

MOUNT PLEASANT

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT



Mount Pleasant from Radio Hill, Muswellbrook. December 2013

Prepared for

Rio Tinto Coal Australia

by

Rob Tickle

2004 (Reviewed 2014)

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He has written and compiled a number of publications on local and family history, they include:

- Weidmann Cottage and its Owners
- Biographical Register of Muswellbrook and District Vol.1
- Post Offices and Telephone Exchanges in the Muswellbrook District.
- Convict Ships – an Alphabetical List
- Sale – Estate of the late Thomas Cook
- Donations of Muswellbrook & Denman Districts, 1914
- Notes of a Trip Through the Northern District
- Building Census of Birralee Street, Muswellbrook
- The Denman Disaster – The Great Denman Fire 1928
- 1903 Electoral Roll for Denman, Kayuga, Muscle Ck, Muswellbrook and Wybong.
- Kayuga Cemetery

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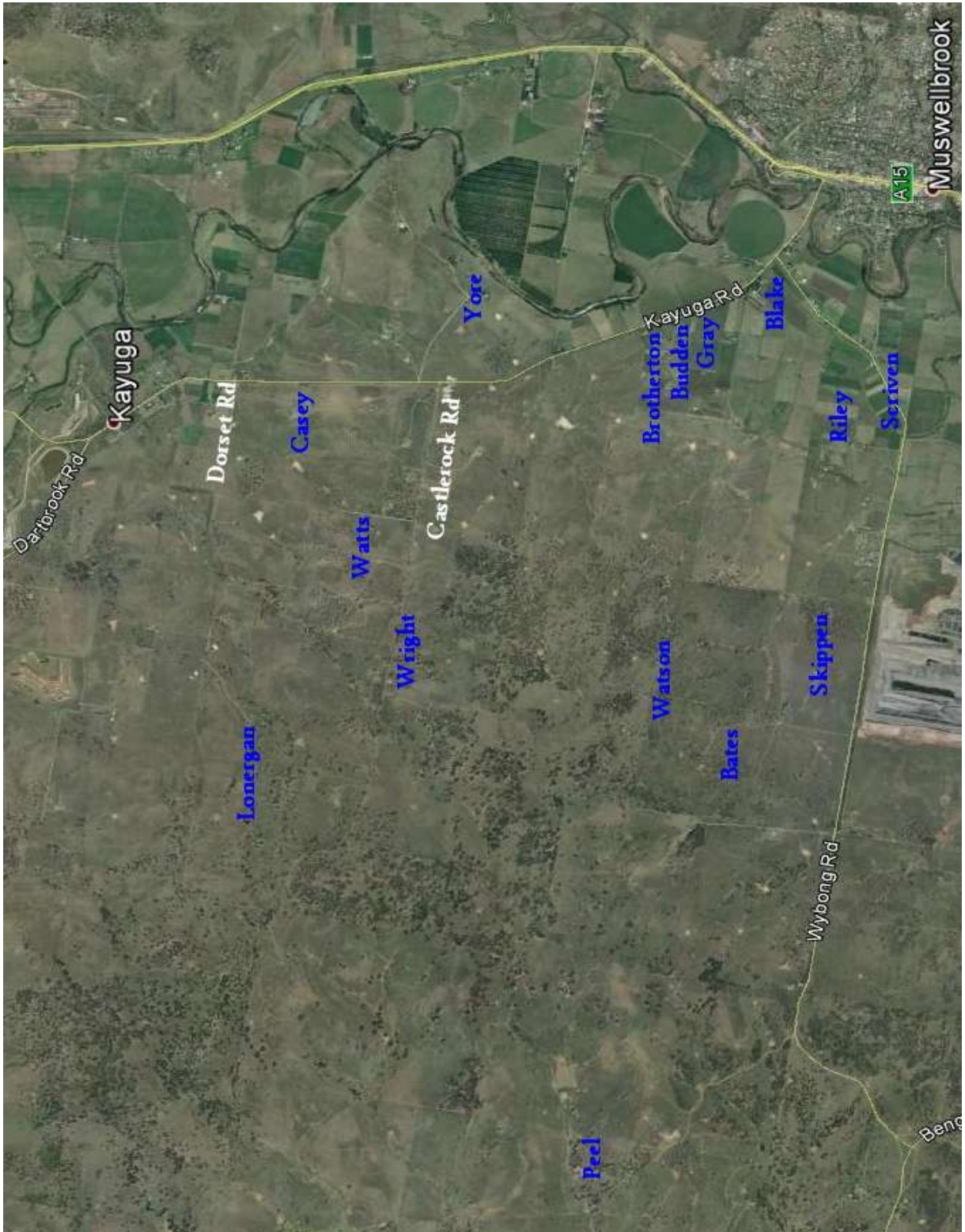
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Map in Google Earth showing the area where persons interviewed had lived.

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INTRODUCTION

Section 4.3.4 of Coal & Allied Operation's (a Rio Tinto Coal Australia managed company) original Mt Pleasant Development Consent (DA 92/97) stated that a qualified person is to prepare an oral history of the area before local residents are dispersed. A copy of this report is to be made available to Muswellbrook Local & Family History Society, Muswellbrook Shire Council and Planning NSW. The September 2011 modification to this Development Consent, retained a similar condition (Schedule 3, Condition 35 d), that an oral history should be included within a detailed history to be prepared for the Mount Pleasant locality. This is the resulting document.

The first interview, with Dawn and Eddie Watson, was conducted in November 2002, and over the next thirteen months, 16 families were interviewed. Initially, it was intended to interview many more people, but those interviewed have provided an excellent history of the area and the people involved. To continue interviewing would create repletion of information.

The main area of interest was bounded by Wybong Road, Kayuga Road, Dorset Road and west to 'Broomfield'. Some of the people have lived within that area for a number of generations. Others have lived in the district and moved there after purchasing land. A few came from well outside this district to leave their mark.

I would like to thank all who agreed to be interviewed. For some to sit in front of a tape recorder was an ordeal, for others it was a wonderful opportunity to yarn. All interviewees were aware that they were recording history and at the same time creating history. This is a historic document, which will provide a rare insight into a period of this districts history.

It will also provide a rare insight into peoples' lives and I impress on the readers of this report to use discretion with the information provided. This report illuminates lifestyles that are disappearing, and hardships that are not comprehensible to many people. I hope that this report will be of value to further study of the district and that it will encourage people to record their history.

Rob Tickle
January 2004 (reviewed 2014)

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Interviewee: Col & Gaye Bates

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lot 63 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 13 August 2003

Venue for Interview: 900 Wybong Road, Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

What is your full name?

CB: Colin Francis Bates

Your parent's names.

CB: Dorothy Violet Bates and Colin Benjamin Bates

Your mother's maiden name.

CB: Dorothy Dever.

Do you have any brothers and sisters?

CB: Yes I have one brother Larry James and Cathy Faye

What's the order, are you the eldest?

CB: Yes I'm the eldest, then my sister and then my brother. Cathy is five years younger than me and Larry is five years younger than her.

I know your father was a local, was your mother a local?

CB: No not really she came from Merriwa, Singleton, everywhere, she was born in Greta and then they went to Plashett at Jerry's Plains, Merriwa and then back into here.

You were born in Muswellbrook

CB: Yes, at the old Orwell Hospital which has been pulled down. Its gone.

Where did you come from Gaye?

GB: Denman, I was born at Denman but originally came from Giant's Creek. Had a very short stay in Muswellbrook and then moved back to Denman.

What was your maiden name?

GB: Cox

Are you connected to the Negoa Cox?

GB: No, my family came from Gungah, my father's name was Archie, Archibald and lived in Denman.

How many children do you have?

CB: We had five, only got four left.

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Where did you go to school?

CB: Muswellbrook High, I dropped out in second year, half way through second year. Couldn't even get a job in the cordial factory.

What did you do?

CB: I went to Penfold's vineyard, put my age up two years so I'd get a decent wage and from there I went, was there for about nine months, and went back and got a job with Muswellbrook Engineering, done my trade as a boilermaker and Trevor promised me the bloody world. From there I went to Theiss's, no I went to Denman and worked for myself, couldn't do no good out there, then I went to Theiss's for 18 months then back to Muswellbrook Engineering for about another 18 months, two years then I left there and started working for myself. Trevor kept promising promising just more responsibility and no more money. I just snatched it.

I should have asked how old are you?

CB: 53

You didn't get called up.

CB: No, my birthday there was, my birthday is on the 16th July and there was one on the 15th and one on the 17th, one each side.

Were you pleased with that or disappointed?

CB: I was pleased, if my number had come out I would've went, but wasn't keen on it, no no. Like I think the fellows that went, I don't think they got their rewards for going like they should have got for going. Like I feel that the government at the time was flogging the young people more than they should and I think it was bloody wrong, dead wrong.

We might go back a bit, what did your dad do?

CB: He worked up at the Muswellbrook Pit, he worked in the underground for a while then he went into the, used to make the power up there, power generation part of it, stoking the boilers and cleaning up, what ever.

So on the Bates side, do you know who your grandparents were?

CB: Yes, Jimmie Bates.

What was his wife's name?

CB: No, Ada, can't remember now.

The Bates go back a long way here.

CB: Yes. Was Ada Colson her maiden name, they used to live across from where the RSL was, straight across the road and the house, I'll tell you who used to live in it, old bloody, what's his name, Cook, used to sell the AMP.

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A Spanish style house.

CB: That's it, that's it, was that there when you came here. That's where they used to live. I don't know if it was always that way or not, apparently that where they used to live. Apparently she was only a very small woman.

It and Kennedy's fruit shop were still there when we came. Wooden place.

CB: As long as I can remember he used to bring the fruit around when we used to live in Carl Lane, used to be the baker's shop just up from it, Torpey's. Old Bill used to drive the horse and cart there for awhile.

You didn't have any ambition to go into Muswellbrook Coal. It was almost hereditary for the son to follow the father in the early mines.

CB: I went up there, I was not old enough at the time, I couldn't get a job anywhere, my uncle got me a job out there at Penfold's. On the hoe from bloody seven o'clock to bloody half past four, you didn't get smoko then, you had to take it out of your own time. We would come back to the bachelors quarters and there would be beans and more beans, hot sauce and bloody camp pie every day except, and I think the hot sauce was to keep the flies away. Summertime you would be treading through dust bloody six inches deep but anyway.

Did they have single men's quarters out there?

CB: Yes.

Where there many people working there?

CB: There was 18 to 20 at the time, there were four tractor drivers and the rest were all on hoes or tying up.

Was this the vineyard near Sandy Hollow?

CB: No, the one at Wybong, Garry's got it now, Yarraman Park or something, used to be Penfolds then Rosemount bought it, this other rooster's got it now.

They didn't give you a nip of wine at night.

CB: When I was leaving there they was just starting to dig out for the winery and old Perc McQuigan says if you want to stop here there's a job in the winery for you then, no thanks. I was only in a Trevor's a couple of years and then we went out and put all the, who ever built the place never put all the little lugs for the wind braces on, we went out and were there for about six weeks, you had to put scaffold up and move it around, weld all the lugs on to hold the wind braces on.

When did you buy here?

CB: When was it, 78.

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Who did you buy from?

CB: Kenny Brown, but before that as kids we used to go ferreting and chasing rabbits and a few roos. The only place, there always used to be a lot of rabbits through all this country but, the only place you would get a few roos was over in Broomfield, old Broomfield. Old Les Weidmann had it then.

Did Ken Brown own this country when you were a kid?

CB: I don't know who had it. I know old Humphries used to own this front block but we never knew who owned the other block behind us.

Was that Ken Humphries?

CB: No, it wasn't Ken, no can't remember, I know it wasn't Ken though.

When were the three blocks to the west of here subdivided off?

CB: 90, that was Ken's property there.

The first one is Pearce.

CB: Yes, Pearce next door, then Gampers then Fairclough.

Did they build houses?

CB: Gamper built fairly straight away, so did the top one (Fairclough) there wasn't a house on Pearces. This other block on the side of us, old Frank Carter said he bought that and he never bought it and the next thing I know that Richard Baber had.

The block that Bengalla has next to you.

CB: Yes and I went and seen Richard when I knew he was putting it back on the market, I knew what he paid for it and offered him \$10,000 more but he got more money out of the mines.

Did you buy your property all in one block?

CB: No, the front portion was purchased when the other blocks were subdivided.

So you purchased the back block first.

CB: Yes we've had that block 20 years, 25 years now.

It was all Ken Browns.

CB: Yes

Now you mentioned that there was an old house on here somewhere.

CB: Yes, it was down the back.

Was it still standing?

