

SOME BONDS WERE NEVER  
MEANT TO BE BROKEN

# A DAIRY STORY



ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT  
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## ELECTRONIC PRESS KIT: A DAIRY STORY

### LOGLINE:

Every day, thousands of dairy calves are separated from their mothers at birth. One Scottish farm risks everything to prove there's another way.

### SHORT SYNOPSIS (100 WORDS)

Wilma and David Finlay are challenging dairy farming's most controversial practice: separating calves from their mothers at birth. Filmed over two years, A Dairy Story reveals the couple's determination to reinvent dairy farming by putting nature and animal welfare first, and their herd's profound capacity for maternal care. When Wilma receives a terminal cancer diagnosis, their mission to encourage industry adoption of cow-with-calf dairy systems takes on new urgency. This thought-provoking story shows how changing a farming system changes everything; from the lives of the animals to the wellbeing of the farmers, and perhaps the future of dairy farming itself.

HIGH RES STILLs DOWNLOAD: [Dropbox](#)

TRAILER: <https://vimeo.com/1100054090/2345a0dd85>

CONTACT: Lorna Young, Producer, [info@laverockproductions.com](mailto:info@laverockproductions.com) +44 7872 492 283

FESTIVAL STATUS: World premiere announcement pending. International premiere available.

LAVEROCK PRODUCTIONS: <https://www.laverockproductions.com>



## FILM SPECIFICATIONS

**Runtime:** 78 minutes

**Sound:** 5.1

**Completion:** August 2025

**Language:**

**Shooting Format:** 4K Digital

English with optional subtitles available

**Aspect Ratio:** 2:1

**Available Formats:** DCP

## LONG SYNOPSIS (250 WORDS)

Every day, thousands of dairy calves are separated from their mothers at birth. A Dairy Story follows a husband-and-wife team as they risk everything to prove there's another way.

Over 20 years David and Wilma Finlay transformed their farm in southwest Scotland from conventional to regenerative and, most radically, pioneering commercial scale cow-with-calf dairy farming. Their path hasn't been easy. They faced criticism and ridicule from their intensive dairy neighbours and almost went bankrupt proving it could work.

Filmed over two years with unprecedented access, A Dairy Story captures Wilma and David's determination to reinvent dairy farming; challenging industry norms by putting nature and animal welfare first by keeping dairy cows and their calves together. When Wilma receives a terminal cancer diagnosis, their mission to encourage wider industry adoption of cow-with-calf systems takes on new urgency. Following calves from birth to weaning, we see the herd's profound capacity for maternal care in the sweeping beauty of the Scottish landscape.

This is a story about the bonds that matter most. It addresses universal themes of connection and mortality, and topics of animal sentience, the environment and system change. It introduces us to Lancashire farmers who have been inspired by David and Wilma's work, and we follow David to London as he contributes to the UK Climate Change Committee.

A Dairy Story shows how changing a farming system changes everything; from the lives of the animals to the wellbeing of the farmers, and perhaps even the future of dairy farming itself.



## KEY THEMES

- Animal welfare innovation
- Sustainability and food systems
- Personal courage
- Legacy and mortality

## WHY THIS STORY MATTERS

At a time when our food systems face unprecedented scrutiny, *A Dairy Story* offers a window into a genuine agricultural innovation that brings a wealth of ecological benefits. Wilma and David's approach, keeping dairy calves with their mothers, challenges fundamental assumptions about farming while proving that compassion and commerce can coexist.

The film reveals the emotional intelligence of dairy cows and behaviours never previously captured on screen. It shows other farmers adopting their methods, international students arriving to learn from their experiences, and government seeking their expertise for climate policy discussions.

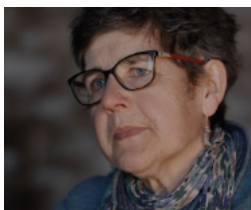
As post-production concluded, the EU committed €3 million to encourage other farmers to adopt cow-with-calf dairy systems. There are more than 7,200 dairy farms in the UK. Only 21 of them follow cow-with-calf management systems and Rainton is the farm that proved cow-with-calf dairy could be done at commercially viable scale.

