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Full transcript of an interview with

BRIAN GRIGGS

on 29 July 2004

By Sally Stephenson

Recording available on CD

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A series of dots, **.... ....** indicates an untranscribable word or phrase.

Sentences that were left unfinished in the normal manner of conversation are shown ending in three dashes, **- - -.**

Spelling: Wherever possible the spelling of proper names and unusual terms has been verified. A parenthesised question mark (?) indicates a word that it has not been possible to verify to date.

Typeface: The interviewer's questions are shown in **bold print**.

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TAPE 1 SIDE 1

Sally Stephenson interviewing Mr Brian Griggs at his Aldinga Beach Home on 29th July 2004, for the Prospect Hill Historical Museum Project on the history of the local dairying industry. The interview focuses on Mr Griggs life in a dairy farming family, and his 38 years working and managing dairy factories, culminating in the position of Group Operations Manager of Dairy Vale Co-Operative Limited South Australia.

Would you tell me your name please?

Brian Griggs

And what is your middle name?

Brian Leslie Griggs. L E S L I E

And when were you born?

December 1937

You were born in Prospect Hill, you told me before.

I was the third child born to Cyril and Merle Griggs. That made me the middle child.

What were the names of your brothers and sisters?

My oldest brother is Mervyn, my sister Pat, then came me, and then there's Trevor and later, after a small pause, was Kevin. He was born in 1943. So, there's ten years between the oldest to the youngest.

I'd like to ask you about your involvement in the dairy industry. I know you grew up on a dairy farm, so what are your memories of your parents' farm?

Well, Dad earned a living from dairying and as was the case back in the early thirties, Australia was in the depths of depression, so things weren't easy. So Dad, young, married, built a dairy, milked a few cows but he had to do other work beside. So, he was clearing his farm, he cut wood, sold it. He did general carrying. And in fact he was one of the early milk carters of the day and carted milk for Southern Farmers. (break in recording) Actually Dad built his own [first: BLG] home with the help of his older brother Eric. It was a timber framed home with corrugated iron cladding. And we lived in that until 1943 when Dad built another home on the opposite end of the property and much closer, and just adjacent to the primary school, where us kids all went to school. Dad was always very interested in trucks and motors. Whilst he often had horses, two or three draught horses to do farm work, he eventually got rid of them and he had an

old ancient tractor and --- but he was always more interested in carting milk, and doing truck work. The farm was run in conjunction with the family and as the family grew we all had a share of the work to do, so started with that.

What were your particular jobs then that you did?

Well, early in the piece, we probably had nothing more than fetching cows and feeding calves. (sound of shuffling papers). I had a view that, the work was kind of allocated, according to perhaps strength and ability - probably more likely it was some sort of an established peck order that meant that, some jobs were more attractive than others so depending on where you were in the, in the family might have depended a little bit on what kind of jobs they allocated to you. I should say that we really had a very happy childhood, we certainly were under none of the stresses that we're under today and, we grew up totally oblivious to what went on in the big wide world beyond in those early years - we were totally involved in our farm work - the only day off, that we would have was, we were not permitted to do too much on Sundays.

You were born in 1937 so that most of your young childhood was spent during World War II. What memories do you have of any effects of the war on your childhood?

War time impacted on everybody, and my early childhood --- different images of lots of service people in khaki uniforms and people being concerned about the possible and very real danger of invasion by Japanese. The entire country had entered into the war mode and the government imposed control over essential services including farm production. This was necessary because of one, the young men were, were joining the armed forces in droves resulting in the pressure being put on to the farming communities, especially the women and children who had to do much of the farm work when the husband and father were away. The War Time Essential Services Act was enacted in I think 1942, and that was to guarantee adequate food supplies. This effectively disqualified many primary producers from enlisting in the services - kept the farms operating. This had quite an effect on our father who, possibly because other relatives and near family members were joining up --- he was a young man in his late twenties, early thirties, and wanted to do something towards the war effort so, Dad joined the army Voluntary Defence Corp - commonly know as the VDC. And he was stationed for a time at Snapper Point near Aldinga Beach, coincidently just down the

road from where I live now. And there they carried out coastal surveillance for enemy incursion. For a short time Dad moved Mum and us kids - and there were four of us then - to be just a little bit closer to Mt Compass and we rented a house there. Dad's truck had been commandeered for the military use and so the only transport, effective transport that he had, was an old Aerial motorbike, and I recall Mum seldom rode on the motorbike with Dad. Mum was certainly not that sort of person, and I don't think she ever liked motorbikes at all. We four kids however, keeping in mind that Kevin had not yet arrived, we had set positions on this motorbike. It was quite an ordered structure. Right at the back, on the back of the pillion seat was Merve, in front of him was sister Pat, then Dad, and then straight in front of him was me on petrol tank and then in front of me again was Trevor. So, all four of us could get on this bike together. Never a crash helmet amongst any of us of course. After Dad was discharged from the VDC, which was in late 1942, he returned home to the family farm, and then started to build his farm work together. By now he had realised that the family, and that included the three of us, were walking to school from a position some three miles from the Primary School, through other peoples' property and stock and horses and things and this wasn't seen to be a very good thing. And there's a few wild stories about being chased with horses and bulls and things and most of which might have an element of truth in them ---. But it was certainly a bit of a hazard in the winter time. The one thing was certain, Dad never saw the need to have us driven to school. Ironically, even though there was a school bus operating from Blackfellow's Creek, we apparently for whatever reason, we were just outside the scope of being able to meet that bus and travel that way so, because the opposite end of our property was so much closer to the school, I think that's where it was measured from. However, Dad then decided he would build a new home, which he did, a timber framed kit home, albeit asbestos clad, on the opposite end of our farm quite close to the Prospect Hill School. A place which I now understand is owned by a Mr Fryer. About the same time he erected [words deleted: BLG] a new dairy. And, it was at this time that the economy was picking up and milking machines were being installed in dairies and Dad installed a GVB milking machine in 1943 and this happened to be the same year that our youngest brother, Kevin, was born.

