

# Spring News 2021

Our planned Autumn open days didn't happen & we missed having you here. In reality the new parlour building ran three months behind schedule, so you would not have seen 2020's completed project anyway. It has been an ambitious build for a relatively small dairy farm. In our 1970's cow building, the cows filed down two sides of a central pit & stood herring bone fashion, while they were cleaned & milked. The old building design had the disadvantage of being dark & cold in winter & too warm in summer. The standing cows spent time waiting for their turn in some inclement conditions. We were spraying them with mist & cooling fans in summer / clearing concrete of ice to make sure they were not slipping in winter & milking is a twice daily event, taking four hours morning & evening. However these things become the norm & you get on with it. New parlours are expensive & are typically a once in a generation investment. Construction work has been challenging as the new parlour & collecting yard cover the same area as the old one!

By the time November arrived, regular breakdowns in the old parlour had worn away most of the remaining sentimentality for it. It was a happy day when we christened the rotary parlour. The cows astounded us. We had been told to expect the cows taking several weeks to settle to the, frankly alien, moving foot plate they have to step onto and off. They were guided through the new parlour on the first evening, the next morning our savvy Dairy Shorthorns had remembered that food was dispensed for them to eat while they



enjoyed a slow carousel ride! By their third milking, the really cute ones were ignoring the air jet, which signals the exit point & were staying on for a second 'ride.' Not ideal as it prevented their herd mates from stepping on & caused a log jam. En masse reversing is not easy for humans, let alone cows. We now have this addressed & the whole herd is milked in half the time. The new building is designed to keep the cows (& milking team) cool in summer and dry & sure footed in winter, as well as freeing time for other farm activities. NB: we have built a viewing platform so on future visits (hopefully in 2021) you will be able to see the cows being milked, without being too close & spooking them.

Another achievement of 2020 was gaining 'anti biotic free' status for our farm. A significant step, as it exceeds the current UK organic regulations. Previously if the vet administered an antibiotic to one of our cows, her milk was not allowed to enter the human food chain for 9 days (3x the withdrawal period in non organic systems.) Running a herd, without the use of antibiotics would have been unthinkable in the 1990s before we converted to organic. Cows need to be relaxed & enjoy the best of food, space & care to maintain peak fitness & naturally fight off potential illnesses. Breed of cow, low stocking density, quality of feed, bedding & foot care are paramount. Our Dairy Shorthorns do not produce large milk volumes but are a more resilient breed. With good handling & management, they do not need the regular antibiotic support that other breeds often receive to maintain foot & udder health. Barry & his team use a range of feeds, including vitamins & supplements to boost immunity to common ailments. This level of dedicated attention to detail requires a skilled & focussed team.



Last year we planted lucerne for the first time. We were hopeful it may be a new solution to some future feed concerns. It introduces another forage to provide variety in the cows' diet and is a source of protein and digestible fibre. Lucerne's deep roots also fair better in drought conditions. Shortage of rainfall is currently not the problem it was last May! We made silage with the first crop. It clamped well and the cows love it. This year we hope for a higher yield. It will reduce our reliance on bought in protein, which is important to us and our footprint.

Even with everything else drawing attention & concern last year, more of you switched to choosing milk in glass bottles. Our average customer household uses 4 litres a week & saves 5.5kg of plastic waste each year. Cumulatively this is keeping 19 tonnes of plastic out of the waste/ recycling system each year. Our glass bottles are 100% UK sourced & produced. Our poly bottles (fully recyclable!) start with polymer from the middle east. The threat of a no deal Brexit, combined with France closing their UK border for biosecurity in December, had our poly bottle supplier a little worried. At any one time there is only 1 month's worth of stock of raw polymer in the UK. The upside of this? We are now less ignorant of the fine balance of the system on which we rely! Our consumption based economy & comfortable lives are fragile. We take nothing for granted, as our next generations will, very likely, not have it so good.

If you are looking for inspiration on changes you can make to reduce your impact, you may like to read this blog from one of our customers near Richmond– a family who decided this time last year, to make one change a week to be more 'Planetwise' by 2021. 52 changes may sound a lot to most of us but even 1 change, en masse, has impact. Isn't there a proverb that poetically describes when many people make one easy change to effect a better outcome... ??