CB: No, all that was left was the bedding logs and a lot of old rocks. The little hut that's still down there, it's been there ever since I can remember and there used to be another

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one, there's a lot of bricks and a couple of mounds there. I don't know what was ever there, but there must have been some sort, also there was some big post like whether there was a killing yard or whatever I don't know. There was a lot of bricks there and you know how they used to make the old fireplace up from rock and stuff like that and like I said I don't know what was ever there. There used to be another house just here where our house virtually same spot as ours. Used to be a couple of big post here that may have had something to do with yards. We found bits of glass and pottery all broken up. I think they must have had yards here too cause when we were digging here with the backhoe to do the foundations for the house the topsoil was beautiful down about a foot, like it was really good then you got into really hard clay here. Once you leave this bit of a knob and go back that way you get into all black soil again The closer you get to the road the worse it gets and the further you go back, except for one knob up from the old hut, its pretty hard, the rest of the country is all good soft country.

Is the hut down near your sheds?

CB: Yes

Are you leasing this front paddock from Bengalla?

CB: Yes

All these pepper trees in there, was there ever a house in there?

CB: Right down on the road.

Yes

CB: Not that I can remember, back up here in the middle of the paddock there was. You can see old concrete where the old dairy was.

Roughly in the middle of the paddock?

CB: Yes

You mentioned before that there were heaps of other places further back.

Yes there is a lot, nearly every paddock you go, you will find an old building somewhere. Over in Wayne's there is a lot, Wayne Watts, but nearly every paddock you go you will find an old house. Its really surprising the amount of places you will turn up bits and pieces and I will tell you another thing that surprised me.(Col went to shut door, Gaye joined discussion)

GB: Mrs Marr. She lived around, she lived on one of these properties here somewhere and what did she call it, Bollibon or something like that was the name of the property. When we bought it she told us what it was.

CB: Before I forget Rob, nearly everywhere you go and plough or what ever, someone has already been there. Even this front block we ploughed down the bottom, remember the old shear ploughs, I found about three broken, and down the back, everywhere you go and plough or harrow you will always turn up something. So when you think you are doing virgin land, bull shit, somebody's been there before you. Its really surprising cause

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they never had tractors, just horse and single tine furrow or what ever. That's one thing I have found, and even when you start getting around a lot of these blocks you will find bits and pieces. Like the other week I was up the back paddock, I've slashed , I've ploughed and that turned up (old bottle) Where the hell did that turn up from, where was it, I have no idea. Also I don't know whether many other people have said but I think the bloody blackfellas were around this country a lot more than what they want to know. Cause most of the ironbarks, especially this knob here, and back up into Broomfield, if you go around most of these big ironbarks, they can't be all surveyors marks, these bloody big scars and shields of bark probably ten or twelve inches deep where they have carved them out, I don't know, may be I'm barking up the wrong tree. The people that suppose to know what they are doing they didn't even mention them. I don't think they do cause when they came on to our place all they seem to do was walk the road and what really amazed me is when they were coming up this bloody road here, they said here's one here and I said yes all that gravel's been brought here. They would not get off the bloody tracks, like shit, how long have, we've been here bloody 25 years, like now is the time to go looking for stuff, low grass. Rob, Aborigines really fascinate me.

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Interviewee: Frank Blake

Association with Mt Pleasant: No. 59 & 66 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 23 Dec 2003

Venue for Interview: 'Rosebrook' Kayuga Road Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

What year were you born?

1931

Where you born here at Muswellbrook?

No, Denman. My grandfather owned a property near Denman called 'Blakefield'. Grandfather owned a property, which had been part of the 'Piercefield' Estate, people named Withycombe owned it, my grandfather bought the half, which was closest to Denman, or roughly half, the Gilder family bought the other half, which was closet to Muswellbrook with Piercefield homestead, which is still there. As it was called. Piercefield when the estate was broken up my grandfather decided to call his half Blakefield. It's been there ever since, actually my cousin, the homestead block, my cousin Grant Blake lives on the property there, he has a fish farm there as you may well have seen.

My grandfather came up here in the early 1900s and he was actually born in Ireland, his family migrated to the gold diggings at Buninyong, which is close to Ballarat. His father died there and his mother remarried as so often had to happen, as there wasn't any social service. She married a farmer who had a property at Buninyong and his descendants still own the property at Buninyong. Grandfather eventually came up to Sydney and he had a business at Pymble. Makes my mouth water, dad used to say grandfather owned that paddock up along Telegraph Road, which is one of the premier areas there now. That was his turn out paddock and he owned the opposite side of the road down to the railway station where today there is a Catholic church and hotel right down where the siding was, cause everything had to be moved by rail if it was not moved by horses.

Anyway he married a local girl, Cecilia Lofberg, the Lofberg family is still current down there, there is a Lofberg Park and street. Grandfather sold out and sometime in the early 1900s, sold the business down there, sold the property he owned, didn't sell the business actually, sold the property. Came up to Denman and bought part of the property there. He was a veterinary surgeon as well he had livery stable cause he used to hire out horses and carriages, buggies and all those sorts of things and he had a blacksmiths shop and a wheelwright shop, you know, making wheels for sulkies and things. Had a number of people working for him plus a produce business. I know from families in the area, they say everything he touched turned into money. Anyway he moved up to Muswellbrook with his large family and wife and bought the property there and in those days they used to run sheep.

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My mother happened to come up here, dad was born in Sydney as were most of his relations, there were two of them born up here, at least one anyway. My aunt had the Denman Hospital, Kit Rocheford, Katherine Veronica Rocheford was her name and she had the hospital in Denman. Originally it was where the motel is in Denman, opposite the motel actually and later on she leased a site where the present Denman Hospital is, mum came up to visit, met dad and stayed on in Denman. Quite funny to watch in a way that the older people in my age group that are in their seventies knew mum as Sister Rocheford but she never actually had a nursing certificate although my aunt she actually trained, she was born in Sydney, but she trained in Tasmania because instead of a four year course it was three year course. Anyway, Aunty Kit eventually came up to Muswellbrook after having joined the Australian Army Nurses Service in the First World War. She came up to Denman, mum came up, met dad and never moved away. We lived on Blakefield when I was very small, born in the Denman Hospital and later on Dad bought his own farm at Wybong.

Whereabouts was his farm?

It was on the Brogheda Road, there was a property opposite, it might still be called Millfield, you know Mick Le Breton, well the place where Mick lives now, Mick's got a part of it, Dad had 2000 acres or 1900 I think it was, we lived there. We had an idyllic life for kids, the hills all around us, plenty of wallabies and kangaroos and things like that. I lived there until, actually, bit of a story attached to it, I was only very young when we went out there, 1938-9, and I was only five or six, mum thought the school, the Castlerock School was four or five kilometres away. It was too rough to ride a bike, all rough gravel roads and I could not ride a pony all that well so, although I was already riding, so they decided to send me to Aberdeen to the Convent Boarding School. I lasted two weeks and I decided I didn't like and started to walk home. I didn't walk all the way home, I walked as far as Muswellbrook where I had an uncle living in Hill Street. I got up there in time for lunch, they rang up and told mum and dad where I was because everyone was madly rushing around looking for me at that stage. Dad went up to the Convent to explain where they had found me and where I was and that, the nun said we've got his bag packed. I didn't get the opportunity to go back. They sent me off to Sydney to stay with my grandfather and aunt in Waverley or Bondi. It was on the bottom side of Waverley Park, again very good for kids again as we were not far from the beach and across the road was Waverley Park. Anyhow, I went to school down there until I finished 6th class then I came up here to Muswellbrook and went to the High School, finished up doing what was then the Leaving Certificate in the first Leaving Certificate class. Anyway I was Captain of the school, only by default, there were only five or six boys in that leaving class and I think I was the biggest so they gave me the job.

As far as the farm here is concerned we moved in here, I'm not exactly sure, dad leased the farm from the Hall Estate, the Hall family owned it at that stage, anyway, a Miss Hall owned it, I don't know what her name was, but she lived in Sydney. The Halls were very big farm owners in those days, not on this particular farm, but in the very early days

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Halls must have been the amongst the largest land owners. They had several properties, Rosebrook was one of them, Nandarra up on the Dartbrook Road, Blairmore and Dartbrook and they also owned Cressfield which is on the Parkville side of Scone. I have heard stories that one of the Halls was the breeder of the original blue heeler dog.

We moved in here sometime in the early 1940s, dad leased the farm for a short time then bought it from Hall, well Miss Hall had died, he bought it from her estate. We didn't own all of the land we later purchased, we only had this block here which in those days was only about 50 hectares. Then we acquired the property behind us then the property across the road and another one down the road the other way. We had purchased from my grandfather's estate in early 1950s the area we now call Mayfield, my brother Peter lives on the property out there and we've got 4500 acres there and about 1300 acres here. There have been a lot of owners since we came here.

Can you remember who you purchased the parcels of land from.

Yes, the land here was from Miss Hall, the land directly behind we bought from a chap named Harold Richardson who had the lease on Eaton's Hotel, he had purchased it from the Wilton family. Charlie Wilton was the owner and he died his sons inherited the property and they sold it very quickly, anyway, I think the Wiltons had been there for fifty or sixty years. There were a lot of people who actually lived here, many of their descendants say oh my grandfather owned this place but they never did. According to our deeds it was owned by William Cox originally who you may know was the fellow who surveyed the road over the Blue Mountains after Blaxland Lawson and Wentworth. Then it was owned by the Hall family, than as I said dad bought it from the Hall estate. It also involved an area of about 16 hectares, which was on the opposite side and had a frontage to the river. This piece across the road here, which was about fifty hectares, 122 acres actually, it was owned by the Weidmann family, we bought that from them. The land up, it's actually owned by my brother Terry or it's in his name, we bought that from the Weidmann family who were very big land holders up until the 1950s or so. There are some things you can't put on tape.

They were careful with their money.

They were more than careful and they were actually careful with other people's goods to some extent. They were interesting characters and probably people of their time. The property was, in the earlier stage up until advent of the cream separator there was not much option other than to graze cattle or sheep or horses. Horses might not sound much to you, but my grandfather, one of the reasons he bought land up here, was that he had a friend who used to buy horses for Tooths Brewery. This friend recommended that if he was going to buy property then to come up here because the best horses came from the Hunter Valley.

Louise Parkinson entered room.

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(This is my niece Louise, Louise Parkinson, her name was Hornery before she was married and the Hornery family had a garage in town amongst other things, Stewart Hornery is cousin, Brian, Louise's father, is the environmental and maintenance manager at the Singleton Abattoirs. He was born here and lived here for 30 years before moving away)

Anyway, getting back to the property here, there were a lot of people who leased land or rented it, the people who had the land immediately before my father had it, his name was King, I'm not sure of his first name, his son Les had a furniture removalist business in town. Pam King who has the bicycle shop, I don't think they are related. Her father used to come out and help on the farm. The mines were established in the early 1900s and many of the miners came off the land and very often 'cause miners weren't so wonderfully paid in those days they very often came and worked on the farm at weekends and after work, helped with the hay making. They also very often when they retired they worked on the farm. Weren't supposed to, they got a miner's pension and in those days it was a no no, you couldn't go and have two jobs, like you couldn't go and get the miner's pension and go and get paid to work some where else. Not to sure how they do it these days. They don't need it the money is so good. Edward Higgens for Higgens, Parkinson, he leased the farm for many years. Do you know Wally Pitman? Wally's father was a coachman here when he was a young fellow. Bob Preston, Bob's mother worked in the house as a maid, so she was telling me when she was a young woman. There were a lot of people who had a connection with Rosebrook one way or another.

I don't know exactly when the house was built but I read it in one of your articles it was 1856 or 58. A fellow of the name of Wilkins, you know the coffee shop up top end of town, well the Wilkins family, one of Wilkins lived in a house behind Harry, he was the man of all jobs around Campbell's for many years gone by. Harry and his brother, Roy, they would have been men in their 60s or 70s, 60s at least when I was my 20s say, both of them told me that their grandfather did some extensions on this building in 1858 and he carved his name over the cellar, JW 1858. They both claimed their grandfather told them the house was up at least 30 years when he worked on it. There were a lot of out-buildings as there were on most station properties, there was no bridge, people had to cross at the end of Ford Street at McCully's Crossing.

Muswellbrook was the end of the railway for some time and they used to bring large mobs of horses and cattle to be sold here. Dad was telling me that when he was a young man Muswellbrook was still a major selling centre. The yards were where the High School is today. He said they would have three and four day sales and a two day horse sale and they would be selling a great many saddle horse, but they would also be selling a very large proportion of draught horses.

