



**A Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust**  
**Report**

*Award sponsored by*

**Jill Willows NSch**

**How to succeed in dairy farming:  
attitude determines altitude**

**Joe Delves**

**August 2013**

**NUFFIELD UK**

# A Nuffield (UK) Farming Scholarships Trust Report



August 2013

*"Leading positive change in agriculture.  
Inspiring passion and potential in  
people".*

Title	<b>How to succeed in dairy farming: attitude determines altitude</b>
Scholar	Joe Delves
Sponsor	Jill Willows NSch
Objectives of Study Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To encourage farmers to take a fresh look at themselves and their dairy businesses.</li><li>• Is there a career ladder in UK dairying?</li><li>• Can you start dairy farming with just £1?</li></ul>
Countries Visited	Australia/Tasmania, New Zealand, UK, Netherlands and the USA
Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The attitude and mindset of the owner/manager is paramount to the success of the dairy business</li><li>• There are no right or wrong systems: it's the attitude and approach of the owner/managers that makes systems work.</li><li>• Every dairy business is built around a person's values</li><li>• Throughout the world staff retention and recruitment seemed to be the biggest issues.</li></ul>

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## Disclaimer

The views expressed are my own and not necessarily those of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, nor my sponsor, nor any other sponsoring body.





## 1. Personal introduction

I was born in 1980 on my family's small dairy farm in East Sussex. I am the middle child of three and have always loved where we live. After leaving school with the bare minimum of GCSEs I started work on a neighbouring sheep farm. It was so close I could walk to work and I enjoyed the fact I was near to home and could still help out at weekends and evenings.

I have always believed that nothing in life is chance and that your decision making process affects your future. Raised in a Christian home I knew there was a God but didn't have a personal relationship with him until I was aged 24.

As well as sheep, the farmer's son on this neighbouring farm had a small plant hire company. Over the two years I was there I became familiar with construction plant of different types and started to take an interest in what seemed to be a profitable way of generating cash. My boss at the time had plenty of sayings such as: "Doesn't matter if you're a bin man, just make sure you're the best". I guess he made me think a lot about what I was doing and taught me to take pride in the small things. I was offered a job laying tarmac when I was 18 - this started my path out of farming.

By the age of 21 I was doing my own work and went into business with a friend from school to create JA Construction. I enjoyed a great period of doing different types of work, from large sites to small extensions on people's homes. I learnt a huge amount during this period; my people skills were improved as I had to deal with customers, suppliers and staff. When I reached 24 my life changed for ever; I met Becky and wanted to get married. I knew I needed to improve my lifestyle and



Me with Becky and our two daughters

wanted to get back to working in agriculture. My father at this time had been offered a full time job leading a church and this presented an opportunity for me to return home and take on the family business. I knew that I had to strike a deal from the start as I didn't want to take a backward step in my life. My goal was to have ownership at some level, so I sold up everything I had and put this money into the family farming business in return for a small share of that business.

The next three years were some of the most stressful I have ever endured. Becky and I moved into the farmhouse and soon realised that we weren't going to get rich off the cows. We worked together for a year and this put tremendous stress on our relationship. After almost breaking up we decided it would be best to set a goal of employing someone to help us. This coincided with an offer from our milk supplier for us to directly supply Tesco.



The decision to employ someone started a chain reaction that leads me to writing this Nuffield paper today. I feel our story as dairy farmers shows that if you set goals and keep

your mind positive you will dramatically change your situation.

I will finish the rest of this story in my Conclusions.



## 2. The UK Dairy Industry

### 2a. What makes an industry?

**Definition of an industry:** the companies and activities involved in the process of producing goods for sale, especially in a factory or special area.

Doesn't sound very attractive, does it? I then thought about what a farming industry is. It's not the cows, it's not the machinery and it's definitely not the land. Like the church, the dairy industry is the people who are involved in it. I use the analogy of the church because without people attending the church becomes obsolete.

### 2b. People

**Definition of people:** men and women who are involved in a particular type of work.

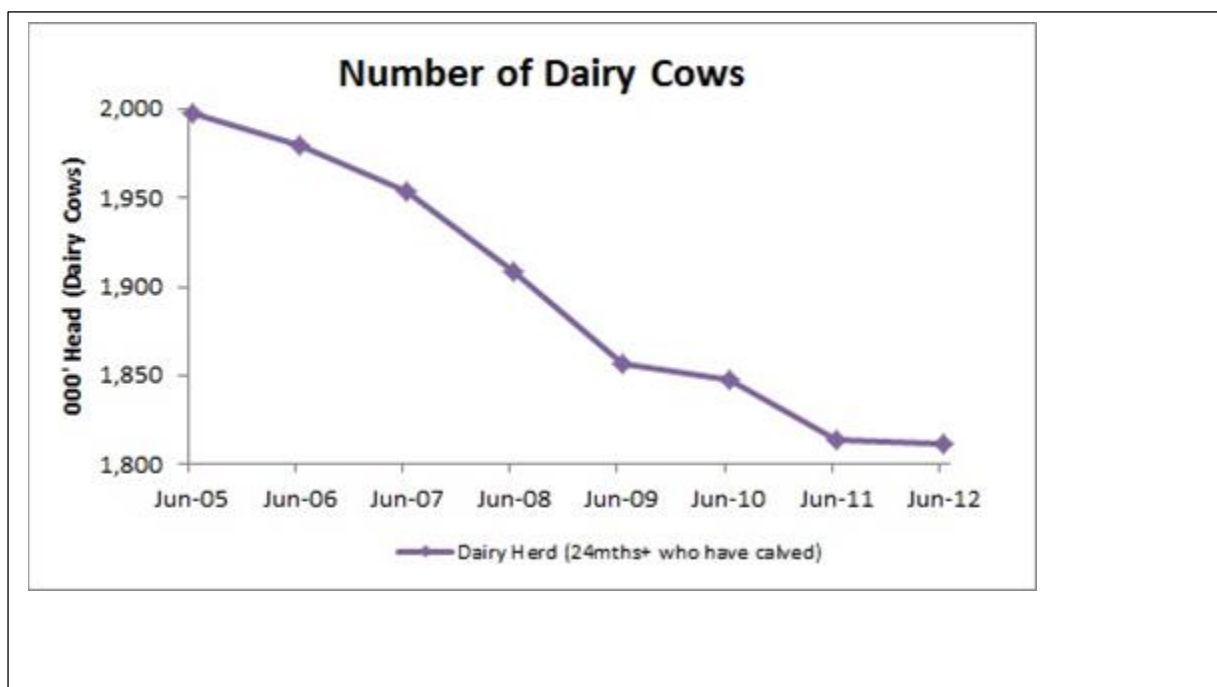
This sounds better and backs up why I want to focus on the people involved in the industry and the image we project to other people who are not involved in agriculture.

### 2c. The UK herd

The UK dairy herd stands at around 1.8 million head. In 2012 the latest complete figures were 10,540 dairy producers in the UK. The average herd size in the UK is 117 cows (with considerable regional variation). This is significantly above the EU15 average of 42, and the trend is for the herd size to increase further.

Yield per cow is increasing and is around 7,617 litres per cow per year. Again this is much higher than the EU average.

In the UK the majority (64%) of raw milk is purchased by just six major processors who each purchase between 1.1billion and 1.7billion litres of milk per year, with a further 23% of UK production purchased by fewer than 20 other large processors. Therefore 87% of UK milk is purchased by just 5% of the processors in the UK. The remaining 13% of milk is purchased by the remaining 440 or so medium or small UK processors (who





constitute 95% of the processors in the UK). Total raw milk production in the UK is around 13.3 billion litres annually.

Liquid milk consumed in Britain is produced by British cows, with rare exception. However, there is substantial trade in processed products. The value of UK exports of milk products is significantly lower than the value of imports and in 2010 the UK had a trade deficit of about £1,219m in dairy products.

Fifty per cent of milk is for the liquid market, I had never realised how unique this market was until I started to travel and take a greater interest in other countries' milk consumption. You may ask why we are a nation of liquid milk drinkers. To answer this I think you have to look back at our history.

## 2d. The history of milk

Milk is as ancient as mankind itself as it is produced by all species of mammal, from man to whales, as the perfect source of nourishment for their young.

The first reports of human consumption of other mammalian milks date back as early as 6000-8000 BC. At this time ancient man learned to domesticate species of animals initially for the provision of meat, and then later for the provision of milk for general consumption.

Mammals used for milk production included cows, buffalo, sheep, goats, and camels, all of which are still used in various parts of the world today for the production of milk for human consumption.

**Fact:** I found out whilst studying this subject that a recent analysis of some 7,500 year old pottery found in Poland at an archaeological site had residues of fat on it. This suggests that milk was being processed in some way.

At the birth of the of milk consumption I'm sure the humans involved would be blown away if they knew how complex the dairy industry is today.

## 2e. The simplicity of dairy farming.

The job of a dairy farmer is by and large fairly simple. Cows are used to harvest crops off the land and turn them into cash. e.g. A farmer grows some grass, cow comes along and eats it, turns it into milk, which is then sold to generate cash.

You may think it is almost humorous to look at dairy farming in such a simple way but this is the nuts and bolts of the process. The majority of farmers in the UK have forgotten just how simple a process this can be.

The supply chain can also be looked at in a simple form:

FARMER to PROCESSOR to RETAILER to CONSUMER

**Question:** who is my customer? The processor or the retailer?

At each stage of this process there are factors that will affect farm gate milk price. As recent protests have shown, when pressure is put on the top end of the chain, the price at the bottom can be increased. As with supply and demand, a shortage of milk coming out of the farm gate at the bottom end of the chain can push up prices at the top.

What I think is interesting is that a lot of the changes in price are simply down to people's choice. If consumers buy less dairy products then an oversupply from the bottom of the chain is created pushing prices at farm gate level down.

I was lucky enough to spend two days at Arla Food's offices in Leeds. This gave me a fantastic insight into how their supply chain actually works. I feel that farmers lack a lot of





knowledge when it comes to other people's businesses. Whether it's the retailer or the processor, farmers just immediately assume that everyone else makes better money than them. As Robert Wiseman's accounts showed when he traded as a PLC, his target margin of 2ppl was never achieved; confirming that, as I first thought, dairy processors are working on tight margins.

