

Evenings such as these often found their way into Alice's diary. Her brothers and sister, as she described them, worked hard for their parents, but played hard too. Although she had no formal schooling, she found little about which to complain. In later life, she reflected on her childhood in isolated Martins Bay: '... people who live in lon[e]ly places often read and study more than those who live in towns, and have many things to distract their minds from study.'⁴⁵ Her childhood had left her with few regrets, despite its apparent limitations.

The Welchs and McKenzies may have been exceptional families, and again, they may not have been. Too few families have left the kinds of records that would allow historians to make sweeping generalisations about the quality of family relationships on New Zealand's turn-of-the-century farms. What these records do tell us, though, are the possibilities: that it was possible for children to work hard, to play hard, and to have reasonably strong bonds with their parents and siblings in spite of the rigours of life on the farm. Unfortunately, there are not enough records available to tell us what relationship a family's economic position bore to that family's ability to provide a stimulating home life to its children. In a poor share-milker's home, there may have been less food to eat and less milk to drink, but how much love and affection there was remains a mystery. What we do know is that New Zealand's sons and daughters generally survived and many thrived, but often chose in later life to leave the farm behind. That they did so is both a testament to their parents' efforts on their behalf, as well as to the difficulties that their parents' choice of an agricultural life imposed.

REFERENCES

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- 2 *New Zealand official yearbook* (1905), 607.
- 3 Jeanine Graham, 'Country Children: Part two,' *New Zealand genealogist* (March-April 1992), p.86.
- 4 Rollo Arnold, *Settler Kaponga 1881-1914: A frontier fragment of the Western World* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1997), p.181.