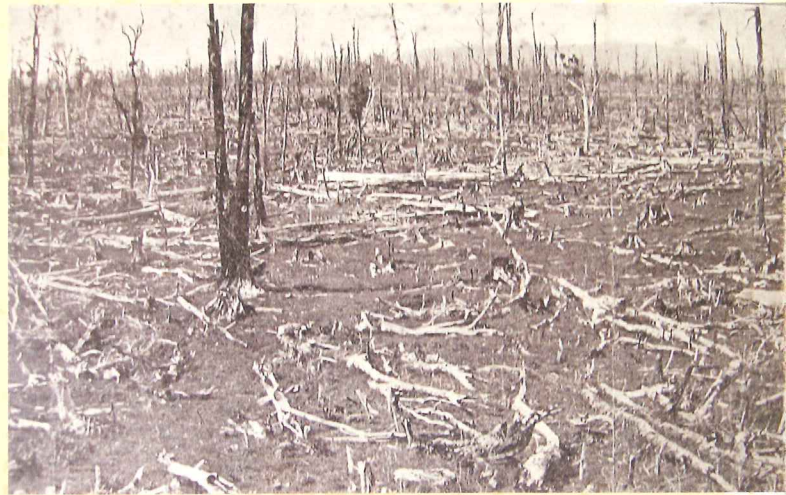


“Even the dogs have forgotten to bark”

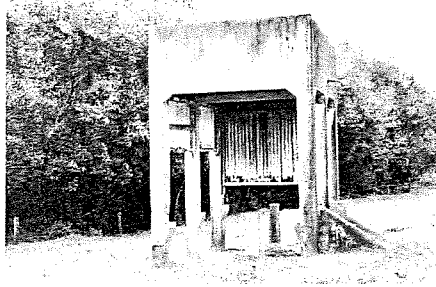


**The events and the people of Lepperton,
Sentry Hill and Waiongona**

Compiled and written by Peter Wilson

The Condensed Milk Factory.

Much of this story is told by reprinting articles published in the newspapers of the day. They all come from PapersPast.



Tank stand once part of the
Condensed Milk factory

This was situated next to the Mangaonaia stream, on the downstream, eastern side where the Kelly Road crosses it. Pearce's owned the buildings and land until recently. The only really visible remains of this factory are an elevated water tank standing on concrete pillars and a nearby shed. From the newspaper article below it would appear that the successfully established 'Burnside Factory' which is the one referred to in this article, may not have been the only one contemplated.

The Taranaki Herald. 13 May, 1897.

The Crown Dairy Co.'s factory at Waitara Road is now being fitted up with the necessary machinery for carrying on condensed milk manufacture. It is expected that the plant will be in working order in the course of a couple of weeks.

No further reference to this proposal has been found.

The following newspaper articles chronicle the development and problems that followed the establishment of this new industry in Lepperton. It is not clear just what happened to the company that ran the factory but it seems as if the project only lasted a few years. The company and production at the factory seems to have finished by 1903.

Mr Donald Munro, who started the idea, does not appear elsewhere in the story of Lepperton and is not related to the Munros of Wortley Road as far as I can determine.

The Taranaki Herald. 16 October 1898.

Next week we understand the 'Burnside Factory', near Sentry Hill, for the manufacture of condensed milk is to be opened. Mr Munro, in face of many difficulties, has persevered with his process, and it is to be hoped that success will reward his efforts. The establishment of this industry will, it is claimed, provide the means of using the whole of the milk at a better return than is now obtained by rearing weedy calves on separated milk. The enterprise will also lead to the employment of considerable labour, and will supply an article for which we are at present dependent on foreign countries. The value of condensed milk imported into New Zealand every year runs into very large figures, and there seems to be no reason why it should not be

produced locally as cheap as or cheaper than it can be imported. Mr Munro's venture will be watched with interest.

A New Industry.

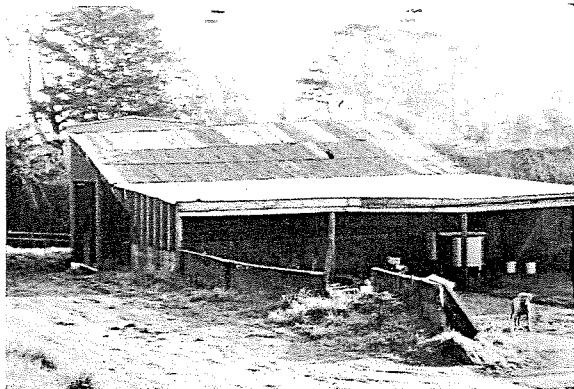
Taranaki Herald, 27 March 1899,

PROPOSED MILK CONDENSING COMPANY. It has often been a source of surprise that in this district, which produces the raw material so abundantly, the manufacture of condensed milk has not formed a prominent industry. An attempt is now being made ... to acquire from Mr Donald Munro, the butter and condensed milk factory established by him near Sentry Hill. It is an industry that ought to thrive in Taranaki, where milk can be produced so cheaply, and there seems to be no reason why a locally manufactured article should not supersede imported goods, nor indeed why a market for Taranaki condensed milk should not be found in the other colonies.

Taranaki Herald, 15 April 1899,

Prospectus of the Condensed Milk Company of New Zealand, Limited.

