

RURAL MUSEUMS NETWORK

SORTING THE CURDS AND WHEY

Dairying collections in the UK



Progress with identifying the 'Distributed National Collection' of Agricultural Heritage items

by Catherine Wilson, May 2006

This Report summarises the results of the Survey of Dairying collections in the UK's leading rural museums, undertaken as part of the Building Relevance Programme, funded by the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council in 2005/6. The Report was undertaken for the Museum of English Rural Life and the Rural Museums Network. It builds on, and takes forward previous reports:

Sorting the Wheat from the Chaff

The Distributed National Collection: a scoping & development study of agricultural heritage collections

by David Viner and Catherine Wilson, in association with Rob Shorland-Ball

Published in January 2004

A Supplementary Report

Developing the Distributed National Collection of agricultural heritage collections

By David Viner and Catherine Wilson

Published in July 2004

Tractors and combines – icons of 20th century farming

An Additional Report

By Catherine Wilson

Published in February 2005

All the above reports were undertaken for the Museum of English Rural Life of the University of Reading, from whom copies are available on request.

Cover illustration: Butter print, drawn by Peter Brears.

From 'The Old Devon Farmhouse' by Peter Brears, Devon Books, 1998

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SORTING THE CURDS AND WHEY

A Survey of Dairying collections in the UK's leading rural museums.

1. Background

In 2003, the Museum of English Rural Life [MERL], using resources from the Designation Challenge Fund, commissioned a scoping and development study for a 'Distributed National Collection' of rural and agricultural heritage material. That Study resulted in the publication of the *Sorting the Wheat from the Chaff [SWfC]* Report in Jan 2004 [Viner & Wilson, 2004] which recommended a way forward for identifying significant items in museum collections. This was followed by a further piece of work which tested some of the recommendations in *SWfC* and undertook a survey of combine harvesters. This work was published as *A Supplementary Report* [Viner & Wilson, July 2004].

As part of the same funding programme, MERL established a Rural Museums Network to share information and knowledge between museums. Building on the work of its predecessor, the Rural Life Museums Action Group, the Rural Museums Network was officially constituted at a meeting in February 2005. At the same time it was recognised by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council [MLA] as a Subject Specialist Network (SSN). On behalf of the Network, MERL was awarded funding for the Building Relevance Programme. Most of the Programme has been devoted to finding out more about audiences and potential audiences for our museums, and generating ideas for themes and approaches that would be likely to attract new audiences. But part of the resources has been used to continue the work of identifying the 'distributed national collection' of agricultural heritage items. Previous work during 2004 and 2005 undertook detailed studies to identify significant holdings of tractors and combine harvesters. But this has involved only a small number of museums. For the Building Relevance Programme it was felt that a topic should be chosen, from the list of twelve already identified, which would involve all museums in the Network. The topic of dairying – milk, butter and cheese - was agreed because of its universality, and because of its obvious relevance to a wide contemporary audience, not just those living in the countryside.

The format for this work followed that recommended and trialled in the earlier Reports.

2. The Dairying Survey

The topic of dairying was chosen for the third of the collection surveys deliberately to engage all the museums in the Network. It was recognised that this would require a different approach to the combine and tractor surveys where only a few museums, and small numbers of easily identified objects, were involved. Unlike the previous topics, it was likely to be assemblages of items, rather than individual objects, that were important. Given the likely quantity of objects the detailed assessment and use of range statements to ascertain significance was felt to be unworkable. A different approach was therefore taken and a survey form devised which asked general questions about the importance and use of dairying collections, and then simply asked for numbers of items in particular pre-identified categories, with space for additional categories and comments. [see Appendix A]

In May 2005 the Questionnaire was circulated to the 51 members of the Rural Museum Network. This membership includes a variety of museums across the UK: 2 in Northern Ireland; 2 in Scotland; 3 in Wales and the rest in England. Subsequently Fife Folk Museum joined the Network. They were sent and completed a Questionnaire, making a total of 52.

This total is made up as follows:

Local authority museums	21
Independent Museums	21
National Museums	6
University Museums	2
Private collections	2

48 of the 52 Questionnaires were returned, a return rate of 92%. This level of return shows the commitment of members of the RMN to the process of sharing information about their collections with colleagues. Several commented that they had found time to complete the Survey, despite the pressure of other activities, because they felt that the process was important for their museum.

One museum sent back a nil return, saying that the survey was not relevant to the collections of that museum. So what follows is an analysis of the holdings of 47 museums. Even so it should be noted that not all respondents answered every question, so the numbers do not always add up to 47! A list of these museums is at Appendix B.

The first section of the Questionnaire asked some general questions about Dairying holdings and how important they were to the museum. We sought information on the use of dairying material in displays, and on holdings of other source material, such as photographs, film, or sound recordings. We also asked for the curator's assessment of the importance of the collection.

The responses to Questions 1-10 are summarised here.

Question 1

The majority of museums indicated that their holdings of dairying material were the result of random collecting from a variety of donors, but a significant percentage had good holdings of material associated with one person, or a sizeable collection of more than local significance.

