

“Matangi Leads the World” Waikato Times 13.11.1919

The opening of the new Frederick Daniell designed “Glaxo” building was momentous in that it was at that time the largest dairy factory in the world.

The Prime Minister William Massey arrived to open the factory and drew a great crowd. Much was reported in the papers of what was said in the speeches about dairying and politics of the day.

Some things don't change however – it was reported that “land had become very expensive”.

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THE WAIK

WHERE GLAXO IS MADE

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OPENING OF NEW FACTORY

MATANGI LEADS THE WORLD

PRIME MINISTER'S CONGRATULATIONS

Few, if any, other districts in New Zealand have made the progress in the last decade that has been witnessed in Waikato, not only in its towns, but in the area of land that has been brought under cultivation and the growth of its chief and very important industry—dairying. Everywhere across its plains healthy cattle are to be seen grazing on rich grass-lands, while numerous thin shafts of smoke indicate the centres where the milk flow is converted into a marketable product. Each year sees an increase in these smoke trails, and one, of larger dimensions than the others, telling of unusual manufacturing activity, has this season sprung into being at Matangi, where yesterday, in the presence of a very large attendance, the Prime Minister (Hon. W. F. Massey) officially opened what is claimed to be the largest dairy products factory in the world. Visitors were present from a very wide area, among the important ones being Messrs R. F. Bolland and J. A. Young M's.P., W. Goodfellow (managing director of the New Zealand Dairy Co., Ltd.), and H. E. [Name of Messrs Joseph Nathan and

object in view the amalgamated companies had decided to open a London office to control the sale of butter from this country.

Mr Massey's Efforts.

Mr R. F. Bolland, member for the district, considered that Matangi was very highly honoured in having the presence of the Premier, who was a very busy man. Even since the Massey party had been in power, he said, they had had nothing but trials and tribulations, and he thought it was now up to the public to give the Prime Minister three years of peace. (Laughter.)

Mr J. A. Young, member for Waikato, after offering his congratulations to the suppliers and the district upon erecting the magnificent factory, said there was no man in the country who had worked harder for the producers of the country than Mr Massey had. (Applause.) The country had passed through very strenuous times, which had left them with a legacy of problems to solve, the solution of which they would only find in the gospel of work—production. If the country was to pay its way and redeem its promises to the

THE IMPERIAL PURCHASE

PREMIER-MAKES REPLY.
TO ADVERSE CRITICISM.
SHIPS THE MAIN FACTOR.

Referring to the export trade outlook at the opening of the Matangi Glaxo Factory yesterday, Hon. W. F. Massey said that in 1915 the position was not at all good, especially in regard to shipping. It was, as a matter of fact, very serious, but the Imperial Government came to the assistance of the Dominion, and arrangements were made that the Home authorities should purchase the whole of our frozen meat and dairy produce. These arrangements still held good at the present time, and although they had been the subject of some adverse criticism, there was no question that they had been a tremendous success. He has taken the opportunity of approaching the Imperial Government to see if the arrangements could be continued for another year. To his enquiries he had as yet received no definite reply. There would be no difficulty at all in arranging for a continuance for another three or six months, but for another season was quite a different matter.

The Danger Ahead.

The danger which faced the Dominion was (and he would like to impress the knowledge of this on the producers) that there was a probability of the Imperial Government purchasing the whole of the Argentine output of meat, while negotiations were also in progress with Australia with a similar end in view. Should arrangements be completed in this direction, and should New Zealand be left out of the deal, what, he asked, was the Dominion going to do about ships, because there was no question that the countries he had mentioned would have first claim upon the tonnage if their products were purchased by the Imperial Government.

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The Opening of the Dairy Factory was the Big News of the Day

Settlements all over the Waikato and other dairying areas of New Zealand have long been clustered around a dairy factory.

Matangi had had 3 dairy factories on site before 1919 but the major investment reported above transformed the village. As well as building the biggest dairy factory in the world, the development included the building of housing for factory managers and workers.



Harry Jephcott's Wife, Doris, Took this Photograph in 1920-21. Harry Jephcott was the Chief Chemist for Glaxo at the Time

In 2003 Harry & Linda Mowbray purchased the factory and discovered the original drawings for what they now call the "Glaxo Building".