In Arla's head office in Leeds there are around 350 people working there and not one of them puts milk into a bottle or stacks crates of milk onto trucks. There are whole departments of people trying to work out clever ways of getting more people to consume milk. As dairy farmers we should realise how much dairy processors and retailers have invested in our industry. Every business has its profit margin just as farming does, however we should be clear about what our margin is before we go asking for more money.

## 2f. COP

COP stands for 'cost of production'. This has always been a contentious issue for our industry. There are many different figures

bandied about: I have seen a range from 16ppl to 45ppl. The main issue with COP is trying to value the labour of the farmer. A recent Dairy Co Milkbench figure putting this at £8.50 per hour is neither realistic nor sustainable for a farm business owner either working on his farm or making decisions, strategic or otherwise.

Whether you agree or disagree with the idea of COP models, when asked, the farmers that I met in the UK agreed that the former have gone some way to increase the other prices paid by dairy processors. I would even go as far as to say they have created a base price that every other milk price should be close to. Without the COP models you would have no idea where a milk price should be to keep production at a healthy level.

My main point of including this section on COP is, that whether you're a fan or not, every dairy business should know their COP, be benchmarked against similarly structured businesses, and try to improve on any costs that are higher than the average.



### 3. Highlights from my travels

During my study tour I visited the following countries:

Australia and Tasmania	February 2013
New Zealand	March 2013
USA	March/April 2013
The Netherlands	February 2012
UK	June-August 2012

It would be an endless story if I wrote about every person I met, so here are a few highlights from my travels around the globe. I have to say that I am not a well-travelled person and before I was married I never went far. I also never realised how much my wife did when we do go abroad. You should not have the opinion that a Nuffield Farming Scholarship is only for well-travelled people because this was not the case for me.

My study tour was influenced by the people I had met in my past. I was very keen to get over to Australia and, having had a Tasmanian Scholar stay with us after the Contemporary Scholars Conference, I was keen to have a good look around the island.

I had visited New Zealand in 2010 and couldn't wait to return and meet up with some of the friends I made and still had contact with.

My father decided to mind the farm whilst I was away but a freak accident with a cow broke his collar bone and rendered me stuck in the UK. Being of a positive mind set I decided to use this time wisely. I planned to spend time looking around the UK and meeting as many young people as I could to see where they felt let down by the UK dairy

industry. It always amuses me when people try and invent something or start some new process without first asking people what they need.

My travels ended with a trip to the USA to meet what I could only describe as my farming hero. To add insult to injury he ran an intensive housed system that is the complete opposite to my extensive system.

#### 3a. UK

The UK has a fantastic spread of farms and types of systems: from all year round calving housed herds to extensive once a day milked ones. The recent applications to build large confinement system farms has pitched the industry against itself with effectively grass based systems being hailed as the "best" way to keep a cow. Fuel is added to the fire by consultants publishing figures showing more profit is obtained by grass based farms. The bottom line is simple: farmers should farm the way they enjoy most.

"If you enjoy what you do,  
you will always *do it well*"

#### 3a.i. Prospect Farming Ltd

The highlight of my trips round the UK was a visit to Prospect Farming Ltd. Tom Foot and Neil Grigg have an amazing business which was set up with the aim of mobile milking 1,000 cows once a day in Dorset. Their story is fantastic and shows what can be achieved with the right attitude toward problems that crop up when you start on the journey toward your goal. Prospect Farming had cows out at grass keep across Dorset and had leased cows out for the 2011 season before the



opportunity at Longlands Farm, a predominantly arable unit, arose. In July 2011 a five year farm business tenancy was secured for the 360 hectare block. When Tom and Neil looked at putting up a new parlour the £700,000 to £1million that would be required did not add up. Capital investments needed to be viewed in the light of the clause that they will only be paid £1 for any and all improvements at the end of the five year tenancy. With this level of write-down, laying concrete would have been a huge mistake. Tom and Neil live by a few simple rules:

- Money goes into cows, the things that make money, not things that will depreciate.
- Don't spend money on unessential things
- Instead of spending £30,000 on troughs, two mobile water troughs were assembled to be towed to paddocks the cows were grazing.
- Getting the right team in was essential; always build a strong team.

Although mobile milking was not ideal Neil and Tom say they have "done what we've done in order to get milking." Longlands Farm was a massive opportunity that they were not going to let pass by. It is very well set up with two 20/10 swing over parlours on wheels that have ramps front and back to assist cows' entry and exit. Milk from the mobile milk tank is circulated through a plate cooler that has antifreeze on the water sides of the plates. This is all run off a trailer that houses the generator, vacuum pump, water heater plus washing plant for the parlours. Tom is a talented engineer and I would advise anyone thinking of copying this model to brush up on their welding skills. The milk is towed to the local dairy by a tractor. The parlours are then moved into the next grass break ready for tomorrow's milking.

See photo on next page showing cooling system and milk tank.

The issues of stock handling are overcome by having some light weight cow hurdles at the exit of the parlours, in which to catch cows. Any cow that needs treatment of any kind is caught and taken back to the buildings where Tom and Neil have another parlour set up to deal with fresh calved or sick cows. This helps to make the milking in the field simple as there are no dump cows to worry about.

See photo on next page showing catching pen in front of parlours

Tom and Neil have a great opportunity here to create wealth through compounding stock. With 1,000+ acres at their disposal it will be interesting to see their progress over the next five years. They inspired me to think outside the box and view rented ground in a less permanent way.

### **3a.ii. Giles & Emily Bristol**

The smallest farm I visited was a 60 acre starter farm run by Giles Bristol. Giles was a new entrant into the industry and was hoping to make a living out of 60 cows. I sold Giles some cows to get him started and was keen to see what a county council farm has to offer the new entrant.

With a loan from the bank and some help from his family Giles had started in the industry. I guess you could look on the house and location of the farm as desirable and you would pay the same rent just for a house in a rural location in the south east. What seems to be key when running a small unit is to have a flexible approach and not over-capitalise the operation. TB is an issue in the area where Giles was farming and this can prove disruptive to the business as cows are taken and need to be replaced.



Photo above showing cooling system and milk tank



Photo above showing catching pen in front of parlours





From what I can see, one takes a council farm and waits for a bigger farm to become available. County council farms have their place in the industry and the government should be aware that selling off such farms may have a long term effect on people entering the industry. They are a great place to learn business management and look at ways of increasing income ready for a step up the ladder. Giles and Emily are extremely passionate about the dairy industry and, being a young couple, Staffordshire council are using them to help promote the latter's farms. I would recommend any young people thinking of starting up to go and speak with farmers like Giles and Emily. It is surprising just how much money is required to start up a small sized business. I wish them every success in the future our dairy industry needs people like this.

### 3b. Australia

The history of Australia's Dairy Heritage:

In 1788, Captain Arthur Phillip and the First Fleet came ashore at Sydney Cove with seven cows and two bulls bred to survive a hostile environment. This small herd soon moved to the greener pastures of Parramatta where they escaped into the bush not to be seen for some seven years. Upon their recapture, the herd comprised 61 cattle.

*It was the cows of this group which became Australia's first dairy herd. By 1800, through breeding and importing, there were 332 bulls and 712 cows in the colony. The settlers were adapting to their new Australian environment. They made butter and cheese during spring and summer (when cows produce most milk), and preserved these commodities with salt for autumn and winter.*

*Pioneers such as John Macarthur imported more dairy cattle to his Parramatta farm*

*while, in 1805, Dr John Harris built Sydney's first commercial dairy at what is now inner-suburban Ultimo.*

*However, Tasmania gave Australia its first cheese industry. In the 1820s, the Van Dieman's Land Company established Australia's first commercial cheese factory. Farmers from the NSW district of Illawarra began to send their cheese and butter to Sydney markets by sea, and, as more ports opened, dairying extended all the way down to Bega.*

*In 1832, with two cows and two calves, John Fawkner arrived in what was to become Melbourne. With ideal dairying conditions around Port Phillip Bay, the herd grew. Within a year there were 155 cattle in the district. By 1850 there were 347,000. South Australian dairy farmers were becoming so successful that they were selling cheese to Tasmanians. In 1891, there were almost 1 million dairy cows in Australia. The gold rush brought thousands of people to Australia. With its collapse, many of those who had taken part were offered Government pastoral leases on the outskirts of inland towns. By 1900 there was hardly a township, even in remote outback Australia, that did not have its own fresh milk.*

I love this account of history as it gives you a real sense of the pioneering spirit that has dwindled over the centuries.

After a long travel you finally arrive, first thing that always strikes me is how much more seriously other countries take the issue of border control – as opposed to the UK! Basically if you have anything that is food in your bag you need to show it to someone. Also the card you fill in asks if you have been in contact with animals within 30 days. Although this does slow up the entry into the





country it does make you think about how easy it is to bring anything into the UK.

I took a taxi ride with a Lebanese taxi driver. He had entered Australia 20 years ago to get a better education. He started working on the trains and has just purchased his taxi plate for Aus\$500k. This plate entitles him to operate one taxi: he can also rent the plate out at \$600 a week giving him around 6% return on his investment. House prices have soared from 100k to over a million dollars in ten years, so the cost of living is high.

Sydney itself has almost its own economy; wages are high but so is everything else. Houses of average size are easily over \$2 million to buy in the suburbs. The cost of things increases as you move toward the centre of the city and climax with beer prices at the Opera House bar (£10 a pint). I would not want to live here; unless you go to the beach you will just spend money. A nurse doing a 3 shift week will earn around \$52k (after tax) a year; however a one bedroom flat will set you back \$500 a week to rent, so with food and everything else on top of the rent even a salary like that soon becomes a subsistence wage. Sydney is very clean and the bars and restaurants are very stylish. Lifestyle is a big part of Australian life. Work starts at 7am and finishes at 3pm for the average person, or there are flexible hours for office workers. Gas barbecues are free to use in the parks, and there is plenty of green space around.

### **3b.i. Dr. Kendra Kerrisk, Automatic Milking Systems**

Kendra was an amazing individual. She is Kiwi born and bred and in the early 2000 started a project in NZ called Greenfield Project. The aim was simply to see if you could milk cows with a robot in a pasture based system. This idea met with a lot of resistance from some people in the dairy industry. She is well

educated in dairy cow behaviour and has a Doctorate in calving systems in large herds.