Table 1 Which of the following best describes your collection:

Question 1	Milking	Butter-making	Cheese-making
a. Small random collection, variety of donors	29	28	29
b. Good material associated with one person/place	10	9	6
c. Sizeable collection, more than local significance	8	10	9

Six museums had large and significant collections in all three areas; four more had good collections in two of the three areas; and one in the area of cheese-making only. These are as follows:

Table 2 Museums with significant collections

Museum	Milking	Butter-making	Cheese-making
Beamish	yes	yes	yes
Gloucester Folk Museum	-	yes	yes
Highland Folk Museum	yes	yes	-
Leicestershire Museums	-	-	yes
Museum of English Rural Life	yes	yes	yes
Museum of Scottish Country Life	yes	yes	yes
Museum of Welsh Life	yes	yes	yes
Ryedale Folk Museum	-	yes	yes
Somerset Rural Life	yes	yes	yes

Museum			
Ulster Folk & Transport Museum	yes	yes	yes
York Castle Museum	yes	yes	yes

Question 2 How important is the dairying story for your museum?

It was expected that all museums with rural life collections would be likely to have some material representing at least milking and butter-making, as these aspects were such a universal part of daily life at least up to the second half of the twentieth century. The Questionnaire, however, sought information on how important the dairying story was for different museums.

For 23% of respondents, these topics were of general interest only; 22 museums, or 47%, said that milking and butter-making were important to their museum as part of the general farming story, but this fell to 30% for cheese-making.

However a further 20%, felt that the dairying story was a significant part of local life in their area. Most of these museums are in the west and north of the country, where dairying was, and still is to some extent, an important industry, going beyond the purely domestic needs of the farming community. This clearly demonstrates that museums do reflect the regional variations of farming in the UK, and that past collecting has taken account of this. The regional story is a vitally important part of the national picture and any assessment of collections at a national level needs to recognise this.

Table 3 Where dairying is a significant part of local life

The following museums indicated that dairying was significant to their area:

Museum	Milking	Butter-making	Cheese-making
Chiltern Open Air Museum	-	yes	-
Cotswold Museums	yes	yes	yes
Dales Countryside Museum	yes	yes	yes
Fife Folk Museum	yes	yes	yes
Leicestershire Museums	-	-	yes
Manx National Heritage	-	yes	-
Museum of Lakeland Life	-	yes	yes
Museum of Scottish Country Life	-	-	yes

Rutland County Museum	yes	yes	yes
Shibden Hall, Halifax	-	yes	yes
Shugborough	yes	yes	yes
Somerset Rural Life Museum	yes	yes	yes
Ulster Folk & Transport Museum	yes	yes	-
Weald & Downland O A Museum	yes	yes	-

Relatively few museums have buildings specifically related to milk, butter or cheese production, but for them the dairying collections were necessary to interpret the story of those buildings.

Table 4 Museums with buildings associated with dairying

Museum	Milking	Butter-making	Cheese-making
Chiltern Open Air Museum	yes	-	-
Cogges Farm Museum	yes	yes	-
Highland Folk Museum	yes	yes	-
Lackham College	yes	yes	yes
Museum of Kent Life	yes	yes	-
Museum of Scottish Country Life	yes	-	-
Shugborough	-	-	yes
Somerset Rural Life Museum	-	-	yes

Question 3

This question tried to assess the value of the museums' collections for interpretive purposes. More than half of the museums have material, both object and archival, that chart technological development, whilst half have material demonstrating regional distinctiveness. Eleven museums have holdings relating to a specific brand, whilst four hold relevant company archives.

Table 5 Range of holdings

Holdings	yes	no
a. that chart technological development	27	15
b. demonstrate regional distinctiveness	23	22
c. relates to specific brand	11	33
d. company archives	4	39

The four museums with company archives are:

Museum of East Anglian Life
 Museum of English Rural Life
 Science Museum
 Somerset Rural Life Museum.

Question 4. Do you have specific displays?

This asked whether the museums had specific displays on the dairying theme. Most of them have some displays for milking and butter-making, and about half have displays about cheese-making. However only nine have displays about dairy products as food. This reflects the small number of rural museums which interpret agricultural produce as food, and this must surely be a missed opportunity, particularly with a topic which is so much part of everyday life today and is (relatively) non-controversial.

Table 6 Dairying displays

Dairying displays	Yes	No
a. milking	30	17
b. butter-making	35	12
c. cheese-making	24	23
d. dairy products as food	9	37

Question 5. Do you have items in store?

To try to find out the extent of use of these museums' collections, a question was asked regarding material in store. This revealed, unsurprisingly, that most museums have relevant items in store, but more worryingly that approximately 21% have dairying material in store, but none off it on display. Compare this table with Table 6 above.

Table 7 Dairying material in store

In store	Yes	No
a. milking	40	7
b. butter-making	43	4
c. cheese-making	36	11

Question 6. Do you have any photographs, film, video of sound recordings relating to dairying?

As well as objects, the Questionnaire sought information on other holdings, in order to assess potential for interpretation, and also to identify where any gaps might be that could be filled by non-object material. About half of the museums indicated that they have relevant photographs, but very few have any film, video or sound recordings. Given the size and complexity of much modern equipment – milking parlours and milk tankers, for example – video would seem to be an ideal way to bring the story up to date, or at least into the second half of the twentieth century, and yet only five museums have any post-1960 film or video holdings, and only nine have any sound recordings.