Week 31 of the blog - you can proudly tick off as completed already! [www.ProjectPlanetwise.co.uk](http://www.ProjectPlanetwise.co.uk)

# 1985...

36 years ago we made a very good appointment. Barry was (& still is really) a bright, young man from High Etherley. Aged 19, his Houghall College lecturer Angus Miller, persuaded him to apply for our advert for a female herdsperson, (not considered p.c. now, but totally acceptable at the time!) Our experience to that point suggested a lady may be the way to go for the attention to detail & caring attitude we wanted in this person. We can't remember if any ladies did apply but Barry certainly made a strong case for himself & was soon working alongside our father & one farm assistant. We had 120 Friesian cows, milked through an 8 aside parlour. All milk was sold in bulk to the Milk

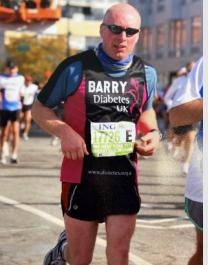


**One of the 500 strong herd Barry & his team manage.**

Marketing Board & a milk tanker came in to collect it. Barry has been instrumental in managing all the changes of direction we have taken & helping us face the challenges too. During the 1990s the herd expanded to 300 cows, with the parlour modernised to take 20 each side of the pit. We sent Barry on a dairy tour of New Zealand to bring back their secrets of producing cheap milk. At that stage we were trapped in the commodity system, required to focus on producing ever larger quantities at least cost, to match the falling farm gate milk price. Barry returned from N.Z. in part questioning some of their production methods... & having completed a Bungee jump. It was shortly after this that a change of direction was decided on for our farm. Barry helped manage the significant changes required in moving to organic production in 1998, including the introduction of our Dairy Shorthorn cross breeding & now antibiotic free milk, in 2020. Each change has required ever increasing focus on animal & feed management. This can

only be found in experience & a willing, open-minded team. Beside us, Barry endured the threat of BSE in the 90s, then Foot & Mouth disease nearby (twice.) In 2001 we came within quarter of a mile of seeing all our ladies & calves culled, then burned on site to create a fire break between a local infection hot spot & the wider area. They wouldn't do that with COVID-19! He shudders as he recalls that time.

More happily, he has also witnessed the first 20 years of Acorn



Dairy deliveries! Perhaps being more hands on in the initial years than we/ he imagined- changing delivery van tyres & even covering milk rounds in the dark with no route training at zero notice.

Oh- those early days of Acorn! Nowadays he is better known to our customers for guiding open day farm tour groups with Graham & Gordon & is often behind the camera, capturing those early

morning, late evening wildlife photos we share. In his spare time Barry, is an impressive marathon, charity runner, completing the New York Marathon in 3.5hrs for Diabetes UK.

The next 36 years? are in good hands. Barry has helped us pick a crack team in Colin, Tom, Marco & newly Shauna, each bringing & building their skills / qualities to continue our story as a modern, organic, accountable, food producing farm.

## 8pm

You can now change your milk, cream, butter & egg orders up to 8pm the evening before your delivery via our online app. It is faster & more flexible than emailing us & ties in with our move to electronic delivery lists for our milkmen. This has reduced our paper use by 520kg & the replacement of at least 1 worn out printer annually (& lots of manual order inputting.) Thank you to all who are using it regularly.

Some products we buy in do have a short lead time & the app auto inputs the first date these can be delivered to you as a one off, or as part of a new standing order. Very simple. If able please register for your online access from our website

[www.acorndairy.co.uk](http://www.acorndairy.co.uk) The app is not bespoke to us but is used by many smaller home delivery companies across the UK. If you would like a printed user guide... as always, just ask!

**Fresh milk direct from our organic farm. Doorstep delivery in:**

Darlington | Barnard Castle | Richmond | Northallerton | Middleton St George | Ayckliffe | Long Newton | Barningham & local villages.

Partnerships covering: Durham | Ripon | Harrogate | Newcastle | Alnwick | Morpeth | Hexham | Yarm | Stokesley



**Changing wheels with Gordon- 1990**



## Pimhill Porridge & Muesli!

Breakfast has just got better here. We are delighted to have these new mueslis & porridges for you. 100% organic, grown & packaged by the Mayall family in Shropshire from land that has been certified organic since 1949! Fantastic.

<b>Porridge Small Oats</b>	850g	£2.99
<b>Porridge Jumbo Oats</b>	850g	£2.99
<b>Original Swiss Muesli</b> (no added sugar)	850g	£3.29
<b>Muesli Apricot, Fig &amp; Seed</b> (no added wheat or nuts)	850g	£4.97

We still have Alara's Rich Muesli 500g £3.15 which we know many of you enjoy. It will rotate well with Pimhill's Original Swiss style soft muesli & their luxury Apricot & Fig. Which one presses your breakfast button? All standing orders for Rude Health porridge will switch to Pimhill Jumbo Oats in Feb. If you would prefer to switch to the Small Oats- just ask. This is a real 'trade up' & an amazing saving- Pimhill packs are 800g for the same price as Rude Health's 500g! We hope you enjoy Pimhill's range & it gives you an extra boost

**Thank you for your custom.**



**Graham & Caroline**