

Interview with John Sutton. Conducted by D. J. Runnacles and typed by Louise Charters for the Richmond Borough Council. Interview carried out in June 1984.

I was born in 1904 in Hill Street in the same room as my father had been born in. His name was Oliver Sutton.

Mother's name was May Constance, nee Tunnicliffe from Wai-iti. She had worked at the old people's home in Queen Street, near the water tank. They met while she had worked there.

The house was near Sutton Street, or where Sutton Street is now. Uncle Herb Sutton lived next door. Dad and uncle were in partnership when they took over from Grandfather. They dissolved the partnership in 1920. Dad's part is all built on now except for about 10 acres in Manuka. When I was in my 20's my brother Vic and I grew potatoes on the flat up the hill.

I had two brothers and two sisters. Yelvie is the youngest and he is about 14 years younger than me. There was one older sister and then me.

That photo on the wall is of my great grandparents. George and his wife came out in 1842. He was 11 and she was six. George F. Sutton attended night school so that he could learn to read and write.

Great grandfather George's house was in Queen Street just over the road from where George Street comes out. That was the only piece of land that I ever heard of George having. Yet the next generation all seemed to have land, 'i.e. all his sons. I don't know how the sons acquired the land but it must have been after grandfather John was married. He talked of courting grandmother. She lived up the Maitai. He was working at Waimea West and on a Saturday night he would walk into Nelson, spend Sunday with her and walk back to be at work on the Monday morning.

I don't know where he worked or who for but it was at Wāimea West. That was grandfather John and that was a story he used to tell us. So whenever and however he got his land it was after he got married. I can't tell anything more about that or about great grandfather George except that he was buried in the cemetery over there.

Grandfather John had the land as it is marked on the map (enclosed). My Dad's plot is also marked. He had two plots. One of 20 acres, the other of 30 acres, on each side of Hill Street.

When my grandfather was there, then Muntz was still on the land which is now the Waimea College block. As far as I can remember when I was just a little boy my father used to do work on Muntz land. You know the way that farmers help each other doing the jobs that come up.

I remember that the only time I ever went to the trig station up the hill; I went up with my sister and Clarry and another, and we took our lunch

and when we got back Dad and them were down there digging and putting in a garden for Mrs Muntz. I was only about nine at the time.

I can remember and still see (in my minds eye) a nephew of the Muntz driving the old lady over in the carriage. That's as far back as I can remember of that family. She must have died just shortly after that time and the farm went to Smallbone's (i.e. the Muntz daughter and her husband). He planted the orchard and my father helped do that. I helped my father planting the orchard.

This crop of wheat that I remember seeing. I'm not sure whether they grew it themselves where the college is now and carted it back to Hill Street onto their own property. But I remember when I was just a young fellow seeing the combine coming round with a thrashing machine. We weren't allowed to go out there because we had mumps at the time and were home from school because of it.

I remember Mrs Kyte went around cooking for the contractors. She had a caravan. But we weren't allowed to go and see Mrs Kyte because we had the mumps.

I have a faint recollection that they grew it down on the 50 acres where the college is now. I'm not sure whether they grew it for half shares or what. But it was down on that college land where they had 10 or 15 acres for cropping that the big wheat stocks used to be. Grandfather John did a lot of cropping. He cropped all that Marsden estate. I heard him say that. In those days Grandma and one of the daughters would prepare a hot dinner and give it to one of the girls and she would walk from Hill Street through to Stoke. So grandfather must have either owned or rented land, probably rented land, up in Marsden Valley. That's the story that we have of it. It wasn't so very long ago that we had a photo of them harvesting grain in Marsden Valley.

The harvesting machine belonged to George Webby. Mr Fowler worked with him but I'm not sure if he had shares in it. That was in my day. Earlier

on it was Holdaways and they kept it over in/near the place we lived in Salisbury Road.

I know they had a traction engine there because when I dug the 'cess' pit for our house, it was the hardest hole I'd ever dug. Where the traction engine rolled up and down that drive it was packed solid and I had to dig the hole 6 feet deep. Carl Webby had the land as a 'stack' yard before we bought it to build on.

George Webby had his traction engine in Oxford Street by the old police station and after that he moved down by Three Brothers Corner, near Joe Hill's. He had a shed there. Earlier he had lived in Queen Street for a while, just opposite the butcher's shop. So he had three shifts.

He had two sons but they lived in Blenheim - Noel and Ash Webby. Carl Webby had children, a daughter of his was living in Richmond but I can't remember her married name. Trevor died here a while back; Ronald Webby got killed in Blenheim, and there

was another boy.

Webby leased all that land down in Salisbury Road that we bought. They had it for many years. Old grandfather Webby had had it from way back and when he died his boys just let it go.