We spoke about the public perception of dairy farming in Australia. Much like the UK the general public considered farmers to be 'moaners', always discussing the weather or the price they are paid for their product. She touched on her home country - about how more rurally based it was and how the share farming structure was so ingrained into the country that everybody knew if you worked hard you could progress. Her brother in Western Australia is looking to cash out of his 50/50 milking operation, and when this happens it will yield him over \$1 million from nothing. Kendra's next big project is trying to set up a fully automated grass based farm that would have the capacity to milk up to 1,000 cows. This sounded like a great challenge and I think this will be one to watch in the future. I would question why in the UK do we keep cows indoors when robots come into play?

### **3b.ii. Kim McKean**

Kim, the dairy manager at Sydney University, took the time to show me round the facilities. As you would expect it was set up for teaching with facilities such as a milking pit that you could host a wedding in; five crushes in an oval around a lecture area for teaching students about injecting; and similar. Kim told me he was a juvenile delinquent and got a job at the university as a young man. His father was a drunk and his childhood was tough. He told me about how he and his partner had gone on to foster children. This made me think about how animals or even dairy farming have the ability to almost heal damage in people's lives. Animals are not judgmental and if handled correctly rarely fight back. Also the isolation of farming suits certain personalities and lifestyles. Kim had the same moans that you would expect from



a university herdsman but he loved his stock and the cows were exceptionally quiet, a quality which is always a reflection from the people who manage them.

I guess my take-home message was that you can pioneer an idea against all odds; that cow behaviour is a top priority in any dairy business; plus if you have to push cows at any point then you need to rethink your system!!

### **3b.ii. Ewan's Oyster farm**

I had a spare day so went to visit Ewan's oyster farm in Batemans Bay on the east coast. The NSW rock oyster can only be found in rivers along this coast. They are an extremely niche market but, like all markets, pressure from cheaper, easier to grow foreign product is creating a cap on price for Ewan and his business. Much like growing an animal on land, oysters are caught at a young age on specially designed plastic mesh which sits in the water and the baby oysters grow on this mesh. Ewan then picks these off and transfers them to cages along the river. Each lease block has different sized oysters in them. A lease is a section of water that you lease to use to soak your cages in. Much the same as growing lambs each oyster is graded and the small ones are placed back in the water. Oysters benefit from coming out of the water for a few days to dry out. This helps to kill any marine bacteria that may have settled on the oyster's shell. With oysters selling at around \$6 a dozen, this makes an oyster worth 50c a pop.

For three years' work this is not a great price but, like all good businessmen, Ewan has followed the supply chain through and has discovered ways of lifting the end sale price to benefit him. His company owns an oyster bar in town which serves oysters with a beer or glass of wine; they also directly supply restaurants along the coast. Ewan is currently forming an export company to sell directly

into the eastern markets of China, Japan and India. As Ewan realised on his Scholarship tour of the world, with such a huge population in these countries, only a small percentage have to take up your product for it to be successful.

*See photo of oyster shed, on next page*

Every time the oysters are graded any dead ones are removed. Mortality loss can amount to 20% plus of the crop. Oysters grow by simply living off small feed that is naturally present in the water. This way of farming I guess is completely natural with very low in inputs. Ewan had decided to invest in an automatic grader; this machine washes and then measures the size of each oyster using a camera. Once the size is determined the oyster carries on down a conveyer belt where compressed air jets fire the oyster into the correct chute for its size. Ewan said this has turned a 3-day job into a 3-hour one!! His original idea was to grade other people's oysters along the river but resistance to the new technology has been strong. His father said the other fishermen were 'waiting for us to fail'. Once again the pioneer spirit that first brought white men to Australia has been diluted to almost nothing over the generations.

### **3b.iii. Lynne Strong**

I stumbled across Lynne on the Internet where it took me to a website that was all about something called 'farming champions'. I went to see her with the intention of getting to know what this was all about. What I found was amazing: a dairy farmer's wife who had decided that something should be done about the lack of interest in the Australian dairy industry. She had concocted several successful ways of connecting to the younger generation but, as she admitted to me, teaching primary school kids where milk comes from wasn't actually a good use of time



These cows are given to the schools and the children are asked to paint on them.  
This helps to engage them with the industry



One of three barns that housed the goats





and resource for the industry. Getting the attention of the 15 year old plus was having a greater effect.

Her approach was refreshing. As I had thought before I left home, it showed young people that farming could tick all the career boxes and offered great opportunities to create wealth and have a good lifestyle.

I met Emma at the farm. Aged 15, Emma was not sure of her career path but knew she wanted to work outside. At this point one of Lynne's schemes came to the school. The school was given two calves to rear and, after six months, the students had to give a Powerpoint presentation about what they had learnt about agriculture. Emma said she wanted to be involved in farming and went to Lynne for advice. She became a Young Farming Champion at 16 which kick-started her career.

*See photo of painted cow on previous page*

### **3b.iii. Peter Notman**

Pete had to be the most dynamic farmer I met - he had more energy than a 20 year old. Married to Elaine, Peter started his career share milking 100 cows. He then went on to start his own seeds business whilst he and Elaine climbed the share milking ladder to farm ownership. Based in Poowong, Victoria, Peter has built up a 500+ dairy herd which runs alongside his seed business. The seed business is now being run by his son who is making progress with the next generation of farmers in the area. In 2008 Peter and Elaine took a big gamble and built an 800-cow dairy on a converted beef and sheep farm in Walcha, NSW. This was a pioneering project as there were no other dairy farms in the area at that time. Peter used all his years of knowledge to help construct a well-laid-out dairy that was based around time saving, simple-to-use technology. Peter had a pure

hatred of fixing things and said you should always have a long term vision when setting these things up. He favoured a feed auger over using a tractor and made sure the dairy building had a rapid cow throughput as well as being quick and easy to keep clean. If you ever want to question where hard work will get you in life, I advise you spend a day with Peter Notman.

**Cebu's Goats (Australia)**, in conjunction with its Caprilac brand, is Australia's largest producer of goat milk products. Cibus Goats farms 5,000 dairy goats at its farm at Trafalgar, Gippsland, South Australia. The goats are housed in large open-air barns and fed a pasture and silage based ration to optimise production and animal health. The farm will rear in excess of 2,000 female kids this coming season. Cibus Goats is also involved in animal exports for the sale of breeding animals. Peter took me to see the operation and it was like nothing I had ever seen. 7,000 litres per day were being produced on this system. With a milk price of \$1.20 per litre and an average of 800 litres per goat per lactation Peter said this would be possibly more profitable than cows. It was a treat to see and something I will never forget.

*See photo of goats on previous page*

### **3c. Tasmania**

My trip to Tasmania was a lot longer than I had first planned. After being cancelled at the last minute by Fonterra's China farms operation I decided to treat the island as if it were an independent country. As many Australians like to pick fun at the people who live in Tasmania I wondered why it was so different. If I'm being honest I loved the place and all the people I met were fantastic and very forward thinking. I had a great contact through Australian Nuffield Scholar Michael Chilvers. It's true that everyone knows everyone in Tasmania. There are around 400



dairy farmers and it's fair to say that they have all met each other at some point. With its three different coast lines and breathtaking mountain ranges I could have just stayed there.

### **3c.i. Grant Archer**

Australian Dairy Farmer of the Year, Grant Archer, is based in Tasmania and just happens to be the share milker on the Chilvers's dairy units. Grant's story is fantastic.

It was great to finally meet him and he has had an interesting rise to fame amongst the Tasmanian dairy farmers. Born on a farm in Smithton, Grant was brought up on the family farm. When given the opportunity to buy the farm on vendor terms, he decided it would be a good move. Once he had started a family he and Kim felt that they should move out of the area to give the children a better education.

Grant employed a non-agricultural consultant to basically draw up a life plan for him and Kim. The key driver for this was to school the children in Launceston. The decision was made to move off farm, advertise for a manager for the home farm and try and find another farm to milk on near Launceston. A manager was found and employed on the home farm.

Grant felt it would be good to travel abroad for 3 months to give the manager a spell on his own. When Grant and Kim returned from holiday they found the farm in good order and made the move to Longford near Launceston. Once there he was approached by an old school friend who said he had a redundant swing-over parlour that Grant could use to start up a 400-cow herd. Grant started as a 50/50 share milker with the Chilverses.

When the Chilverses split their family business Grant found himself in business with Rob and Jo Bradley. Rob saw the great return from the partnership with Grant and decided to dedicate more land to the dairy and put in a rotary parlour and push cow numbers toward 900. Grant had issues on the home farm when the manager decided to leave, so he then made the radical decision of putting a 50/50 share milker in on that farm. This then released the cows from the farm and gave 85% of the management decisions to the share milker.

Back at Cressy, Bill Chilvers, one of the original partners in the Chilvers family farm, decided he wanted some dairy income on his share of the original farm. Bill put in a rotary on a green field site with three irrigation circles. This unit could take the cows that Grant was bringing back from the home farm.

As you can imagine, Grant's success is founded on some simple rules of thumb. Whilst most farmers were exporting stock to China, due to increased demand pushing prices well above the home market, Grant kept all his stock, treating them as an investment for the future. This idea does have a price, but when you need the stock they are there for you to milk and this avoids the bank loans etc. that can be a problem. Grant said he leased out stock for \$100 a year, which he admitted was cheap, but he knew they would be looked after. Today Grant owns a farm which is run by a 50/50 share milker, and has 1,800 cows on 50/50 share milking agreements in Cressy. He said he is producing around 600 heifer calves a year and has farmers lining up to have him share milk on their farms.

Grant said expansion is tough on cash flow but timing was important. If he doesn't have the stock to milk he is reluctant to start on another farm. Basically he can





start one new farm every two years as the heifers mature. Grant employs a manager on each farm with a 2ic and then two more staff under that. He said it is a struggle for him to keep staff on one of the units but not so on the other.

This pyramid system of employment is very common in the Southern Hemisphere and has its merits. However it is easy for Grant's staff to forget that he has done his time on the cups. It's very easy to look at what Grant has built up and forget that he started in the milking pit like everyone else. Grant is a blue sky thinker, and has adopted different milking frequencies on each farm. With OAD (once a day milking) used for the first 4 weeks after calving, then stepped up to TTITD (three times in two days) milking times are set by each manager with a rough guide from Grant of 5am, 6pm and midday. This is not the religious 16 hour gap that everyone sets, but it's sustainable, which is key to any system. Cows thrive on routine so the milking start times are more important than the gap.

