

Monday - Wash Day!

Monday as Wash Day is now a thing of the past- thank goodness.

In fact, I doubt if many young people today have any idea of how Wash Day disrupted families of most over-seventies, when they were young people.

Compare the following with the modern practice of putting a load at any time of day into automatic washing machine, selecting mode, temperature and spin speed, adding soap powder, softener if wanted, pushing button to start and leaving until cycle is finished, usually around one hour.

Next washing is moved into dryer installed close-by and ironing is not even required for most modern materials.

'Washing' took precedence over all other activities on Monday- cold meat etc left over from Sunday, was usually served up at lunch time with rice the common 'pudding' in many households.

First there was the rush to light the copper and get the wash started as early as possible to make most of drying conditions, as clothes wrung by hand or even through the wringer retained far more moisture than those spun in our automatic machines. They were heavier and more cumbersome to hang out on lines.

Early families boiled the clothes, starting with whites, some of which had been soaked in cold water to remove stains first, many using home made soap, and removing them from the copper with a long stick.

It always astounded me how women lifted those awkward, heavy loads of sheets with boiling soapy water pouring from them and remained unharmed. Even getting clothes rinsed in cold water and then wrung out by hand before draping over the clothesline was hard work, especially when pregnant, unwell or elderly.

Many housewives draped washing over various bushes to absorb their scents, or small bags of dried herbs, especially lavender, were placed in linen cupboards, wardrobes or drawers.

Long, straight clothes-lines in the back garden would be filled with white sheets, towels, table linen, best white clothing, followed by coloured items and finally the darker work clothing. Scrubbing boards - usually wooden, but glass ones were popular, and I've heard of corrugated iron ones - were a necessity beside all wash tubs for removing heavy stains and dirt from work clothes.

Last to be hung were the items needing special attention - woollen articles, socks, best clothing, delicate materials and elaborate items.

Later in the day, if the weather had been kind with sun and breeze, the sorting and folding began for clothes requiring airing in the super-heater cupboard, or hanging on the long airing racks suspended from kitchen ceiling where heat from the coal range collected.

Separate piles of items for ironing were made- some being sprinkled with water and rolled to allow moisture to spread evenly for easier ironing; or even dipped into starch solution for better and firmer finish - especially the white detachable collars which were sold two to a shirt; and items requiring mending, patching or darning put aside for attention.

Ironing was usually set down for Tuesday, and the resumption of general household cleaning etc. with mending and darning being usually done by hand after tea at night.



Over the years various types of washing machines were invented, but with the Depression days of 1930's and World War 2 these were generally beyond the financial means of most. Washing machines were usually of the plunger type with three heads that moved up and down in the water to swirl the clothes.

Agitator and wringer models became common after the war.

From the mid 1930's, my mother did the washing in a lean-to against the back wall of a small cottage, heating water in a copper to wash by hand for a rapidly growing family and a husband who worked off farm.

On moving to Dunedin in 1940, she was astounded by the competition between nearby housewives to have sheets etc on their clotheslines earliest on Monday. She finally concluded that some must have started surreptitiously on Sunday or even Saturday night to have it out so early - even if they had washing machines.



Whiteness of sheets was also noted, and that final rinse with Reckitts Blue to add brightness was considered absolutely essential.

My mother continued to wash by hand until after the sixth child was born in 1946, though she had a plunger, similar to those in early washing machines, on a long handle, to plunge up and down to move the clothes around the tub. The purchase of a new agitator washing machine with a wringer was greatly appreciated.

I recall my mother using the liquid drained off from boiled rice as an emergency starch, I've often wondered if this had been an economy practiced on starched collars, cuffs, or even the starched table cloths in her younger days. On asking others have found this was a common practice.

In our family, Saturday morning was when we changed our bed-linen, swept, mopped and dusted our bedrooms, and helped with other household chores around the house to ensure everything was clean and shining, and cake tins filled for Sunday.

Saturday night was bath-night, so all clothes were added to the large collection already in the washhouse, ready for an early start on Monday morning.

Sunday was a day for church, family and visiting relatives- certainly not sports, gardening, knitting, playing cards or similar activities.

When I was married at the end of the 1950's my washhouse had a copper for boiling clothes, but was quickly removed for use elsewhere, as I had a new Beattie agitator washing machine and lots of hot water from the cylinder by the enamelled coal range.

With that machine I found the weekly Monday wash of several large loads with a cold water rinse following the 5-6 minute wash cycle, then another with Reckitts blue could be done in two hours or so, provided there were no interruptions - but found the wringer a source of danger for small children- one getting his arm caught in it and a larger one quickly reversing the action to get the smaller one's arm out. .

When the changeover to the automatic machine came, I was delighted with the much lighter loads of washing for

hanging out, faster drying times, the convenience of coming home to find a load waiting to be hung out, but I still miss being able to clean up a washing backlog in around two hours.

This is particularly so when family come to stay - parents and children now have at least one shower each day using minimum of one towel each time, and frequent changes of clothes from skin out.

Changing life styles have made one wash day per week impossible, but I liked getting it all done in one longer session, and the ironing with it.

There are downsides to my automatic washing machine - I miss being able to use really hot water for washing sheets, towels, and especially tea towels etc but I wouldn't be without it.

I can manage without the dryer as I much prefer washing to be dried outdoors, in the sunshine for preference, as sunshine has long been recognised as having the power to destroy many germs and it does it for free.

Food for thought- No longer do we see mattresses, and bedding, window drapes, carpets and mats being thoroughly aired in sunshine and wind at spring-cleaning time - are we the better or worse off for it.?



Brinkworth Bale Loader and Stacker

by Richard Robinson

At a "New Zealand Made Farm Machinery" weekend near Christchurch Lewis Brinkworth, Matamata, exhibited a bale loader and stacker invented by his father Robert Harold Brinkworth. The identification plate on the stacker read "B. I. L. (Bisley Industries Ltd) Bisley Brinkworth Pat. Bale loader and Stacker, N.Z. Distributors, Bisley & Co. Hamilton.N.Z.

Bob Brinkworth patented his idea in 1946. The concept of hay bale loader was not new but the practice at the time was to have a loader attached to the side of a truck. When the truck was full the side loader had to be taken off to enable the load to be taken through gateways to the barn. Bob's system not only did not have to be detached but also assisted in the stacking in the barn. It was powered by an air-cooled Villers Mark 10 engine which produced 1 horse power at 2000 rpm or 1.3hp at 3000 rpm, driving the reversible gearbox by Vee-belt. The rig was lowered to the ground in front of the truck to pick up the bales then raised at the stack, motion reversed and used as an elevator.

Bisley Industries Ltd manufactured and distributed the loader in New Zealand. It was also patented overseas and produced by a number of firms. The main ones were Gippsland & Northern Co-op Ltd in Melbourne and Steel Fabricators (Cardiff) Ltd in Wales.

Footnote: Picking up hay bales with a loader attached to a truck brings back many memories. I was able to borrow one from a neighbour. The driver had the easy job until he lost the load then he had the task of throwing them back up to the stacker on the truck. We had a town friend staying who was conned into driving the truck. He thought it was great being out on the farm on a fine day helping. He was having the time of his life speeding around picking up hay bales. Unfortunately he forgot that the person on the back needed a little time to stack the bales. Bales were going in all directions.