What are your memories of working in that new dairy then?

I was never a great dairyman when it came to milking cows; again, you know it's the middle child syndrome I guess. I had two people instructing me above me, and only had at that stage a young brother to hand it onto. And so my work was to fetch the cows, feed calves and generally be the roustabout for the others. Merv was the senior partner in our gang and it was a case of doing things usually when it's cold and it's wet and uncomfortable and it usually interfered with the things that I really wanted to do, and milking cows and hunting cows through mud never did really appeal to me.

What were the things you really wanted to be doing?

Well I, later on as I grew up, I had interests in horse riding. Not that we had a pony at that stage but, we had access to one that Thorpe* had loaned us and we were paddocking this horse, and I became quite interested in that. Coincidently, my sister Pat was also quite interested in horse riding. The other boys never took to this. I was interested in raising ducks, poultry. I used to love to rabbit trap, and was quite an avid rabbit trapper and then later on we had a bunch of ferrets that we fed and so I used to like to catch rabbits. This was given approval by our parents because the rabbits were eaten and the skins I was allowed to sell for pocket money. I might add that pocket money was a non-event unless you found some other way of getting it. And I suspect that was something to do with the dairy. There was no pocket money attached to the farm work. You did it for your keep.

*Mr Royal Thorpe, whose son Albert married the interviewee's sister, Pat: BLG

You mentioned you ate some of the rabbits that you caught. Was your food rationed at all during the war?

Yes it was. Rationing was imposed during war time to limit the consumable goods such as food and clothing and fuel. Gradually after the war of course these restrictions were removed. However, it took much longer to restore adequate fuel supplies, and petrol was always in short supply. I recall, during the latter part of the war, basic food stuffs could only be procured by cutting out these coupons --- had to be supplied before you could buy the stuff. And that went right through until the war ended. (traffic sounds) I remember the war ending in August 1945. We were in school on the day. I recall my mother coming into our classroom about mid-afternoon to relay the information, and I think that school was dismissed for the remainder of that day. An interesting part of the rationing process of course - petrol was always difficult to acquire. Dad had a truck and he could never get enough of fuel that he wanted so, it was common around about that time to use alternate fuel and if you had a petrol engine you could fit a gas producer to your vehicle. And as Dad was carting milk at the time, again, and firewood, he needed to use his truck so he had fitted a gas producer that burnt wood or coke and this of course produces a combustionable gas to replace petrol. Apart from the weight penalty, it was also a quite a fire hazard. Of course there's a story that a motorist stopped Dad one day when he noticed that his load of wood was on fire and Dad hadn't spotted it. Dad quickly got rid of that as soon as adequate fuel supplies returned.

The milking machines that you were using at that time were petrol driven too weren't they? During the war did you have enough petrol to use those milking machines?

Yes. Dad had installed a milking machine when he built the new dairy and this was driven by a Ronaldson Tippett diesel engine. Now, diesel engines are not things that are easy to start if you can't turn through the compression --- and they have a compression lifter. Now Dad was okay and he could spin this thing over and fire it up. Merv was strong enough to do it but he needed somebody and that was one of my jobs was to operate the compression lifter on this diesel engine. Merv would turn the thing over and then at the appropriate time we'd drop the compression lever and hopefully the engine would go through one compression and fire into life. If it didn't of course it just sprang back against the compression --- we'd have a bit of a yelling match for a moment, and then we'd go through the process again. I never really was strong enough,

and being short stature and a bit weedy, I never really acquired that art. I tried hard enough but I just could never get the thing to go through the compression. However, all of our problems came to an end in about 1944 when electricity came to Prospect Hill. Poles were put in and wires were strung and electricity was connected throughout the district. Making yet another dramatic change to the lives of people on the farms and the old Ronaldson Tippett engine wasn't required anymore. We had an electric engine which any of us could throw the switch and start up. With the growing family of course meant that more hands were needed with the dairy and Dad did more and more work with his truck. I'm not too sure that Dad wasn't all that fussed about the family milking - but Dad carted more general goods and wood and he was certainly busy every day, seven days a week carting milk and so the dairying really then became the job of the family.