Table 8 Photographs, film, video, sound recordings

Media		Yes	No
a. photographs	before 1920	-	18
	1920-1960	26	16
	post 1960	16	25
b. film or video	before 1920	2	40
	1920-1960	9	33
	post 1960	5	35
c. sound recordings	before 1920	4	38
	1920-1960	8	33
	post 1960	9	34

As part of the development of this project, it would be worth exploring particularly the video holdings further, to see if any of the material would be suitable to form part of a travelling exhibition, or indeed could be copied for other museums to use if and when appropriate.

Questions 7 & 8. Are your dairying collections used for handling sessions/demonstrations, and are they separately identified as ‘use’ collections?

Encouragingly, 79% of the sample 47 museums used some part of their dairying collections in educational activities, including handling sessions. This is more than indicated that they have this material on regular display, indicating at least some use of the material in store. 42% also use these collections to give demonstrations of milking, butter-making or cheese-making.

Only 57% of museums identified this part of their collection separately as 'use' or working collections, indicating that there is still some work to do on the documentation of these collections.

Question 9. Sheep & goats' milk or cheese?

Whilst the vast majority of dairying collections are associated with cows' milk and its products, 24% of the museums said that they also hold material relating to sheep and goats' milk or cheese. Given the current popularity of, for example, 'minority' cheeses, this indicates useful scope for a different kind of interpretation.

Question 10. How important is your collection?

Finally in this section, museums were asked for their own assessment of the significance of their collections. Eleven museums felt that their collections were of national importance; with a further twenty of regional importance. There is some overlap where curators consider their collections to be of both regional and national importance. The rest are of local importance.

Those museums holding nationally important material include, as might be expected, the relevant National Museums in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and the Isle of Man. The Science Museum's collections in this area are however not considered to be of importance, so that role for England rests firmly with the Museum of English Rural Life, which has not only fine artefact collections but extensive library and archive holdings in this subject area.

The other museums, considered by their curators to have nationally important material are:

Acton Scott, Shropshire

Beamish, North of England Open Air Museum (Designated collection)

Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes

Highland Folk Museum, Kingussie

Somerset Rural Life Museum

York Castle Museum

There is some cross-relationship with those museums indicating that they had significant collections in Question 1 (see Table 2), but not a complete match.

Acton Scott, and the Dales Countryside Museum indicated at Question 1 that their collections included good material associated with one person or place and then assessed this material as of national importance at Question 10. Gloucester Folk Museum, and Ryedale Folk Museum both

hold sizeable collections of more than local significance in the fields of butter-making and cheese-making at Question 1, but felt that these were of regional rather than national importance at Question 10.

Leicestershire Museums, specifically the Melton Carnegie Museum, has significant collections relating to Stilton cheese, though these are not assessed as of national importance at Question 10.

Question 11. Please give the numbers of the various artefact types in your collection as accurately as possible.

This question produced a mixed result. It is a tribute to the enthusiasm of the staff of these museums that so many of them did give actual numbers of objects, though some with a 'caveat' about the accuracy. One museum did not attempt to count, but just ticked the relevant boxes. Three others simply sent a print out of their computer database, not sorted into the requested headings. These three remain to be added to the totals because of the work involved. It was recognised that the object list given was not comprehensive, so space was allowed for 'other' items to be added. This was useful, but, of course, the 'other' items were different for nearly all museums!

Table 9 Total number of objects in collections

Activity	Artefact type	No. of items	TOTALS
Milking			
By hand	Stool		139
	Pail/bucket		223
	Yoke		216
	Back can		31
By machine	Vacuum, non pulsating		22
	Vacuum,pulsating with bucket		47
	Vacuum,pulsating with pipeline		44
Milk cooling	Water cooling for churn storage		100
	Refrigerated bulk tank		4
Measuring instruments	Thermometer, cream gauge, etc.		132
Storage/selling	Churns		301
Other			
Butter-making			

Separating	Cream skimmers, etc	210
	Setting bowl/dish	177
	Separating machine	95
Butter churns	Glass	171
	Plunger	121
	Table	103
	End over end	90
	Barrel	116
Butter working	Butter worker	133
	Butter pats/hands	485
	Butter moulds/prints	749
Other		
Cheese-		
making		
Preparation	Cheese kettle	39
	Sieve	56
Curd	Curd breaker/cutter	102
	Agitator	18
Shaping	Cheese vat	131
	Sinker /lid	115
	Cheese moulds	279
Pressing	Cheese press	199
Other		58
		48
Milk Delivery		
	Milk Can	270
	Scoop measure, pint, half-pint,etc.	294
	Milk bottle	1910
	Milk carton	113
Vehicles	Handcart	28
	Electric float	5
Other		
Butter/cheese		
marketing		
	Boxes/containers	75
Advertising	Brochures	49
	Posters	34
	Other ephemera	48
Other		

Textiles			
Workwear	Head covering		49
	Protective coat/jacket		29
Other textiles			11

This bare list of totals does not give much information, except perhaps to indicate where there might be an over, or under supply of objects. It is interesting that the aggregate of the collections of these museums is not larger than it is.

