

Top Weekly pics

Nornalup jetty/boat ramp after the recent rain

(Pictures courtesy Greg Hale)



LOOKING BACKwith Molly

In the late 1970s there was a significant change for those in the dairy industry in Walpole and its outer districts. Until then dairy farmers produced cream or butterfat... the milk ran from a vat into the separator which had two spouts...one for cream and the other for skim milk which was fed to pigs. The cream was transported in cream cans.



In the very early days of the district the immediate priority of the settlers was to make their holdings productive and as this district was ideal for dairying, butterfat or cream was the way to go. There were various collection points for the butterfat, but don't imagine for a moment that farmers had cream cans full of cream to send away. In those early days cream was painstakingly skimmed from the milk and sent in a billy can. Separators were far too costly at that time. However, cream production steadily increased as a result of consistent hard work of the settlers.

The Great Southern Butter Factory was the operator at that time and collected cream from a depot near the Frankland Bridge where it was weighed and graded before being taken in bulk to Denmark. Sunnywest took over from the Great Southern Butter Factory in Denmark in 1955, having already acquired the Factory in Manjimup some years earlier. Sunnywest operated the cream runs to both places but reduced numbers of dairy farmers in ensuing years resulted in cream going to Watsons Butter Factory in Mount Barker in 1976 where butter manufacture had commenced some years earlier. The drivers of the cream trucks who collected the cream over the years were extremely helpful and offered many other services to farmers, such as transporting of stores, tractor parts etc.

Butterfat farmers in the district had always aspired to produce bulk milk quotas as this was much more lucrative than producing butterfat. Bulk milk farmers on the west coast jealously guarded their industry and were inclined to look with disfavour at admitting south coast dairy farmers into the bulk milk quota system.

However, by the late 1970s bulk milk tankers replaced the cream trucks throughout the district as dairymen took advantage of the introduced quota scheme to produce bulk milk. This brought about quite a change in the district...improvements to dairies were necessary as well as an increase in herd numbers, and as time went on life style improvements to homes and farms were evident.

The last can of cream left the district in April 1979 and a productive dairy industry continued in our district for many years until adverse circumstances resulted in dairy farmers quitting the industry...but that's another story.



Many thanks to Don Burton for his photo of a herd of Friesian dairy cows taken during the years of bulk milk quotas.