How big was your dairy herd at this time?

Initially, Dad milked about thirty cows and he probably got up at the peak to about fifty but it was usually in that thirty, forty range. Milk was cooled over a water cooler, similar to the one that you have in the museum [at Prospect Hill]. And it was carted in ten gallon milk cans.

Where were they taken, the ten gallon cans?

Well the pick-up truck came to a stand that was built alongside of the dairy. And our milk went to the Kondoparinga Co-Operative at Meadows.

You mentioned in the preliminary interview that you worked at the Kondoparinga factory. What was it that made you go along and seek a job there?

Well, after finishing high school in 19- --- end of 1953, I came home and joined forces with my brother and, who by this stage was driving a milk truck also and working on the farm with Dad. I did jobs on the farm, to earn my keep and I worked off the farm picking grapes or picking potatoes or whatever seasonal work was about at the time. I was never very interested in the dairy. I was never interested in farm work for that matter. You know there were four boys in the family by this stage and we had a 75 acre farm, and it clearly indicated that some of us were going to be doing other work so I was looking to do outside work. This was brought to a head when I had an accident with the family car one evening - that made me less than popular with the rest of the

family and it also brought a need for me to earn some money to pay for the damage because the car was certainly not insured in any way and I had to repair it. So I rode my bike up to the Kondoparinga factory at Meadows and asked to speak to the manager. The fact that it was on a weekend day and I forget whether it was a Saturday or a Sunday - it was certainly a winter's day and I also remember it was raining - but I was directed to the boiler house where I found Mr Jack Donnithorne, the manager - there was Jack with a fag hanging off his lip firing the old Cornish boiler and I asked him --- told him who I was and asked him for a job and to my surprise he gave me a starting date on I think the next Monday and I began work, at that stage riding a push bike from Prospect Hill to the factory.

What were your impressions of the factory at that stage?

Well having just come off a dairy farm and never having been anywhere or done too much it all seemed a bit awe-inspiring I suppose. There were pipes and equipment everywhere and huge open vats filled with milk and curd and whey and pumps and noise, and it was my job to help with the work on the receival platform initially and then work over the cheese vats.

What particularly did you do with the cheese vats?

Well I guess we followed the instructions of the cheese maker. It was very physical. We simply cleaned and washed tanks, we pumped whey to the whey treatment area, and we handled curd during the cheddaring processes. Then there was of course the milling and salting and the filling of the cheese hoops and finally the pressing and trimming --- where the cheeses were left in gang presses overnight and unpacked in the morning and then carted off on your shoulder to the storage room. There they remained for awhile. We turned every cheese every day to assist with moisture distribution in the cheese. Being fit and having lots of energy was certainly a help in those days.

You mentioned that you were at that factory for five years, I think. What were your expectations of a career in the factory at that point?

I think I was seventeen when I went to the factory and, I guess the first year or two, I had a notion that I really wanted to do an apprenticeship, but dairy apprenticeships weren't available. So, instead I undertook to study for and gain milk grading, milk testing, cream testing [certificates] --- some basic certificates that really gave me a bit

of an insight into the dairy technology part of milk handling and milk processing. I certainly wanted to continue in that line of work and I never sought to do anything else. Later on I gained a boilers' certificate which enabled me to help fire the boiler. So, it wasn't until I decided when I was about aged twenty that I really needed to do something else and I started to enquire about courses beyond the basic dairy certificate courses.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 1: TAPE 1 SIDE 2

… training in whatever it was, be it butter fat testing in milk and cream and then you'd be subjected to a series of practical tests, where you conducted the test against a control and if you were accurate enough, consistent enough, and you got the results, you would pass and be awarded a certificate. And this was the same for milk grading and there was another one called a pasteuriser operator's certificate (traffic noise) which was a theory of milk pasteurisation and then a practical demonstration that you understood the workings of the types of pasteurisers that were available at the time. I continued to do this and then that opened my mind to other opportunities that were about. And I was aware of the course at --- diploma course being conducted at Roseworthy Agricultural College and sought to get information on that. However, I was approached by the Senior Dairy Factory Inspector Gordon Pickhaver - who incidentally wrote a book later on the subject of the people in the dairy industry - and Gordon asked me what I was doing. He was interested in my certificate courses because he had had some input into the theory marking of those papers, and recommended that I consider Hawkesbury Agricultural College because it had new facilities, new equipment and it was probably --- equip me far better as a dairy technologist than the rather antiquated and aged facilities that they had for teaching dairying at Roseworthy. This I did. I made an application. I didn't have the required entry educational requirements, but I was fortunate in gaining entry following a cancellation in January of 1959.

What were the educational requirements at that time?

It basically required a matriculation pass, and I only had a third year pass. So I was a bit behind the eight ball when I went to Hawkesbury. It's rather interesting that when I showed up to Hawkesbury, and went through the registration process, given my allocated room - we all had to go before either the registrar or the principal within that first day or so and be interviewed. And my interview really went something like this. "We know that you're here as a result of a recommendation from Mr Pickhaver from South Australian Department of Agriculture. You don't meet the minimum educational requirements. I recommend that you put your head down and tail up and try your hardest and we wish you luck."