The most numerous type of artefact is the milk bottle but this is hardly surprising given its ubiquity, and the fact that many bottles carried the name of the farm or local dairy, making them obviously collectable for a local museum. Technological changes to milk packaging, and the demise in some areas of the doorstep delivery, make even this small area of the story an easy one for a temporary exhibition. What is not clear is how many museums are now collecting cartons or polythene milk containers to illustrate the changes.

The other two most numerous categories of items are butter pats and butter moulds or prints. These items are very much associated with domestic life and the work of women around the farm and in the dairy. On smaller farms it was almost always the farmer's wife who was responsible for making butter to sell at local markets, often marked with the distinctive print of that family or area. So again there are good stories to be told with these items. It is also very easy to demonstrate how butter pats were used, even using bought rather than home made butter, so the numbers in museums do not seem excessive.

As well as these global figures, tables exist showing each museum's numerical holdings, for future reference and research purposes.

3. The Seminar

As with the two previous DNC topics, a Seminar involving knowledgeable people, both museums people and private individuals, was planned, to try to identify the landmark developments in dairying over the last 150-200 years, and whether or not those landmarks were adequately represented in museum collections. The Seminar took place on 21st October at Glastonbury, by kind invitation of the Somerset Rural Life Museum [Somerset County Council]. The free access to a seminar room, excellent refreshments courtesy of the Friends of the Museum, and the warm welcome received, are gratefully acknowledged.

The seminar aimed to pool the knowledge and expertise of the participants in two intensive sessions. The morning session considered the following in relation to milking, cream and butter making, cheese making, and delivery and marketing:

1. What are the landmarks in the development of dairying as part of UK farming?
2. What types of objects best illustrate those landmarks?
3. Are there regional differences to the story.

The afternoon session considered the social impact of these developments, looking at the following questions:

4. What was the social impact of change and mechanisation upon a) the farmer, b) the rural community, c) the wider public?
5. What makes/types or other artefacts would best illustrate that impact?
6. Which objects already in UK museums could represent the traditional forms of dairying and change in all its forms in the industry, and the social impact?

The desired outcomes were to assess the quality of existing museum holdings, and to identify where any gaps might be and how they might be filled.

In addressing these outcomes, it became obvious that the essentially numerical data collected in the survey did not give enough information from which to judge the quality of holdings. However, it did highlight where the most significant collections were. It was decided that a follow-up questionnaire was needed to those museums in order to be able to assess their quality. This was undertaken and the results are described in section 5.

In terms of where the gaps are, it was clear that museum objects alone, even if they had been collected, could not adequately tell the full story of

dairying in the second half of the 20th century. Issues such as Artificial Insemination, cow passports, milk quotas, and EU regulations are what drives the farmers, whilst supermarkets' demands dominate the production, packaging and marketing. There was a strong plea for museums to be pro-active in collecting and recording these more difficult topics. Oral recording of personal experiences, film recording of the production processes and the collection of contemporary advertising and ephemera were suggested as ways of addressing the gaps. It was also noted that the growing popularity of 'niche markets', for example for specialist cheeses, was a fairly recent phenomenon that could be recorded by the relevant local museum and perhaps promotional partnerships formed. Museum cafes were considered an underused asset in this regard!

There was a fascinating and detailed discussion around all the topics, and once again the value of involving carefully selected practitioners alongside knowledgeable museum people proved extremely positive. The proceedings were recorded and a full transcript is available on request.

The Seminar participants are given at Appendix 3.

4. The specialist Questionnaire

The additional specialist Questionnaire recommended by the Seminar was sent to thirteen museums which had indicated on their original returns that they had significant collections of dairying holdings. This questionnaire requested considerably more detail, and was therefore difficult for some museums to complete. Due to recent staff changes at Beamish, it was not possible for them to give the additional detail required. Four other museums did not complete the questionnaire due to pressure of work. However all were very supportive of the process, and apologised for simply not having the specialist staff capacity to do it. This is a sad comment on the state of curatorial expertise in our museums. Either there is not sufficient knowledge of the collections to complete the process easily, or, where the expertise does exist, those individuals are so engaged with day to day administration that they are unable to use their expertise for the benefit of the wider museum community. The museums concerned were all contacted personally. There was a strong desire to participate in the process but there were genuine reasons for not being able to do so.

This analysis therefore is based on the returns from only eight museums. The Questionnaire asked for information on the date, production method, rarity and condition of the 55 categories of object identified in the original questionnaire, ranging from hand milking to marketing.

Milking

All museums have hand milking items, some 227 items in all. Most of these date from the period 1900-1950. For example, of the 58 milking stools, only 8 date to before 1850 and these were in the collections of Somerset and St. Fagans. The Home Counties all have strong collections in this area, with Somerset and MERL having the strongest collections in England. The Yorkshire regional speciality, the 'back-can', is represented at the Dales Countryside Museum at Hawes, York Castle and MERL. One of the Hawes examples is special as a full record of its production survives. The majority of items are in stable, or better, condition. Only York Castle identified items in unstable condition. The fact that these included items of some rarity is a cause for concern.

