Cheese Heritage Museum for their support.*

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Bemboka's history is something that should not be forgotten... That is why it is time for you, Clarabell, to hear all about our dairy history and how it is still important to families in our area today.

One day you will pass this information onto your calf. So listen carefully...



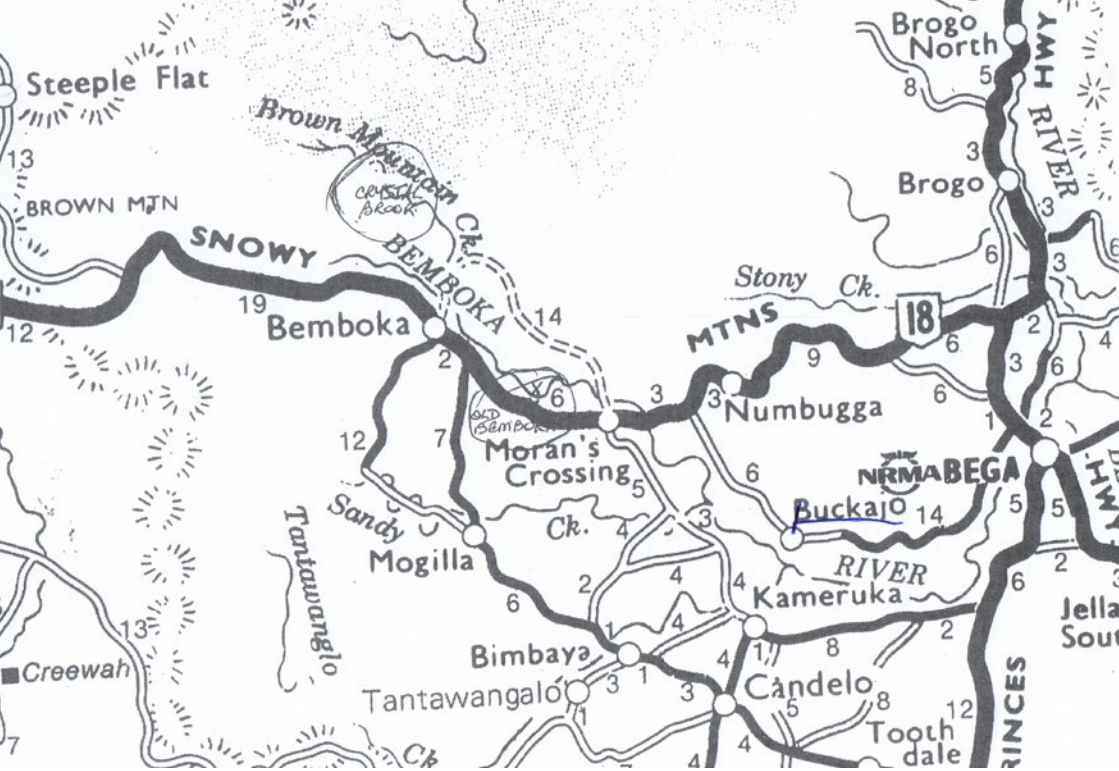
We live at 'Riverdale' which is a farm on Pollacks Flat Road in Bemboka. There are 170 cows here.



The cows are milked twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Each cow produces around 40 litres of milk per day, which adds up to about 3000 litres in total each day.

Louise and the boys look after us fantastically and that is why we produce our best for them.



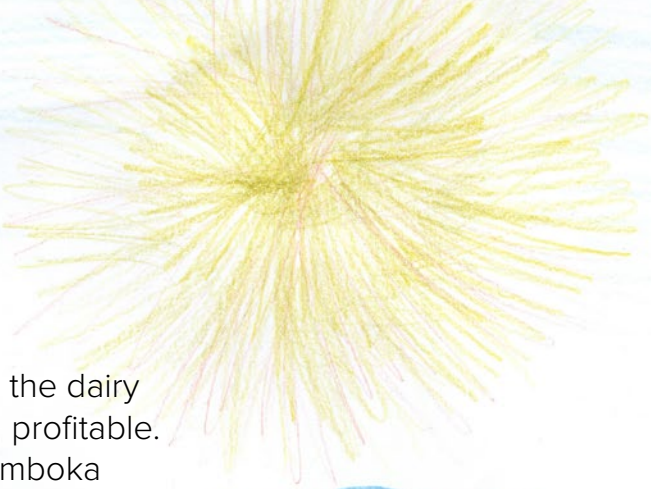


Clarabell our history is very interesting.