And how do you feel about the way that you ended up the course?

I had to work very, very hard. I had a lot of ground to catch up. I was motivated because I was there at my own cost. My parents weren't in a position to fund me going to Sydney, so I'd been working for over four years at that stage and I had a bank balance and I funded myself. The New South Wales government did give sponsorship to all students attending agriculture colleges in those days, and I enjoyed the benefits that other students got which was really a subsidised fee structure within the college. But, I did say that it's probably one of the better things that happened to me during my life. I thoroughly enjoyed it once I got on top of my worries. My serious concerns were to master the schooling - I hadn't been at school for a long time and I had done some study fortunately through the certificate courses but I was highly motivated mainly because I didn't want to be made too big a fool of and I certainly, wouldn't've, gone back home with my tail between my legs so I just gave it my best shot. And fortunately, I started to work out that, if I worked harder than everybody else - it was all proportional the amount of effort I put in - within six months I was, I was in the top third of the class and starting to feel as though I had some hope - up until then, the army was starting to look perhaps a second option more. But I certainly wasn't going home defeated. By the end of the first year, believe it or not I managed to top the course, but I got tipped in the second year. I had another fellow from Western Australia was giving me taffy in the education stakes and we both finished up with first class honours but he beat me in the final score.

After you finished at Hawkesbury, you returned to Meadows for a brief time and then you told me before that you went to the Gumeracha cheese factory as

manager. At that stage you were only twenty four. Was that unusual to be manager at that age?

Probably. It didn't seem so because I thought I was --- by this stage I'd just done two years at Hawkesbury - I'd gained a ticket. I'd seen a little bit of life that I certainly wasn't going to see otherwise. I'd discovered the world was a much bigger place than Prospect Hill, and I felt reasonably confident that I understood the subject that I had a passion for, which was the dairy technology. And, having come back to Dairy Vale --- I should say that Dairy Vale didn't sponsor me in any way and that was never asked for and, it wasn't the thing to probably to do in those days. And I had no reason to come back to that company. In fact I very nearly went to work in Queensland in a specialty cheese operation. And I could very well have been working for the Department of Primary Industry up there. But some reason or other I sort of had a pull to come back to South Australia. Probably to be closer to kith and kin but also there were possibilities within the company which was later called Dairy Vale. It was then called United Co-Op Dairymen Limited, and I worked back in the factory at Meadows, Kondoparinga factory where I resumed making cheese. I --- possibly the cheese maker at that stage --- and later in the first year that I'd returned I was appointed as the Branch Manager of the Gumeracha factory, where I moved, lived in a company house, and my wife Dot, chaperoned by her mother, by my mother or her mother, came over once a week to clean the house up and wash most of the dirty dishes that I'd left lying around but it was a busy year and I learned a lot about dairy factory management when I was there by myself. This was a cheese factory, and I discovered the glory of being the manager meant that I could work seven days a week, be the boiler attendant on the weekends and be the general rouseabout in between times. But I must say I was fit, I was enthusiastic and I enjoyed it. And it had a bit of prestige to go with it I guess and --- young fellow of my age that didn't do me any harm either.

After Gumeracha you moved to Mt Compass in 1962 and you were there for ten years as the manager. What products was that factory producing?

Yes, in July 1962 I think I arrived at Mt Compass. This was the flagship of the manufacturing factories in the United Co-Op Dairymen Group, because it was the newest factory, built in 1956, and it produced butter and dehydrated milk. When I arrived, we had two churns for butter making and we had a single Buflovac spray dried milk powder plant. Within a couple of years the factory was expanded to include a

second drying drier which was a Rogers drier and the old wooden butter churns were replaced with modern, stainless steel, butter churns. These were later replaced again with a continuous throughput butter maker. Generally, work at Mt Compass was of the same style [as at Gumeracha]. Milk was received from dairy farmers, using contract carriers and the plant would operate up to twenty-four hours a day during the spring part of the season from September through to November, and in fact the production through that plant due to the quite dramatic upsurge in dairy farming within the communities that was (traffic noise) occurring at that time, put production pressures on all dairy plants during the spring months. I recall on one year the Mt Compass factory, because milk would be diverted from other areas into it, and because of the ready sale for dehydrated milks and then by that stage we were producing Denkavit calf food in very large quantities, the factory actually operated for twenty-four hours a day over the whole twelve months of one year.

What were your particular roles then as the manager of that factory? Were you for example hiring? You chose who was going to work at that factory? You employed them?

It was a feature of the branch factory role, in our company, was that you pretty well took on the captaincy of that factory with very little interference from others. We had field officers who attended to the liaison between the dairy farmers - the co-operative members who supplied their milk to the company - but all other decisions about day-to-day management of the place was the manager's responsibility which meant, a big part of my job was to ensure that we had an adequate work force that was trained to do the job that was required of them.

I know that you mentioned in the preliminary interview that some of the people who had been working at Meadows you encouraged to move down to Mt Compass.

