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# Agribusiness NZ



## English family celebrates 125 years of farming same land

[NZ Farmer](#), [New Zealand](#), General News, [Diane Bishop](#)

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# English family celebrates 125 years of farming same land

It's been 125 years since the English family first settled at Dipton West. **Diane Bishop** reports.

**F**IFTH generation farmer Louis English is continuing a family tradition of farming at Dipton West.

His Rosedale property has been farmed by his family for 125 years and has well-known political ties.

His uncles – Bill English, the Deputy Prime Minister, and his younger brother, former Federated Farmers chief executive Conor English – were raised on the property along with their 10 siblings.

Farming the same property for more than a century is a major milestone and the English family will be formally recognised at the New Zealand Century Farm and Station Awards in Lawrence on May 23.

Louis English and his wife

Angela milk about 870 Friesian-cross cows on their 335 hectare milking platform at Dipton West Dairies and they expect to produce about 515 kilograms of milk-solids a cow this season.

A wintering barn, built in 2012, has enabled the cows to be housed during the colder months and they receive a significant premium for the out-of-season milk they supply to Fonterra.

While now a high-producing dairy farm, sheep were the main source of income on Rosedale Farm in the late 1800s.

Originally swampland, the 240ha property was granted to John Morrison under the Southland Wasteland Act in 1873, but a year later he sold the farm to the Rose brothers – George, William,

Andrew and David.

The brothers were declared

bankrupt sometime before 1890 when Louis' great-great-grandfather Richard English bought Rosedale Farm from the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Company, the previous year having bought all of the Rose brothers' sheep.

Richard English, originally from Tipperary, Ireland, arrived in New Zealand around 1863 or 1864.

It was assumed, although not confirmed, that he followed the gold rush to Victoria where he met his future wife Mary Jane Casey.

Richard was heavily involved in the creation of the Dipton Channel, which helped drain the swamp land and ensure Rosedale was able to be farmed efficiently.

"It [Rosedale] was pretty wet country," his great-grandson

Hamish English says. "Richard drained the property and started developing it."

Following Richard's death in 1906, Mary-Jane continued to run the farm until the following year when their eldest son William took over the mortgage.

William also had another farm in the area and in 1919 sold Rosedale to his brother Vincent, who had returned from serving in World War I.

Vincent English, a bachelor, sold Rosedale to his nephew Mervin and new wife Norah in 1944.

Mervin and Norah farmed Rosedale with their children: Richard, Mary, Anne, Norah, Elizabeth, Veronica, Mervyn, Vincent, Hamish, Bill, Dermot and Conor.

They farmed sheep and grain, importing the machinery for their

granary from England in 1966.

A decade later they built a new woolshed on Rosedale, helped by their 12 children.

In 1993 Hamish English and his wife Kathleen and their three children – Annie, Louis and James – bought Rosedale.

"My brothers were interested in doing other things," Hamish says.

The original homestead was bought by Hamish's brother, Bill English, and his wife, Mary, who still spend some of their holidays there.

Hamish and Kathleen farmed about 2000 ewes and about 60ha of wheat and barley a year.

However, after many tough years farming sheep and low grain prices they converted Rosedale to a dairy farm in 1999, becoming the first farmers in the Dipton area to do so.

"Sheep farming was a real struggle in the 80s and 90s," Hamish says. "We have a much more sustainable business now –

we weren't thinking so much about succession then but it's made it a lot easier."

The transition to dairy farming was made easier by Hamish's supportive father Mervin who remained on the farm into his 80s.

"He supported the move – he was always interested in farm development projects."

In 2012 Hamish's son, Louis, bought Rosedale where he now lives with wife Angela and their two children – Harriet, nearly two, and Robert, five months, who are the sixth generation.

That same year they built the wintering barn, after previously wintering the cows on crop, and



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will calve the cows inside if they have a wet spring.

"The wintering barn has given us another 30 days in milk, it's brilliant," Louis says.

Louis and Angela target high production from their cows and feed canola and wheat pellets in the shed while supplementing their pasture-based diet with palm kernel and silage.

They have also grown 20ha of fodder beet for the first time this season and will lift it and feed it to the cows in the wintering barn as they require.

**The wintering barn has given us another 30 days in milk, it's brilliant.**

**LOUIS ENGLISH**

## MILESTONES

Thirty farming families will be formally acknowledged at the 10th NZ Century Farm and Station Awards in Lawrence on May 23.

Chairman Symon Howard said of the 30 families receiving awards, 10 were from the North Island.

Five of the families would receive sesquicentennial awards, which acknowledged 150 years of farming the same land, including the Lochart family, of Milton.

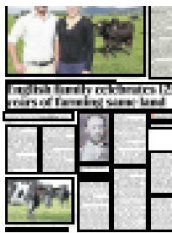
"Farming is a big part of New Zealand's history and it's important we keep this history and keep the awards going," he said.

Howard said the organising committee was looking at setting up a building in Lawrence to hold all the archives of the families that had been presented with awards and it was hoped this would happen by the end of the year.

About 320 farming families have received century or sesquicentennial awards since the awards started.

Fifth generation farmer Louis English, with his wife Angela, is focused on achieving high milk production on Rosedale Farm.





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**Fifth generation farmer Louis English, with his wife Angela, is focused on achieving high milk production on Rosedale Farm.**



**Richard English, originally from Ireland, bought Rosedale Farm in 1890.**



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