Switch to Dairy Farming: William jnr, the eldest son gradually took over the running of the farm. In 1864, he imported from Sweden the first cream separator to be used in the Northern District. By 1890 the farm totalled 103 acres following purchases of two nearby farms. By 1893 the dairy herd contained over 100 Alderney cows and supplied dairy products to Newcastle, Plattsburg and Wallsend were supplied by boat via Ironbark Creek.

Disaster Strikes: In 1893 flood waters covered Ash Island to a depth of six feet and all but 14 of Milham’s cows were drowned. Many Ash Island farmers were ruined but William Milham jnr, his wife Ruby and children, Ethel and Walter stayed on.

Farm continues under Murison name: William Milham snr (see picture) died in 1907, aged 87. William jnr died in 1913, aged 57 and Walter took over the farm. When he died childless in a horse accident in 1919, his sister Ethel and her husband, Alexander Murison took over the farm then known as ‘Errington’. They tried to keep the farm going, but as floods became more frequent, the land became more degraded.

1955 Flood - the last straw: The farm was completely ruined in the 1955 flood and the Murison’s sold it to the NSW Government for industrial purposes. The house was partially demolished by Public Works in the 1970s to deter squatters.

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The story of the Milham family gives insights into the early farming practices and social life of the time.
The Milham Family

England to Ash Island:
In 1838, at the age of 18, William Milham, his father, Uriah, and 9 siblings migrated to Sydney from Sussex. The Milham family took up a farming lease first at 'Leigh Farm' north of Raymond Terrace, then at 'Burrowl' near Seaham.

By 1849 William Milham had married Ann Robinson Miller and become a tenant farmer of A W Scott on Ash Island, then a lush and beautiful place. He built a two roomed wood slab hut with a separate kitchen near a well and two pear trees.

Farming Freehold:
By 1864 Scott was in financial trouble and William Milham purchased 26 acres with money he is said to have made at the gold diggings. William was one of the first freehold farmers on Ash Island.

Milham's Farmhouse:
By 1866 the Milham's had six living children and had outgrown the slab hut. William then built a two storey sandstone and sea-shell mortar house, approximately 120 feet east of the new dairy, with a verandah facing the river. An iron kitchen, bathroom and laundry were added to the new house. A verandah across the rear of the old dairy provided a place to store hay and feed. The interior of the new house was reminiscent of the old slab hut.

Points of Interest:
1. Well and William's Pear Tree: The well and 160 year old William's pear tree mark the site of the original farmhouse built in the late 1840s. It was a typical two room wood slab hut.
2. Sandstone Farmhouse: Built in the 1860s, the house was of sandstone transported from Muree quarry near Raymond Terrace by bullock dray then by river to the site. Seashell was not uncommon in mortar and indicates either that dredged sand or shell was used to produce lime to help set the mortar.
3. Drain and floodgate on west side of house: This is typical of the drains the farmers of Ash Island dug across their fields to remove excess water. Floodgates such as this old brick and iron one were built to prevent the high tides and floods of the nearby river from entering the property.
4. Old Dairy: About 50 metres north of the original farmhouse stands the remains of the 'old dairy'. In the early days, milk was separated into cream, butter and other dairy products on the island before being taken by boat to markets at Plattsburg & Wallsend via Ironbark Creek. The rectangular recessed enclosure, known as the butter slab, was used to store dairy products prior to marketing. The recessed enclosure, known as the butter slab, was pumped with water to cool the butter and other dairy products on the site. The site is still known as the 'butter slab' and is a popular meeting place for local farmers.
5. Old Milking Shed: Just east of the new dairy is a large concrete slab, known as the 'old milking shed'. This concrete slab was the floor of the old milking shed where 30-40 cows were milked. The ground floor had a sitting room, dining room and a large dormitory style bedroom. All the wood in the house was cedar, with some rosewood. All the wood in the house was cedar with the exception of the扩散 styles. The surrounding areas of the house were surrounded by oak. The house was surrounded by oak trees. The house was surrounded by oak trees.
6. Well and William's Pear Tree: The well and 160 year old William's pear tree mark the site of the original farmhouse built in the late 1840s. It was a typical two room wood slab hut.
7. Depression: Caused by horses walking in circles as they powered the chaff cutter in the nearby shed.
8. New Dairy: About 50 metres east of the old dairy stands the remains of the 'new dairy'. This was built when milking was by machine. Cream and milk were separated and the cream was pumped into the separator. The separator was a large iron cylinder with a revolving drum inside. The cream was pumped into the separator and the remaining milk was pumped into the dairy. The dairy was a large iron cylinder with a revolving drum inside. The cream was pumped into the separator and the remaining milk was pumped into the dairy. The dairy was a large iron cylinder with a revolving drum inside.
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10. Farmhands Quarters: By the mid-1930s, the wooden slab hut used to house workers from the 1860s had become dilapidated. The original farmhouse, the 'old dairy', was re-erected on the site and used as a staff residence. The new house was surrounded by oak trees. The house was surrounded by oak trees.

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England to Ash Island