In 1857, a reward was offered to find a horse trail from the tableland to the foot of the Brown Mountain. Joseph Triggell, Arthur Alcock, John Green and Joseph Hammond succeeded and some of their family names are still around Bemboka today.



In 1861, Colombo (Bemboka) was surveyed and in 1894 Brown Mountain, Lyttlton and Colombo became Bemboka.

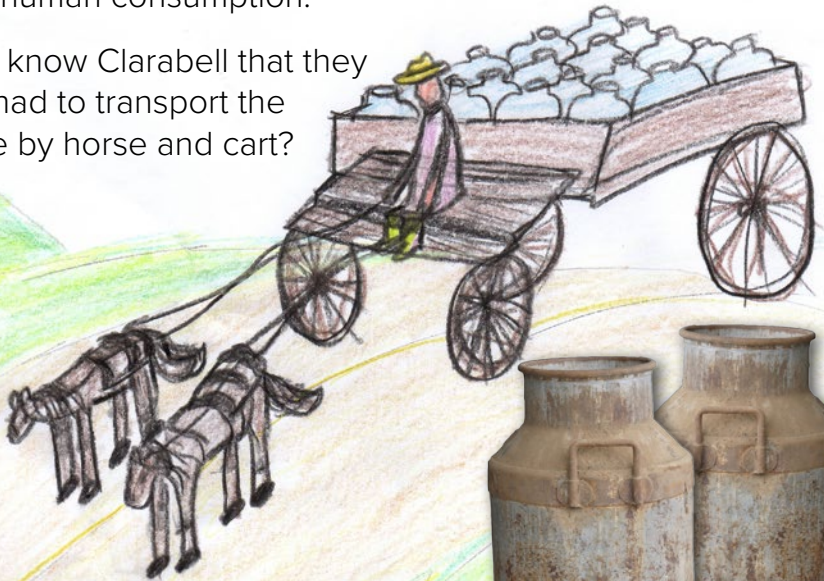


Early settlers discovered the dairy industry to be viable and profitable. By the mid-1800s the Bemboka area had a small but growing dairy industry, which was established based on butter production.



They focused on butter because the area was too isolated from any major markets to consider producing liquid milk for human consumption.

Did you know Clarabell that they initially had to transport the produce by horse and cart?





Back then the Bemboka area supported a large number of butter factories, including Brown Mountain, Mogilla, Green Brook, Sam's Corner Road, West End Co-operative and Bemboka Co-operative.

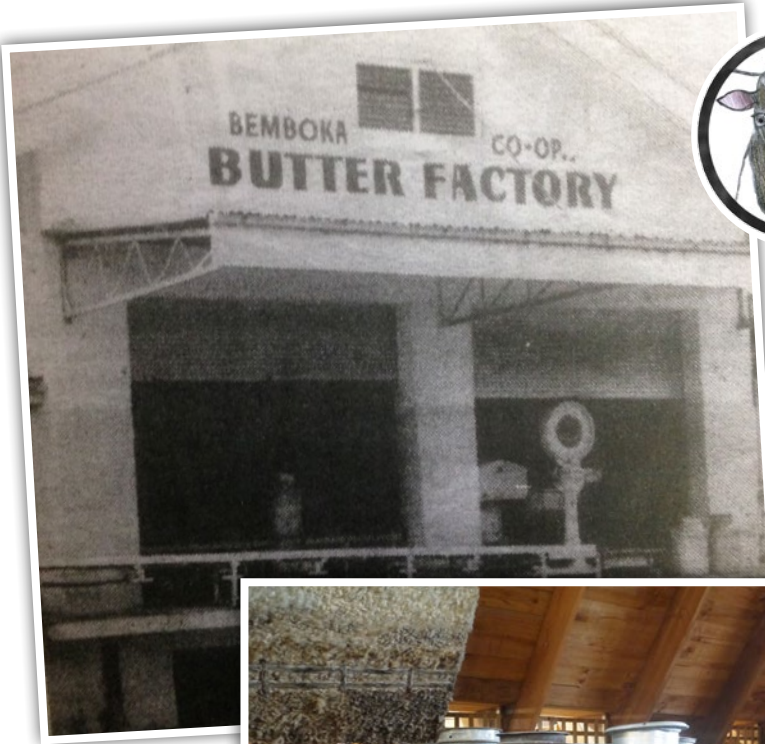
However, the numbers of butter factories declined due to the co-operative factories operations and changes to the policies of the dairy industry, such as the buildings were not allowed to be wooden.