What they did on this place before dairying I am not sure, but dairying once it arrived, you may be aware there were a great many central creameries and people took their

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milk to the place and it was separated. Then it went to butter factories, there was a butter factory at Denman, Muswellbrook, Aberdeen in my lifetime and Scone, but I don't remember it. When I was a kid, they used to bring cream in on the train from Merriwa cause the train went to Merriwa every day. Had a special compartment that fitted on the train, and the butter in from the Denman factory. Had special ventilation louvres on it. An old fellow from the factory, where the veterinary hospital is now, it was his job to go down to the railway station and pick up the cream and bring it up the factory and because they no longer made butter in my time. Say from late 1940s on the cream was sent to Hexham to be made into butter down there.

On the property we had, they played polo here out in the paddock where I grow lucerne, quite a number of the old timers, the more affluent ones, they remember fondly when they used to come down here and play. Hunter Bowman was one, John Scholes was another, two that I can think of offhand, anyway they were telling me that and it had a billiard room off the side of the house where the cellar is now, like over the cellar area. They told me that there was a prize given by Countess of Dudley, apparently her husband was the governor of NSW, anyway she presented a prize in competition by the polo players, David Macintyre has written a sort of synopsis of polo and he mentions in it that polo was played at Rosebrook. There was an actual building over in the paddock which we called our woolshed 'cause we had sheep in the early days. We modified the building and extended it substantially so we could shear our sheep there. That was built specifically so they could have somewhere to have a cup of tea or a rest after they played polo. Actually in your article in the Chronicle it mentions the erection of the building in 1902. Apparently they played polo long before that. So from what these old fellows told me the first Countess of Dudley cup was played here on Rosemount.

We now play polocrosse here, lot of years after, but it is considered one of the best grounds, not just in Australia not just in NSW. They have all the buildings they need over there, we have had national championships here as well as visitors from South Africa, Zimbabwe, most recently from Ireland and from all the States in New Zealand. My brother was the chief umpire for Australia for the polocrosse association and state president, that's Terry.

When did polocrosse start here?

I wouldn't be able to tell you offhand, Terry would know. I think it would probably be in the 1960s. He is well and truly retired from polocrosse these days. He is still active as president of the zone area, and still interested in what goes on. You wouldn't believe it but New Guinea and Indonesia play polocrosse. On the property to the best of my knowledge it was grazing originally, then dairying arrived. There was a dairy on this part here, a dairy over the road, another one on the farm behind. Even the smallest parcel of land, Gordon Scriven who lives up along Rosebrook Creek, I think Gordon might only have 20 acres or so but I can remember Gordon dairying up there. The dairy was well and truly established long before Gordon went there. You can pick them, the era almost

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defined by the structure of the building. Style of the dairy building. A minimum of concrete as it was fairly costly. You washed washed washed the walls of your building to try and keep them clean, minimum of drainage. Gordon had the advantage of being on the Rosebrook Creek bank which would be a no no today. There was a stone quarry here that we know of and I have heard stories from the Wilkins family that there was a lot of stone cut for the old house in Muswellbrook. Actually you can see large blocks of stone that have been chopped out of the side of the hill and left there and there is great heaps of small stones.

(Terry Blake entered room.) Rob was just asking when polocrosse started here? About 45 years.

There was another chap lived across from us, Allan Morrison. I don't think he ran a dairy though, only milked a few cows. Do you know Noel Morton, Noel is very much involved in the garden club, he has had considerable success, Noel's family lived here for quite a while. They came from Wollombi, his father won a half share in a £5000 lottery and I understand in the early 1930s they bought the farm a couple of kilometres up and he would know more about people who lived here.

Chances are they would have bought it for £1000 (Terry). Probably even less as you could buy a fairly good house for a £300 or £400. But anyway around here there was a stone quarry where they cut a lot of stone for the gutters around the town and crushed a lot of stone for filling on the roads because otherwise it was river gravel and its not a great success unless you had a crusher. Most of the roads were built by contract or maintained by contractors who were responsible for a section of roads. One old fellow who had a section of road, Paddy Keegan, I knew Paddy and was already an old man when I was a boy. Keegan came from one of those islands in the mouth of the Hunter, he worked around the district on dairy farms and road building and like.

The buildings around here, there was a large coach house, two-storey place, it was built of ironbark slabs, which were split, the roof was shingle. There was an outside toilet, and an outside bathroom cause there was no provision for a bathroom in the main part of the house. We had to rectify both of those pretty quickly. For more than one reason. Not long after we came here a violent windstorm came through and the toilet was actually big enough for one long plank with two holes in it. There was no division for privacy or any thing like that. Cedar plank, most of the house is cedar, with two holes. It blew out and finished up out on the Kayuga Road. I rescued the seat, I put it away but have not seen it for years. It was such a curiosity. We put a septic system in as soon as we could. The shed itself, apparently they kept, the person who was the horse boy, he lived upstairs and also kept some horse feed up there. There was a place where you could pull feed up into the, a hole in the front of the building with a windlass. The floor was paved with stone similar to around the house here. There is still evidence of paving around the house. There was a bridge in the front of the house, you came over the bridge and came up into the front of the yard with a drive around. The house itself, this

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part anyway, all of it actually, was built on logs, large logs and were adzed flat then they put 6 x 1 boards, not tongue and grooved, some were just ordinary planks. Originally, the walls were just stone inside and out. The main part of the building is solid stone, the back part which we have as a kitchen, hallway and bathroom, skillion, it's what they call rubble fill, there is about four inches of stone then they have got all sorts of rubbish, mainly stone.

In later times, it was cement rendered, then we knocked a window in the top upstairs, at the head of the stairs, in the process of doing that I discovered the original wall would have been kalsomine, several coatings. Then there were four or five coatings of wallpaper, then they put plaster board over it, a mixture of fibre. Three of the rooms upstairs still have that; there are three rooms upstairs with this part and the veranda, which we built in later years. In the downstairs part there were only two main rooms, the one we are in and the next one over which I have been using as a bedroom of later years, then the back room. Mrs Preston was telling me that cupboard which you can see on your right there was actually a servery which, the maid prepared the meals and they were put on a shelf and another maid put them on the table for the people. When we closed in the back part I now use it as a bookcase. The cellar these days is only used for junk. Keith Yore has an extensive cellar under his house at Negoa. I'm not quite sure who built it, if it was Cox or Hall. There were outbuilding of various kinds, workshops and there was a meat house where they slaughtered their stock and where they hung them up. Most of these were in extreme state of disrepair so we demolished them including the billiard room. I don't know what happened to the table, it was gone by the time we got there. There was a fireplace there and everything including the shutters on the windows was cedar. The flooring and the joists were hardwood. The building originally had a tile roof, when you think about the period it nearly had to be tile, if we are talking about the period between 1830 and 1860 I don't know if there was corrugated iron about. Yes slate, the out-buildings were shingles but the main house was slate. Most of the nails used in the house, like there a lot of wood joints, tongue and groove and mortice and tenon joints, the nails they're not the sort we know today, they generally go from quite thick at the head down to a point. I don't know what else I can tell you.

Could I just check on your mother's name?

Rocheford, my aunt, as I was saying came to Denman, didn't marry was, Catherine Veronica Rocheford and my mother was Ina Cecilia Rocheford. Her history like so many early families is quiet interesting. Her father was a member of the NSW army and he was telling how he used to go to the drill halls, the militia that were stationed around the country, he used to go as far north as Glen Innes I think it was. He said he always had a memory of Muswellbrook because one of the first places he went to, he went be rail of course, he got to Muswellbrook, (you might be aware that there were refreshment rooms, the train stopped for a short time and you could get off and get a meal and a drink). Being a young soldier he got to the bar and ordered one drink, finished that very quickly and tried to get another one. Next to him was an older man,

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he said I can see you are a new chum, if you want a second drink you ordered them at the same time. That was his memory of Muswellbrook.

As I said I started high school here, actually I started school in Denman where the nuns had the convent there, my grandfather used to go to Mass occasionally, we went of course, we lived next door, or pretty well next door in Denman, next to the church, it was easy to walk across, most of the farmers were involved in dairying here and at Scone and Denman.

What was your grandfather's Christian name?

Martin

Your father's

Francis or Frank. My dad was Francis Harold and my grandfather was Martin Henry, the grandmother was Cecilia Lofberg, that's her maiden name. My grandfather on my mother's side, he migrated from Scotland as a young man, joined the NSW army, got a bit of experience and went to work eventually in what is now the maritime services board, in those days it was known as the Sydney Harbour Trust. When Terry and I were at school in Sydney he used to take us out at weekends. I can remember on one occasion him taking us to South Head where there were gun emplacements. My grandfather eventually finished up as a clerk in the Sydney Harbour Trust, they lived on Goat Island for a number of years, my mother went to school at St Augustine's at Balmain.

Did your father have many brothers and sisters?

My father had his eldest brother Martin, Mary, Clara, Harry, George, Jack, Bill, and dad of course, and he had a younger sister Mildred. There was nine, nine children. In my mother's family they had, a couple had died before she was born, she was the youngest in the family, she was actually born in 1899, in December, but her birth was not registered until 1900. I think her birthday was the 22nd. An interesting mix, Lofberg, it's a Scandinavian name, Sweden, anyway they were very early settlers, 1820s, I am not sure if they were assisted by the Crown or were free settlers. They married into a family named Lewis, who I'm told, it wasn't their surname, it's what we would call a Christian name. Lot of them could not read or write. As far as I know all my grandfather's family, the Scottish side could read and write. My grandmother's side, Webb, they could read and write. The Lofberg side I am not sure, in the early part they may not have been able to read and write. Even on my grandfather's side, his mother remarried after the first husband died. They were married in Ireland and brought three children with them.

I grew up in a time when there was much poverty, though they did not realise it, they had no floors in their house, they had little schooling or little opportunity for school as they had to start work so early in their life. Their chance of dying, you only have to go to the old cemeteries and see the number of young children that died before they were five or even before they were twelve months old.

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Are there any others besides yourself and Terry?

We have quite a large family, I'm the eldest in the family then my brother Terry, then my brother Peter who lives near Denman, the eldest of my sisters is Catherine, she died some years ago, she married a chap named Bill Badier, the Badier family, some of them were living at Aberdeen, one of the Badiers married one of the Wilkins. Anyway there was Catherine then there was Margaret, then Louisa's mother Phillipa, she married Brian Hornery. Between those there are 17 grandchildren, my mother and father had 17 grandchildren. Phillipa had six, Catherine had seven, Peter has three girls and one boy. Two of the girls are living in England, one's not married, but the other has three children, so there is plenty of us about. Terry, Margaret and myself never married.

Have you heard of a property called Chiselhurst?

Yes, it's at the end of Logues Lane. As I understand it, the railway went through it, the line to Denman and Ulan. I can't remember offhand who owned it, but apparently the Logue family worked for him and he left it to the Logues. There are still Logues around the town; Charlie Logue is one you might come across. We had a neighbour, Allan Witt, Noel Morton would know them better than I, Noel's sister married Allan Witt. Allan Witt's father and mother worked on Brindley Park, Merriwa. Bettingtons, Bettingtons owned a lot of land, where Piercefield is was originally owned by Bettington and Martindale. They shored 100,000 sheep, hard to believe. Anyway the Brindley Park shed was built by the Bettingtons, it's a very large shed, I remember as a kid dad used to buy and sell sheep for a living, part of a living, when I was about 12 or so he had some sheep shorn there. There were 39 stands in the shed where you shored them with machines, but in the earlier days they used to do them by hand, there was double that number.

What about Ken Humphries, did he have much land on the Wybong Road?

Yes, he owned land down the Logues Lane area. He had two dairies there at one stage; there are members of the families still about here who were share farming on those properties. When I was young the ones that I remember there were the Bennett family, and the Broadbent family. He also owned land that adjoins us now which was part of Rosebrook in the early days. Rosebrook took up a couple of thousand acres. Then the land behind it was taken up by mostly small owners, they had 40 acres lots, which is typical of the Kayuga, Wybong or McCully's Gap area. Lot of the names I know of people in those areas.

Can you remember who had Eddie Watson's property?

It was originally part of a reserve, it was a very large reserve, I was talking about the number of stock that came in to the area. The area of that reserve I understand was about a 1000 acres. Then it was subdivided, some of it is still Crown Lease, Gordon Scriven had one area of Crown Lease, he bought some of it. Gordon used to shear for us, and his brothers, very good shearer too. Gordon bought land there, got the first bit

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there where he lives from Bernie Mason, then he bought the back bit, he actually lived up the end of that laneway there where a Mrs Skippen lived there in later years. He lived in that house, then he bought the block behind it, Wallen, chap named Wallen was there in the early 1940s. The next one, I know there were McNamaras there, there was also Lonergan, Thorndale Lonergans.