This discovery prompted Harry and his son Andrew to research the history of the site.

It was a mind blowing experience for both Harry and his son and it has profoundly influenced how they have approached the ongoing development of the site.

It became a project of restoration rather than pure development and buildings that would normally have been bulldozed have been rebuilt and plans are in place to continue this work on the remaining buildings.

A number of the key historical points are listed in the following time line.

- 1) The first factory on the site in 1885 was a creamery owned by the New Zealand Dairy Association, (NZDA). They were the biggest Dairy Co-op in the Waikato.
- 2) NZDA was the first factory to supply Henry Reynolds with cream outside of his own farm and his immediate neighbours. Henry Reynolds was the farmer who started the Anchor brand. In the mid 1890's the Anchor brand was purchased by NZDA, and the brand moved to Matangi.
- 3) In 1894 a cheese factory was established on the site, and in 1900 this was made into a condensed milk factory and produced Highlander condensed milk. These buildings are still on the Matangi site.
- 4) At this time these two iconic NZ brands, Anchor and Highlander, established themselves from the Matangi site.
- 5) In 1900 NZDA opened a butter factory on the site to make the Anchor brand.

- 6) In 1914 NZDA built a cheese factory across the road. This building is now a hostel.
- 7) In 1917 the Frederick Daniell "Glaxo" building was built. It was the biggest dairy factory in the world at the time and produced the patented dried milk powder Glaxo.
- 8) Research revealed that Frederick Daniell had iconic status within New Zealand architecture, and designed many of the historic building around the Waikato.
- 9) Halfway through the construction of the building NZDA realized they did not have enough milk to supply it, and went to all the other Co-ops in the Waikato and asked them to join together, as Glaxo was paying 1 penny a pound of butter fat more than the going rate. They then formed a new Co-op "The New Zealand Cooperative Dairy Company"(NZCDC)
- 10) The NZCDC was to go on and form Fonterra, and Glaxo was to become Glaxo Smith Klein, the biggest pharmaceutical company in the world. Thus the two biggest companies to come out of NZ had their primary root in the Frederick Daniell designed building.
- 11) Matangi was the head office of NZCDC until they moved to London St next to the historic Frederick Daniell designed St Paul's church. Matangi was also their R&D laboratory where they developed new technology that was used to build the Pairata and Reporoa factories.
- 12) Matangi was the first dairy factory in the world to have milk tankers, which were "S" Bedfords with Truscott trailers. The Mowbray business have purchased an original Truscott trailer and a 1952 "S" Bedford, and plan to build an original "Anchor Tanker" which will be put on display in the front of the factory site.
- 13) Three of the original Highlander Condensed Milk buildings are still on site. So far two have been refurbished and brought up to earthquake code. Plans to refurbish the third building have been conceptualised. This third building is one of the earliest concrete constructions in New Zealand which makes it more of a challenge to bring it up to code, as it is not well reinforced.
- 14) Refurbishment plans are in place for the Frederick Daniell Glaxo building. It is hoped to start this work over the next 12 months.
- 15) The plan is to continue to develop the factory site with a focus on preserving the history with the objective of the site becoming a destination in its own right and an asset to the Matangi community.

Harry has shared the research with the community via the Waikato District Council website ². In terms of conserving the heritage of the Waikato we are fortunate that he has invested in preserving and securing the buildings as productive locations, and is determined to develop the site in keeping with its history.³

1. <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/waikato-times/1919/11/13/2>
<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/WAIKIN19191113.2.16>
<https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/NZH19191113.2.99>
2. <https://wdcsitefinity.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity-storage/docs/default-source/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans/community-plans/matangi-factory-historic-places-trust-restoration-proposal.pdf?sfvrsn=2>



3. Frederick Daniell's
Church Preservation



These are the before and after photographs of the Highlander Condensed milk factory buildings





The before and after photos of the manager's office. It has now been turned into a two bedroom cottage and the Frederick Daniell's designed fence has been extended around the front of the building.





One of The North End Gables of the Glaxo Building