“So what happened Mum?” enquired Clarabell.



Bemboka Co-operative opened a butter factory in 1905. In 1917, the Dairy Industry Act condemned wooden butter factories and the construction of a new brick and concrete complex was opened in 1927.

Initially wagonettes and buggies crowded the yard as farmers drove in their cans of cream. The factory had more than 60 suppliers at its peak and it concentrated on cream to be made into butter. For many years the factory flourished.



“How does milk become butter and cheese?” asked Clarabell.



To make butter you need to pour cream into a butter churn. After letting the cream sit at room temperature for 2½ hours to ripen, the thickness of the cream forms at the top of the churn and then you start the process.



Eventually the Bemboka Co-operative combined the milk and butter factory due to an oversupply of milk from the farmers. It was the first factory to supply milk to the Canberra market in 1957.

By 1978 the local suppliers depleted to only 5 due to the diversion of milk supplies to Bega, the inroads of margarine and a drop in overall consumption.



As the roads became sealed to Bega and transport options were increased the lack of suppliers to the Bemboka butter factory caused the milk side of the operation to close in 1978. The butter side continued until 1980 before closing the doors permanently.

That was a very sad day for some of us Clarabell.





However, we moved on with the times and in 1972 bulk pick-up of milk by tankers from the farms had commenced. This made the delivery of milk to Bega Cheese much easier for the farmers.

Bega Cheese has now approximately 84-200 suppliers around the Bega area with 5 suppliers still around Bemboka nowadays.

That is why we are still here Clarabell, because the O'Brien's at their 'Riverdale' property have moved with the times.





I also know for a fact that Bega Cheese are noted for their high standards and supply a range of products to people right across Australia and around the world. They have even implemented canned cheese to supply poorer countries with their product to help the people get their necessary daily nutrition.

“Mum is that why we are still at ‘Riverdale’ because we are good quality too?”

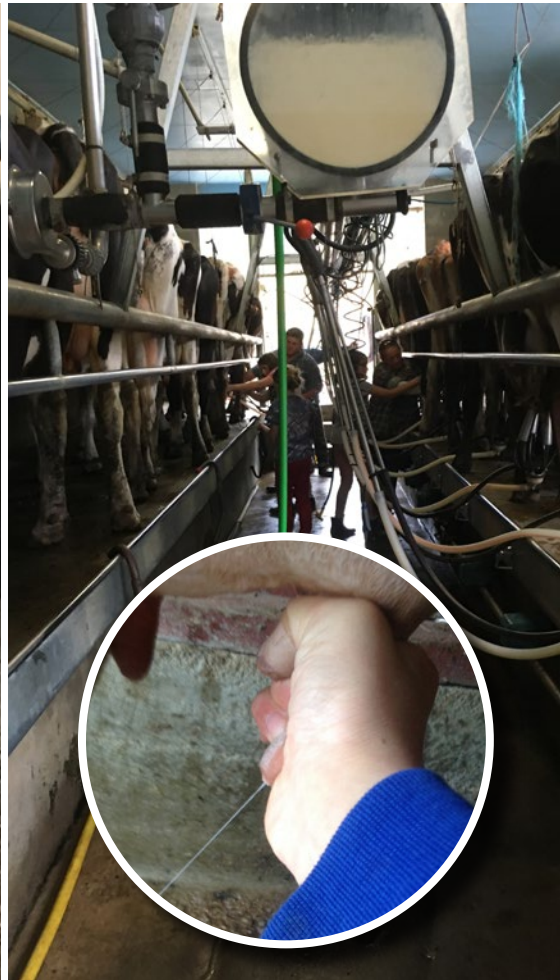


Absolutely, Clarabell!