I have always thought it would be hard to get staff enthused about this system but Grant's staff were surprisingly keen on it. I talked to them with Grant and the owners absent. Staff work on a four-days-off a fortnight roster with four weeks holiday, which is reduced to one day a week off for the first six weeks after calving.

We discussed the training system used by the dairy industry in Australia. Grant said it was a good system, simple to understand and clear for employers and employees alike. It seemed to work better in Tasmania with higher rates paid for each grade level. Grant said he had learned of the same system and only questioned the one-day-a-week policy. He said they used to spend a week together doing the technical parts and this helped the

students to form good relationships with each other. Isolation is a key factor in the Tasmanian dairy industry. The 400 farmers are very spread out. Grant uses some of the tools shown on the People in Dairy website (run by Dairy Australia). The only issue I could see going forward was how Grant would grow his business further? We discussed giving staff a share in the gain. Due to the progressive nature of his business Grant said it would be hard to allow anyone a percentage of the profits. However he said that he had considered giving vendor terms to the share milker back on the home farm. I totally understood where Grant was coming from. When you're growing, cash flow is tight, and I would struggle to implement something like this at home. Great to meet Grant and was surprised how open he was with me. He was keen to listen to what I thought about the industry in Tasmania. Anyone who is willing to listen makes a good business man.

*See photo on next page of Bradley rotary parlour*

### **3c.ii. The Van Diemen's Land Company (VDL)**

The Van Diemen's Land Company (VDL) has been committed to quality land, dairy, and stock management practices for over 180 years. Established in 1825, they are located in the picturesque northwest of Tasmania, and are one of Australia's oldest companies. Today VDL owns and operates 25 dairy farms, a Dairy Support Unit and a standalone Heifer Rearing Operation. Including replacements VDL currently runs approximately 30,000 dairy stock.

Northwest Tasmania is ideally suited to dairy farming. Its temperate climate combines abundant and consistent rainfall with moderate temperatures year round. Tasmania is also an island with a pristine natural environment, and a rigorous approach to food



Cows being milked in Rob & Jo Bradley's dairy conversion near Longford in Tasmania

safety and product traceability. The historic Woolnorth Station is home to the Roaring Forties Woolnorth Wind Farm, and a disease-free refuge for the endangered Tasmanian Devil<sup>1</sup> population. Bulls are kept in fields directly below the wind turbines as Hugo, the farm manager, explained that they were not allowed to run pregnant stock under the turbines in case one aborted and this may attract eagles into the path of the turbine blades.

I had met Hugo Avery by pure chance as I bunked the night in the house up the road from him. He took me on a grand tour of this very historic and iconic place. I saw Cape Grim (the north western tip of Tasmania) as well as the foundations of the first house to be built on the north coast of Tasmania. Although VDL had some history of poor animal welfare Hugo said that no profit would be made at the cost of the cow's health. Hugo went on to explain

how the business was owned by shareholders who would simply look at VDL for a good return.

VDL's dairy business operates thirteen milking sheds on the historic Woolnorth property, five at Togari, and a further seven in the wider Circular Head area. VDL currently milk approximately 19,000 cows with a mix of autumn and spring calving. In the year to 31st May, 2013, the business produced 6.22 million kilograms of milk solids. The Woolnorth operations run 12 rotary dairies and one herringbone dairy. The largest, an 80-bale rotary platform, milks up to 1,800 cows. Currently 5 of the dairies are run by variable order share farmers and 8 are run as managed farms. Since 2010 there has been a significant shift in milk supply patterns on Woolnorth with most of the dairy cows now calving in the autumn. The 5 Togari operations run herringbone dairies. Currently 3 of the Togari farms are variable order share farmed

<sup>1</sup> It is suffering from a facial tumour disease





and 2 are managed. All Togari farms calve in spring. The 7 remaining farms also operate herringbone dairies. Two are run by variable order share farmers and 5 are run as managed farms. All these farms also calve in spring. All the dairy farms supply Fonterra.

### Non Dairy Operations

In addition to its dairy farming operation, VDL operates a Heifer Rearing Unit and a Dairy Support and Development Unit. The Heifer Rearing Unit operates on approximately 2,500 hectares of pastoral land on Woolnorth that has been developed from native heath between 1994 and 1998. The unit is responsible for rearing calves from 100kgs. These are delivered from the dairy farms and then returned to their farm of origin prior to their first calving. Presently the unit looks after up to 10,000 dairy heifers at any one time. VDL also has dry stock units to help keep dry cows.

The aim is to have just milking cows on the dairy farms and to treat the heifers as an almost separate business.

This was impressive to see, as they were sorting a group of heifers whilst we were there. Every two months each batch of 200 is run through the central weighing system. This electronic system identifies the animal by its ear tag, and its weight gain is then calculated by the scales. If the animal has not grown at its given weight gain, they divert it into another group which will be supplementary-fed until the weight gain is achieved. It was great to see heifer rearing being done well on such a large scale. My day at VDL was a highlight of my Nuffield Farming Scholarship study tour and I couldn't thank Hugo enough for his time.

*See photo below of heifers being **weighed at VDL unit***



Heifers being weighed and drafted at the VDL heifer unit, all animals are weighed every 8 weeks and grouped according to growth rates. This is all done electronically using weigh scales and EID tags.



### 3d. New Zealand

Without doubt New Zealand is the home of grass based dairy farming. I had been lucky enough to go there in 2010 to look into block calving and I had soon realised that, although a lot of people talk about the New Zealand system in the UK, very few have actually been there. I had kept in contact with some farmers from last time I was there and it was great to meet up with them and see what had changed. I guess the biggest difference this trip was the move towards housing cows in cubicle sheds, called wintering barns. These are exactly the same as our cubicle sheds in the UK. I saw a couple and was not very impressed with the designs; cow comfort was not high on the agenda and, as we found in our own shed at home, one cubicle per cow works best. I was amazed that the home of grass based outdoor dairying was going down this road. The animal welfare lobby groups were already taking a big interest in these

types of farming systems and I felt that the farmers who stuck to the more traditional rotational grazing system were making more profit. It's funny that, as a milk price increases, farmers will spend the extra money increasing their cost of production.

#### 3d.i. Ian Handcock

I first met Ian in 2010 when he was a consultant in the Thames area of the North Island. He is now pioneering a fresh approach helping farmers and people within the industry to improve attitudes. Ian's mission now is to help people realise their dreams and goals by using sport coaching techniques and past experiences to change the way people think, so they too can live how they want to live rather than how they are forced to live.

*See photo below of Ian Handcock*

The day I spent with Ian was a Eureka moment for me. I had been rolling around in



Ian Handcock of Target Focus NZ





my mind for a few months now the idea that the success of a farm was down to the mind-set of the owner or operator. As Ian explained, the idea of his business - Target Focus - was to change the attitudes of farmers in order to change the outcomes they are receiving. Any alteration to farming outcomes must first come from an internal desire to change. Without this change in attitude, results will be short lived. Ian's role was to make farmers aware of what their long term goals were.

I asked if he thought this wasn't already being done by consultants and he said that the difference with coaching is that you are not *telling* people what to do, or trying to stamp a blueprint on someone. He quoted that great saying: "a man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still". This theory was reinforced when I returned to the UK and met a handful of sheep farmers converting to dairy. Sadly some had employed the use of dairy consultants to help plan their new operation and were not always happy about the service that was provided. Coaching is all about getting the best outcome from using people's skills in a team. Farm businesses are no different. I suspect Ian's business will be a slow grower as we are literally the last industry to recognise the benefits of business coaching.

I met many good farmers in New Zealand and I look forward to returning at some point in the future.

### 3e. USA

Going to the USA to look at intensive indoor systems did not appeal to me in the slightest. These systems to me seem almost unsustainable and use a large amount of resources such as fossil fuels. However, whilst at a dairy conference in Australia, I heard a dairy farmer called Calvin Moody speak about his business in the South Georgia State of

America. He was telling the story of how he managed his staff in a unique way by giving some of the top team a financial stake in the business. He also had very clear values which were used to build his successful business milking 6,850 cows over 3 separate sites. At the coffee interval I asked if I could come and visit him at some point. He had never heard of Nuffield Farming Scholarships but after a while he agreed to let me have a look. I took my wife Becky with me - she had put up with some long months without me and I thought we could have some time together at a resort in North Florida after the farm tours.

#### 3e.i. Calvin Moody

I would never have thought in a million years that I would meet my farming hero in the USA, or that he would be running a completely opposite system to mine. Calvin is an extremely humble man who entered into a business partnership with a retiring farmer due to there being a bit of friction on the family farm. This partnership has been a real blessing for Calvin and his family. Calvin is absolutely a cowman. He says that you can't be good at everything so he leaves the crop growing to the arable farmers in the local area.

*"If I'm the only successful person in my business, then something isn't right"*

Brocksco Dairy, Jeffco dairy and Westbrook dairy are three similar sized farms located in South Georgia and North Florida. Total head of milking cows is 6,850. Cows are housed in cubicle sheds and bedded with sand. The sheds are flush washed four times a day and the sand from the washing is reused after being stacked outside for two months. Calvin uses Mexican labour but treats them with a lot of respect. Walking around the units you





could tell that he rarely gets involved in any day to day hassle and fully trusts his employees. Calvin went on to explain that it is all about having a simple system. This made me smile as we always think of pasture based systems as being the simple ones. His labour unit to cow ratio was 1/100 which is what most pasture based farms are achieving.

*See photo on next page of Calvin and me in one of the cubicle sheds at Brooksco Dairy, USA*

Calvin went on to explain that all the young stock are reared at Brooksco dairy, and this is also where every cow is calved. Cows are taken from the farms at drying off and returned at 14 days calved. The reason for this is to keep all the trained dry stock staff in the same place. It also benefits Calvin's business when building a new farm as there will be only milking cows on that farm. This replicable system was amazing to see. Calvin had even fitted two of everything on his farms as he said breakdowns were unacceptable to the business. A simple loss of power or issue with a vacuum pump would cost the business thousands. This was great to see and very forward thinking.

