



Cardiff Co-op Dairy Company

Cardiff Road

1888

Use:	None	Historic Value:	3 out of 5
Materials:	Concrete	Architectural Value:	1 out of 4
NZHPT Registered:	Not registered	Technical Value:	1 out of 2
Legal Description:	Pt DP359 & Pt Sec 3 BlkXIII Huiroa SD - Bal at 11980/124-	Symbolic Value:	- out of 3



Rarity Value: - out of 2

Townscape Value: 1 out of 2

Group Value: - out of 2

Overall Heritage Value: 6 out of 20

The Cardiff Butter Packing Company is seen to be the first co-operative company to be founded by settlers in the Stratford District.

In February 1881 four families (Richards, W. Johnson, P. Ralfe and G.A. Marchant) cleared the land, and built their own bush homes. In 1888, after a period of settling in, Johnson, Ralfe (who later became the mayor of Stratford) and Marchant set up and managed what was thought to be “the first successful co-operative butter factory in New Zealand”. The factory employed approximately 21 staff in its early days, comprised of the settlers who were living in the Cardiff area.

The butter was made on the local farms, and brought to the factory by any and all means of transport available. The butter was then processed from the unsalted granular state into a marketable form, packed into kegs and exported as far as Cardiff in Wales. Returns from the packing company were considerably better than the prices offered locally. However, the profit was not as high as they hoped for, so, on 6 December 1890, it was decided to wind up the company, and on 20 May 1891 the building was sold.

There is no trace of the Cardiff Butter Packing factory today, but if you go along the Opunake Road from Cardiff, cross the bridge over the Waingongoro River, look over the side of the bridge towards Stratford, you will see a sweep of flat land along the river, which is the site of the original factory.



The 'CCC' symbol

Nine farmers decided to carry on and fund the Cardiff Co-operating Dairy Factory Company, which focused on the production of cheese. This was only possible through the help of a borrowed capital of £600 from the National Bank, which was guaranteed by fifteen Cardiff settlers. The site was owned by Mr. Richards, and was 4 ½ acres in area, costing £20. On February 3, 1891, a tender of Mr. J Walters for 205 pounds and 16 shillings was accepted for building the factory.

In August 1891, a pig farm was started up to dispose of the whey, which meant that the factory was also able to export frozen pork and bacon. However, due to unsatisfactory contract management and proceeds, this enterprise enjoyed little success, and in June 1899 it was sold by auction.

In 1894 the Babcock test was introduced at the factory, and it was not long before it was used everywhere else as well. The Babcock test tested the butter-fat content in milk, with the payments being made accordingly. This resulted in farmers culling the poorer producers, and breeding from the better ones to get a better class of cows. Cardiff made many such interesting “firsts” in the dairy industry: in July 1891 it was decided that “*the handles of cans be altered from stationary to swinging*”, which later became a universal feature of the tin milk cans.

In the company’s second season, on October 24, 1892, it was decided that the trademark be registered as triangle with three C’s inside it (*see picture*). This remained the trademark until the company’s closure. Due to continued success, in the next season the factory was enlarged to contain six vats, replacing the original two, and a new boiler was installed: this had a cost of

around £500. The amount of shares also increased: going from 694 shares in 1891 to 2344 in 1900.

In 1896 at a general meeting it was decided to install a butter-making plant. Because of this, by 1902 many shareholders suggesting that the cheese plant should be “thrown out”. However, the cheese plant continued, and in May 1912 a plant for whey butter was installed.

From 1895 a post office and telephone office were located at the dairy factory to try and meet the needs of the growing amount of settlers in the district. The company’s community service was also continued in 1946, when they began to build houses to attract and retain staff.

By 1957, the Cardiff Co-op Dairy Factory had begun a tanker collection; ordering 16 farm milk vats for the suppliers, and gaining finance from the National Bank for a tanker from Truscott's Ltd. (another tanker was ordered in 1959).

On 13th of July 1960, Eltham, Mangatoki, Lowgarth, Ngaere and Cardiff Companies decided to trial a joint whey butter manufacture for 12 months at the Eltham Butter Factory. This trial was successful: and as a result Cardiff joined with Stratford, Eltham and Normanby to form the Taranaki Dairy Company in 1964, after they voted in favour of amalgamation.

The Cardiff Co-op Dairy Factory closed at the end of May 1965 after a record 1200 tons of cheese had been produced for the season. The building was taken over by R. Bloor for mushroom farming, and has also been used as an eel factory and storage for machinery.

Overall, Cardiff’s product was successful, especially in England, where it was the cheapest cheese available. The success of this company is also seen through the fact that in every dairy company in New Zealand basically the same rules and regulations that the farmers and settlers in Cardiff originally set up are still in use.



Bibliography

Stratford District Centenary: 1878-1978

Daily News, 23 January 1986

Cardiff School District Centennial

Cardiff Co-operative Dairy Factory Company Limited: Diamond Jubilee 1891-1951