What about the Daniels?

Well Leo only acquired that of late. Actually, Watson and Daniels purchased property from people named Burton who had it, they had land across the river here. Burtons owned that bit down Burtons Lane as it was called, Weidmanns owned the rest of the land in that area, who they bought it from I don't know, actually, I do know, they bought it from Campbell Estate. The area where the jail is now, where the homestead is, that was Campbell's.

Who was on Negoa when you came here?

The first one I remember on Negoa was a fellow named Ludlow, he was a city businessman. I think he might have been involved in the rag trade. He owned that, then the next one was a bloke called Frank Thorne, I have an idea Keith Yore might have bought from Frank Thorne. The farm we own up the road, there was a family named McMahan, Weidmann's used to refer to the various paddocks that they owned by the name of the person they purchased the property from. There were dairies up there, some of the places that they dairied were ungodly. They milked jersey cows because of the small body frame; they could exist where the larger breeds of cattle would never exist. They were very rich in cream as were Guernseys cattle, the two premier breeds for butter fat and they, when it rained and so relative small to the large Friesian cattle we now know when we got a little bit of rain and the grass came away they produced more milk. They were the predominant breed because of the high butterfat and the fact that there was little or no irrigation. There was irrigation, but some of the irrigation plants you have to see to believe, mostly steam driven or crude-oil driven. They were very large for a small horsepower. Until recently we were dependent on the river for water, it varied depending on the season, quite often it would stop running.

Keith Budden had a vegetable garden, were there any other vegetable farmers around?

There were a family named Gardiner, they lived up near the foot of the hill, up the Wybong Road, Reg Gardiner, many of the old timers in town would remember Reg because he had both a vegetable shop and a vegetable run where he drove around the town in an old utility, a cut down car. His father had a vegetable farm at the foot of the hill and always had nice fresh vegetables. That was one, Mortons, they grew vegetables but I think they grew more for the market than from their door. Louie's grandfather, McTaggartt, they owned land here, the house on the corner of the Wybong and Kayuga Road, big old wooden place, Amos McTaggartt lived there, he was a substantial land holder. He owned a property that Hugh Gageler has now. Lot of them were broken down in the name of Rosebrook, particularly the more recent ones call their place

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Rosebrook to the confusion of everybody and in particular the post office. Gageler called his place Rosehill, the people on this side call theirs Roselyn, that was Hugo. We lease it from Coal & Allied. Mr & Mrs Hugo still live there. Amos McTaggat lived there and he also owned a property up the end of McCully's Gap called Happy Valley. When he died in the late 1930s things were pretty crook most of the property except for the house block down here was sold. A fellow named Stan Budden owned the land next to it here, his family had a property at Limestone which is out along the McCully's Gap Road. Stan and his wife, you know Bernie Budden, Bernie's father, well Bernie married Edna Thompson the plumbers.

Maurice Gray has been growing vegetables up here for quite a number of years, Maurice went to school with Peter so he would be getting up towards the 70 mark. Still very active with his garden and he does it very very well. He's got a magnificent garden up here which he sold out to the mines and has moved over to the New England Highway. Maurice's family came here, we were here before them, I think his father came up as a share farmer, came from Swansea, got a job in the open cut in the 1940s when the open cut started up there now where they have these sports grounds. I was a kid going to school when the big strikes were on and the police and the army took over the running the mine. I don't think anyone was that much worried about it, was a non event.

There was actually a mine on the property here, it was up, it's up the Wybong Road to get to it and the mine interviewed a few people and they wrote a brief history of the area. A chap named Jack Reynolds who lived up there and he has been bought out by the mine and moved to Sydney, his sister's family still live in town, Brown, Freddy Brown, he was a miner. Jack was able to tell them the last people to work in the mine up here. Pam King, who has the bike shop, her grandfather used to come out here and work on the farm. Pam tells me she has fond memories of coming out with dar to help make the hay.

Hay making was an interesting occupation. When I was a kid we had horses, there were tractors about but we didn't have a tractor. Draught horse that had been retired from the pit. All geldings, very quiet and easy to handle. We would mow with two horses drawing the mower, only cut about 4' 6", then you would rake it with a horse, you had a foot pedal and a handle and when you had gathered so much hay with that you pulled the handle and pushed your foot down and dropped the hay and made a long row of it. Then you went along and if you were lazy you tried to make it into little heaps with the horse. It was not a great success, I know I tried it. Then you got a fork and you picked it up with the fork and made little stooks of it, you left it there to dry then you loaded it onto a wagon by hand, the horse drew it up to the hay shed which would hold about 120 tons. If you baled the hay you did it with what was called a stationary press and you tied it with wire as they didn't have the string we have today. A number of people would come out from town as we were so close and they would help fork this hay to make it into stooks and to load it onto the wagon. They nearly all had brought their own hay

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forks and a piece of rock to rub on the tines of the fork so the hay would slip off easily. It was a fighting matter to touch someone else's fork. The best forks had a hickory handle, they were thin and very supple, it was surprising how high you could get the hay. When the hay got really high someone got up on top and stacked around on the wagon

When I came along there were a number of dairies that did not dairy in the wintertime even though we were supplying the city trade. There were a number of small dairies such as the Adams family who supplied the town.

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Interviewee: Robert Lesley 'Blue' Brotherton

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lot 139 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 9 July 2003

Venue for Interview: 152 Segenhoe Street, Aberdeen

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

Where were you born?

Muswellbrook

Your parents?

Catherine and Lesley Brotherton, 'Baldy'

What was your mother's maiden name?

Gillies, Gillies from Morpeth.

How did they meet?

During the war, Dad was, what do they call them tradesmen when they got them to do different things?

Labour force.

Yeah, labour force and they meet at what used to be Birmingham Mills, that was a war operation, Mum worked there, she was drafted into that too.

Where did your father come from?

Narromine, as a boy moved to Muswellbrook, came over here, brought over here when he was eleven years old to work for his aunty who wasn't married, lived up Castlerock Road there.

Have you got any brothers or sisters?

Had one brother who died when he was sixteen and one sister.

Did you go to St Joseph's school?

No, I went to St James primary school then Muswellbrook High School. Not for long, should have been a bit longer.

Did you end up getting called up for military service?

No, number did not come out. I was in the right age group, they did it alphabetical order and missed out, did not get called up.

I was the same.

I went to work when I was fourteen, first job was with Yore Irrigation, Keith Yore, putting in irrigation. It was from the river right through to the top of Nandarra. That was a short term job. Worked at the cordial factory then, a year, might have been a bit

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longer. I then went to work for Jack Shepherd at Gyarran for three or four years. Then I went to Woodlands and when George sold Woodlands and bought Kia Ora stayed there for nearly ten years. When the kids were growing up needed money so had to get out and worked for Abiganno. Oh, I did have twelve months at the meatworks in the stockyards. Was with Abiganno for about four years then came to Costain. That was about it. Power Station was just about finished and everyone was looking for a job in the mines and I got a job at Costains.

How long were you at Costains?

14 years, Bengalla five years next month, started in August.

You must be the same age as me.

55, be, no 54 in December.

National Service sorts out the ages.

Had a few mates go, I missed out, at the time I was sort a disappointed. More you read about it years later, lucky, lucky didn't go. When I missed out I was disappointed, thought it would have been good.

So where about have you lived in the district since you were married.

We got married and moved in at Kia Ora, and we lived at Denman in one of Marianne's father's places for 12 months while this place was being built, other than that lived in this place for nearly 24 years, married coming up 33 years.

Marianne's maiden name?

Duggan, had farm both sides of the road as you go into Denman, Stan Duggan, still got the place there.

You had three girls

Three girls, yeah, two married, both expecting.

Their names.

Michelle, eldest, Kim, librarian in Singleton,

The property that was next to Gray's on Kayuga Road, how did you acquire that?

That was dad's, when he came over here, I am not sure how, whether he bought it or Aunty Gem owned it, and it was part of the deal him coming here but was originally 24 acres and ran through to the top of the hill there and right along Rose Hill, Gagelars place at the time, it wasn't then, Smiths owned that. Graham Smith, still got dairies further up at Scone. Then Dad built the house, must have been built around when I was born as I can't remember living anywhere else. I think when I was just born, mum lived out with Aunty Gem on Coal Creek. House was being built when I was a baby. I don't remember how, but it was left to me.

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Your father subdivided it up.

Yes, he subdivided the blocks off there.

Maurie Gray thought part of his place had belonged to the Brotherton's at some stage.

Yes it did

Did he [your father] run it as a little farm?

Yes, used to breed Corriedale sheep, keen breeder of Corriedale sheep, showed them everywhere, some of the best in NSW. That's virtually all he did plus a couple of milking cows, he was real keen on Corriedale sheep.

Besides that 24 acres, did he have any more land?

He did, he had a paddock on Castlerock Road or Coal Creek Road, whatever you want to call it. There was a reserve then he had a paddock, in the next paddock up there's a house where the doctor lives, there's 80 acres there, reserve then 200 yards, might be 500 metres, not sure, then there's this paddock sitting on top of the hill. He sold that to Bill Hoole when I was a kid.

Lives not far from where you live now, Bill Hoole was a cattle dealer and worked for Keith Buffier, Mick Buffier's uncle actually. He was a big time cattle buyer. Cattle dealer, Wally Buffier. I remember as a kid, Joe Moloney, Bill Hoole and myself, we had 500 bullocks on the road, walked them from just out on Muscle Creek corner there round the back way through Maison Dieu and back to Singleton saleyards. We thought 500 head was a fairly big mob, he yarded 4000 head there that day, Wally Buffier, 4000 head of his own cattle, his own special store sale. I had a broken arm at the time.

Dad used to show his sheep everywhere and never got beat, he used to sell some, had a pretty good name for breeding rams, kept a small herd. He used to go to New England buying when we were kids, was a big trip. You used to have to change your rams every so often. I'm not up on sheep breeding but you can only go so many years and you have to change your rams. We would go there and he might spend two days selecting, may be one or two rams, just keeping his breed. You have to change or you breed them out. Always up New England way.

How would you go up there, car?

Yes, old Austin ute, was a big trip I can tell you. Only did 30 – 40 mph flat out. Bring them back in a little crate. There was only ever one or two. Very select lot. I can remember them trimming them for shows, worse than hairdressers when getting ready for shows, shedded and rugged.

Did you ever get flooded out?

Yes, 55, I had just started school, they came and got us, Dad stayed home, got us in Euclids, we went over to Jack and Dell Powell. That's the only time we had to leave. In the 70s, a bit of water came there but it didn't stop us, was up and down in a day or two. 55 was bad, it lapped the floor but never went in the house.

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That ground there must be a little higher.

Yes, lot of places around got flooded. Never went in the house, but I remember when we came home the stink of the mud, any time I smell flood mud it brings back memories of when I was a kid.

Your father never lost any stock.

He did in 55, lost stock, he did get some of them out but sheep are funny things. They knew it was coming. He was up all night helping people lift furniture. We didn't lift ours.

You mentioned rabbits earlier, did you do a bit of rabbiting?

Yeah, Rowland Parkinson lived three doors up the road, used to go ferreting with him, trapping, used to go trapping, my part of the deal was I got the pelts and he'd sell the rabbits and I'd peg the pelts out and that was my part of the deal. Used to be good money too for kids. I'd have rabbit skins pegged out everywhere.

Where would you trap them?

Mostly on Stan Creek's place out at Wybong Road, you know where Bray's are now, turn left and go in there. Ferreting was a bit of fun, trapping you had to run the traps at night, ferreting was sort of fun, we would go everywhere ferreting. Allan had the ferrets and we used to tag along.

Aunty Gem, how did the Smith's tie in with your family?

My grandmother was a Smith, Mary Smith. She had a sister, Hannah, there was another daughter, Fanny, she married Frank Roser, had Ascot Farm. That was the three daughters.

What was your grandfather's name?

Richard

Did he come from Narromine?

Originally I don't know, think they came from Grenville. I never meet him, he was dead. My father's name was Lesley Richard.

Who lived at the farm at Coal Creek?

Gem and dad, the three girls were all there, their father was Charles, they all lived in the homestead when they were little. Well before my time. Hannah or Gem, she was always a spinster so she got the place down there. She sold the Coal Creek Road. They owned the paddock where the coal mine was, he always talked about going down there, suppose to be good coal there, very good coal there, he could remember blokes carting out of there. Dad was born in 1909, we think, 1911 on his grave, his sister said that's not right, his driver's license had 1913. He came over here when he was 11, he was the second oldest, there was a girl older, Stephanie. He was the oldest boy, like there were six of them or seven, so they sent him over to help the aunty. Did his trade with, where the chemist shop is now, plumbers shop in Muswellbrook.