I asked Calvin about staff structure and time off. He said that he himself worked a five and a half day week, then watched or played sports with his children on a Saturday afternoon. He had Sundays off to spend with his family. Calvin had the most balanced values of anyone I had met in my travels. He said:

*"Communicating our statement of values, management objectives, and our goals to employees is the most critical task we do in order to be successful"*

Here is Calvin's values statement:

*"Our statement of values is the foundation for how we conduct our business. What we are trying to accomplish may change, and our strategies may change. Who we are will never change. It is very important for our employees to know who we are trying to be. Our values are as follows:*

- 1. We must take care of our employees by treating them with respect, compensating them generously, increasing their knowledge about their position, and providing opportunities for growth.*
- 2. We must deal with the people we do business with in a way so that they are also able to prosper. It is important that our gain does not result in another business's loss.*
- 3. We will at all times treat cows with respect to the best of our ability. We will try to remove as much stress from their life as possible, and we certainly will not add to their stress level by rough treatment. Cows pay the bills. Anyone that does not at all times consider the wellbeing of the cow is an enemy to this company and will be treated as such.*
- 4. We must at all times take care of the environment. We must never do anything that may potentially contaminate ground water or pollute the atmosphere.*
- 5. We must be good stewards. We must be careful not to waste feed, supplies or time. We must also always consider the cost of what we are doing.*

Calvin has aligned his business with his values, with five separate divisions within the business: milking parlour, feeding, sand bedding, herd care and workshop. Each division has its own set of objectives. When Calvin loaned money from one dairy to build another, he decided to give away some of the ownership of that dairy. Calvin said that his business started with zero equity so he was



giving nothing away. As the business paid back the loan the workers' own equity increased. I thought this was a great way of keeping staff interested.

Calvin's business is a true representation of how having balanced values in life can lead to great financial reward. I had no doubt that this humble man would continue to grow his business quietly in the USA. Calvin's policy of buying cheap woodland and creating a dairy

in the centre to help shield it from the public could be replicated all over the State.

We headed off to Destin beach for a few days after this visit. It had a big effect on both Becky and me. Calvin had shown us what happens when you apply biblical principles to a dairy business. We could not thank the Moody family enough for their hospitality and knowledge shared.



Calvin and me in one of the cubicle sheds at Brooksco Dairy USA

*On the next page is a photo of a poster which hangs on the wall in Brooksco Dairy Farm office.*



## Brooksco Dairy LLC Policy

*"The rule to be observed in this stable at all times, toward the cattle, young and old, is that of patience and kindness. A man's usefulness in a herd ceases at once when he loses his temper and bestows rough usage. Men must be patient. Cattle are not reasoning beings. Remember that this is the Home of Mothers. Treat each cow as a Mother should be treated. The giving of milk is a function of Motherhood; rough treatment lessens the flow. That injures me as well as the cow. Always keep these ideas in mind in dealing with my cattle."*

*W.D. Hoard*

Abuse to livestock or equipment may result in immediate termination of employment.  
Any person observing abuse of livestock or equipment and not reporting the abuse will be disciplined or even terminated.

If you need help or observe abuse, please contact:

**Gustavo Munoz**

Please note: Any person abusing animals is subject to prosecution according to Georgia Code: O.C.G.A 16-12-4 (c) that includes fines up to \$15,000 and/or imprisonment.

**\*\* This farm complies with standards of the Southeast Milk Inc Animal Welfare Audit. \*\***

Above is a poster which hangs on the wall in Brooksco Dairy Farm office.





## 4. Findings and recommendations

### 4a. Values

All businesses are built around a person's values. I have unknowingly built my dairy business around my own values. I came across this conclusion when I was looking at all the different types of systems that I have seen over the past 18 months. Some systems only required a 39 hour working week, when others would require a 90 hour working week. The same thing is achieved in each system: milk is harvested from the cow. I spent a lot of time thinking about the reasons behind the varying scale and why some people worked harder than others. I concluded that there are three pieces to this puzzle.

- Yourself
- Family
- Business

You need to invest an equal amount of time into each of these. If you invest too much in one or the other your values become unbalanced and your business, health or marriage will be compromised at

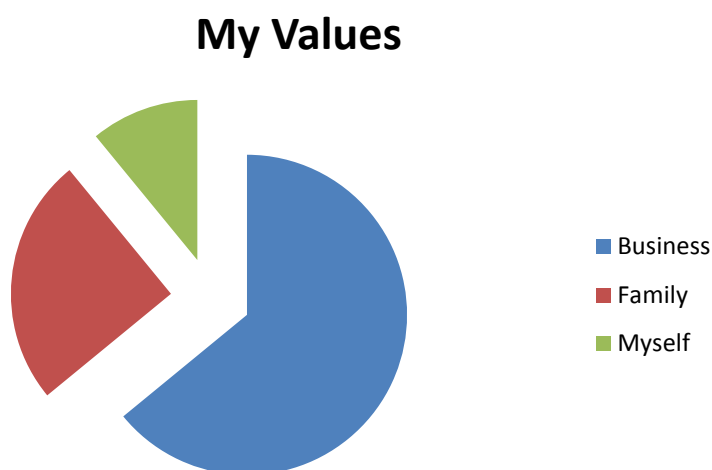
some point. I have seen all through my life examples of people who have allowed their values to become unbalanced and the effects this has had on their future fortunes.

Examples of this are:

- Farmers working too many hours all their lives, only to drop dead of a heart attack in their early 50s.
- Another example would be a farmer who works long hours and neglects his family. His wife then leaves him and he is forced to sell up everything he has worked hard for.
- A third example would be a breakdown in family communication which then affects the wealth of a business when a generation passes away.

I am in no way a great example of balanced values. I have an obsessive nature and don't communicate the big picture to my wife very well. I love my children dearly but still find myself putting work before them as I chase the next project. Writing this paper has made me stop and think about how important it is to have balanced values.

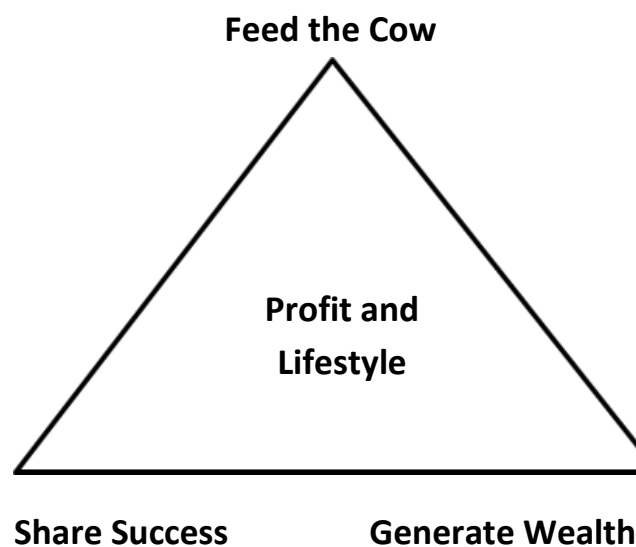
On the left is a visual example of my values. As you can see, they are not balanced enough and this is something I need to work on. You can calculate your own values by adding the time you are awake each week and then simply assign time to each section. You could argue that if you work a ten hour day seven





days a week, you could never get the balance right. But that is the point I am making - if you want to improve the balance you will change your business to fit around your values. Build your business on balanced values and you will find more enjoyment in each day.

My dairy business is built on these simple values; I am accountable to myself and others if my business does not reflect these.



Look at the diagram above. If you follow the triangle round in a clockwise direction, each value relies on the next one to create success. Feeding the cow is the fundamental value that every dairy business is built upon. If you avoid feeding the cow properly, your business will suffer a knock on effect.

It is good to work out what your values are and create a simple visual diagram of them. This helps with all decision making as you can put any issue against your values and see if they align. If they don't then you don't choose to do something.

The values above are mine alone; what are yours?

*"The cows work for me, I don't work for them"*

I heard this quote (at the foot of the previous column) in New Zealand in 2010 and it resonated in my head all the way home. Once at home we started the switch to block autumn calving as we have a dry farm. The benefits of this switch have improved the balance of my values and we have found a new love for our business. We are less tied to the farm and only have short periods of stress. This quote should not be dismissed offhand, as every farmer should consider who they are working for.

#### 4b. Structure

"Have a smaller piece of a bigger pie"

I'm going to try and tackle this head on; in my opinion farmers - in general - structure their businesses in a certain way which in turns makes it difficult to release value out of them. In many cases the farmer ends up tied into the business for life and doesn't ever get his hands on the money which he has in the business. I noticed in New Zealand that farmers were not keen to pay off capital on their loans; instead they would use this spare cash to invest in liquid assets that they could sell off at any point in order to reuse the money. In the UK you would say this is a risky strategy, but I feel this is a cultural thing unique to us.

As a farmer myself with a large mortgage, I too am obsessed with paying this off, a goal that I have inherited from the generation before who were keen to clear debts as quickly as possible. You may think the latter is a wise decision and will protect your business from any future interest rate rises. Let's look at it another way; in my own example my obsession to pay off debt has made my business vulnerable. To keep labour costs low so I can channel more money into debt repayments I have made myself the key man of the business. I am in effect the CEO, financial manager, HR manager, purchasing





manager and even take a place on the shop floor milking cows. Now you may think this is an extreme way to view yourself but what happens tomorrow if I get hit by a bus? My business becomes a liability!

Farmers need to structure their business in such a way that it doesn't revolve around one person. Make sure that every task that is carried out in the business is simple and replicable. You will find it far easier to expand in the future if you are not the key man in the business. Having simple replicable systems in place makes expansion simple and easy.

In New Zealand I was asked if I would "buy my own business?" This made me stop and think. The structure of my business is not attractive to the outside investor. What will we do with the older generation? How will we retire? What is life like after cows? These are all big questions that affect every farmer. By having a good and even flexible business structure you will be able to let staff and others invest into your business. You may take offence at this suggestion but I see this as a great way of releasing money out of the business and being able to take a step back from the day to day running of a farm. I also feel that if business structures are addressed this will give a lifeline to the next generation who are poised and ready to take hold of opportunities that arise in the future.

- Is your business structured for the future?
- Can your business run without you?
- Would you want to buy your business?