Machine milking on the other hand is represented at only four museums: Somerset, MERL, St Fagans and Kittochside. Of these, Kittochside and Somerset have the most comprehensive collections, with Somerset having the only example of a pulsating vacuum machine with pipeline for an 8 bay milking parlour, and this dates from before 1950.

All the museums have milk coolers and churns for storage. No individual objects stand out as particularly important, most items being factory produced and dating between 1900 and 1950. MERL however has 3 milk churns of pre-1900 date and identified as rare survivors. Kittochside has post-1950 material, including the only refrigerated bulk tank, whilst Somerset has a churn refrigerator, and two churns, in good condition, with brass labels, used for transporting milk on GWR.

Butter-making

Butter-making is well represented in all the museums, but a few items stand out. Wooden butter-making implements are quite difficult to date, but pre-1850 cream skimmers and setting bowls are identified at Gloucester, MERL & St Fagans. Kittochside & St Fagans also have pre-1850 examples of wooden plunger churns, but most of such churns are dated between 1850 and 1900. Gloucester has a good range of material, with a number of items from the 19th century. Regarding butter churns as a whole, St. Fagans and York have the outstanding collections, both with good range and depth.

St Fagans has early examples of butter workers, whilst the 'honours' for butter pats and prints are shared between St Fagans and York. York perhaps has the outstanding collection of prints and moulds, with 120 quality examples, including one dating from c. 1600.

The dog churn at St Fagans is a 'one-off', and a fascinating exhibit in its own right, whilst the bog butter and containers in Ulster are unique to that area and similarly fascinating.

Cheese-making

Cheese-making equipment is, not surprisingly, focussed in those areas where cheese-making was a significant part of the local economy. The substantial collections are at Hawes, Somerset and St Fagans, with MERL also having good representation.

Hawes, Gloucester, Somerset and St Fagans all have pre-1850 cheese presses, whilst Kittochside has the largest number – 36. Gloucester has a fine range of cheese presses covering 200 years, and the Victoria Smith cheese-making collection featured in Edith Brill's 'The Cotswold Craftsman'. The carved oak follower used to make a cheese to celebrate Queen Victoria's accession in 1839 in the Somerset collection, must be considered in the 'iconic object' category. The stone cheese press at Hawes is identified as a 'star' item. The cheese presses at MERL and those at St Fagans are also exceptional items. St Fagans has the 'official' Caerphilly Cheese stamp – another 'one-off' important item.

The most comprehensive collection seems to be in Somerset, which has good range and depth in all areas, though obviously with a local regional emphasis. MERL has a broad range of cheese and butter-making equipment originating from the Dairy School once run by Reading University, so this collection has a cohesion not found elsewhere.

As with butter-making, there is an almost total absence of items representing the second half of the 20th century.

Milk delivery

All museums had a good range of items relating to milk delivery. The vast majority dates from 1900-1950, though there are good numbers of post 1950 milk bottles. A number of museums have large quantities of milk bottles: Gloucester – 65; MERL – 98; Kittochside 779! Many of those at St Fagans are printed with Welsh farm names that make them distinctive. It is assumed that many of the others also carry the names of local farms or dairies, though this is not stated in the returns. MERL and Kittochside have examples of the more recent milk cartons, and York has one, but no

museum yet has apparently collected a supermarket plastic container. Somerset, though, do have two contemporary polythene milk bottle tops.

Four museums have hand delivery carts, each made within their region. Only Ulster has an electric float, though these are items that are likely to be part of transport rather than farming collections.

Butter and cheese marketing

Only two museums have substantial holdings in this area. Both Somerset and Gloucester have a range of boxes and containers, brochures, posters and other ephemera from the 20th century. Ulster has some containers and brochures, but no other material. Somerset also has a medal, a tankard and certificates awarded for cheese-making.

Textiles

Again Somerset and Gloucester recorded the most holdings, all items dating from 1900-1950. As well as head coverings and jackets, Gloucester has towels, butter muslin and cheese cloths. Only York records cow bands and udder towels, which must once have been common, but perhaps not obvious items for collection. None of these items appears to be outstanding, but the fact that there are so few of them gives them added significance, particularly in relation to today's Health and Safety regulations.

Other material

MERL has very significant library and archive collections relating to dairying, including records of firms making dairying equipment, and of major national dairying organisations. They also have extensive photographic holdings. Gloucester holds the Lilla Smith collection of photographs, pamphlets and ephemera covering over 100 years of dairying in Gloucestershire; Somerset, as well as paper records, has an extensive oral archive of cheese makers; and York has a folk song!

Summary

The national museums in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have broadly based and representative collections. St Fagans and Ulster have strengths in the earlier period, whilst Kitchside has material from the second half of the 20th century. For England, MERL also has a broadly based and representative collection, together with the excellent library and archive holdings.

Of the other English museums represented in this sample, all have good collections of the more common items, but each has its own specialism with its own particular 'treasures'. These do not really duplicate, but complement one another. No one collection is comprehensive in itself but taken together they can demonstrate most aspects of the history of dairying in the UK. They can demonstrate the progression of dairying from essentially an individual and very local activity towards the highly organised industrial-scale activity it is today.

