

An initiative of the Victorian dairy industry proudly sponsored by the Gardiner Dairy Foundation in partnership with Monash University

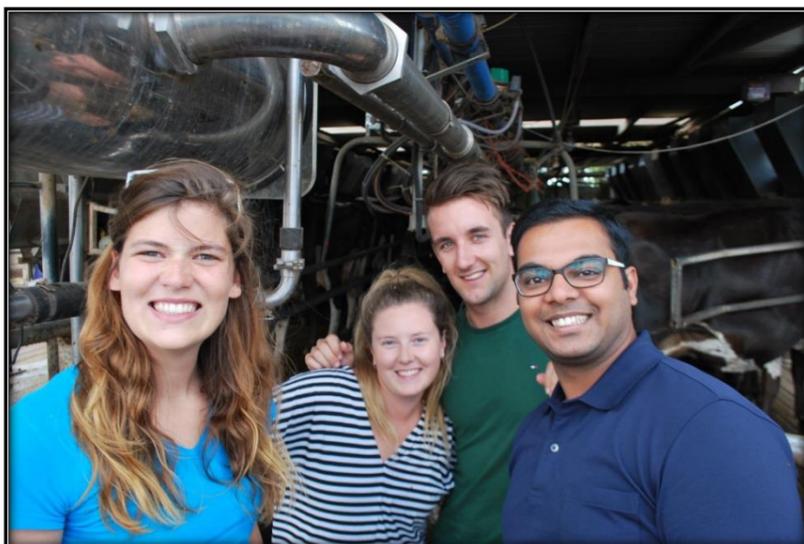
Monash Industry Team Initiative (MITI) 2015-16

Compiling and Digitising a History of the Victorian Dairy Industry

Team members

(L to R)

- Louise Almeida
- Phoebe Goodman
- Henry Kerstens
- Prayank Kashyap



Louise, Phoebe, Henry and Prayank (pictured Left to Right) in a milking shed in Western Victoria



The MITI team, with (left to right): MITI Industry Engagement Director Madeleine McManus, Gardiner Foundation CEO, Mary Harney, and Gardiner Foundation Business Manager, Caitlin Scholfield, at the Australian Dairy Leadership Alumni dinner at Melbourne Town Hall.

Background

- The Gardiner Dairy Foundation and the broader Victorian dairy industry identified there was a growing need to record, digitise and curate a history of the Victorian dairy industry from the 1850s to 2015, particularly capturing stories of elder statesmen and women before they are lost to the industry.

Description of project scope

- We were tasked with the responsibility of 'recording, digitising and curating' a history of the Victorian dairy industry. Primarily, we believed this brief could be fulfilled through completion of four main tasks:
 - Scoping historical materials
 - Digitising materials
 - Conducting interviews with key industry stakeholders
 - Compiling a history of the Victorian dairy industry

Achievements

- We successfully contributed to preserving historical information, stories and records of the Victorian dairy industry, before it was lost to the industry.
- We were proud to meaningfully contribute to preserving the rich and vibrant history of Victorian dairy.
- Through direct interaction with stakeholders in the Victorian dairy community, including past and present industry leaders, we uncovered amazing case studies of people who have helped shape the Victorian dairy industry.
- We successfully managed various relationships with stakeholders by ensuring they were appropriately represented and keeping open the channels of communication with them.

Learnings

- Working together as a multi-disciplinary team requires clear communication and active listening.
- A solid understanding of statistics, interviewing and writing is required to produce a historical report.
- The Victorian dairy industry celebrates a rich and diverse history shaped by many policy, economic, social and technological shifts.
- The significant role agriculture plays in driving and sustaining regional communities, which is sometimes overlooked by urban communities.

Challenges

- Determining the most valuable information to seek and include on a history of the Victorian dairy industry -given that we were new-comers to the industry- proved to be initially challenging.
- Understanding farming processes, techniques and dairy-specific terms also took some time, as we had little to no exposure to these concepts previously.

Discovery

- An enormous level of dedication and intelligence goes into running a successful dairy business. Overwhelmingly, dairy farmers are astute and forward-thinking business-people who are responsible for managing sophisticated operations in high-pressure situations. A phrase that stuck with us was that 'dairy farmers make more decisions in a day than a corporate CEO makes in a week'.
- There are many career paths in the agricultural sector for university students across the spaces of Business, Arts, Law, Information Technology and Communications. It is now abundantly clear that to be involved in the industry you don't necessarily need to become a farmer- although the lifestyle is tempting!

Enjoyment

- Travelling to the three main dairying regions in Victoria to visit industry leaders
- Completing a tour of the Tatura Milk Factory
- Trying our hand at milking cows
- Attending industry thought leadership events in Melbourne CBD

Outcomes

- Compiled an electronic database including; historical documents, digitised books, oral history recordings, photographs, a history of the dairy industry in WWI
- Completed a timeline of pivotal events over the history of the Victorian dairy industry from 1788- 2016.
- 'Victoria's dairy story' - Completed a 150 page story report highlighting key events and changes that have shaped the Victorian dairy industry
- Collected statistics and graphed changes to the Victorian dairy industry over time (see Victorian Dairy Industry Snapshot: The last 55 years, right).



The MITI team conducting on farm research in Western Victoria.