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Thompson

No, tinsmith, there's still stuff here he made, tea pots and that, plumbers were plumbers in them days, they were tinsmiths. Eddie Hunter, that was the plumber, that's where dad served his time, they had a plumbers shop in the main street there somewhere about the chemists in Bridge Street.

Thompsons were in Brook Street

Yeah, I can remember going there as a kid cause dad was still making tanks, they could roll iron for making tanks, what ever size, set it up, so many sheets, way we'd go.

Lost trade

Yeah, my job used to be standing in the tank holding the dolly, if you slipped off a rivet when he was hitting it you !!! You had to be quick too cause he had the rivets outside and if it slipped back he wanted to know what you were doing.

So the Smiths had three properties out there, the one on the flat where you were, Ascot and up Coal Creek.

Yes

When you were living on the flat who else lived around you? Who was in Rosebrook?

Blakes have always been there, Peter and Terry. I used to do a bit of milking when I was a kid. Bruce Parkinson was the top dairy, \$5 a milk, 110 cows, morning and afternoon.

How many dairies did they run there? [Blake's]

Three, top and bottom, no they bought the other later on, used to be one of Weidmann's. Everleigh's were there on the opposite side of the road. House is pulled down now, they had a stack of kids, they were dairying for Weidmann's. Robertson, Geordie, they lived up the road, Collins, Graham, Terry and Tony. Yore boys, they were a bit younger than me. We used to go on Mrs Thompson's bus to school, was a big old hire car, big old black car with a dicky seat, used to pick us up and take us to school, then I started riding a bike to school. Mrs Thompson owned a fish shop in Market Street and had the bus service too.

Who had Negoa when you were young?

Keith Yore

Weidmann's owned land on the opposite side to Ascot?

Yeah, the old slaughter yards are in there, remember going in there, used to chase rabbits in there, they owned right back to the bridge, to Bandy Budden's place where he had the market garden. Bandy Budden had that bit as long as I can remember. Wally Pitman, I can remember that being built.

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Bandy, was that Keith?

Yeah, Keith, nice old bloke, the other Buddens market gardened on the other side the road.

Where the timber house is?

Yes, that timber place, they were Buddens and had a market garden, and then you had other Buddens up on the hill down Collins Lane, the old house down there has been done up, don't know who lives in there now. The old Mr Budden, he lives in there. We always called it Buddens Lane, official name is Collins Lane. It was always Buddens Lane when I was a boy. I remember old Mr Collins living down the far end there, he was down the flat. Buddens had the old tennis courts, that was a big Sunday go, people used to go up there to play tennis.

Would George Budden who's a keen gardener in town be one of them?

Yes, the same.

Do you remember John Burton's father out that way?

Yes, they were always on the other side of the river, they had a farm there, over Sandy Creek Bridge and turn down the lane, they were the first farm. Burton's farm was there. The next farm was Ivan Osborne's, that was a Weidmann place, then another place where Ronny Langland was, that was another Weidmann place, then you went to Hunterfield, that was Vince Pilgram, they owned a lot of land. [Weidmann]

Did Weidmann's have Broomfield?

I think they might have at one stage

Very wealthy

Never wasted anything I can tell you, never wasted a cent.

The hilly country straight behind your father's and the Buddens, who owned that?

That was Weidmann's, from the top of the hill all the way back, then you went back to Lonergans. Weidmanns went back to the stock route.

Did you go over that country much when you were rabbiting?

Yeah

Did you ever see where there might have been a sandstone quarry?

I can't remember anything.

How far did Rosebrook go back?

It's been the same since I was a kid.

Which brother lives in Rosebrook?

They both live there

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Are they married?

No. The only one married, he lives out at Denman, just this side of Denman. Next place after Piercefield, Jack Lowe had Piercefield.

Did your father ever run a plumbing business in town?

No, always worked for someone, did his time with Eddie Hunter. After the war, I think he met up with Vince Bowen during the war, Vince Bowen started a business and he went to work for him. Worked with him for a lot of years then Vince went bust then dad went with the blokes building the boiler house at the Oak Factory. He stayed with that until it was finished, then he stayed and operated it for awhile, he couldn't handle dog watch so he went and worked for the Council and that was it. Plumber at the Gas Works then he went to the Water Works, stayed there the rest of his working life.

The sheep were a hobby.

The sheep were always a hobby, he got out of the stud part later in life, he went into fat lambs with cross bred ewes. Kill one for the neighbours and ourselves. Had a few pigs there too.

Never had a dairy

No, always up to the last had a milking cow, when I was a kid used to supply the whole road, what she didn't use she'd separate and the pig would get the skim milk, make butter.

Do you remember 'Chiselhurst' on Wybong Road?

No. Jack Reynolds had a carting business, he was on the top of the hill. Wilks had a dairy down Logue's Lane, remember pick potatoes there when I was a kid, they would dig them up and we would bag them. There was an old home right down on the river were Brian Hallet had the dairy, after he sold Fellowes had it. Blake's had the next dairy coming back towards Muswellbrook, that is what they called Bottom Dairy, old Macca McLean owned some of that.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: George Budden

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lot 134 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 14 July 2003

Venue for Interview: 29 Bligh Street, Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

We will start with yourself. Where were you born?

Actually I was born at home out on Kayuga Road. Born in the house there.

Did that property have a name?

Huntermuir

Who were your parents?

Walter and Annie Budden

What was her maiden name?

She was a Hill

Was she from Kayuga?

I think they came from out McCully's Gap Road at one stage.

How old are you?

78

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

I had eight brothers and one sister.

Now for a test, can you run their names off?

Mark, Allan, Keith, Bruce (he died very young), Linton, Roy, Gordon, Heather and myself

Was Keith the one that had the market garden?

Yes, yes. Mark worked in Campbell's for years.

You went to school in Muswellbrook.

Yes, started down in, where the old petrol depot is. When they opened the new school I walked, would only be in fourth class, walked all the way up there.

From out on Kayuga Road

The first day we walked from the old school then I used to walk in every day.

What did you do when you were young?

Played cricket and tennis, stuff like that around the place, there was enough kids to keep us looking after one and other.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Did you play for any particular cricket team?

No, not that I remember, I played for what we used to call the Comebacks when I left school and getting up a bit, might have been married then. Played for the Comebacks, mob of old fellows used to play. I played tennis for I don't know how many years; years and years. I was secretary of the Upper Hunter Tennis Association for nine years, President of Muswellbrook Tennis Association, delegate for the North Western Council and I just played tennis whenever there was a tennis game on. When I was on the dairy, took over the dairy, there was a couple of women lived out there, they used to come up and have a hit of an afternoons, some afternoons and I would go out and play them in my rubber boots after I had finished.

Where did you meet Daisy?

She was staying in town at Mark's place, Mark's wife was Daisy's father's sister. One winter she was staying in there and we had a milk run around town and I went there and I got tangled up with her there.

What was her maiden name?

Dengate.

Were they from Scone?

Were originally I think but McCully's Gap when I met them. We used to ride horse all around the place and that sort of thing.

How many children did you have?

We had three, Chris, Ruth and Keith there were, they are all over the place now, Chris is in Newcastle, Ruth's in Tweed Heads and Keith's in Darwin, been up there for twenty odd years.

Have you been up to see him?

Yes, a few times.

This is a rough plan of the area, is this your place in here?

It was up in there.

How big was that property?

Was 52 acres all told, it used to go up along the lane out there and went right up to Daniels back paddock then it came down what used to be Weidmanns, down passed the old sawmill there.

Did Weidmanns have all this country originally when you were out there?

Yes, no McTaggarts, is this the Kayuga Road?

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Yes

Yes, Weidmanns had all that.

Who had the other blocks around you?

Well it got subdivided into little blocks, there was one paddock there that came along the lane to our fence, Miss Smith owned that paddock in there, we had a bike track there that we used to race on.

Push bikes or motor bikes?

Yes

So your father started on this block.

Yes, ninety odd years ago. 96 or 98 years ago.

Do you know who he bought it from?

No I don't. It was a toss up which paddock he got, he had the option of buying this one or one across here that belonged to Weidmanns, which they call Ascot now and there was nut grass in it and he was concerned about the nut grass and in the mean time Weidmanns jumped in and bought it. He missed out on it.

Who else was across from Ascot?

Ascot belonged to Roser, it only came a little way along. Frank Roser first owned it when I can remember. He had 50 acres down on the river, he never put an irrigation plant on it you know. After he milked the cows he would clean the floor up as clean as your house. Used to get down once a week with a pumice stone and do the floors.

Who had the land coming back towards Muswellbrook?

That was Weidmanns too. They didn't own right down to the bridge, they owned to this fence and Bill Turnbull owned from there down to the bridge. He owned the piece that Keith bought. Wally Pittman bought a block of ground off Weidmanns when they bought it. Turnbolls owned a piece on the other side of the road here to, little block there where Adnums have their vegetable garden now.

Who lived at Rosebrook house when you were young?

The first person I can remember there was old Ernie Winder.

The other Buddens on Coal & Allied map, there is GG and PE Budden.

That's Pat and Geoff.

What relation are they to you?

They are nephews.

WG and D Budden

That was us.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

We have GB & DM and WD & D on that one.

That's right, Gordon, we used to own this and Gordon and Daph owned the one up the back of us. Their block went up the back and then Geoff and them took half of Gordon's block. Bit complicated. They were all divided into block.

Originally, it went to the road.

Yes

This is Collins Lane.

Yes and dad owned that paddock right up through there. He owned all that, I owned it for a while and then came across to this paddock of Gordons then went back down in there. Smiths owned that.

Where was the original house?

Where Geoff lives, just in there. It was the only house out there at that time.

Is it still standing?

Yes

Must be a fair age now.

It's had some alteration, changed a bit to when we were kids. Geoff has changed it around a bit.

Was there any irrigation out there?

Yes, we got a well down the fence line. Was not a real good well but it watered the ground.

Was it hand milking when you were a kid?

Yes, did my share.

When did machines come in?

Probably about sixty years ago. Remember old Bob Boystead used to be about here, he had the job of putting in the first rotary milking machines, we got first one about here, he didn't know what he was doing, Gordon knew more about it.

Did you have a electric motor to power it?

Yes. Had a crude oil engine on the well when we first started and then when the power got on out there we had it around the place.

Who were the electricians then?

County Council put the power to the pump.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

When you were a boy, was the dairy cream or milk?

Cream for a while then we went onto milk when the milk board started up. Used to take the cream down to the road and the cream lorry used to come out a couple of days a week, we had to keep ice around it from the milk factory. If you were not there on time he would not wait. We used to take the horse and cart and pick up a 44 of crude oil from the factory and take it back home for the old pump we had on the well.

Was that the milk factory where the vet is now?

Yes.

Who was running the milk factory?

Muswellbrook Milk Factory started then Hunter Valley took it over, they ran it for years.

Did you ever go rabbiting?

Yes, plenty of times. All over the flats there, in the drought you would see them there every day, hundreds of them. Hilary Daniels had a place up there, his mother had a place up there, Hilary reckons he has seen the time when you could flog a flea all around them flats it was that dry. Great old fellow old Hilary. They owned all this paddock out the back here, Daniels, had about 125 acres or something like that.

Did they use it for grazing?

I don't remember them doing anything on it really, bit a trapping, I didn't remember them until there was only the old lady alive and Hilary was there, the other boys had gone away, Ken or Dick, I'm not sure which was the school teacher, another bloke went up on a banana plantation for awhile.

What did Weidmanns use the back country for?

They had a dairy on the other side

Where were their slaughter yards?

They were up on top of the hill. Where those old yards are now.

Who else was up near Ascot

Lenny Dickson had a place up there. Gordon worked up there, had a dairy going, Allan worked there.

Can you remember who was on Negoa when you were young?

Eveleighs used to work Negoa, old Hilton Eveleigh, sorry it was old Freddy Dickson with Negoa. In those days you had to take the horses by road, lead them to the polo ground.

Where was the polo ground?

Out at Piercefield, He used to go out there to play, he even went overseas a couple of times with his horses.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Did anyone out here have tennis courts?

We did, we had one out there, they had one out at Kayuga hall. The old court out home is still going. Gordon did it all up.

How long ago did you retire from out there?

We have been in here ten years in August.

When you were a kid what was the highlight of the year?

Muswellbrook Show

Did you enter anything in it?

I did later on when I took over the dairy myself. I got into a few stud AIS cattle and used to show them.