However, as with other areas of rural life, there has apparently been little collecting from the last 30 years, so that the significant changes of those years will not be recorded unless action is taken soon.

This summary of the specialist Questionnaire should be regarded as 'interim' in the hope and expectation that the other five museums identified from the initial survey will eventually be able to submit similar detailed information.

Meanwhile there is no doubt that each of the museums in the sample has material of national importance, but perhaps the collections at Somerset, which are clearly the result of careful and thoughtful collecting over an extended period, should receive special mention.

5. Conclusion

The Survey

The subject of Dairying, for the third detailed survey of rural museums' collections, was chosen because it is 'inclusive'. All rural museums, and many non-rural ones, have relevant exhibits, and it is a subject which can readily be related to the everyday experiences of museum visitors. Whilst the subject matter is relevant to non-rural museums, only member museums of the Rural Museums Network were surveyed, for reasons of cost, manageability and time, and because the project was part of the Building Relevance Programme. For a complete picture of dairying material, this survey should be extended to other collections, at least where there are known to be good holdings such as Blaise Castle House, Bristol, and Nantwich, and some National Trust properties.

The Building Relevance Programme

Some museums are already using their dairying collections for educational activities and demonstrations but it is clear that more could be done. This survey highlights the potential of these collections for engaging audiences. It should be read alongside the results of the Susie Fisher Report which forms the main part of the Building Relevance

Programme and gives pointers to the subject matter and approaches which will attract new audiences. Whilst the processes behind the production of milk, butter and cheese can be quite complicated, the collections are, on the whole, accessible and easy to understand. They can be used to tell a range of stories to which people can easily relate such as: animal welfare; real food; food marketing; ‘niche’ products such as specialist cheeses, and so on. Butter making in particular can easily be demonstrated in even the smallest museum, and has strong links to domestic life as well as farming. Most collections surveyed have enough material to be able to identify some items for use – butter pats being the most obvious example, but there are other items as well. It is hoped that the Survey will encourage more museums to use their collections for demonstration and exhibition purposes, and to use them in new and imaginative ways.

Where next?

The Dairying Survey has enabled the major museum collections in this subject area to be identified, thus establishing where the ‘Distributed National Collection’ can be found. It has highlighted regional strengths which are such an important part of the national picture, but which also lend themselves to interpretation targeted at tourists as well as a local visitors – such as the cheese collection at Hawes in Wensleydale. The Somerset Rural Life Museum at Glastonbury has been identified as, and has agreed to take on the role of, ‘lead museum’ for this subject area.

Three subject areas have now been surveyed:

Combine harvesters:	lead museum - Museum of Scottish Country Life
Tractors:	lead museum – Science Museum
Dairying:	lead Museum – Somerset Rural Life Museum

Nine subject areas identified in the *Sorting the Wheat from the Chaff* report remain to be tackled.

The Rural Museums Network is committed to pursuing this approach to identifying and celebrating important museum collections, as a means to the ultimate aim of making the material more available and more understandable for more people.

RMN is extremely grateful to MLA for funding the Dairying survey as part of the Building Relevance Programme. It is hoped that the Network can build on this success and it will also be seeking other avenues of funding to pursue this important work.

SORTING THE CURDS AND WHEY

Dairying collections in the UK

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX 1 – The initial Questionnaire**RURAL MUSEUMS NETWORK**

Further work towards the Distributed National
Collection of agricultural heritage items

***DAIRYING - MILK, BUTTER,
CHEESE******Questionnaire***

**Please complete this Questionnaire and return it to:
Catherine Wilson, Penates, 5 Station Rd., Reepham,
Lincoln, LN3 4DN
by 30th June, 2005**

This Questionnaire has been prepared by Catherine Wilson on behalf of the Collections Working Group of the Rural Museums Network Committee.

It has been sent to all the current member museums of the Rural Museums Network throughout the UK, the Isle of Man and Ireland.

This Questionnaire is being sent to all members as 'hard copy'. If you would prefer an electronic version, this can be arranged.

If you have any queries about this Questionnaire, please contact:

Catherine Wilson

Penates

5 Station Road

Reepham

Lincoln, LN3 4DN

Tel: 01522 753648

e-mail: catherine@penates.demon.co.uk

The deadline for the return of this Questionnaire is 30th June.

Cover picture: A display in the oil engine section at the Lincoln Steam and Vintage Rally, 2004. Photo: Catherine Wilson

DAIRYING - MILK, BUTTER, CHEESE Questionnaire

Background

Working under the auspices of the Museum of English Rural Life, the Rural Museums Network (RMN) has, over the last 18 months, undertaken a general survey of museum agricultural holdings and object level surveys in two subject areas – tractors and combine harvesters. The results of the initial survey were published in the report *Sorting the Wheat from the Chaff* (Viner & Wilson, 2003), whilst the results of the tractor and combine surveys and seminars have been published as supplementary reports. All three reports are available on the RMN website. This work has led to identifying the relative significance of the objects held in participating museums, and the local, regional and national stories that can be told with that material. These are the first planks in identifying a Distributed National Collection (DNC) of agricultural heritage material.