Until I had to leave on my Nuffield study tour I had never asked myself these questions.

Steve Jones whom I met at a conference in Australia gave me an example of how to view yourself. Steve Jones has had over 20 years'

experience working in the gas and oil sectors across the globe. Steve is a very humble man who plays down his achievements. He was asked to speak at the DRF in Kiama where he proceeded to challenge the Australian dairy farmers about the way they viewed themselves. Steve's presentation was very challenging and the usual moaning came out afterwards.

Talking to Steve in the interval he spoke to me about how he had decided to build a business with a friend with the view to selling it on at a later date. Having built the business up he decided to go to the big energy companies of the time and try and sell his business. They were not keen due to the fact Steve was CEO and his business evolved around himself. Taking these comments on board Steve stepped back from the top position and kept in the background. He also got some small investors in to show that he was willing to give up some of the pie. He said during this time he realised that you are better off to own a "small piece of a bigger pie", as this makes the business more flexible and it is possible to have holidays and the situation is less stressful in general. Steve described my situation at home as being the same as his had been and said that allowing people to invest in, and dilute a business, should not be seen as a negative.

He later went on to sell his business and now is enjoying some time off from the gas and oil sector. I was very lucky to meet Steve and I think he is a great example of what Nuffield is about, it's not all about farming!

#### 4c. Time

*"You will never find time for anything. If you want time you must make it."*

I read with interest 2011 Scholar Rhys Williams's Nuffield report on wealth creation in dairy farming. In the paper Rhys talks about



time evaluation and how this affects your business. I am going to pick this point up again as I feel that without considering time you will not have “time” to address your values or business structure. How I value my time is fairly simple: I try and shy away from the low paid jobs in my business. I cannot always maintain this throughout the year as people need holidays and during the stress period of calving I am needed as a labour unit.

What is important is time *allocation*. As the quote above suggests you need to be forceful in your time keeping and value each hour you spend doing a task. I have come to the conclusion in my own business that I do not need a consultant to come in and tell me about other farmers. I can do this task myself, so when I’m out educating myself I can say I’m saving - or paying myself - £50 per hour. Likewise when I’m milking I could pay somebody £7 per hour to carry out this task so I am effectively working for £7 an hour. When people say: value your time, all that means is: don’t fill your day up with lower paid tasks and end up paying a higher rate to get people to do the tasks you didn’t have time to achieve.

My next issue is with people entering your farm and disrupting your day. Farming is extremely unprofessional when it comes to reps making appointments. When I worked in construction people would have to book in time to see me and my PA would structure my day around these appointments. Having had enough of the disruption caused by reps entering our farm unannounced I simply took the stance that everyone must have an appointment before entering the farm. This caused some negativity towards us in the area simply because I valued my time and didn’t want to have the day disrupted.

Think about how you use your time. Do you have time to make measured decisions? Or do

you order inputs when the rep turns up in the yard? In my experience an hour on the phone can save you a £1,000. So put that value on that hour! Always leave it a day before you make a decision and remember not everyone who comes onto your farm is there to help you!

#### **4d. Staff**

It didn’t matter where I went in the world, staff retention and recruitment seemed to be the biggest issue. Although the advances I saw in technology may in time take the pressure off this issue, I still see there being a need for staff over the next two decades. In Tasmania lack of staff was actually slowing the growth of people’s dairy businesses. Why is staffing such an issue? I feel it comes down to two main points. Farmers are, to put it simply, bad people managers and the second issue is: dairy farming has a bad image. I will explain each point and share what I saw that worked better. I have no silver bullet.

##### **4.d.i. Managing people**

Managing people is a specialist task. You wouldn’t be a vet without any training and, sadly, when it comes to people we need to be more professional and invest in our human resource skills. The government, supermarkets and milk processors have whole departments dedicated to this challenging issue. Travelling round the UK I realised that in many cases someone would inherit a farm and be forced to take on the management of staff without any training or knowledge of how to handle them. The people who seemed good at leading people also appeared to attract good people to work in their businesses, rarely having to advertise for staff as people were keen to fill a place if it became vacant.

This demonstrates that investing some time into staff management will give you a good return. In my opinion the problem starts with



the farmer wanting every job applicant to be fully proficient in all aspects of dairy farming. This is rarely ever the case. In my area we have almost seen the last of farmers' sons and daughters who are looking to work - as I did - on the farm next door. If you are close to population you will receive some interest from people with no farming background, although they will not have natural stock skills. We shouldn't write them off straight away. Farming is not difficult and should be open to anyone.

Dairy Australia is tackling this issue by providing farmers with an employment pack, which covers everything from PAYE to health and safety requirements. Communication seems to be key. Farmers need to communicate what they are trying to achieve within their dairy business. Take supermarkets, for example. They communicate their goal very well because, although I don't work in one, I know their goal is to get as many customers into the store as possible. The effects of having a clear and simple goal resonate down through the work force. If a shelf is empty a shopper may choose to shop elsewhere, so the shelf stacker knows this is important. If shoppers cannot find a trolley to put their shopping in they may go to another store, so the person collecting the trolleys up knows there always needs to be some of them available.

All this is an example of what happens when you have clear goals. Farming is no different, what do you want your staff to achieve? Work it out and stick it on the wall, make sure you communicate it to everyone within your business.

#### 4e. Encouragement

Encouragement is a key thing when you employ people. When someone feels valued, they will work harder to achieve their task. Also when people feel valued it improves their

self-worth. Improved self-worth can lead people into improving their skills and knowledge as they feel more confident in confronting their weaknesses. As a farm owner or even a manager, you can become arrogant and think you know better than anyone else. This is a dangerous trap to fall into, as nothing can be more dangerous to a business than the attitude that you alone have all the answers. Instead, make it a priority to share what you are thinking with others.

Within my own business I have found it is best to get everyone's opinion on a decision, regardless of their skills level or previous experience. A lot of the things we do today in our business came about by asking the student or employee what they thought about something within the operation. When ideas come forward, be thankful and encouraging. If the ideas are useful, give proper credit, and implement the suggestions. If the ideas are not feasible, explain why they can't be used, but invite the other person to keep offering input. Encouraging the input of others builds teamwork, honesty, and will stop you making costly mistakes within your business.

*"Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise"*

Job advertising is another area that needs revising, I'm amazed in the farming press how many adverts look exactly the same and read almost identically to the next.

**Example:** *Herdsperson required in East Sussex, 220 autumn calved cows. Great rates of pay, house provided free from rent and rates.*

When I think about why I farm where I do and the good things about the area, I need to communicate that to all potential employees.

**Example:** *Herdsperson required in East Sussex, a salary that rewards hard work, 50 minutes*



*from an international airport, 20 minutes from the beach and close to good schools and child care. We need someone who is willing to become a valued part of our family business.*

This advert is expressing to someone what I think is good about the position of my farm and also that I will value this person in my business. You then prepare an information pack explaining what your business is about, the level of skill required and include some photos of the farm to give them an idea of what you are offering. I see little point of ever saying in the advert how many cows you have or what breed they are. If you run a dairy farm it's safe to say there will be cows that need milking. Putting in photos of the farm will show people what their working environment will be like and give them a chance to stop the process if they are not happy.

#### **4f. The 90%**

Everywhere I travelled around the globe I heard this same old saying: *"You've got to be in the top 10% and you need to employ people in the top 10%."* I started to think - hang on a minute - if we're all struggling for staff why don't we try and utilise the 90%? It made me think about the complex ways we have set up our farms in the UK and how, with a little more thought, we could probably open up our industry to the 90% and some untapped labour.

A good example of this was in Tasmania where share milker Grant Archer had several farms running a very simple system, which seemed to fit any skill level. Grant had chosen to milk his cows three times over two days. This meant that one day would be normal milking times and the next day one midday milking would take place. Grant had unknowingly

created a system that suited part time workers. A mum could drop her kids off at school and fit a midday milking in between the school run. Grant said that unknowingly he had created a new position which fitted well with a person's life; this then opens up his business to a new group of people who wouldn't have considered farming before.

Everything comes down to  
your values.

Every farm business should conduct itself in a way that welcomes people with different skill levels. As I explained in the "Simplicity of Farming" section of this report (*see 2e, page 4*), dairy farming is by and large simple. If you are struggling to retain staff - look at your system for each process of the business and assess its level of simplicity.

I am a great believer that a lot of profit is lost in a business when it comes to logistics. Make sure every minute clocked on a machine is limited to a certain task. Also look at movements around a farm. Why fetch the cows in and then go back to remove the wire when you can do it whilst the cows are walking home? A haulage business like Eddie Stobart's (2,500 trucks) would put the issue of logistics high on its agenda. Farmers should too.

As I have explained in this section, everything comes down to your values. Structure, time and staff will just be a reflection of what you value. If you challenge yourself in the weak areas of your life, seek help and become accountable, I can see no reason why you would not succeed.





## 5. Could you start dairy farming for £1?

When I started my Nuffield journey, this was one question I kept asking myself. As ridiculous as this question might seem, during my travels I found plenty of people who had achieved this and more, with some going on to become farm owners. In this section I will try to explain the rules of thumb that I saw many younger farmers use in a bid to get to farm ownership. I will also show some practical examples as to how you could better your position in the industry and notice more opportunities as they come up.

### 5a. What's your dream?

*"If you're not clear about what you want to achieve, how will you know when you're successful?"*

What is your dream? Where do you see yourself at certain points in your life? Before you get started making your fortune out of cows you need to establish some goals. Goals are easy to set if you think about your dreams and what you want to achieve in life. When we have a student on our farm I always ask: "What is your goal for this year?" I want the students to think about what they wish to achieve from working in my business.

For some their goal could be as simple as passing their tractor test or milking solo; for others their goal could be to own stock or buy a farm. Before you start on your journey make sure *you* are clear about *your* goals and make sure that your decisions reflect them.

Whilst on my travels I met a lot of people whose actions and decisions didn't reflect what they were trying to achieve. Accountability is key in these situations. Communicate your goals to a friend and let them challenge you when you steer off

course. As the quote at the top suggests, knowing when you have accomplished your dream is important as many people keep on pushing themselves well into retirement age as their lifestyle of progression takes over and unbalances their values. My advice on goal setting is to think big, in fact the bigger the better. Our brains are only wired to accept 136 things at once, so the bigger the goal, the more aware you will become of opportunity to achieve your dreams.