What breed of stock did your father run?

Mixed breeds, anything that was going in them days. If it was a brindle cow it was either good or bad. If it was bad you did not keep her.

Did you grow all your own vegetables out there?

Yes, used to grow watermelons, pumpkins, beans and peas, carrots, beetroot, everything.

Do you remember any old buildings on this back country when you were rabbiting?

There used to be one right out over the back of Castle Rock Road, Castle Rock Lane, right out the back, that belong to McNamaras, they had a bit of a farm out there, they used to come down through our place to get out.

Was there any track or road into this back country?

Yes, there was a track on the old plans.

Did you ever try shearing?

Never tried shearing.

Were the rabbits you trapped for skins or meat?

Used to sell the skins, old Grub Newman used to have a shop up the back of where the paper shop is. There was a laneway up there to his shop. We were getting about six bob a pound for them then and in the wintertime; you were only getting five or six rabbits to the pound. It was good money in them days. People made a lot of good money out of them. Hunter Budden was the man that could skin rabbits, he could skin them that quick that one day he caught one, skinned and let it go, ran about ten yards and dropped dead. Quick skinner.

Did anyone go for fox skins?

Yes, if you got a fox you could take it in and sell it to old Grub and he would buy it.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

How did he get the nickname, Grub?

I don't know, we all called him Grub Newman.

Where there many hares around then?

Quite a few hares about too.

What crops would you grow?

Normally oats and lucerne for the cows in the dairy and then another paddock where there was a bit of vegetables.

Maurice Gray was in near you with his vegetable garden.

Yes

Where there many other people growing vegetables?

No, not at that stage, Keith went down near the bridge there, he was growing them down there. He had a good garden there, made some money out of that.

When did all this land around you start to get broken up into all these tiny little blocks?

Well, we broke ours up when we, Roy bought half and I bought half, I had some down near the road and then we went on from there and when Roy died I was going to buy that block but Gordon wanted and I thought let him have it. It just kept getting divided up, Jack Prowse wanted a block when I was moving in, He bought a block, bloke of Richards bought the block off me down the bottom. Johnny Hayes has got that block now.

When did all the land along the road start to get subdivided?

Gradually worked in with one here and there. I don't know who owns Miss Smith's place in near us.

Who was the Collins that the lane is named after?

Old Charlie Collins lived up there and they named it after him. He lived in a place up there.

Was your house timber or brick?

Timber.

Did you ever get flooded out there?

Yes, we did in 55 and 72. We got flooded twice in 55, it was up one night, I came out to go to dairy and walked out into water up to my waist. We lived in a little old house down the lane here. Then it came up again a few days later. **George**. I was looking up the birthday book and the only one I could remember properly was Keith cause he was born in 55. **Daisy**.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Did you have to get out?

We all went to Mum's place, there was 30 there, bunked down. We milked 200 cows by hand that day, rounded them up, my cows were up on the hill there, went over to the dairy which used to be old Reg Wilton's, we got in there. There was another dairy over at Stan Budden's place which we used, there was nothing we could do with the milk, just had to throw it out.

George Budden worked at the power station; Daisy showed me a plaque they presented to George on his retirement.

15 Oct 62 Cleaner and labourer, PowerGen, Muswellbrook

6 Sept 65 Material Tester, Liddell

9 Nov 72 Foreman, Liddell

16 Dec 86 General Station Foreman, Liddell.

I went for the general station foreman's job over at Liddell, we got half way through the interview when he said you know more about this job than we do. I said I should, I have acted in it enough times.

Were you involved in the dismantling of the McCully's Gap Station

Yes.

When did it close down?

1989. We have been in town ten years, we had five in the other house and forty in the bottom house. We were in bed when we saw our first house burn to the ground. **Daisy.** The old place we had down the bottom, I woke up one morning and thought that looks bright, I looked out the window and there was a blaze of flames, raced out and rang the fire brigade and police, had them out here. Got dressed, went down, and had a look about.

Who did you sell it too?

We sold it to Chris, he had it for a while

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Jack Casey

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lot 30 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 15 September 2003

Venue for Interview: 543 Kayuga Road, Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

What is your full name?

My full name is John Owen Casey

Who were your parents?

Michael and Mary Casey

What was your mother's maiden name?

O'Brien

Was she a local?

No, came from Maitland, East Maitland, Miller's Forest.

I wonder how your parents met.

Yes, well now, they never told me that. A lot of people intermarried in the district, she was the only Mrs Casey who was not a Lonergan.

Where were you born?

I lived here in this house, born Muswellbrook.

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

I had four sisters and two brothers.

Are you the eldest?

I'm the youngest.

What were their names?

They were Agnes, Edward, Mary, Michael Raymond, Veronica Clare, Dorothy and myself.

Did you go to the Kayuga school?

Yes, my primary education was at Kayuga public school, over on the hill there.

Is this the school at the back of Watts or the one in the village?

I went to the one at the back of Watts first until they built the new school over here on the hill. I went to the one up Dorset Road school, then I went to the one up here until I passed the primary school exams. A primary school education.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

So how old would you have been when you shifted into the school in the village?

Twelve.

I should have asked you what year you were born.

1921.

Can you remember any of the teachers?

Yes I remember the teachers, I started school on Wattle Day, I can remember that I took the teacher a great big bunch of wattle and he took a little strip off the wattle and put it on his finger and I was very disappointed he did not put the whole lot. I never trusted a teacher from then on. That disappointed me, but I started on Wattle Day with John Ward, Jack Ward was the schoolteacher. He taught there for quite some time, he taught in the new school for a while too.

Where did he live?

There was a residence at the old school on Dorset Road the road, there was a residence there, he lived there and he still lived in that residence after the new school built, used to walk across to the new school. Most of the teachers right up to, Simpson was the teacher who followed Ward and he lived in the residence there too.

When did they pull the old school down?

Oh, you've got me there.

What happened to the residence?

It was taken down at some time.

Were there many pupils at the school?

When I went to school, at one time, there was sixty or seventy students out there, but that was before my time, at my time there was only about the thirty students, in that vicinity.

When you left school, did you come and work on the farm.

Yes, just worked on the farm for them, worked on other farms helping other people more or less around the place right up until 1940 when war broke out. Joined up in the army, 4 ½ years in the army.

What division were you in?

We were in, it was really corps troops attached to different divisions, attached to different divisions at times, attached to the 9th and the 6th at one stage, but we were classified as corps troops.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Did you go overseas at all?

Yes, I had about 18 months in New Guinea in the jungles. We were waiting at Townsville when the Centaur ship sunk after leaving Brisbane so we were not on that. Had we been in Brisbane we most likely would have been on it.

Did you ever work for Macintyres?

No, never worked for Macintyres. After the war, I worked for some years in Sydney. Worked for a long time in Sydney for different firms. Worked on the dam at Liddell and the putting in of the Liddell Power Station. I returned to the land later.

What sort of farm did your parents have here?

Dairy farm, milked cows from my father's time right up until the milk industry got that way. Most of the farms were dairy farms. Small dairy farms around the place, a lot of dairy farms but they petered right out with the times.

Did you have any irrigation?

No, we never irrigated at any time.

It must have been hard.

It was quite hard, yes, we bought a lot of fodder and things like that and it was hard as we had many dry times, it's a dry continent and a dry district. Many dry times.

How many cows would you have milked when you were a kid?

Between 20 and 30, something like that.

By hand.

By hand in the early days, yes, milked before you went to school. Come home and milk them again. Everyone had to help.

Was that for cream or milk.

Cream in the first stage, cream was sold to the butter factory at Aberdeen. Was collected three or four days a week, three days a week generally, you had to take extra care of it or it would go off.

How many churches were there along Dorset Road?

I think there were two churches there at one stage, on the first corner there on what they called Palmers Lane, there was a church there and another one just the other side of the school.

Can you remember what religions there were?

I think, no no I'm not certain, they could have been C of E, Presbyterian or Methodist, I'm not sure. There was one wedding in one church up there.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Was there a Catholic church out here?

Not to my knowledge, no.

All the Catholics from here would go into Muswellbrook.

Yes, go into Muswellbrook.

Did the priest visit people around the district?

Yes, they visited the district, it was a regular thing for the minister to come to the school to visit the children nearly every week. Each minister would come regularly to the school and take their different congregation for a bit of a talk and things like that. They regularly visited the schools. They would visit people.

Was the store still running when you were a kid?

Devine had a store up from the school, straight over the hill from the Watts, on that property up there. The kids used to go up there and buy pencils and rubbers and other things.

There was never a store in the village?

Not that I know of.

Where was the post office?

The post office just down near, where later it was Mrs Payton's home, where the hall is down there, well straight across from there was the post office for many years then it was transferred down to a property we own which is just on the other corner just before you go down to the boys home. It was there until it was burnt down in 1940-1 I think.

Was the hall used much?

Yes, a lot, it was the main sort of congregation, people liked getting there for socials, dances and things there. Back in those days cricket was the main sport, not like today there are many sports but then cricket was the main sport. It was right at the height of cricket when you had all those great cricketers like Bradman, McCabe and all those and the kids, cricket was at its height. There was a cricket team there and there was a couple of tennis courts there besides the hall too. I never played tennis, mainly the older people for that. We had our own little cricket team.

Where was the cricket ground at Coal Creek?

I don't know. Never played out there, used to travel about the Wybong, Denman, St Heliers, and those places playing cricket, into Muswellbrook of course, played in the B grade comp but I never went to Coal Creek playing cricket.

Where was the cricket ground at St Heliers?

Out that way, I've been there playing cricket, just can't tell you exactly. I couldn't tell you whose place it was on.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Were rabbits a problem around here?

Rabbits, yes they weren't such a great problem in this area just in here but the back part of Kayuga was alive with them, they were a very big problem in the back part of Kayuga in those times.

Did you do much trapping at all?

Never, never did, I didn't do any trapping. I'd enjoy going out to get them to feed our dogs on. We never ate them much even though many people lived on them but it was great to go and get a few rabbits and cook them for the dogs. It was great sport to go out rabbiting and get them.

Did you go out shooting?

No, I never shot them, I never shot a rabbit, I have never shot an animal or a bird for sport. I have great respect for firearms and have never shot an animal or bird in sport, I think, I don't like killing animals, killing things, but we did catch a lot of rabbits and kill them for the dogs.

How big is this property here?

This here, our place, it's been added to, in the vicinity of 500 acres.

Do you know who any of the previous owners were?

No, I don't really know who the previous owners were. I think it was Campbells,

What about the land on the other side of the road, who owned that when you were young?

Mackays lived there, who owned it I don't know, at one time, then before Adnums came there, there were other people there, Cross, Walter Cross lived on that property, he would not have owned it I don't think. He had the use of this paddock here and eighty acres on the other side up from the hall, he had those paddocks and all the time he was there, I think he was some five years and had five good seasons. One of the best I've heard my elder brother say, one of the best periods in those times, all the time he was there, there was good seasons. That was a rare thing.

There seems to be more bad than good.

Yes, from 1930 to 1940 I don't think we really had a good season and this time it's been quite a while. We have had rain of course but it's not enough to call a good season.

Was there much prickly pear around here?

Not such a lot. The prickly pear paddock on the Dartbrook Road was a great source of fodder for the cattle and things like that. It was carted, cooked and chopped up for cattle for many years. There were many people who loved it and used it for feeding their cattle on.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Did you participate in the local show?

Yes, my father did, I didn't, father took many prizes for cattle and things like that, he was very keen. The show was a big thing in those days when we were young and people joined together to make it a great show. He exhibited cattle and won some prizes with them.

What breed of cattle did he run?

Those days I think we had different breeds of cattle, There were fat cattle, you had Illawarra cattle like Illawarra Durhams and those sorts of things but what the beef cattle were I just don't really know.

Did you ever run any sheep here?

No, never ran any sheep.

That's unusual, everyone else had a few sheep.

That's right, we never owned sheep.

Would you have had pigs?

Yes, yes we reared pigs, fowls, turkeys. In the early days all your Christmas produce was reared on the farms, where today you can go into a shop and buy Christmas any day of the week. You can buy all the things for Christmas, in those days they were for Christmas fare and were just produced on the farms for those occasions. It's a different thing now. We killed our own pigs, fowls, they killed cattle too. There was four neighbours who used to join together and kill a beast, just over there on that property there was a slaughter house. There were quite a lot of slaughter houses about, they would take a quarter of the beast, it would keep, they would hang it up in the storerooms, side storeroom, meat would keep alright like that. I remember the last beast that was killed there, it was probably the last that was killed there. I was a little fellow and was taken down there in the spring cart, my father helped slaughter the beast and he was a butcher of course, he had done butchering and they sat me on the side of the bank to wait. A green ant bit me and I have not liked green ants from that day on. Not a green ant lover. When you are little you remember it, I might have been three or four, something like that.