However, the number of museums involved in the subject areas of tractors and combines has been limited – deliberately so, as it was very much a ‘trial run’ to see whether the process of gathering data via a questionnaire and then assessing significance by means of a ‘peer review’ seminar would produce useful results. The RMN meeting held in London in February 2005 concluded that it had, and that the process should be continued.

The awarding to RMN of a ‘Subject Specialist Network’ grant by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council provides the opportunity to undertake a further survey and analyse the results. The grant is to take forward the Building Relevance Programme, details of which are also on the website. This next stage of the DNC work is part of the Building Relevance Programme, and the results will feed in to that programme. The topic of **Dairying** has been chosen because of the opportunity to involve most, if not all museums; and because of the obvious links to contemporary life.

There was an amazing 93% response to the initial Questionnaire. 100% response to this one is achievable and would be a real way of demonstrating the commitment of the sector to improving both the understanding and interpretation of collections and making them relevant to a contemporary audience.

**Please make the time to complete this as fully as you can
– it will benefit your museum and the sector as a whole.**

THANK YOU

The Questionnaire

This Questionnaire looks not just at the strictly agricultural aspects of dairying, but at the wider subject, following the milk from the cow to the consumer. It includes processing – butter and cheese making, delivery and marketing. It includes both domestic level production and more commercial scale operations, though it is anticipated that most of the responses will relate to a domestic scale. We are also interested to know if you have any workwear or textiles associated with dairying. The most common artefacts under each stage of the process are listed, but there is also space to list other, less common items. The topic is a large one, with many different object types. In order for it to be manageable some items have been grouped together in what we hope is a logical way, but there is space for comments if it is not logical for your collection. But do please answer the questions as asked, otherwise the analysis will be very difficult, or even meaningless. If your collections are on a computer database, and you are able to provide a print-out of your dairying holdings easily, please attach this, but do fill out the Questionnaire as well, to ensure consistency of data between collections.

First, some general questions.

Please tick as appropriate.

Q.1 Which of the following best describes your collection. Please assess it for each of the different elements:

- a. small random collection from variety of donors
- b. includes good material associated with one person/place
- c. sizeable collection of more than local significance

Milking/milk production	a.____	b.____	c.____
Butter-making	a.____	b.____	c.____
Cheese-making	a.____	b.____	c.____

Q. 2 How important is the dairying story for your museum

- a. general interest only
- b. important as part of the farming story
- c. a significant part of local life
- d. necessary to interpret the building

Milking/milk production	a.____	b.____	c.____	d.____
Butter-making	a.____	b.____	c.____	d.____
Cheese-making	a.____	b.____	c.____	d.____

Q. 3 Do you have material (objects or archives) in any of the following categories:

	Yes	No
a. items that chart technological development	_____	_____
b. material that demonstrates regional distinctiveness	_____	_____
c. material that relates to a specific well-known brand	_____	_____
d. company archives (<i>please give details at end</i>)	_____	_____

Please tick **Yes** or **No** to these questions

- | | | Yes | No |
|------|--|------------|-----------|
| Q. 4 | Do you have specific displays on any of these: | | |
| | a) milking | _____ | _____ |
| | b) butter-making | _____ | _____ |
| | c) cheese-making | _____ | _____ |
| | d) dairy products as food | _____ | _____ |
| Q. 5 | Do you have, in store, any of the following | | |
| | a) milking items/equipment | _____ | _____ |
| | b) butter-making equipment | _____ | _____ |
| | c) cheese-making equipment | _____ | _____ |
| Q. 6 | Do you hold material in any of the following categories, relating to any aspect of dairying , | | |
| | a) photographs | | |
| | i) <i>before 1920</i> | _____ | _____ |
| | ii) <i>1920-1960</i> | _____ | _____ |
| | iii) <i>post 1960</i> | _____ | _____ |
| | b) film or video | | |
| | i) <i>before 1920</i> | _____ | _____ |
| | ii) <i>1920-1960</i> | _____ | _____ |
| | iii) <i>post 1960</i> | _____ | _____ |
| | c) sound recordings | | |
| | i) <i>before 1920</i> | _____ | _____ |
| | ii) <i>1920-1940</i> | _____ | _____ |
| | iii) <i>post 1960</i> | _____ | _____ |

If yes to any of the above, please attach lists or give brief details here:

- Q. 7 Do you use any of your dairying collection for:
- | | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| a) educational activities including handling sessions | _____ | _____ |
| b) demonstrations of milking/butter/cheese making | _____ | _____ |
- Q. 8 Are these items separately identified as 'use'/'working' collections?

- Q. 9 Do you have any items or information relating to sheep and goat's milk or cheese?

- Q. 10 Do you consider your collections to be of:
- | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|
| National importance | _____ | _____ |
| Regional importance | _____ | _____ |
| Local importance | _____ | _____ |
| No importance | _____ | _____ |

Q. 11 Please give the numbers of the various artefact types in your collection as accurately as possible. Under 'Comments' add any local names, or further information.