In the early days' they were all horse-drawn vehicles but this wasn't a wheat growing district. We grew a lot of straw but none of it formed into wheat. So it was mainly oats or chaff and a little barley. In my grandfather's and fathers time it was all horses. Then when cars came in chaff went out of the district and we switched to dairying and most people did. Lots of Jersey stud farms started up in the district. Dad and I started our stud farm and called it Sellbourne and Yeovie took over the Sellbourne farm and we took over the Mayroyd stud. But that is where the name came from for the Sellbourne Estate.

We started the Sellbourne Stud up on the Sellbourne block and called it O. T. (or O. C?)

Sutton & Son. That would have been about 1916. Dad bought the first cow, then my sister and I bought the next two cows. That's how we started out in dairy stud farming. Vic (their brother) bought her out and the family carried on the Sellbourne Stud until we went down on the flats in 1932 and started Mayroyd and that was J.W. and V.Q. I think Yeovie was in partnership with us all for a while before going out on his own.

Sellbourne I think was named after a place in England that was connected with mother's side of the family.

Prior to buying the farm in 1932 when we were still up above Hill Street we grew early potatoes and peas up on the hill. These were sold in Wellington in September and there was always a bit of a competition to get them there first.

We planted them in March and harvested them in August or September. It was very hard work of course but we used to get a good price for our produce. We grew them up the hill a bit above the

frosts and while some of the land we had was quite flat, not all of it was. Most of the planting etc. had to be done manually and that was very time consuming. Only a well trained horse was at all useful in such an area.

When we harvested the peas it was not just a case of going over the pea vines once to collect the shucks. We used to go over them three times or so. If you picked a kerosene tin full in a day, or a gunny sack, then you were doing a jolly good days work. That was picking on the hill so you didn't have to bend quite so far but you were carrying about half a sack all the time. The sack held about the same as the kerosene tin but was easier to carry over your back. That was in the 1920's. Our sister Rita helped work as well of course, she was the oldest in the family and I was next.

At that time Stoke was nearly all in orchards and there were quite a few in Richmond too, though they've nearly all been pulled out by now, e.g. around the back of Templemore. For a time everybody seemed

to be going into apples where just a few years before everyone was getting into cows and lately they have been going into Kiwifruit and deer.

During the time of my grandfather and during my fathers time they grew crops for people and for horse fodder and carried sheep. My father had some land up the Wairoa Gorge where he worked to try and knock it into farming land. During his time at this he cut down native bush that he would not cut down now. All these fashions come and go and we learn about some of the mistakes afterwards. Since my father cleared the bush up there they have replanted it in exotics. It was a total waste of his time and energy and the bush. Every generation has had to change its method of farming. If we had been in tobacco country it would have been the same. Eventually the farms and the orchards were pushed out of the borough by the rates etc.

It made a huge difference when the horse went out of use too. You must understand that it changed the whole basis of the economy. At that time there

had been about three or perhaps four traction engines in the Waimea area. One of them was actually buried under a great swag of sawdust or gravel in a five acre gravel pit in Hope.

In 1932 we bought 75 acres in Stoke and 43 acres in Richmond. We later bought 25 more acres. We bought the land on the 3rd of June and were living in the house by the 3rd of August. It cost $\frac{1}{2}$ 450. Wilkes took two cows in part payment. That was the house this side of the deviation and by Champion Road that is now used as the Parks and Reserve's Headquarters.

Wilkes took the two cows which were Pedigree Jersey's to Brightwater and built up a pedigree herd. W. E. Wilkes was married to the sister of my father. She had been Edith Sutton.

Our pedigree Jersey herd was started by Dad. Vic and I ran them for town supply until the man delivering it died then we did it ourselves. In those days we used to 'rug' all the cows, i.e. put

covers on them overnight. Yelve worked with us for a while about that time. We had to get up about four to have the milk ready by six. Vic and Yelve used to deliver it while I stayed and worked on the farm.

Amalgamation with Nelson Dairies happened about 1942.

Until 1958 we used to take the cows across the main highway morning and night. Our son David is still on part of the original farm. It's called Daelyn now. He has changed over to Friesians. Our farm was called the Mayroyd Jersey Stud and was owned by J. W. and V. Q. Sutton in partnership.

Where Waimea College is now there was a Jersey Stud, Arthingworths it was called. It was a real show place. They had a 15 acre orchard where the playing fields are. Mrs Smallbone was a Muntz and the farm came to them after old Mr Muntz died.

It later passed to Mrs Gardner who was Mrs Smallbone's daughter. Len Gardner sold it to the college. Dad's farm joined onto Muntz at the back and I remember seeing father helping Mr Smallbone, the way farmers help each other, ploughing or sewing in the paddock. I helped my father do some of the work planting the orchard for Mr Smallbone. Not many people realise that Waimea College used to be in orchard. Bert Jellyman was the manager of Smallbone's farm. When he went up to Belgrove to work for Les Higgins then a fellow White became manager.