Did they salt any of the meat?

Yes

Can you remember who the other people were?

There was Devines, Cracknell and Clayton.

They all had farms around here.

All had bits of property up around there and different places.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Where does your water supply come from?

It was all rainwater up until we supplied from down on the flat there. There's a pipe from there up to the house. Prior to that, it was all rainwater.

Dams

Dams and wells, they had dams down there, rainwater for the house. We have a water supply laid on now.

Were the wells very deep, good supply.

Yes the well down there was a very good supply. Yes, we had a good well down there, supplied a lot of water to a lot of cattle. Harsh water of course, brackish water, in dry times it was very difficult to wash clothes in but it was great cattle water.

Timber lined well.

Yes, slabs, it would be a fair age.

What was most of the timber around here?

Iron bark and box, lot of iron bark and box. Most of the box has been cut out and used. There is very little box about now, mostly iron bark.

Did they prefer the box over the ironbark?

For firewood they did, they were both good woods for fencing. The place must have been very heavily timbered and would be heavily timbered again if it was, even after all those years if it was closed up you see a lot of the trees growing, building itself up, trees everywhere. They don't get very far with the cattle.

Kurrajong does not come down this far.

A few, I think the kurrajongs would have been cut out in the dry times earlier, but we did have kurrajongs, I can remember some kurrajongs there.

The Casey that lived at Riverview, what relation was he.

Well, my father and grandfather and all their family lived there at Riverview. They were at Riverview before my father took up residence here. We, grandfather owned that, Riverview the old Casey homestead.

Is that the original block that they selected

No, they originally came onto that hill over the back there, which the mines own now, a block there, then they selected a place out Dorset Road, it's in from Dorset Road. About halfway between Dorset Road and Castlerock Road, a place there, they selected a place there and that's where most of the Caseys were born, out there, it's still in my name. That was the original selection and it was later on that they came to Riverview, down on the creek there, my father lived there for many years then he obtained this property here and he moved her later on when he married.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Have you heard of anyone who was buried outside the cemetery, on properties in the district.

Macintyres are buried on their own land. No, I don't know of any others buried outside.

Have you ever seen any indications of where Aboriginals have been?

Wouldn't be game to say if I had. No, no, no. There is no indications of them around.

Did you have tractors or machinery?

We had a tractor and farm machinery, ploughs and things, but in the early days it was the single furrow plough. It was a great skill to be able to use a plough and draw a straight furrow. Those competitions have fell through but not the horses. The horse era gave life to the place, a lot of the properties appear to have died since they done away with the horses. You go past them and it looks as if there is nothing there, as if it's dead, farms have a morbid look to them sort of thing, where as in the days of the horses there was activity about and they gave life, horses and chooks and things. The farm was alive and going. Today it's entirely different.

So how many draft horses would your father have kept?

Two or three, something like that and a few saddle horses.

Would you have a sulky for going to town?

Yes, we had a sulky and drays.

Would your father conduct his own repairs on them or would he utilise someone in Muswellbrook?

Jennison, he done the sulky up at one stage, he had a shop there, somewhere about where the Worker's Club is today. He done that up, they didn't do their own wheel work or anything like that, putting rims on or things, they got blacksmiths for that, there was plenty of blacksmiths, Hazells were everywhere.

Would your father do his own shoeing?

No, they would take them into Hazells or Caseys, Casey was a blacksmith right in Brook Street about where the TAB or solicitors offices are. Jordan the builder also had a place there and at the back, Devines owned a shop next to Ryans and there was a pathway up the back and there was a blacksmith there and there was blacksmiths down Market Street. One right up this end of town opposite Windscreens O'Brien, Hazells, they were blacksmiths in Muswellbrook, Aberdeen, Scone, Denmen, Hazell Brothers. Whole stack of them blacksmiths, relations to Mrs Victor Oakes, she was a Hazell.

Which would be the main shop that your family would use?

Campbell's & Co. The orderman would arrive on Monday and take your order and in my day it was Jack Harman and the delivery would be on Wednesday, a chap by the name of Constable would deliver the goods on Wednesday. Everybody ran accounts, it was a

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general store, it was very good. You would get a bag of boiled lollies when you paid the bill.

Did you appreciate them?

Yes, in those days, things were far and few between, penny was a penny. Different stories in those days. I don't know what the wage would have been but I think in a lot of cases they never got any money, in a lot of cases they got paid by taking a bullock or a cow or something like that. Money was very scarce, in the early days.

What would Campbell's use to deliver the groceries?

Lorry, Jack Harman used to ride a motor bike for a while, then Tom Hogan was the fellow who came around in later years, he was the orderman. There was more activity around the farms in those days than you get today. You had a baker call three times a week. You go into the hot bread shops today and day old bread is for animals and things like that, they don't want it. In those days you, the bread you got on Friday you took to school on Monday, it was good for weeks, it would have kept for a week in the shelf. There was no refrigeration. Today if you don't refrigerate the bread from the hot bread shops its not much good in a day or two. In the summer time you would get ice on the cream lorry, blocks of ice out, it was the only way you had of cooling your things apart from drip safes and those sorts of things.

Who was the baker that you used?

Arnotts, Mrs Arnott we used to deal with.

Can you remember where her shop was?

Later on in years it was where the Hub is there in Bridge Street, it was there but I think she had a shop somewhere else earlier.

Were there other general stores in Muswellbrook?

Foleys started later on, there was Lawrie's up by the Eaton's Hotel but Campbell's was the main store for everyone because they produced a lot of produce, brans and pollards and everything like that there.

Would they buy local produce too?

Probably would, I don't know, I don't recall selling them anything. I think that in the early days they did buy chaffs and things like that from some of the people in the district. My granny used to put a bag of chaff on the back of the sulky and that would be money for doing the shopping.

When did Campbell's stop sending someone to take the orders?

I don't know, it might have been the war years.

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Different way of life.

Yes it was a different way of life, was very, there was no television, no wireless, you did a fair bit of reading and a fair bit of that sort of stuff and books were a big thing which they are not today. It was not a bad life in that respect, there was a lot of activity more than there is today on the farms and everything.

Do you remember when electricity was connected?

I remember when the telephone was put on. 1927. Electricity came not long after the war started.

Did you have a kerosene fridge?

Yes we had a kerosene fridge, a Silent Night fridge. That was our first fridge. Some were a bit frightened of them, having a fire in the house all night and wooden homes, thought they might burn. We never had any mishaps anyway.

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Interviewee: Maurice Gray

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lot 141 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 21 February 2003

Venue for Interview: 5 Aberdeen Road, Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

Full name

Maurice Lindsay Gray

Where born

Belmont

Age

67 Some people reckon I don't look 67, but I am.

Were there many brothers and sisters in your family?

Two brothers and one sister. One brother died from a brain tumour and the sister, she had a fit and choked.

Was she young?

She was only 54, yes, she wasn't very old. The other brother lived in Singleton. He's all right.

Your father's name?

William Osland Gray

Your mother's name?

Doris Gray – Groves

When were you married?

I was married in Scone when I was 21.

Who did you marry?

Katherine Leonard from Scone. They had a timber mill.

So how did you meet?

We actually met at a dance, when the dances used to be on, you know, we used to go to Dartbrook dances and the Tulingan dances, all the dances, Kayuga dances, in them days. They're all gone.

The only one left is McCully's Gap, isn't it?

Yeah, yeah, it's the only one left. I don't think there's any young'uns go to it is there? No, I don't think so.

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How many children did you have?

Two boys and a girl.

What were their names?

Lindsay Gray, he's up at the Gold Coast, has a coffee business. Richard Gray, he's an electrical engineer, works at Globe Industries, and Vicki, the daughter, she works for Woodland Stud. *(now deceased)*

Were you called up for military service?

Yeah, I done National Service, Yeah, I was in R.A.M.E. 19th Battalion, 1955. I know that because it's up on the wall. There's a plaque there, National Service.

What sort of jobs did you have?

When I was 13, or 14, I used to work on a milk truck. We used to pick up the milk, I used to drive the big truck, drove through the fence, knocked all our fence down one day. Them days are gone too. No more milk cans to pick up. Then I worked at the pit for a long time. Then I had fruit runs, then we had the vegetable farm and used to supply everything to Woolworths.

So when did you buy the farm up there?

In pieces. In them days you could buy bits and pieces and it was all bought over a period of six years.

When did you buy the first block?

Yeah, when I was 25, I think. We bought the first block and then we bought the pieces and joined them and when we sold to Coal & Allied there were about six sets of deeds. There were deeds everywhere!

How much land did you end up with out there?

Twelve acres

Can you remember who you purchased the blocks from?

Yeah, we purchased one block from Mum and Dad, the middle block. Mr Collins, he owned one piece, then we bought some off Les Brotherton and we bought another piece off the bloke who used to own 'Rosebrook', can't remember his name, he used to own the 'Rosebrook' estate which Coal & Allied own now anyway.

They bought Blake's out did they?

No, it is the "Rosebrook" estate, I think it used to be all ... It's on the right hand side as you go down the lane, you know where he's got a few head of cattle.

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When did your parents get the block?

I was probably 10 or 12 year old. They bought it off Miss She owned a piece of ground along Castlerock Road. Miss, someone. She never married. She left her property to Les Brotherton.

Was she a relation to Les?

I don't know what the situation was. I think she must have been, she left the property to Les and then Les left it to Rob in a will.

So Les was the father of Robert, was he?

Yeah ... Miss Smith!! Knew it would come to me. Mum and Dad bought it from Miss Smith. There used to be a dairy there, sheds and everything, cow bails and all.

Did your father run it as a dairy?

No. Fancy running a dairy there.

Not very big, is it. Would have been a struggle.

Yeah. But then they used to have dairies, you know, all around in them days; little dairy farms. Probably milking ten or twenty cows. All changed. Now they milk 600 and they're goin broke

Milk hasn't got any cheaper.

No, poor old dairy farmer.

Were there any buildings on the land out there when you bought it?

Ah, all the houses, nearly all the houses were built after we started. They all started to build. Wally Collin's father cut that up into blocks and that's how all them houses come along Collins Lane there. Cut them all up into blocks, building blocks.

So you built a house out there?

Yeah, up on the highway.

Who built that?

Kath's father, yeah, he had a timber mill in Scone. It was all built with cypress pine which the white ants won't eat.

Did you give the property a name?

No. it was just known as 151 or was it 165?

How did you get into gardening?

Well I wanted, in them days, to get out on me own and I thought when I worked at the pit, I had a top job at the pit and should have stayed there. Could have been down on the coast now, couldn't I, retired with my big bonus. I decided to get out on me own. It was good in them days. Good because there was no big supermarkets in them days, it

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gradually as Woolworths and Coles and Franklins became bigger and bigger and all the fruit shops disappeared it got harder.

When you started was anyone else around here growing vegetables?

Oh yeah, I think there was about three in Scone. There was Chudyk, me, Keith Budden, couple of others around the place. Probably six or seven or eight in Singleton. Twenty or thirty in Maitland. They're all gone, their sons are all working in the mines.

You're the only one left here now?

Yeah. There's no-one left. Yeah, there's Adnums, they grow theirs and sell them in the shop. We're the only two left, me and Darren.

So how did you learn vegetable growing. Trial and error?

Yeah, all me knowledge will pass with me when I'm gone. That's why I'm not gonna tell you about these tomatoes I grow. They want to know how I grow these tomatoes but I'm not gonna tell 'em.

When you were out there where was your water from?

The wells

Good water there?

Yeah, two wells there. I had a 60 megalitre licence. 60 megalitres of water but you can't take it with you.

Couldn't sell it?

I think Coal & Allied, I didn't know it was worth so much money, could have sold it. Yeah, Coal & Allied got the licence. Just at the present time they're still letting me use it cause I've still got 2 acres of Richard's ground there, cause the irrigation's hooked up to it, so they're letting me use the pumps at the present time.

Where were your wells?

Ah, one's up at the gate, right at the front gate and one's at the back of the house. There's two houses on that place.

Who else had wells?

Ah, Mathers have got a well, one back from the corner, there's a bore on the other place. There's a well on the next place. Bore on the next place. Budden's have got a well, there's a bore that goes to Vasilakis.

Unfailing water.

It's always there. And there is a bore on Richard's place too. The water's always there, but I used to pump into a dam 'cause I'd set the pump so it would pump into a dam and you could run the full irrigation line. Pump 24 hours a day but only at a certain rate.