This family farm in southwest Scotland now finds itself the global epicentre for rethinking dairy farming, challenging conventional wisdom about animal welfare, profitability, and environmental sustainability in equal measure.

Set against the sweeping beauty of the Galloway landscape, *A Dairy Story* is both a poignant portrait of two remarkable people and a hopeful vision for agriculture's future.



## CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS



### WILMA FINLAY

Wilma is a former IT manager who launched a successful ice-cream production and tourism business at Rainton farm. Never comfortable with the industry practice of separating dairy cows from their calves, Wilma encouraged David to explore whether a cow-with-calf dairy system was viable. A passionate advocate for high standards of animal welfare and organic farming methods, her cancer diagnosis adds urgency to their mission to prove their approach can work commercially. Wilma died on 30 March 2025.



### DAVID FINLAY

A third-generation Galloway dairy farmer and a former farm consultant who, over 20 years, has transitioned his farm from conventional dairy to an organic, nature-based, cow-with-calf system. Inspired by Wilma's values, David has become an agricultural innovator and a passionate advocate of regenerative, nature positive farming. His quiet determination and deep understanding of natural processes drives the farm's revolutionary approach.



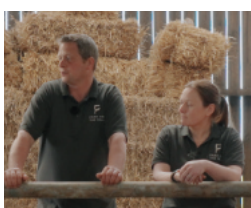
### CHARLES ELLETT

Dairy manager at Rainton Farm whose hands-on experience overseeing the management of the cow-with-calf system provides practical insight into the day-to-day realities of this innovative farming method. Charles previously worked in a 1,000 cow zero-grazing dairy. His experience working at a conventional dairy provides context, and his interpretation of cow behaviours provides rich insight into the sentience and instincts of the cows.



### RUTH LAYTON

A veterinary surgeon, animal food systems specialist and former Chair of the Food Ethics Council with extensive expertise and a global reputation for advancing animal welfare within the food sector. Ruth provides professional context for why the Finlay's approach represents such a significant departure from conventional dairy farming practices.



### MICHAEL & LISA KELSALL

Michael and Lisa Kelsall farm in Lancashire. They used to run an intensive, zero-grazing dairy, and introduced a cow-with-calf system after visiting Rainton farm.



## FILMMAKER'S STATEMENT

We never set out to be filmmakers. We simply wanted to put a window on this remarkable farm.

When Wilma received her cancer diagnosis, we knew that others needed to see what she and David had accomplished over two decades. So, we began documenting.

Our approach was simple: step back, stay quiet, and let the farm speak for itself. At all times we were mindful that we were guests in the cows and calves' home. Nothing was staged. Nothing was hurried. We followed the seasons, the animals, and Wilma and David's lead, allowing their story to unfold in its own time and on its own terms.

Every creative decision was guided by respect for the farm, the animals, and Wilma and David's mission.

Several high-profile films have shone a spotlight on animal welfare issues in the dairy industry. This is a film about a potential solution, developed by two people who chose to trust nature over industry convention. Our role was never to impose a narrative or an agenda, but to create space for an important story to breathe.

We set out to tell the story of the transformation of a farm. What we captured was so much more. At its heart this film asks what makes a life worth living. In Wilma and David's love for each other, and in the bonds between the dairy cows and their calves, we find an answer.

The result is what we hope feels less like a documentary and more like an invitation to step inside a world where doing the right thing matters more than doing what's expected.

**Ian Findlay & Lorna Young**

## PRODUCTION NOTES

A Dairy Story was filmed over two years using primarily a single camera approach that prioritised minimal interference with the farm's daily operations. The production team spent extensive time building trust with both the farm team and their animals. To minimise stress for the cows and calves we moved slowly with intention and gentleness, building trust through familiarity. This rewarded us with unprecedented access to intimate moments between dairy cows and their calves.

The documentary incorporates archive footage by Sid Ambrose and Bruce McKenzie, which provides historical context for David and Wilma's pioneering work.

Filming took place across all seasons, capturing the full cycle of farm life from spring calving through winter housing.

The production was guided by a commitment to animal welfare, with all filming conducted in accordance with the farm's existing low-stress routines and the animals' comfort levels.

## FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

### IAN FINDLAY - Director/Cinematographer/Editor

A Dairy Story is Ian's directorial debut.