Well poaching of course from somebody else with a fully trained person wasn't rocket science but I certainly encouraged people who I well knew and respected, to come and have a change of scenery and this indeed did happen more fortuitously I guess than anything else because the cheese factory at Meadows was to be wound down and closed and we had an available pool of staff to offer work to at Mt Compass. Keeping in mind that in that period, we're talking about that early sixties, they were rather halcyon times, when work was readily available and it was quite difficult to get reliable

staff. Some people were quite transient, and they moved from job to job, and nobody was short of money at that stage and they were quite mobile and people moved around a lot, so the particularly seasonal staff that we would have to employ more people normally during the spring part of the year, and, as of course I recall, Alec Dier and a few other folk who came from the Meadows area, one or two of my brothers actually worked at the factory, also, for varying lengths of time.

On now to your next position. You moved from the factory to the head office in 1972. Had you been aspiring to move to a role in head office?

No, not at all. Moving to head office was certainly not on my radar screen nor did I want to. We loved country life --- at this stage Dot and I were married and we had a young family coming along and there was no better place (traffic sounds) than a place like Mt Compass with a bit of open space to rear young kids and I was master of my own destiny to a certain extent there and as long as I kept performing to the level the company required they pretty well left me alone. And it became quite a shock when the then General Manager of the company - which by this stage had changed its name to Dairy Vale, to give it a brand name, to market its products under - the General Manager Doug Gray, at a very young age simply had a heart attack and died. And that moved things along a little, and an appointment was made within the company to replace Doug, (traffic noise) and I was moved from my position to the head office, which was then located at Glen Osmond Road, Parkside. And I occupied John Spinkston's role. He then became the General Manager.

Did you have a choice then in your new job or were you simply ordered to do it?

I guess I could have said no, but that was never really an option. It was never ever - it was never discussed. I was simply asked to move to the office and take over the supervision of the production that went on in the other manufacturing plants.

What did this new job entail then?

Well my job was to co-ordinate initially. It was to work out production budgets and co-ordinate activities of production, manufacture, plant, equipment and of course monitor the standards of hygiene and quality. I was responsible directly to the General Manager or later on the Managing Director --- and put together capital budget, capital plant expenditure budgets and plan development as the company was growing and make

recommendations to be considered by the General Manager and if necessary it got as far as the board to allocate funding to spend on the growth of the company. The company was growing fast at that stage. We were seeking to expand and to claim our part of the dairy industry. We had about a fifty percent share of the liquid milk market in Adelaide. And we had a big and varied production of manufactured goods. We were the only spray dried milk drying plant in the state at that time. And we had probably at that time the latest butter making equipment. So, we had a wider range of products than perhaps our opposition and we certainly were matching them, which was a good balance within the industry. We created a balance where the co-operative side of dairying commanded about fifty percent of the milk that was being produced in the state at the time; the rest was proprietary or privately owned companies, publicly listed companies.

Which companies were your opposition?

Well initially, AMSCOL, which was an unlisted public company, which was an ice cream maker predominantly, and liquid [milk processors: text substituted: BLG]. This was taken over jointly by Dairy Vale and Farmers Union. Farmers Union which is [now] National Foods was our main competitor and I think we were good for each other because we vehemently contested our competitiveness and I think that probably brought the best out of both companies because I'm quite sure that good healthy competition is what's needed to stimulate activity in the business world. I suspect it's true to say that during that period in the sixties there were difficulties with companies who were not able or had not or weren't financially able to replace equipment and upgrade and modernise as they would need to - fell behind with overheads becoming difficult to meet, and weren't able to match the competitive demands of the market at that time. Consequently, we saw a great deal of merging of co-operatives; the Dairy Vale company merged with Jervois Co-operative at Jervois on the river [Murray] and at Myponga, and because I guess Dairy Vale was about the same size as those two companies together, jointly, they became the dominant authority and the company remained within the name of Dairy Vale. For a short time it was called Dairy Vale Metro because we took over in the form of a merger the liquid milk outlet Metropolitan Milk, or Metro Milk it was then called, leaving only two liquid milk suppliers to the Adelaide market. And that was a healthy and probably one of the better things that

happened. I think in South Australia we showed probably the rest of Australia the need to rationalise operations, reduce the number of small, high-cost operating plants and build larger better located factories. Our company never built a new factory during this time, but certainly revamped a couple of factories and then closed down a number of their own factories. Factories at Meadows, Bordertown, Gumeracha, and Charleston were closed and a larger factory, manufacturing plant which exists today was built at Jervois. This was the old Jervois Co-Operative that was gutted and totally rebuilt.

You said that the small factories were closed down and the better located ones continued. Can you define what you mean by better location?

