

# IS THERE MORE TO CLOTHESLINES THAN MEETS THE EYE?

(5 minute read)

## THE BACKGROUND

It is claimed that in the early 1900's the first clothesline was invented. Gilbert Toyne of Melbourne Australia who was a farrier, blacksmith and wheelwright, patented his first Aeroplane Rotatory clothes hoist. Launched in 1911, the design proved to be popular, but somewhat clumsy and incredibly basic. All it was, was a galvanised metal frame atop of a timber post which was attached to a ratcheting mechanism and counterweight.

In its sales booklet in 1913, a photograph showed a future World War One hero John Monash using one in his home garden. An indication that clotheslines were aimed at the rich and wealthy. Toyne's original clotheslines design consisted of there being 5 arms through which the line was threaded. The hoist with its own paved standing area was seen as the hygienic, healthy future.

After WW1 Toyne continued to work to improve his clothes hoist design. By 1926 he had made a major breakthrough and had perfected that raising mechanism, enclosing it entirely with a knuckle on an up right post that was activated with a simple handle. This made the design far more streamlined, neater and a whole lot safer. The clotheslines sales were healthy, with around 200 being manufactured each week by the late 1940's.

In 1941, Toyne's patent for the all-important hoisting mechanism was lapsed, paving way for competitors.

In 1945, the Hill's Hoist was born. Lance Hill discovered a need for a good quality clothesline when he found his wife struggling to hang out the washing on a rope tied between two trees in their back lawn.

With some pipe a welder and an innovative idea, he created what was to become a world famous Australian icon. The word of his invention spread rapidly and by 1946 he was in business making the "Hill's Clothes Hoist".

Stewi Clotheslines were founded soon after, in 1947. Stewi is a Swiss company known for the highest quality clotheslines in the world. It is one of the only clothesline companies in the world whose sole focus is only on clotheslines, and whose clotheslines are still manufactured in the country of their origin – Switzerland.

In 1950, the extruded clothesline made its way into the market. It is made of PVC that is extruded over synthetic fibres or a small wire. This presented many benefits including that it is waterproof and will not rot with extended usage making it much easier to clean than a traditional cotton clothesline. Today the product is most often referred to as standard clothesline wire.

In 1987 Austral Clotheslines was founded in Australia and today they are the only clothesline company that manufactures a full range of clotheslines in Australia. This means they are sustainably made and designed for harsh conditions. They are a high end brand, durable, and also are known for, and have more line space than other brands.

In the 2000's the Hills Clothesline brand was sold to a Co-operation in the US when the brand transformed from an old world manufacture to an up and coming Technology Company. This company now specializes in security systems, healthcare technology and audio-visual products, meaning that clotheslines don't exactly fit into their new product range. Hills Clotheslines also outsourced manufacturing to China in the mid 2000's, throwing sustainability and durability out the window in hopes of profitability while chasing their new high-tech ventures. As an Australian publicly traded company, the stock has long traded for pennies, so it was not long after they sought cheap Chinese labour that they were desperate to rid themselves of the Hill's Clotheslines products, less than 10 years. After a failed partnership with Woolworths in 2014, they eventually sold the iconic Australian Hills Clotheslines to a publicly traded US company.

## **CLOTHESLINES TODAY**

Pegging your clothes on an outdoor line saves you hundreds of dollars a year. The average cost of using a dryer is around \$1 for a load according to energy wise and a BRANZ study found that the average New Zealander creates 0.35 loads of washing a day. That works out to be at least \$130 a year in drying costs per person - \$520 for a family of four. But it's free when hanging the clothes outside.

From 1945 to today clotheslines are definitely a family staple. Nowadays when the materials used to manufacture them are of far better quality it's hardly surprising that they last a lot longer and far are more widely known. These days there is also far more brands and a vast range of different clotheslines available. There are indoor and outdoor ones, retractable and foldaway, rotary and fixed, covered ones and mobile ones, along with colonial clothes airers and pulley drying racks and of course a variety of accessories. All are very popular with home owners, and are seen as sustainable eco-friendly alternatives to the electric clothes dryer.

## **CLOTHESLINES FUTURE (EXISTENCE & SUSTAINABILITY)**

Clotheslines are viewed as the most sustainable way to dry our clothes. Although it isn't the quickest, it is by far the cheapest and arguably the most popular. Electric clothes dryers or tumble dryers as they are generally called, come with substantial cost, they are harmful to the environment, noisy and hot. Clotheslines on the other hand are free to run, and don't harm the environment. They allow you to get outside and enjoy the sun whilst pegging your clothes out. If they are strategically placed so the weather can positively influence the drying time of the clothes, then clotheslines are an absolute necessity.

The future of clotheslines is undefined. Apart from a number of improvements, the actual idea and concept of clotheslines remains the same from 1945 to today, perhaps because it is just so good at what it does! In a study conducted in the US during 2018, it was discovered that hanging your clothes outside on the clothesline does not impact the environment at all. This is in contrast to the clothes dryer, which uses a significant amount

## WHY SWIFTDRY?

Born in 2011, SwiftDry Clotheslines started manufacturing the Linear T Bar clothesline that proved popular for its simplicity yet very strong steel design. Since then it has brought to market multiple high end clothesline product designs, and is continuing to do so.

SwiftDry's focus is on designing high quality premium clotheslines in direct relation to customer needs and wants. They are especially designed for NZ's coastal towns and cities, where ultra-sturdy and rust proof products are an absolute must to stand the test of time. With various sizes, colours, and styles, SwiftDry also offers an opportunity for you to choose and customise your line or rack to suit your architecture or landscape.

The full range SwiftDry Clotheslines offers include other brands such as Stewi and Austral, specifically chosen for their long standing reputation for quality, being some of the earliest brands to market in history. SwiftDry hand selects products for its range that not only have proven quality, but also made in sustainable environments, and for the most part, are manufactured in Australia, New Zealand, and Switzerland, with some componentry from China and India.

Air-drying clothes is not only part of our Kiwi heritage, it makes a positive contribution to our environment, and to household budgets, and SwiftDry Clotheslines NZ has taken these ideals to heart. More than that, understand the day-to-day satisfaction of bringing in clothes that smell great and feel soft – in a way that only natural drying methods can produce.

SwiftDry wants to offer you a comprehensive range that whatever your final choice, you will have peace of mind knowing that if came from SwiftDry, it just has to be good!