Activity	Artefact type	No. of items	Comments
Milking			
By hand	Stool		
	Pail/bucket		
	Yoke		
	Back can		
By machine	Vacuum, non pulsating		
	Vacuum,pulsating with bucket		
	Vacuum,pulsating with pipeline		
Milk cooling	Water cooling for churn storage		
	Refrigerated bulk tank		
Measuring instruments	Thermometer, cream gauge, etc.		
Storage/selling	Churns		
Other			
Butter-making			
Separating	Cream skimmers, etc		
	Setting bowl/dish		
	Separating machine		
Butter churns	Glass		
	Plunger		
	Table		
	End over end		
	Barrel		
Butter working	Butter worker		
	Butter pats/hands		
	Butter moulds/prints		
Other			
Cheese-making			
Preparation	Cheese kettle		
	Sieve		
Curd	Curd breaker/cutter		
	Agitator		

Shaping	Cheese vat		
	Sinker /lid		
	Cheese moulds		
Pressing	Cheese press		
Other			
Milk Delivery			
	Milk Can		
	Scoop measure, pint, half-pint,etc.		
	Milk bottle		
	Milk carton		
Vehicles	Handcart		
	Electric float		
Other			
Butter/cheese marketing			
	Boxes/containers		
Advertising	Brochures		
	Posters		
	Other ephemera		
Other			
Textiles			
Workwear	Head covering		
	Protective coat/jacket		
Other textiles			

Please add here and overleaf any further relevant information or comments on this project. Please also enclose any documents of relevance e.g. computer print-out of dairying holdings, copy of collecting policy if it makes specific reference to dairying, etc.

APPENDIX 2 – Museums participating in the survey

Acton Scott Museum, Shropshire

Ashwell Village Museum, Herts.

Barleylands Museum, Essex

Beamish, North of England Open Air Museum

Beck Isle Museum, Pickering

Chiltern Open Air Museum, Chalfont St Giles

Cogges Manor Farm Museum, Oxfordshire

Cookworthy Museum, Kingsbridge, Devon

Cotswold Museums Service

Craven Museum, Skipton, N. Yorkshire

Dales Countryside Museum, Hawes, N. Yorkshire

The Farmland Museum, Denny Abbey, Cambridgeshire

Fife Folk Museum, Ceres, Fife

Gloucester Folk Museum, Gloucester

Greenfield Valley Museum, Flintshire

Worcestershire County Museum, Hartlebury, Worcestershire

Hampshire County Museum Service

Highland Folk Museum, Kingussie, Inverness

Kent Rural Life Museum

Lackham College, Chippenham, Wiltshire

Manx National Heritage

Melton Carnegie Museum, Leicestershire Heritage Services

Museum of East Anglian Life, Stowmarket, Suffolk

Museum of English Rural Life, Reading

Museum of Lakeland Life, Abbot Hall, Kendal, Cumbria

APPENDIX 2 – Museums participating in the survey (cont.)

Museum of Lincolnshire Life, Lincoln
Museum of Scottish Country Life, Kittingh, East Kilbride
Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans, Cardiff
Norfolk Rural Life Museum, Gressenhall, Norfolk
Normanby Hall Farming Museum, Scunthorpe
North Cornwall Museum, Camelford, Cornwall
Priests House Museum, Wimborne Minster, Dorset
Rutland County Museum, Oakham
Rural Life Centre, Tilford, Surrey
Ryedale Folk Museum, N. Yorkshire
Science Museum, London
Shibden Hall, Halifax, W. Yorkshire
Shugborough Museum, Staffordshire
Church Farm Museum, Skegness, Lincolnshire
Somerset Rural Life Museum, Glastonbury
Tiverton Museum, Devon
Ulster American Folk Park. Omagh
Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, Belfast
Usk Rural Life Museum, Usk
Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, Sussex
York Castle Museum
Yorkshire Museum of Farming, Murton Park, York

APPENDIX 3 – Participants in the Dairying Seminar

DAIRYING – Milk, Butter and Cheese
 A Collections Working Group seminar
 Friday 21 October 2005
 Somerset Rural Life Museum, Glastonbury

Seminar Participants - listed alphabetically

Roy Brigden -- Seminar Chairman

Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading.

Louise Clapp

Family member of Brue Valley Farms, cheese-makers at Baltonsborough near Glastonbury; local historian and Friend of Somerset Rural Life Museum.

David Eveleigh

Curator, Blaise Castle House Museum, Bristol

James Fyffe

Formerly lecturer in dairy husbandry at the Scottish Agricultural College; now retired and living near Ayr

Alan Salt

Started working for the MMB in 1972 at their Blue Stilton Creamery at Hartington in Derbyshire, finishing there as Process Supervisor in charge of Cheese Making. Since 1998 has worked in PR for another part of the Company, now Dairy Crest Foods.

David Viner

Museum consultant and freelance curator with special interest in rural life museums of all kinds; joint author of *Sorting the Wheat from the Chaff*, the initial scoping study/report on Distributed National Collection potential within agricultural heritage collections.

David Walker -- Seminar host

Keeper of Social History at the Somerset Rural Life Museum, Glastonbury and Curator of Somerset County Museums Service's extensive West Country rural life collection, which includes much dairying material.

Catherine Wilson -- Seminar secretary

Joint author of *Sorting the Wheat from the Chaff*. Organiser of the Dairying Survey.