Well factories should be located presumably near where the milk is being produced. At that stage a large quantity of milk was being produced along the Murray River irrigated flats and it was being in the centre of a high density dairying area made it the obvious choice. And in fact, the National Foods company built a factory similarly at Murray Bridge, so we had the two manufacturing plants producing predominantly cheddar cheese. National Foods did have one set back - when the new factory had only been going a year or two, burnt down. And for the next year or so, Dairy Vale undertook to process the total of their milk, that would have normally gone into that factory during that period of rebuilding. It's true too that dairying, possibly because of the alternative uses for land or development in other areas, moved away from some areas and as we can see now that Meadows, where there were two dairy plants operating, now don't have any. So the company still operates a plant in Clarence Gardens as a milk processing plant and one at Jervois and another one in Mt Gambier. All other plants --- and I think we closed down in total, six plants in my time.

You were in charge of production planning. During your twenty years in head office, what changes did you see in the variety of products that you were producing?

Well the Dairy Vale organisation then set out to be a brand name and to do that it needed to meet the market demands. Goods sell off supermarket shelves and you've simply got to keep the product marketing side fresh and appealing. So consequently, the liquid milk products were an important part, keeping in mind that liquid milk returns are very much higher than the return that can be gained from a manufactured product such as butter or cheese.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 2: TAPE 2 SIDE 1

So consequently products such as a flavoured milks, and I believe South Australia was the first state in Australia to produce flavoured milks and that was, I believe, was done by the Metro Milk Company, which we later acquired fifty percent of. Dairy Vale had a full range of flavoured milks. It produced a range of yoghurts under various brands. In particular a popular brand at the time was the Eve yoghurt brand which was a concept that enhanced our marketing tremendously. Of course keeping the liquid milk packaging current – it necessitated moving away from bottles to cartons and --- to meet the sizes and requirements of the market. And we were always in competition of course with our friends up the road, National Foods, and anything they produced, I guess we produced as well. So there was always an option for consumers. Cheeses of course, went through a similar phase because of the need to convert huge quantities of milk to a product that is not required for liquid milk, requires having a market for products such as cheese. And cheddar cheese was always the main product manufactured in our cheese factories. Mozzarella cheese is a slight variation, but fundamentally the same as cheddar cheese. We've never produced mould-ripened cheeses because of the problems of contamination and cross-contamination with other products. Those cheeses are more suited to smaller operations. So mozzarella and cheddar cheese were the two main ones. We produced some Edam and Gouda cheese at one of the factories.

You also told me you were in charge of capital expenditure. What sorts of new equipment did your company purchase during your time as group operations manager?

The real trick here was to try and replace that equipment which had reached the end of its useful economic service life. And it's an ongoing process (traffic noise) that was sometimes quite difficult to convince people that we really needed to spend a huge amount of money to make changes. We were confronted with a market place that demanded a high quality, more consistent product and so standards were constantly being elevated and the need to have equipment that enabled production to go forward with less labour input and higher out-turn. The pressure was always on to produce more, and consequently with developing technology and dairy equipment, much of

which comes from Scandinavian companies and Sweden is a country that was in the forefront here through the Alpha Laval group - and Britain through the APV equipment were the two major brands that still remain principal dairy equipment suppliers. But in the cheese making for instance, it was no longer possible to operate the quantities of milk that had to be processed through open vat. Open vats inherently have a problem with contamination. So totally enclosed, continuous operation was the way to go and when we redeveloped the Jervois plant, we installed six totally enclosed automated OST vats. And in fact the Jervois plant, that equipment remains today. I saw it quite recently. More equipment's been added to the factory but the equipment that we put in at that time is still there and operating, and that equipment was imported from overseas, and the whole process (cough) is controlled in our case (break in recording). Jervois is a continuous process and the whole process of milk intake into the vats, the rennetting, setting, cutting, agitation, through to the whey draining and the curd matting process is continuous and then the curd is pneumatically conveyed over to the series of Wincanton towers [large vertical curd presses: BLG] that form the block and then it's automatically cut out from the base mechanically. But it's all a mechanical process - no product is seen other than through side glasses and all the testing and sampling is done hygienically without people putting their hands in the product. When we completed the Jervois development, we in fact engaged (traffic noise) in a pilot project under Dr Peter Linklater, from the University of New South Wales and he was operating under a grant and developed a continuous and automatic pH measuring control. Cheese making basically is all about controlling the pH of the product. And we had a computer operating in the plant at the time, which [controlled equipment that: BLG] took and drew samples and [measured: text substituted: BLG] the pH and of course adjustments were made from there. This went on there for a number of years. I noticed recently that it's been discontinued and been replaced with something else. But that was the beginning of some pilot work which was going on at that time. I think the Murray-Goulbourn plant, one of the Murray-Goulbourn factories had a similar piece of equipment installed under the same project with Dr Peter Linklater. We were the small --- smaller factory through-put, the Murray Goulbourn was probably six or eight times as much as we were doing. We were processing about six thousand ton of cheese a year at that stage. It's interesting to know that same factory now produces fifteen or sixteen thousand tons [annually: BLG].

If we now move on to talk about some of the issues that affected the dairy industry in the time you've been involved in it - you've mentioned just a few times then about quality control issues and hygiene. Can you give me some examples of what we might now consider to be poor hygiene that was considered to be all right at the time?