Another interesting fact that some of the older cows told me years ago, is that in 1947 they saw the introduction of power to the area. This meant the introduction of milking machines instead of people milking by hand and other less productive machines.

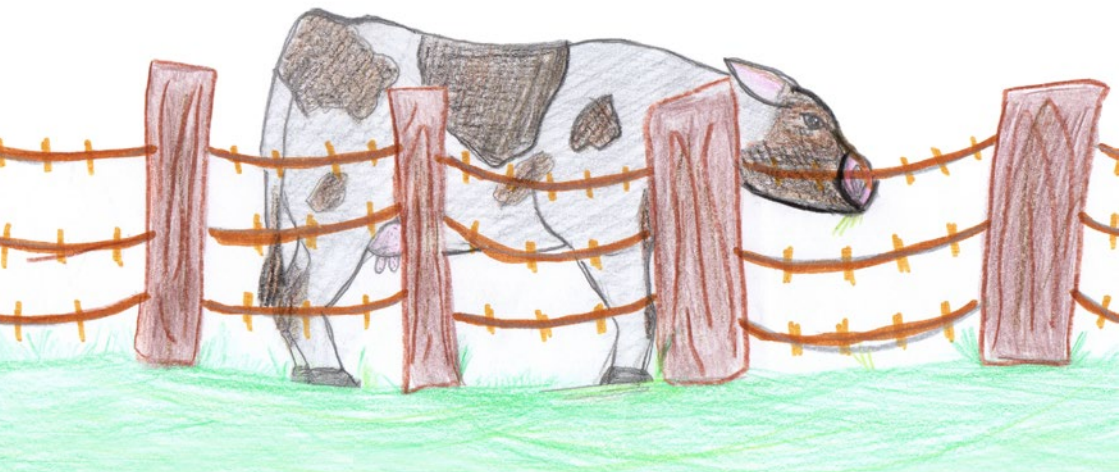
This innovation made it easier to milk more cows in the same time and it helped dairy farmers increase the number of cows they kept.





Also, it was the smaller jersey cows that were originally used due to the high butterfat content in their milk. However, today Friesians/Jersey are often cross-bred because Friesians, like you Clarabell, produce more milk for the farmers.