Ian is an award-winning designer and photographer whose eye for composition has translated naturally to moving image. Based in southwest Scotland, Ian brings a distinctive observational approach to documentary filmmaking, which is enhanced by a deep understanding of place.

His expertise in visual storytelling, combined with a gentle commitment to minimal interference and maximum observation, enabled the capture of beautifully authentic footage of the people and animals on the farm. This included footage never before documented, including maternal behaviour within a commercial milking herd.

NOTE: There is no familial relationship between the Director and the subjects of A Dairy Story. Findlay and Finlay are common names in southwest Scotland.

### LORNA YOUNG - Writer/Producer

Lorna is a marketing strategist and economic development consultant, with a degree in Film & Media from the University of Stirling. Her understanding of factual storytelling and emotional connections shaped the narrative of A Dairy Story. With a marketing career informed by early work in journalism, she recognises the importance of communicating stories of innovation and courage.

As Producer of A Dairy Story, Lorna navigated the balance of documenting a working farm while respecting its operations and animal welfare. Her established relationships with the farm team, and her parallel work, editing Wilma and David's memoir of the same name, facilitated the candid access that gives the film its emotional resonance.

Lorna and Ian have collaborated on creative communication projects for more than 15 years.

## ORIGINAL SCORE by Finlay Harrison and Lewis Findlay

Talented young Scottish composers and musicians, both graduates of Riverside Music College near Glasgow. The end credits music, 'Living with Shadows', was written by Finlay Harrison for their former band Cloaks.

## ARCHIVE FOOTAGE by Sid Ambrose and Bruce McKenzie

Galloway film makers who were commissioned by Wilma and David to document the start of their radical transformation of Rainton Farm. Filming of the cow-with-calf pilot itself did not take place, but the archive footage provides valuable insight into the couple's hopes at the start of their transformation, and the extent of their infrastructure investment to support the project.

# IMPACT STATEMENT

## Changing the Conversation Around Dairy Farming

A Dairy Story arrives at a critical moment when consumers are increasingly questioning the origins of their food and the welfare of farm animals. By documenting the first commercially viable cow-with-calf dairy system in Europe, this film provides a tangible example of how agriculture can evolve to meet both economic and ethical demands.

## Industry Influence

As evidenced by the EU's €3 million investment in cow-with-calf research (which the Rainton farm team are involved in) and the growing number of farmers adopting similar approaches, the film documents a movement that is already influencing agricultural policy and practice across Europe. As the industry stands at a crossroads, Wilma and David's model presents a potential path forward that balances economic viability with ethical considerations.

## Consumer Awareness

Understanding of animal sentience has transformed in recent years. This documentary shows the emotional lives of dairy cows and their calves in a way never before captured on film. With agriculture under scrutiny for its environmental impact, Rainton demonstrates how working with natural systems rather than against them can benefit land and livestock.

## Universal Themes

Beyond agriculture, the film explores themes of courage, integrity, and the personal cost of pioneering change, making it relevant to anyone facing the challenge of standing up for their beliefs.





## QUOTES FROM THE FILM

### Charles Ellett:

So in a normal system, calves are taken off mum at anything within two hours. Could be even sooner, to be honest, people do what's called snatch calving, where they literally take the calf away, straight away, at the point of birth.

### Ruth Layton:

They have a whole social structure and hierarchy that develops and evolves over time. And we're breaking that all the time. We're breaking that.

### David Finlay:

It was probably as bleak a time as I can remember in farming, where we had committed ourselves to doing something which was controversial, and a lot of people were praying that it would fail.

### Wilma Finlay:

It's lovely when you see them all together. Just that whole behavioural thing that just the natural instincts coming out in them. Yeah, the cows have changed. The calves obviously don't know any different.

### David Finlay:

The thing is you've got to stand up and say what you're doing and what you're achieving otherwise nothing will change, you know. Half the point of what we're doing is to try to bring about change, but if you keep it a secret then you might well as not even have bothered in the first place.

### Wilma Finlay:

I think of all the changes at Rainton, this one, the cow with calf one is the huge one, because it's really not been done at a similar scale to us - yet. So that has been something that to be really, really proud of even though it's come with a lot of flack.