HISTORY OF AHUROA RIVER FARM

Mossy Bryham came from a background of dairy farming and jersey bull breeding. His father, Jack, owned the pedigree jersey herd "Fernhill" in Brooks Road, Waipu. Jeanette arrived in Waipu in the mid-1950's to take up a position in the Waipu Primary School and came from a family of teachers.

Mossy and I arrived on Ahuroa River Farm on June 1st, 1965. We drove up between rows of 2 foot high Scotch Thistles. They were all over the 135 acre block of land. It was a wet cold winter. The ground was soggy. Mossy milked 80 cows in a 6-bale walk through shed. There were half a dozen concrete pig houses between the shed and the river, housing pigs. The house stood in the middle of a vast paddock. We listened at night to the sound of cows shitting against the bedroom walls. I carried groceries, babies and bassinet over fences. All the paddock fences were barbed wire. I helped milk the cows and washed the separator until mother suggested I give up milking. Cream was collected and the pigs got the skilly. A Massey Ferguson was the work horse. Mossy and his dog Kim walked everywhere to bring in the cows – a pedigree herd of Jersey cows in the making. A few years later when the Dairy Co-op began collecting whole milk in tankers, we off-loaded the pigs, the 6-bale walk through shed was converted to a 6-a-side doubled-up herring-bone shed and the Massey Ferguson was our only mode of farm transport.

By this time we had enlarged the herd to 120 and registered the pedigree herd Amethyst. All the cows had names. All the paddocks had been grubbed free of thistles. There was no kikuya on farm.

In the mid-1970's when wintering barns caught on with farmers in a big way, Mossy in his enlightened way of thinking, tile drained the farm. (1978). Macrocarpa trees lined the road and races. These were slowly cut for firewood, along with dead puriri branches. The native bush had been fenced in the early 1970's to keep cattle out. Several years later when tile drainage was completed the barbed wire fences were replaced with two wire electic fances. Mossy was nearing the end of this work when he died aged 48, in 1983. Before the end of that year, the farm water supply had dried up. With previous knowledge of divining water I succeeded in finding a good supply at the depth of 35 metres. This is in use to the present day.

In the years that followed contract milkers came and went. We made silage instead of haymaking as half the haymaking gang had passed away. A feed wagon was bought as well as a new Massey Ferguson tractor.

In 1990 the Waipu Bypass cut off 35 acres of land and a deal was made with Transit NZ. I came out of it with 60 acres of the Mrsich Farm plus a

wintering barn. The Russell Farm on Millbrook Road went to auction which I bought along with the other wintering barn and a house. The paddocks were knee high in kikuya, all 80 acres of it. The native bush was fenced off from cattle. This farm was originally part of the Home farm. So with 250 acres in total, the herd was increased to 240, a total Jersey herd. Young stock were grazed off. Once a day milking was trialled when grass became short. Farmers began to use motorbikes and quads. Silage was fed out in the paddocks. Cows grazed the riverbanks.
In 1995 Neil Troost took a position on the farm as a lower order sharemilker. He worked his way through the system, eventually becoming a 50/50 farm manager with his own herd and machinery. He was with me for 27 years.

Times have changed in the Farming World. Technology has taken over or added to the work on the farm. Government and Councils have put their spokes in the wheel of ever growing demands.
In 2023 Neil employed Patrick as a contract milker, the Jersey herd had long gone. Calving cows was no longer part of the farm work as MT cows were bought gotten in calf and sold as in calf cows. Even the system had changed. Neil had bought all machinery. Land only belonged to Bryham Farms along with four homes where the four families and farm worker lived. Neil had built his own home on land bought from us. Then Neil decided enough was enough with all the changes and demands the Government was making. Farming had become political. Resource consents had become difficult.
Now the family rallied round and put in their share of work and capabilities. We began buying machinery for the farm. A couple of tractors, feed out wagons, trailers, a generator, grader blade, post rammer, fencing equipment, calf feeding equipment and much much more.
350 MT cows were bought and the system reverted to autumn calving, building up and retaining the herd on farm. Neil's home and land was bought.
The expenditure reached over two million. Major development included fencing, races and work on effluent ponds. A new calf shed was built and fitted out also to be used for implements.
All of the family are involved in the farm business. Linda is business manager. Heather Jean has taken over riparian planting and maintenance. David, a carpenter is in charge of buildings and R & M. Gordon, an electrician, has taken over fencing, effluent management and general

repairs and maintenance of machinery. My granddaughter Vanesa, with a Lincoln University degree has become general farm manager.
Bryham Farms has supported three generations and built homes for all of the five families. Each home is on a separate title with land in use.
NZTA wants all farm land including all six houses. It encompasses nine separate titles.
All my heart and energy, for the last 60 years, has gone into farming this land. I have kept it as Bryham Farms (to honour my late husband Mossy Bryham) and for the purpose of giving my family, my two daughters, my son and my granddaughter the opportunity to continue in the business of farming and to continue the lifestyle in perpetuity that has been my chosen life's work.
My late husband was an environmentalist at heart with an understanding and love of the land and natural native bush. This is the reason his ashes were scattered in the Kahikatea swamp Forest at [redacted].
Bryham Farms has provided 60 prosperous and successful years for a generational farming family.
Now in the year 2025 we are advised it is all to be destroyed; land, homes, business, employment and lifestyles and given heart rending sorrow to all members of the Bryham Family.
Jeanette Bryham

Letter to Mike Forrest from Jeanette Bryham, Bryham Farms
The land at [redacted] where my daughter and her husband Jose have built their retirement home and the Kahikatea Forest where my husband Mossy's ashes are scattered was left belonging to the Bryham Family as part of the land transaction deal when the Waipu ByPass was built by NZTA through the farm in the late 1980's.
The Kahikatea Forest is regarded as a living and perpetual monument to the memory of the late Mossy Bryham, the original owner of Bryham Farms. He was a most respected and well known personality of Waipu and the surrounding districts for the interest he showed in the environment, in dairy farming and Jersey breeding. In rugby and athletics he was a most respected player and coach.
In memory of Mossy Bryham, February 2nd 1935 – August 16th 1983.