### 5b. The Career Ladder

Over the centuries mankind's bid to achieve more for less effort has brought us some of the greatest inventions: the car, aeroplane, even the humble vacuum cleaner, are examples of what happens when man's laziness is put to good use.

However when it comes to a career in agriculture I feel it is important to stress that every successful farmer you see has worked very hard to achieve their goal. I met a lot of younger people who said there is no clear career ladder in dairy farming. The reason for this is that everyone travels a slightly different path. There is a danger when you try and follow someone else's path as they may have skills that you do not, or access to money that you don't. I will break the ladder down into four sections to give a visual demonstration of how a person **builds their own career ladder**.

### 5c. Wood

This is the base of the ladder; you are the wood. Any career is built on you; we all have limitations in life and lack of skills. If you want to build a strong ladder you must start to gain experience and knowledge from the start. I am 33 and I want to learn more now than I did when I was 15 years of age, as I know my



limitations and want to push myself further to achieve more. Educating yourself is key!

The most valuable thing I saw on my study tour was young people seeking out jobs with successful farmers with the aim of learning more quickly. A lot of farmers - like me - are more than happy to transfer knowledge that we have gained from making mistakes and learning the hard way. If you value these opportunities and the effect it will have on your long term career, how much you are paid will not be relevant. You would also benefit from spending a single day with a successful farmer, taking notes as if you were on a study trip. Locally there is a discussion group and the best meetings are always when we have a good, successful farmer come and speak to us. I always take notes and read them back.

A solid mind is key. Life has a great habit of throwing what people call “curve balls” at you. How you behave when these troubles come reflects how solid your mind is. The human mind is a complex thing and you must understand how simple choices about what you watch on TV and which books you read affect your path in life. Taking some small steps to protect your mind will benefit you greatly in the long term. A good example of how your mind is manipulated easily can be demonstrated by what I call “the car you drive”.

**Example:** Each time you change the make or model of your car, you then notice all the other cars on the road that are the same make or model. These cars have always been there, but your mind never noticed them because you did not own one yourself.

This example proves to me that everything we see, hear or read affects our outlook on our

future. One thing you will realise over time is that the more successful people in dairy farming are long term players, who are focused on a goal that is a long way off. This stops them focusing on the negatives of today. The wise man built his house on the rock and the wood (your mind) for your ladder needs to be solid and strong.

### 5d. Nails

Once you have some solid wood you will need some nails. In my example nails represent finance. Chris Adams, who is running a successful mixed business in the Southland of New Zealand, said to me: “Don’t let money stop you from doing anything”. Love of money is the root of all evil, but handling money in a mature and sensible way is essential to building a strong career ladder.

A friend explained to me once that you need to become disciplined with money when you are young. The reason for this is that as your earning capacity increases you will not waste the extra money that you will later earn. When I left school my wages were £50 per week. I gave £10 to my parents for rent, put £10 of fuel in my motorbike, saved £10 for a rainy day and spent what was left on going out. When I look at the expenses of my house today, not a lot has changed, with the percentages spent on food, fuel and savings being roughly the same.

Personal budgeting is key when you are young. You can find plenty of tools that will help you with this. Your online banking will have a section on this, with some banks using information from your account to help fill it in.

**Example: see chart on next page**

Using that table you will be able to manage your money so that your income matches your outgoings. You may wonder why this



INCOME	Budget	Actual	Difference
Wages & Tips	2,000.00	2,000.00	-
Interest Income			-
Dividends			-
Gifts Received			-
Refunds/Reimbursements			-
Transfer From Savings			-
Other			-
Other			-
<b>Total INCOME</b>	<b>2,000.00</b>	<b>2,000.00</b>	<b>-</b>
HOME EXPENSES	Budget	Actual	Difference
Mortgage/Rent	1,100.00	1,100.00	-
Home/Rental Insurance	56.00	56.00	-
Electricity	50.00	67.00	(17.00)
Gas/Oil	43.00	52.00	(9.00)
Water/Sewer/Trash	7.00	7.00	-
Phone	25.00	25.00	-
Cable/Satellite	35.00	35.00	-
Internet	15.00	15.00	-
Furnishings/Appliances	0.00	150.00	(150.00)
Lawn/Garden	0.00	0.00	-
Maintenance/Supplies	50.00	20.00	30.00
Improvements	0.00	0.00	-
Other	0.00	0.00	-
<b>Total HOME EXPENSES</b>	<b>1,381.00</b>	<b>1,527.00</b>	<b>(146.00)</b>
TRANSPORTATION	Budget	Actual	Difference
Vehicle Payments			-
Auto Insurance			-
Fuel			-
Bus/Taxi/Train Fare			-
Repairs			-
Registration/License			-
Other			-
<b>Total TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
HEALTH	Budget	Actual	Difference
Health Insurance			-
Doctor/Dentist			-
Medicine/Drugs			-
Health Club Dues			-
Life Insurance			-
Veterinarian/Pet Care			-
Other			-
<b>Total HEALTH</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
CHARITY/GIFTS	Budget	Actual	Difference
Gifts Given			-
Charitable Donations			-
Religious Donations			-
Other			-
<b>Total CHARITY/GIFTS</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
SUBSCRIPTIONS	Budget	Actual	Difference
Newspaper			-
Magazines			-
Dues/Memberships			-
Other			-
<b>Total SUBSCRIPTIONS</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
MONTHLY BUDGET SUMMARY	Budget	Actual	Difference
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>2,000.00</b>	<b>2,000.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,381.00</b>	<b>1,527.00</b>	<b>-146.00</b>
<b>NET</b>	<b>619.00</b>	<b>473.00</b>	<b>-146.00</b>
DAILY LIVING	Budget	Actual	Difference
Groceries			-
Personal Supplies			-
Clothing			-
Cleaning			-
Education/Lessons			-
Dining/Eating Out			-
Salon/Barber			-
Pet Food			-
Other			-
<b>Total DAILY LIVING</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
ENTERTAINMENT	Budget	Actual	Difference
Videos/DVDs			-
Music			-
Games			-
Rentals			-
Movies/Theater			-
Concerts/Plays			-
Books			-
Hobbies			-
Film/Photos			-
Sports			-
Outdoor Recreation			-
Toys/Gadgets			-
Vacation/Travel			-
Other			-
<b>Total ENTERTAINMENT</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
SAVINGS	Budget	Actual	Difference
Emergency Fund			-
Transfer to Savings			-
Retirement (401k, IRA)			-
Investments			-
Education			-
Other			-
<b>Total SAVINGS</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
OBLIGATIONS	Budget	Actual	Difference
Student Loan			-
Other Loan			-
Credit Cards			-
Alimony/Child Support			-
Federal Taxes			-
State/Local Taxes			-
Other			-
<b>Total OBLIGATIONS</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
MISCELLANEOUS	Budget	Actual	Difference
Bank Fees			-
Postage			-
Other			-
Other			-
<b>Total MISCELLANEOUS</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

is necessary, but I have found from past experience that people who are good with money and live within their means are easier to employ and have a better attitude at work. If you cannot spend less than you earn you will get nowhere on the career ladder of dairy farming. Once you have started to generate free cash from better budgeting, you will be

able to start investing your money into appreciating assets and investments.

Appreciation is a big word that means things which increase in value over time. The opposite is depreciation which is when things devalue over a period of time. A lot of people spend money on cars, and these are classic depreciating assets. You buy a car for £5,000 and within a year it is worth less than £4,000.



On top of the cost of running the car you could take the £1,000 that you have lost in its value and spread it over the miles you have driven in that year. Say £1,000/10,000 miles gives you a cost of 10p per mile in depreciation. This clearly demonstrates why you should avoid spending excessive cash on cars.

Having spare cash is key. What you do with it is even more important.

### 5e. Saw

You will need a saw to cut the wood to make your ladder. When I thought about the whole thing I realised that you have to shape yourself if you want to go forward in life. As a saw can shape wood, you need to look at your habits when it comes to spending money and how you spend your time. Everybody in business is looking for honest and reliable people to help build their empires. Look at your social life, to see if any of the things you do, or how you chose to behave, is having a negative effect on your career. Cutting off any negative habits will help you to build your ladder more quickly and make it stronger than someone else's. I suppose the three main areas are:

**Honesty:** being honest in life is hard, even for a Nuffield Farming Scholar like myself. But I could not stress enough how much more valuable an honest person is than a liar. When you employ, or go into business with someone, you need a high level of honesty. We had a great student at our farm once and he sadly run over our dog with the tractor. When I asked him if he had been driving too fast he said No, and I was able to believe him because he is an honest person. Be honest about who you are, this is key.

**Habits:** do you have any bad habits? I used to smoke and stopped when I saw it was a waste of money and also damaged my health. You

People who are good with money and live within their means are easier to employ and have a better attitude at work.

may enjoy a gamble on the horses or try and compete with your friends for status. This is all meaningless and will damage your career. Stay focused on your dream.

**Social:** this is a tricky one. I guess I enjoy a pint in the pub like everyone else; however I never meet hugely successful people in the pub. This tells me that if I want to succeed then I must not go every night to the pub. Farming is a very small world and getting branded a drunk, or making a fool of yourself, will damage both your reputation and those of your bosses or business partner.

You need to build your reputation as much as your career.

All these examples are ways to show how you can make small decisions that have a big effect on a person's fortune. Use the saw to shape the wood (mind) correctly and you will see what a long term effect this has on your ladder.

### 5f. Hammer

By now you have some wood cut to the right shape and some nails to join it together. The hammer for me represents the "action" of putting all your skills together. But hammering is a noisy process that may involve a little pain along the way. You need to build your reputation as much as your career. Build a great reputation within the industry by being an honest, hardworking individual. You could start to create wealth at the same time. Now I





will give one example of this that I have seen and experienced myself, although there are other ways to start building wealth with your cash.

Rearing young stock has got to be one of the best ways of creating wealth for several reasons. One of these is that you can get a good return on your money; the second reason is that it teaches you a lot about running your own business; and thirdly you will demonstrate to your bank that you can run your own finances as well as taking risks with your own cash.