This Company has been formed for the purpose of acquiring from the owner, Donald Munro, the Butter and Condensed Milk Factory, known as "Burnside Factory," situated near Sentry Hill, Taranaki, ...and the Patent Rights as granted by the Government of New Zealand to Donald Munro for a process whereby separated milk is manufactured into condensed milk, The farmers hitherto supplying milk at the factory have



Remains of the Condensed Milk Factory as it was in 1985

been paid four pence per gal of ten and one-half pounds weight (10½lbs), at 3.6% butter fat test by a Babcock patent machine, and the estimate of profits herewith is calculated on that basis. The factory is a large and commodious building, measuring internally 60 feet long, 40 feet wide, and 25 feet high, exclusive of boiler house and coal sheds, and is built throughout in a strong and substantial manner with first-class timber. The machinery is entirely new, of the best description, and every part in perfect working order, no effort or pains having been spared to make the whole up to date. The site on which the factory is built is admirably adapted for the purpose. The river Mangaonaia flows through the ground and ensures a constant supply of splendid water.

Taranaki Herald, 21 December 1899,

Before His Honor District Judge Kettle.

CLAIM FOR BREACH OF CONTRACT.

Taranaki Condensed Milk Company v. D. Munro, Claim £500 damages for breach of contract...

Mr Hutchen then proceeded to prove his case. He said the defendant was the patentee of a process for the manufacture of condensed milk from whole milk, and was also the owner of a factory near Bell Block. Several attempts were made by him to float a company to take over the business, and finally the negotiations were carried out, as per agreement produced. The capital was £2500, £1800 of which was paid up. After the incorporation of his Company, defendant was asked to instruct the Company's agent in the working of the process, as agreed upon, but he declined to do so, and left the district. The assignment of the patent rights was originally put down at £500, in addition to which the Company had lost considerably through having contracted for the supply of milk.

His Honor gave judgment for the amount claimed, with costs.

Taranaki Herald 5 May 1900

The Condensed Milk Company,

After a period of vicissitude, fortunately of a character seldom met with in launching a new industry, the Taranaki Condensed Milk Company seems to have overcome its main difficulties ... The factory, ..., is situated on a site at Sentry Hill admirably suited for the satisfactory conduct of the business, being close to the main road, while its proximity to the river has advantages which are not to be under-rated. The process of turning the milk from its natural state to the condensed stage is intricate, but thanks to the lucid explanations of the manager (Mr Macleod), assisted by Mr Frank Atkinson, the visitors were able to obtain a fair knowledge of the subject. Cleanliness — that very desirable factor in such matters — is properly observed, and from the time the milk is received till it is put in tins every precaution is taken to guard against impurities of any description. At the outset the fluid is treated through the separator for cleansing purposes, then it is scalded to such a degree that all germs are effectually killed, after which it is drawn into the vacuum pan heated by coils of steam pipes. The temperature is raised to 140 degrees, and the actual work of condensing is carried out. When it is considered that something like 8lbs. of water has to be drawn from a gallon of milk a faint idea of what the process involves will be gained. The condensed milk is next strained into long cylindrical cans, which are placed in water, and allowed to properly cool, after which the material is sealed in tins, the tinning department being replete with all the necessary

materials. The Company at the present time is making ordinary condensed milk and pasteurised milk. The latter is treated differently, and as there is an absence of sugar the article may and undoubtedly will judging from the rich textural flavour of the sample tested be in great demand. It is pleasing to note that already a market is being opened for the product. ... supplies have already been sent to South Africa and Australia and from what we gathered from the secretary (Mr T. O. Kelsey) the demands show that the quality of the product is being recognised.

I was shown to-day a sample of the condensed milk made at the Sentry Hill Factory. It compares very favourably with the imported article, and should meet with a ready sale.

Taranaki Herald, 2 July 1901,

Mr Pell, secretary of the Murray Condensed Milk Co., of Auckland and Invercargill, was in town on Monday. In company with Mr D. Berry he visited the closed down Condensed Milk Factory at Sentry Hill in order to inspect the plant, with the object, it is understood, of seeing if the plant was suitable to purchase.

Taranaki Herald, 17 October 1901

DUNEDIN FIRM PURCHASED SENTRY HILL FACTORY.

The Butter and Condensed Milk Factory at Sentry Hill has been purchased by Messrs Irvine & Stevenson, of St. George Works, Dunedin. It is understood that this makes the seventh factory which this enterprising firm are now running. As the firm have agents in South Africa the day should not be far distant when Taranaki condensed milk will be placed on the markets there. Mr Stevenson, who has just returned from an Australian business tour, is spending a few days here.

It would seem as if this firm continued operating the factory for perhaps another two or three years before all reference to the condensed milk industry fades from the Lepperton story.

The following article appeared a few years later but I have found no indication of where the proposed factory was to be built.

Taranaki Herald, 9 March 1908,

CONDENSED MILK.

PROPOSED FACTORY IN TARANAKI.

Arrangements have almost been completed for the erection in Taranaki of a big condensed milk factory. A representative of Messrs Preston and Co., who are the managing agents in New Zealand and Australia for the well-known Nestle and Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company, has informed the West Coast Times that the company enterprise in building a factory of this kind large enough to supply the whole of New Zealand, and fitted with modern condensing machinery, means investing no less a sum than £70,000. The company manufactures the well-known brands of "Nestles," "Milkmaid Condensed Milk," "Ideal" unsweetened cream, and is a large manufacturer of cocoa and chocolates. It is the opinion of experts that it is only a matter of a few years when Australia and New Zealand will be supplying nearly the whole world with milk condensed in these countries.

Great aspirations but it appears nothing came of them.