Well just a thumbnail sketch. When I first started, milk was run into open vats, people put their hands into the whey and handled it, managed the curd. Cigarette smoking wasn't permitted in the manufacturing room but there was certainly not the level of surveillance and the level of personal hygiene that is required now by operators who enter any production area. Market forces have made over the years some probably well-deserved changes. Products are now produced under a strict veil of hygiene control. But what's helped this whole process is (a) the development of better equipment to be able to manage larger quantities of milk and product through the plant but also far more sophisticated testing techniques. Historically, all testing was done by some form of chemical analysis - testing with phenolphthalein and dilute caustic soda solution to determine a pH. Whereas it quickly became a pH meter monitoring thing and these days of course, everything can be dealt with through an electronic piece of equipment so quickly that the protein and fat analysis can be determined by passing a sample through an electronic device and it's known instantly. So things have speeded up and the technology is so much further ahead.

Who determines what the quality control standards are and checks that the factories meet those standards?

Well ultimately the consumer does. The market decides whether the --- but we still have, we still have a dairy authority that's responsible to the Minister of Agriculture for ensuring that safeguards and licensing and the regulations, the Dairy Act, is understood and supervised and maintained. And to this end all plants are routinely inspected and given a grading. You know quality assurance is the requirement, and nobody can expect to produce products now that are not produced under aseptic conditions. And manufacturing plants go to quite elaborate lengths these days to ensure that people entering the processing areas are not wearing jewellery or are properly clad and in some cases we even have overshoes so that they can't transport --- transfer contamination into those areas. Head covering and hats and coats are worn.

In the preliminary interview you mentioned to me that from World War Two the industry was quite highly protected in terms of pricing. Can you explain to me a bit about the changes in the regulation and deregulation of the dairy industry?

The dairy industry is part of the agriculture industry and as such it fits into the agriculture economic cycle. So it's going to have highs and lows. And this can be traced back as long as organised dairying. And I think dairying started in South Australia in 1842. However, during World War Two, a subsidy was paid to ensure adequate supply of dairy food to the community. Now subsidy remained in place for many years and in fact was only removed in recent years as deregulation of the industry took place and open free marketing has occurred. These days, the supermarkets have a very large impact on the prices that the dairy farmer is going to receive but over the time there's always been some form of equalising or stabilising arrangements installed within the prices paid to dairy farmers. In South Australia this has been as a result of a higher price being gained from milk sold for liquid consumption as opposed to those farmers whose milk was converted into a manufactured product, and to avoid some farmers gaining a much higher price than the bulk of the farmers who live further out and weren't able to gain the benefit of city milk pricing, a milk equalisation pricing scheme came into effect in the 1930s and that's carried through, right through until recent times. These days of course, companies -- there are fewer companies and they tend to their own marketing arrangements. (break in recording) In summary, I suspect, what I should say is that the history of dairying of Australia, throughout history of dairying in Australia there's always been problems with higher prices being paid for --- to one section of the dairying community to another, and this disparity has always been corrected by some form of price controlling through government agency. It used to be that the export of dairy products to Britain, who had an insatiable appetite for Australian dairy produce, contracted for the total [surplus: BLG] amount of butter and cheese that was being produced and there was a guaranteed return. Now this gave rise to the Commonwealth Government dairy products equalisation arrangements. Intrastate [in South Australia] where higher prices are gained from liquid milk [sales: BLG] compared with [milk used in manufactured products: substituted text: BLG], a similar facility [called: substituted text: BLG] the Metropolitan Milk Equalisation System, ensured that dairy farmers whose milk ended up in a manufactured product and returned a lower price than that that was supplied to the metropolitan area were not

disadvantaged. So, pricing arrangements and equalising arrangements have always been a feature of the dairy industry. These days however, we've moved on from there with deregulation, probably a far better arrangement where the industry has now reverted to open market forces and companies, being fewer companies competing with one another, are responsible for ensuring that the dairy farmer and possibly through the co-operative philosophy is not disadvantaged and returns a reasonable return for the milk that they produce. It's true however the milk price per litre from the dairy farm has stabilised and has not grown probably anywhere near in line with the price of other commodities in recent times. However, the cost of production may very well have come down. A single farmer now to be efficient needs to be milking at least a hundred and fifty cows whereas fifty years ago it was probably fifty cows or less and even before that it was twenty or thirty. So, there's been a dramatic shift by --- I can indicate to you that is that with all the changes within the dairy industry over the years, there's always been a need to produce the milk to meet the local consumption demands. South Australia is still producing more milk now than it's ever produced before through far fewer farms but very much larger farms. South Australia at the present time produces 7.1% of the national milk intake.

You mentioned to me in the preliminary interview that before the 1960s there were many small regional factories, for example ones in Meadows, but then in the 1960s and '70s they were forced to close and the better located ones continued. What was the human cost of those changes do you think and the effect on the rural communities?