The Marlborough Crescent area was Dellside Jersey Stud and belonged to Griffins.

Dr. Washbourn's Jersey Stud was called Tillingdown. When he died the house was sold to Dr. Currie but I think the land was sold to some one else because it became known as Jame's Estate.

The Hammonds had Friesians down the bottom end of town. The Friesians in those days was a big Friesian. When you sat next to it milking it

seemed as big as an elephant. The animal today is much more compact. They used to be huge and they produced much more milk than today, though now the butterfat content is higher.

As far as the Jersey's were concerned there was much more competition than there is now. Nowadays it's all Friesians. Between Champion Road and Queen Street on the hill side of Hill Street there were about 300 cows 50 years ago. Now I don't think there are any.

The two Malcolm boys, Allan and Keith, and Ferris Prowse are about the only remaining members of my class at school. We knew the Woods family too. My mother and Mrs Woods were quite good friends.

The Muntz family were real English gentry and like the other gentry they left European trees behind them. You can always tell where the old established houses were because that is where the old European trees are. The McRae's, for example, were where the Salisbury School is now. The Muntz

were like that. I was always under the impression that they were gentry. My old Dad always said that they were gentry folk. One son of Muntz had a store at Moutere and Mrs Rae, the ex-matron of Alexander Home was a descendant of the Muntz.

My father and uncle used to go up the Wairoa Gorge each Monday morning and arrive back home on the Saturday afternoon. We had four or five cows at that time and as the eldest boy I had to look after them. My mother got arthritis at a very early age and so there were many things that the older children had to do. Though most children had plenty of chores in those days.

We had started our married life during the depression. People say these days about the wife working as if it's something new, but both partners have to work if you are going to have a home. My wife worked very hard in the home and without her work I couldn't have done the work on the farm that brought in the money. I started out when I was married to keep my wife, and as we all did in those

days, but I couldn't have done it without her working. In those days the amenities and aids to housekeeping like you do now of course. It took a full-time worker to look after a household, especially if you had children. We didn't even have electric light in those days. The lines went past the house I think, but it was eight years before we had the light put on. Then we had it put on in the house and in the shed. That was when the war was on.

We had an old Henderson 'pop-pop' motor driving the machinery in the milking shed. I wondered quite often how the Huffan's across the road (Runa Claasen, nee Huffan) put up with the noise. This old machine would be popping away just along the gully from their place. We never had any noise complaint anyway. It was a two stroke motor and it never failed to start in the eight years.

I don't think people are any happier now than they were 50 or 60 years ago. There's a lot more money around now obviously but I'm not sure that their real living standard is any higher, in so far

as they seemed as happy or happier then and they could afford to buy the things that they and society said they needed.

My mother ran her house on about $\frac{p}{L}$ 50 housekeeping money per year. Now she didn't have to pay for our milk, or butter, or meat etc. The prices were so low and there were lots of things that didn't exist then. We didn't starve. We ate quite well and our clothes were made up at home. It was a simple life but they should never have let the land prices get so ridiculous. Land is really only worth money relative to what it will grow and the land round here isn't that fertile.

Our family had a great deal of land around this district and we could only ever afford to pay that 'productive value' for the land. That was about what we sold most of it for too. It was later on that the prices were hiked up to those ridiculous levels. It was the same with the profit made on constructing houses in the early days. The carpenters just made wages for themselves and their workers

and put a bit on the top for profit, but that profit was a very small percentage compared to now.

My wife's maiden name was Benseman. Her parents retired to upper Queen Street from their place in upper Moutere. They owned 5 or 6 acres where Warwick Street is now, including the knob up there.

She is related to Heine the German minister who came out on the St. Pauli in 1842. A great aunt, Anna Benseman married Johann Heine. I think all the Benseman's are in the same family.

Conversation with Mr John Sutton, August 2nd 1984.

The squarish house over the road from Mr and Mrs Sutton's house at Champion Road and Salisbury Road corner, was there earlier than Mr Sutton can remember. (Guesses as to the age of similar houses suggest between 70 and 90 years).

His uncle, Mr Herb Sutton, built his own house in Hill Street about 90 years ago according to his estimate. This house still stands and is of the squarish type mentioned.

Mr Herb Sutton worked with W. E. Wilkes at an early age, later going farming. Wilkes probably built all the other houses of this shape says Mr Sutton. (It seems worthwhile to note however that the Henlet Store is similar in shape and was built by Mr Herb Lusty).

The house of similar shape in Wilkes Street was previously on the corner of Queen Street.