Example: Get your personal budget trimmed to the point where you are generating a £300+ surplus each month. Save for 12 months until your savings account shows a surplus of over £3,000. From that point you could start small:

- Buy 10 calves @£200 each.
- Rear the calf for almost 2 years at £1/day (365 days plus 325 days - you want to sell them a couple of months before calving - total £690
- Vaccines & wormers £40 per head
- Semen £20
- Total spend £950 per animal (£9,500 for 10 animals)
- Selling price £1,300 per animal
- Profit £350 per animal, or £3,500 for 10 animals, in 2 years.

You have spent £9,500 to make £13,000, so now you have some extra cash to invest again. There are risks involved as one may die, and I would rear 12 to allow for 2 wrong ones. It sounds silly to rear a small number but it would sell easily as farmers are always looking for a bunch of 10 or so to top up their herds. Cows are simply the tool to grow your capital, do not worry about actually selling them. People get too hung up on *milking* their stock

when every two years you could use your profit to rear more animals each month.

Another way of doing this would be to keep the stock on the farm you work on, agree a monthly rearing cost, and let your boss deduct it out of your wages each month. This would be a great way of building a relationship with your employer as well as increasing your wealth.

### 5g. What's the next step?

Now you have some way of creating wealth you could start to think about the next level. Property prices in the last ten years have gone up and down. I guess there is always a good buy in any market but, in general, the market is low as I write this. Capital gain from property was a big thing in the early 2000s with banks willing to lend on the back of a fast-rising market. I am not saying that property is a sound investment as I know some people who have lost a lot from trying to play that market. However the simple facts still remain, God is not making any more land and everyone needs a home to live in. If I were a young, enthusiastic person, working in a job where my house was provided as part of my salary, I would be looking to own a property simply as an insurance policy in case something went wrong at work. This investment could grow in value over time and be used to help me borrow more money in the future. The right time to buy something is always today, with many people missing out on good deals because they worry too much about it first.

### 5h. Vendor financing

Until I started travelling around I had not heard much about this in farming. The easiest way to explain vendor financing is to give you an example:



Young farmer wants to start dairy farming. Needs 100 cows @£1000 each. Bank will not lend the money to buy these cows.

A farmer who is selling his/her 100 cows offers the young farmer a loan of 100k over an agreed period. An interest rate is agreed. Repayments - to include interest as well as a percentage of the capital - are made on a monthly basis, which would be the case with a normal loan from a bank.

I met a couple of share milkers who had each done deals of this type in Australia. One deal was that a monthly rate was set for the value of the cows, spread over 4 years. The monthly payments were then continued for the 5th year. These 12 extra payments represented the interest on the loan over 4 years. This gave the vendor a great return for his cows (5% p.a.) and also assisted the young farmer in getting started.

I have considered these deals and looked at how to apply them in my own business. I guess one way could be to have an investment per child, like a house, or flat, maybe a herd of cows - or something that could be called an asset. When the child is older and the original loan has been paid off I could vendor-finance this asset to my child. This would give me a good return on my asset, money for my retirement and help the child get started. Upon my death the loan would be cleared and the asset transferred fully to them. I have not look into the legality of these agreements but I think they have their place within the UK dairy industry.

## 5i. Share milking

Share milking is more common in New Zealand and Australia than in the UK. I met several milkers Down Under. All of them had the same game plan. Start at 10% (*see further explanation in Detail of sharemilker contract, next column*), and move up to 50% as funds,

opportunities and finance allowed. A few had gone to the next step of selling half their cows to give a 30% deposit on purchasing a farm. Obviously a bank in the UK would require a bit more deposit. Facilities such as vendor finance should not be dismissed just because it is rarely done here in the UK. 'Cows build empires' is something that I keep saying and it gets people's attention.

### Detail of a sharemilker contract:

Share milkers receive up to 21% of the milk income for providing labour and machinery. Every percentage above this refers to cow ownership. Once share milkers can afford to buy cows, they get paid a higher percentage up to a maximum of 60% (it is in fact more common to stop at 50%).

The top operators would own all the cows and machinery and be getting 60% of the milk income. They would be expected to pay 60% of feed, fertiliser, and contractor costs.

The aim is to compound stock as quickly as possible to create wealth. Although the banks value cows at zero they can be sold for \$1,300 a head average, so 200 sold would give the milker \$260,000 and therefore some cash to put down on a farm.

Successful milkers had similar rules of thumb:

- Do the small things well (attention to detail)
- Don't borrow money for paint (machinery)
- No staff for the first 3-4 years unless above 250 cows
- Low cost grass based system
- Serve everything to dairy semen

You could come up with plenty of excuses not to follow these simple rules. However from experience in my own business this is some sound advice and will speed up your journey towards your goals.



## 6. Conclusions

*What is in your mind, determines what is in your hands'*

This quote for me sums up my entire Nuffield experience: the simple saying of "success is all in the mind" has the power to change everyone's fortunes. Whether you are a farmer, farm labourer, share milker, milk processor employee, feed rep, tractor mechanic or even - dare I say it - RPA inspector then if your mind is not right you will not achieve or enjoy anything you aim for.

When I started my Nuffield journey I truly thought that I would find some blueprint to help our industry thrive; something which involved new technology and a way of bringing together the old generation with the new.

What I discovered was that everyone has a responsibility for the success of the dairy industry. Any negative talk, or negative actions, towards people has a long term effect. If we as farmers remain focused on what is actually important in life, our dairy businesses will reflect this good attitude and become places of enjoyment and encouragement. I changed the title of my paper to: "How to succeed in dairy farming" as I felt my previous title did not reflect my positive message.

As I said at the start, Becky and I decided that we needed to employ someone so we could

improve our lifestyle. The chain reaction of this has seen our business expand and we have reinvested large sums of money to try and improve our surplus cash situation. We have not always got it correct and have made some costly mistakes along the way. We are now in a position to invest money off farm, and all this has been the result of making one decision to employ someone. Never underestimate the decisions you make.

I believe that every business needs direction and someone to drive progress within it. If you are tired and fed up with the way your business is working, then open yourself up to change, find an honest, hardworking person who has a vision for the future, and involve them in your business. My father is over 60 now and is keen to be involved in a business that allows a good balance between work and play, and can create wealth at the same time.

I really hope that this paper will be of use to someone. Writing is not my strong point but I am glad that I applied for my Nuffield Farming Scholarship and now have a great network of global friends.

Thank you for reading this.

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## 7. Postscript

The last 18 months of my life have been the most hectic and enjoyable ones of all. I have met some of the world's best farmers who have all had an impact on my family and me. We have had some great people come and stay at the farm and we hope to see many of them again. I could not thank enough my sponsor, Jill Willows, who has helped me to stay focused on the end goal.

I guess since I came home my whole life has changed; I take little interest in the TV and enjoy reading any book that will help me to improve myself. I have also started to spend time coaching young people in the industry with their businesses. I am keen to pursue this further as I think there is a real place for mentoring people to succeed.

I was asked to speak at a conference in Australia. I chose to focus on farmers' attitudes and values. This went down very well with the people there, and the CEO of Dairy Australia commented on how great the conference was for focusing on more than just cows.

I would like to start coaching farmers on their attitudes towards business and see if there is a better way of encouraging staff to improve output.

The business at home was looked after superbly and I couldn't thank my father enough. We have purchased a property in the village and built a self-feed silage clamp this year. We are reorganising our operation with the aim of taking on a share milker within the business when my father retires. I feel this will allow us time to focus on other areas of the business as it grows.

My wife and I dream of adopting two children and pray that this will happen over the next 3 years.

I had several business offers, both whilst I was travelling and since I returned home. I may pursue some but only if they fit within my values.

I truly believe the UK dairy industry has got a positive future and the people within it should be grateful for what they have.

*'Difficulties are just things to overcome'*





## 8. Acknowledgments

I feel it would be wrong to try and list every person I met on my travels. Some of the people who had the greatest effect and influence on my thinking were those I met in an airport lounge or a café whilst having breakfast - and I have not remembered their names.

I would like to thank again my sponsor Jill. She has given my family and me a life changing opportunity. If I am successful in the future I may consider sponsoring my own Nuffield Farming Scholar.

My wife deserves the biggest thanks. She has tolerated my obsessive nature for nearly 8 years. She did a great job at looking after our

two girls whilst I was away, which I'm sure was a lonely experience for her.

My father Andy did a fantastic job of looking after the business. We are in the middle of a major project and he coped well with the added stress of this. Through the hard work of himself and my granddad Ron, I have a great asset to build on.

I feel I should thank our retired NFST Director John Stones. John was a great help at the start of my Nuffield Farming Scholarship as I was, like so many before me, very inexperienced at this sort of thing. I thank John for his support and answering the ridiculous questions that I emailed him at times.



## 9. Executive Summary

When applying for my Nuffield Farming Scholarship I was unaware of just what this would mean for me and my family. Having worked hard for many years repairing and rebuilding the family dairy unit, I had reached a point where I had plateaued. My next goal was to start up another unit and milk twice as many cows.

This was by no means a hard goal but locating another unit proved to be a difficult task. After a few failed rental bids and a joint venture which never got started I gave up. I wondered how anyone could get started in the dairy industry? I have a proven track record and plenty of capital (money) behind me and even that didn't seem to help my cause. After explaining all this to a family friend he suggested I applied to do a Nuffield study on this very topic. I titled my paper 'How best to save the dairy industry'; I truly believe that without enough people entering our industry it will simply just shrink to a point where we will lose critical mass.

I travelled around the UK speaking to as many farmers and their staff as I could. Some points became clear; one was that

some young people struggled to grasp the content of Nuffield Scholarship reports, saying they were sometimes too complex. The other point which popped up every time was that people wanted a clear career path to climb, where they had the choice to either work very hard and climb towards farm ownership or just stay in the position they felt most comfortable with.

Many farmers in the UK have forgotten the plus points and focus on the negative things about farming; things we can't control such as weather and global markets. Farmers need to get back to basics and look at what makes a great business appealing to others outside farming. In many ways agriculture has become isolated from other industries in the UK. This has not helped our image problem.

The aim of my Nuffield report is to get farmers to take a fresh look at themselves and their business. I'm also going to share some of the insights I have had from my travels and show how anyone can succeed in the industry no matter what their circumstances.

*"Myself plus motivation, equals success"*