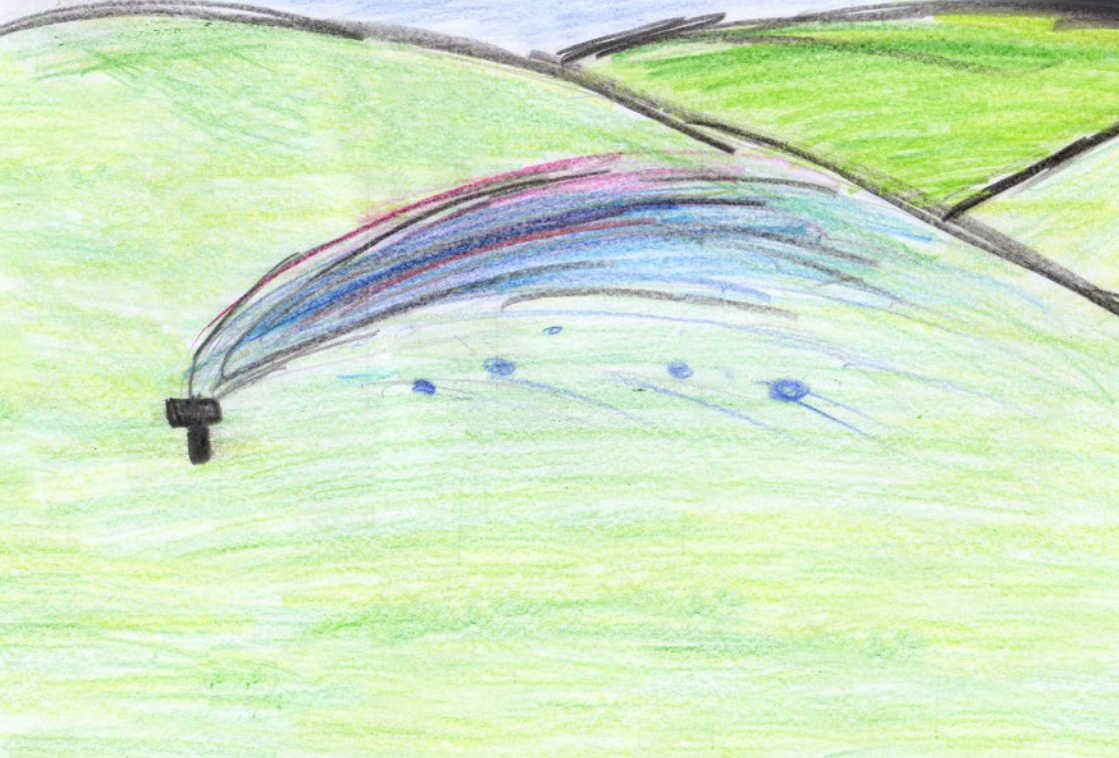
The farmers here at Riverdale know how important it is to monitor and manage the dairy herd. Every cow has a number so they can keep track of us and how much milk we are producing. This is called our output.



Improved pastures with irrigation have seen the farmers be able to run 1 cow per acre in dry times and 2 cows per acre at other times.

The feeding programs they have now also helped them run more cows on their land. They also use crop rotation, silage of grasses and pellets to supplement the cow's diet.

Did you know Clarabell, milk is made up of 97% water and 3% fat?





Government regulations have also changed over time. This has been to make sure we supply a quality product and to help manage and protect both our farms and the surrounding bushland. There are many more policies now covering environmental waste, irrigation licenses, dam restrictions, regulations on clearing land, chemical hazards, machinery checks and water testing.

Every 12 months a Safe Foods audit is carried out and you are given a grade as well as EBL (Enzootic bovine leucosis) milk checks. This helps keep the herd healthy and strong.

Clarabell, this is a big change to the early days of dairy farming where there was not as many regulations in place.





Our boss Louise started dairy farming when she was just 14 years of age, so she knows a lot about how to look after us.

They started with just 12 cows and today there are 170 at Riverdale. They sell our milk to Bega Cheese.

Louise told me that the weather had the biggest impact on a dairy farm, especially long droughts. She also needs to keep informed about demand and prices on the global market as they control how much profit the farm can make.



Clarabell can you remember the kids from Bemboka Public School visited the farm the other day? They were very keen to learn all about the Bemboka Dairy Industry just like you.

It is important that both you young calves and the children learn about these things so you can make sure the knowledge is passed on.

We all think it is really important to keep telling the story of Bemboka Dairy Industry.



COW FUN FACTS

How much milk does a jersey cow give per day?

Answer: about 20 litres of milk per day.

How many dairy farms are there in Australia?

Answer: there are about 8,594 dairy farms in Australia.

How many litres of milk does Australia make in a year?

Answer: Australian dairy farmers produce 9,102 million litres of whole milk per year.

How many people does dairy farming employ?

Answer: dairy farming employs 27,500 people throughout Australia.





AND SOME MORE INTERESTING DAIRY THINGS!

Did you know cows can smell up to 6 miles away?

A cow's heart beats about 60 to 70 times per minute.

Did you know a cow spends 8 hours of the day chewing its cud, 8 hours sleeping and 8 hours eating?

Cows are colour-blind. In a bullfight, it's the waving of the cloth not the colour red that makes the bull angry.

Did you know the average cow chews about 50 times a minute?



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Bemboka Public School, 2016

