

## Celebration Dinner 1931

Mr Mark Churchill, of Semley, was the guest of honour at a dinner held at the Seymour Arms Hotel, East Knoyle, on Wednesday, which marked the completion at the end of last month of fifty-five years' service with the United Dairies (Wholesale) Ltd., and its subsidiary companies.

As a large number of his friends expressed a wish that the event should be celebrated, it was decided to hold a dinner, and this was attended by about a hundred guests, some of whom came from London and from Dorset and Somerset. Mr Leonard Maggs, a managing director of United Dairies Ltd., presided, and in the course of the proceedings three gifts were made to Mr Churchill, one from the directors and officials of United Dairies, one from the staff at Semley dairies, and one from a number of his friends in Wiltshire, Dorset and Somerset.

Mr Churchill entered the service of the Aylesbury Dairy Co., at Swindon, on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1876, and a year later moved to the dairies at Semley, which at that time were owned by the late Mr Thomas Kirby. In the following September he was sent to Gillingham to open a branch business there. This he did, in a shed at Station-road, on a piece of ground which is now covered by extensive dairies. In March, 1880, Mr Kirby's business was bought by the late Mr Silas Taunton, and in the same year depots were opened at Salisbury, Tisbury and Templecombe. Other premises were opened later on, and ultimately they were all brought into Salisbury, Semley and Gillingham Dairies, Ltd., which in turn were absorbed by United Dairies Ltd.

Mr Churchill became depot superintendent of the old SS & G Company, and did most of the milk buying. He became widely known throughout the three counties, and is deservedly popular for his high personal qualities. More people know him by the name of Mark than by that of Churchill, and the use of the Christian name indicates the general affection in which he is held by so many. Sixteen years ago Mr Churchill returned to Semley from Gillingham, and now, at the age of 76, he has sought and obtained relief from a part of his duties, although he is not retiring from business altogether. Mr and Mrs Churchill have recently removed their home to Old Boundary-road, Shaftesbury.

After the loyal toasts, the Chairman said they were gathered together to celebrate Mrk Churchill's remarkable achievements, namely, the completion of 55 years' real active service in the dairy trade. As his colleague, Mr Sydney Taunton, of Salisbury, had known Mark almost before he (Mr Maggs) was thought of, he was going to ask him to tell the gathering something of their guest's earlier activities. Mr Taunton spoke of the great regret which he felt at the partial severance which was now taking place of many years' association with his friend. At the same time he was pleased at the opportunity thus presented to thank Mr Churchill personally and in public for his 55 years' work for the trade.

In the first place, he recalled the year when their business was a private one, prior to 1890, when the Salisbury, Semley and Gillingham Dairies Ltd were formed. Those were very difficult times, and he could not attempt to measure the value of the work which Mr Churchill did in those days.

Next there was the period from 1890-1919, the life time of the old Salisbury company. That period included the war years, a period which was without precedent for hardships and difficulty. It called out all the resources of which men were capable, and he was glad to testify that Mr Churchill maintained a remarkable standard of efficiency throughout the company's affairs. In 1919 the company became associated with United Dairies, and their Chairman would speak of Mr Churchill's stewardship in those later years. But he (Mr Taunton) would ask them to pause to consider the conditions under which Mr Churchill worked as compared with the present organisation and the facilities which exist to-day.

There were then no telephones, no typewriters, no motor-cars, no motor-lorries, and of course, no airplanes. Everything moved slowly. In winter milk was got in after the most severe hardships and in summer it was not easy to maintain delivery of milk in the best condition.

In this connection the words that occurred to him as most fitting to apply to their guest were these: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, that do with all thy might". There was another saying and this applied also to Mr Churchill's activities as a Manager of the excellent Grammar School at Gillingham: "Do the work that's nearest, tho' its dull at whiles, Helping when you meet them, lame dogs over the stiles".

Many a young man had to thank Mr Churchill for his start in business life, because in years gone by whenever they wanted a good man they send down to Mr Churchill for him. During the period of forty years at Salisbury, they had only two foremen, and both of them were proteges of Mr Churchill. The same thing applied when men were required at other depots, and all he could hope now was that Mr Churchill was not too much inconvenienced when so many of his best men were taken away. He was glad to know that the time had come when Mr Churchill would be able to devote himself more extensively "to the liberal arts and sciences" and yet give attention to that important branch of their business, the best method of making pigs pay. In conclusion he wished both Mr and Mrs Churchill many years of health and happiness in their new home.

### A Personal Tribute

Mr Maggs, who followed, said that after Mr Taunton's remarks it was not easy to add anything, notwithstanding that Mr Churchill had led such a busy life. "I well remember", Mr Maggs continued, "when in the spring of 1919 I came back from France and managed to get my way by being appointed to the country side of our business. That was when I first met Mark Churchill and I very quickly realised that in him I had found a real bit of U.D. backbone. I decided, wisely, I know, to lean on him, and I have never regretted doing so. It is a pity that more young men are not content to-day to take guidance, as I took it, from someone of longer and riper experience. I can assure you that Mark's long experiences, which have varied from day to day, even more so than the barometer, have been of untold value to me. I was never above taking advice from him. We had to deal with a lot of awkward farmers (laughter) and he helped this "lame dog" over many a stile (renewed laughter).

#### Father of the Business

"Despite his years, no day was too long and no job too big or too small. It pleases me to see so many of his and our farmer friends here to-night and to realise the respect in which he is held. Mark is definitely the father of the country side of our business, and I believe he is also the father of the whole of the United Dairies, although I have not been able to verify this latter statement. I know that Mr Hattersley in London has a long record with the Aylesbury Dairy Company, but I believe Mr Churchill's period of service is a year longer than Mr Hattersley's. Throughout the counties of Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire, our guest is known as Mark and nothing could show more plainly than that how highly esteemed he is".

Turning to Mr Churchill, Mr Maggs thanked him for his long service and loyalty to United Dairies and hoped that in the more restful days to come he would keep the cheery smile and youthful gait which were so characteristic of him. Mr Maggs thereupon presented to Mr Churchill a wallet of notes and a framed illuminated address, in which the Directors and other officials of the Company expressed their congratulations to him on completion of fifty five years' service. Immediately afterwards, Mr Walter Beadon, on behalf of the staff and workmen at Semley, presented Mr Churchill with a tantalus, upon which was an inscription extending the donor's hearty good wishes.

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