I believe the changes were dramatic. And I grew up in this period and was probably one of the people whose job it was to change the arrangements within factories --- close down a factory indeed and move the milk into another factory. So there were winners and losers but, take a plant like Myponga Dairy Co-op. That factory went out of operation completely and it was probably the only industry in the town. It was a big employer of labour. And then the decision was taken to relocate the manufacture into other establishments and close the factory. A similar thing happened at AMSCOL at Victor Harbor, (traffic noise) similarly at Gumeracha, again at Charleston and of course the National Foods Company were doing exactly the same thing. So there is a very high cost and this is not readily understood by people within those communities. Sometimes staff from the factory could be utilised through attrition at other plants.

They would get the opportunity to move to another plant, but often, they went elsewhere. I recall my involvement with the closure of our Bordertown factory. That was a small cheese factory that only existed for ten years. The company'd gone to that region on a promise that there'd be a growth, an ongoing growth of production and interest in dairying in the area. However, Bordertown is not traditionally a dairying area, and the notion that dairying was really a mum and the kids affair really didn't work. Dairying's a serious business and these days very sophisticated. However, we closed the factory down after ten years and we were lucky enough (coughing, break in recording) to find everybody in the factory work within the town before we'd closed the doors. That factory was later on sold to a meat works and it's now a large abattoir and employing people again and so there's two sides to it I guess - it seems to me dairy factories had a useful life and at the end of that life they disappeared. Another factory that I didn't mention was our so-called new factory at Mt Compass. That disappeared during the --- I believe it's probably about seventy something or early eighties. That factory was discontinued so I had a --- more than my share of exposure in closing factories down. We certainly [had our share of mergers and takeovers: BLG]during mergers and take overs of other companies --- there was inevitable reduction in manufacturing, the number of manufacturing facilities. But the Dairy Vale organisation realised that if it was to remain profitable and ahead of our opposition, it had to be smarter and it had to get rid of the high costs. So instead of off loading two liquid milk plants we closed one of them. (break in recording) So the development really has been build up the best located plants and phase out those on the --- further out or those that were deemed not suitable for redevelopment. Always to try and reduce the cost of operation and this had the penalty always of reducing labour that was required to man the plants. And certainly during my time one of the saddest things that I saw was people who really work as a community within an operating plant being disrupted in this way. But that presumably is what we know as progress.

Was it particularly difficult for you do you think having grown up in a small community such as Prospect Hill, to see the closure of the factories then? How were you treated by the people back at Prospect Hill for example, whilst you were closing factories?

Yes indeed, Prospect Hill as a child growing up, was a dairying community. It had probably come from a background of dairying and other things to predominantly

dairying and that existed through the whole region, through the Meadows hills region. And then there were changes afoot. Dairying gradually phased out in some areas and grew in others and all I can --- my recollections and what I could see with what's happened over time is that there's always been change, there's always been highs and there's always been lows and I should add that just recently, I was at a SA Dairymen's association meeting and I'm greatly encouraged with what I'm seeing. Certainly not doom and gloom as some pundits may indicate but instead great optimism. I see young people coming into the industry and, when probably ten or twenty years ago the average age of dairy farmers was a dangerously high level and there just weren't younger people there. These days I think that even though there's far fewer dairy farmers, they're certainly far, far more sophisticated in their management techniques and meeting the demands and requirements that the industry imposes on them. And, believe it or not, there's still more and more milk being produced. The total volume of milk being produced now is certainly higher that it's ever been and continues to grow marginally. (sound of paper shuffling) At the present time, Victoria is the leader with 64%; New South Wales has slipped at 12.5% of the total. South Australia produces more milk now than Queensland does. That seems to be the state that's tapering off quickest - and about twice as much as Western Australia. Tasmania, it continues to be a growth at around 6%. So, South Australia is --- still has a sizeable dairy industry albeit they are fewer and very large and well-organised dairies. There are no longer the small family farms that we used to know twenty years ago.

Looking back over your career, [what would you say are the main changes?]

END TAPE 2 SIDE 1: TAPE 2 SIDE 2

I find now that it's gone on from where it was. It's still the same redeveloped factory that I knew, but it's been expanded, there's been a huge capital expenditure applied to the place, extending the products produced, including drying the cheese whey and turning out vast amounts of whey powder. The people within the [factory, the

operatives: BLG] are optimistic and confident. Young people managing the places are also career people and I see nothing but good coming from it. I see dairy farmers in the main are optimistic. Of course people who are caught in debt traps struggle to make the grade, and unfortunately, this has always been the case. Dairying is expensive because land and cows are expensive and to meet the dairy facilities, the milking facilities, that go with it and the infrastructure, is very expensive. People who can get on top of that debt, and I'm assured by somebody who I spoke to recently, and when I asked him the question, "Why do you continue to do it? You're sixty-two years of age. You've got two dairies. Why have you got your money tied up in dairying at this stage of your life? You have no sons to pass the dairies on to. Why are you doing it?" And his simple answer was because he likes doing it. And I said "Well, okay. Now tell me about return on capital." And he said "Well believe me", he said," I can't find anything else that will give me close to 10%." I think that says it all. And there's someone who's spent his entire life in the dairying world. I've enjoyed my time in the dairying industry. It's been my life. And I'm delighted to look back now and see that the industry goes on with the same, I believe, optimism that it always had.

Thank you very much for your time.