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So whereabouts was the dam?

Just at the back of the house.

Did you ever get flooded out?

Yeah, in the big '55 flood. Yeah, '55 and one other, I think it was the '70 flood. We're gone close a couple of times but I think it broke up near where that big two storey place is. I think Jim built the bank up, stopped it from breaking there. It went pretty close, but you see, Glenbawn Dam wasn't there then. But without Glenbawn Dam we'd have got flooded a few times cause I can assure you it came pretty close but Glenbawn just held enough back to stop it.

What were the worst years out there?

Probably the eighties. The drought was on. Yeah, it was like it is now, but I'm semi-retired now, I can handle it.

You don't get stressed?

I don't get stressed anymore. We're had a few hailstorms, yeah, it's a non-hail area but you always get that one in eight years and one year we got two in a row and then we never had any more for about eight years. It's not a hail area, but you'll always get one every, probably on average, every 8 years.

Did you have a lot in then?

Yeah, chopped things to pieces.

What crops, what vegetables did you grow?

Oh, everything, especially, we used to supply truckload plus trailer load to Woolworths every day. Lettuce, cucumbers, onions, zucchinis, spinach. Woolworths used to take, on average seven thousand bunches of spinach per year. They used to sell seven thousand bunches. I reckon they sell seven hundred now.

So your main market was Woolworths?

Yeah, Woolworths, they were big. They used to take everything. Before they became corporatised. Headquarters in Sydney. Now they take nothing from nobody.

Where would their crops come from now?

All over the State, then they go to Sydney. They won't buy out of the Newcastle markets. Coles and Bi-lo, they're all the same. They're all tarred with the same brush. Everything comes from their warehouse in Sydney.

You never sold from the farm?

No, it was in the wrong area. Not like here, yeah, it's ideal here.

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Over the years, have you seen many changes in crops?

Oh yeah. We never had to spray lettuce or anything or cabbages. They're all coming into the country now, come in them boxes from the back dock. That no-one knows anything about! The diseases, the insects, the diamond-backed moth was the worst. It came from, the Department of Agriculture, it started in Russia, Japan then it went to America, then it came into Australia. Viruses, all tomatoes around the town now get wiped out with viruses. The insect that carries it is so small, see, you can't see them. They're minute, but they carry the virus. They wipe out the lettuce crop in spring.

Do you spray?

Oh yeah, but the diamond backed moth it absolutely devastates cabbages, cauliflowers and broccoli. One year there when it first come out the spray was \$400 a litre, yeah, to kill this thing; which wasn't real profitable, but Shell got a new chemical and it was only \$40 a litre, but it does the same job. It's improved, but they come around. They're been around, they weren't here for about 18 months cause I never grew any cabbages, but I gave it away, but then I started to grow them again. They've been back again in the last month or so but we're sort of controlling them but trying to grow cabbages in the summertime is impossible, not economical.

What about fruit fly?

Yeah, fruit fly, but I have a spray that'll fix them. But they don't come around until just now. Been no problem with them, but they're around now.

Are they getting worse?

No, they're about the same. About every February they come around. Stay around for probably about a month then they're gone again. That Dymacrop, it's the proper Roger, it'll kill 'em, can't buy it at Woolworths! You could drink that stuff they sell up there , it wouldn't hurt you.

Lebycid used to be good, I think they have weakened it too.

It's that weak now, like I said you could drink it now. But this stuff, it's terrific spray for fruit fly. But you gotta watch it, especially after it's rained. See I got the sprayer on the tractor and everything. Soon as it dries up I'll spray 'em, the fruit fly. 'Cause it's just the time now, and they're gonna come around.

How big a place have you got here?

Five acres, yeah, five acres. Nice little spot, nice little block, this, five acres. Yeah, needs nitrogen but so does most of this ground, water's got a bit of a salty content but so has the wells out there, because of the dry weather. It'll go.

Do you have a well here?

No, pump out of the creek. We put in a brand new pump and everything. The water comes back from the Hunter, it doesn't come down Sandy Creek. I bought 10 megalitre of Hunter River water, so it comes back. That's what I had to buy and pay for.

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Were you every involved in service groups or anything?

Yeah, in the Greyhound Club. Vice-President of the Muswellbrook Greyhound Club. I broadcast at the dogs, when they were on, every Sunday.

They've been advertising that.

Yeah, Sydney's taking 'em over. 'Cause of the fact, the insurance, you know; the insurance went up from \$1800 to \$7000, plus all the photo finish, it's just not economical so Sydney's going to subsidise it, without taking them over. They're going to control them without controlling them.

So I suppose insurance here would be high, wouldn't it?

It's not too bad, NRMA, this place has \$5 million public risk. It only costs, for the house, furniture and public risk, it only costs \$80 a month, which is pretty good. But the NRMA do it, for farms, yeah. So as long as we don't have a claim, we'll be right for the \$80 a month. But we had to do it, we just, if someone pinches a watermelon and trips over, then they'll be suing me, now, they'll be suing the insurance company so they won't get nothin'. But they could send you broke, the way things go these days.

Produced map of Kayuga Road area.

There's a house on Richard's block.

There's a collection of Buddens at the back.

Well, Gordon, he died not long back, his son's got the one on the left hand side [Gordon would be in the middle] but George sold his.

Gagelers

Yeah, they had a fair bit. That's Brotherton's, Robert, he got it left to him. He sold it, it belongs to Coal & Allied now. The block 140 belonged to Les Brotherton, the centre block belonged to my parents and the block to the north I bought from Collins.

Hayes, that's an old name around here, isn't it?

Hayes, well that's a different Hayes. He hasn't been there long. He built the house just as they were about to start at Mt Pleasant. Then further up you've got Doug Moore.

Vasilakis, is he the one who had the fruit shop?

Yeah, he had the fruit shop. He's down the South Coast now. Then he owned one of the houses down on the flat, him and Bennett.

His wife was a Bennett wasn't she?

Yeah, no, there was some connection there, because they were always together and they went down the coast together and they had the two houses together. Yeah. I know everything that happened out here.

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Interviewee: James Allan Lonergan

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lots 22 & 38 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 23 July 2003

Venue for Interview: 53 Hinemoa Ave, Killarney Vale

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

Interview started with Allan showing me some of the valuable documents that he holds. These consisted of leases and discharge of mortgages that relate to land owned by his grandfather, John Lonergan.

What is the background to the documents, Allan?

My old grandfather had some land that was leased. The Gall country was leased and when my parents got married they lived down there, it was called 'Chermside'. Later on when the old man passed on my dad inherited land close by. He also bought land in conjunction with his brother. Later on this land was split up; he took the northern side of the Mt Pleasant road as you go up over the top. He took that and his brother, who was my uncle, took the other side of Galls. There was a discharge of mortgage and I think it was £4 for the discharge, 4½% interest rate. Document was signed by T B Haydon.

We might start with you, when were you born?

I was born in September 1918.

In Muswellbrook?

In Muswellbrook

Who were your parents?

My father would have been born in Maitland, my mother would have been born in Muswellbrook.

Where your parents James and Catherine?

Yes, James and Catherine.

Was her maiden name Flanagan?

That's right.

Was she a Flanagan from Wybong?

She was, 'Gillie Burn', Wybong, true Irish people, no fooling about with them.

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

I had one brother and three sisters, at the moment there is only one sister left. She is about 90 or very close to 90 and this is how I came to write about the family. I have a daughter in Sydney, she leads a pretty busy life. She is a doctor and works eight days out

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of seven. Our other daughter is at Toukley here, she is a school teacher, but she is much more interested in all this stuff. The other daughter, well I suppose she's interested. I gave them all a copy of the Lonergan Family see and said to Denise, what did you think of that great story, did you read it? Well she said um er. I could tell no, she didn't read it, but Joanne read it back to front. Tony I don't know, I dare say Tony read it but if he can find it now I'm not sure, probably can. Terry, our eldest son is in Thailand. He is working with the Yanks in a power station; he's 2IC in the power station in Thailand. Well he got his copy and studied it, I think he was genuinely interested. Joanne is very keen. I found a piece of paper here, we were doing a clean up, it was addressed to me, 83 Anzac Avenue, West Ryde. Now we left there in 1950 and I think from the look of it, it was in my mother's hand writing and I think she had rolled the Chronicle up as they did and posted it to me and the stamp on it was worth 3d. When Joanne came over, I said I had found a 3d stamp, she said where did you get it. I told her the story. What happen to the paper? I put it in the garbage. Get it out – so she's got that.

Well, it is historic.

It is historic, but there are not very many people. Now she approached me, she said there is only you and Aunty Madge, why don't you write something. We don't know where we came from, we know nothing. I had a lot of this garbage and stuff that I had collected some from a cousin, Jack Lonergan of Thorndale, he's long since dead, he had a lot, all handed down, passed it on to me. I have some of my own that I had acquired along the road and I said I will. I didn't do anything about it until about three months later one of my nephews from Muswellbrook, John Lonergan, he lives at Kayuga, John rang me up and asked me to write something down. He said we don't know anything. Not many of the elderly left. Well I thought I had better do something, so I dug out all this gear and went over it. I was able to put something together.

Now I know great grandfather Lonergan arrived here when he was 19 years of age, I found where and when he was born. He came from a farming family in Ireland; he came here after the potato famine. He had another brother who went to America. We went to America for the first time in 1980. When we left here I said, when we get to America the first thing I am going to do is sit down and ring up some of the Lonergans. Pages and pages in every phone book, I didn't ring anybody. The first hotel we stayed at I got the phone book out; honestly, there were five or six pages just in that one city. We landed at San Francisco. We had a good tour around, couple of months in America. Check the Lonergans out; there was no way.

Even now, today, there are first cousins, families, now Barney Lonergan, Barney's wife's still alive in Muswellbrook. I'm sure they have a son Kerry. He works for the ABC, does that farming program on Sunday. I don't know him for that matter, he has family in Queensland. They get away so quickly, they really get away so quickly. I know some of them were in WA, but whether they stayed in WA I don't know, but just one family has spread all over the county since 1860s. Not a great deal of time for people to get a spread on.

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What about schooling, where did you go to school?

I went to school in Muswellbrook.

You didn't go to Kayuga at all?

Sorry, yes I did, I started at Kayuga.

Where was the school then?

The old school as it was called, or the original school was, there are pepper trees, it would be mile and a half from Kayuga Road. You know where you turn the corner and you get a couple of zig-zags, well there are two lots of pepper trees there. It was a big area of several acres, fenced in and the school was there when I started there many years ago of course. I think, I'm not sure but there would have been 60-70 kids there but I understand at one stage earlier there were 100 kids going to school there with two teachers.

Next door to it there was a little, though it did not operate in my day, and I don't know what church it was, could have been Presbyterian, could have been C of E, don't know, but there was a building there. I think the ground was donated by the people who owned it, the Devines, they lived on the hill and they just cut this little piece off for whatever church they belonged to and the church was built. In those days people seemed to pay a lot more attention to church and going to church than they do today.

There were no less than, I don't remember, it was before my day, but there was another one further down. As you come up the road from Kayuga, from the turn off there is a nice brick home built. Pat Kauter built on that patch there, but there was a church there on that site. I'm not sure of the denomination. It was an area fairly well settled I suppose, but the two churches of different denomination for an area of that size. Eventually they were pulled down. We used to leave our horses in the churchyard cause the school was next door.

How far would you ride to school?

I used to come around three miles; I walked it more than once too, but usually used to ride ponies. At a later date, about 1932 or 34 they moved the school down into Kayuga proper, built a new school there and it celebrated its centenary and I think if you look the little plaque commemorating that would still be there. I don't know when, the school's been shifted and long gone, but now I have a feeling the toilet block might still be there. For years after the school closed and prior to it closing, there was a voting booth there. I was one of the operators. We used to look forward to that day, few eats; you would see everyone from around the district. Everyone came to vote and would stop for half an hour talking. Those days are gone I am afraid. Nobody has time now.

Was all your primary school at Kayuga?

Yes

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Then where to?

I went to the Catholic School in Muswellbrook, that closed afterwards, pretty small.

Where about was the Catholic School?

It was, there was a big primary school, they have moved out and it's used for all sorts of things. They moved out over near the hill there. You know where the Convent was, it's the Conservatorium, there were 12-14 nuns living there, teaching school. That's long gone.

Did you go on to the Leaving?

No

What did you do after you left school?

I was home for a little while then I took a job with the railway department and got on the relief staff and worked all over the northern part of the state. Finished up I was based, my home station was Murrurundi. Would be sent out on signal box and stuff like that. Did a bit of shunting here and there, shunted in Muswellbrook. I worked in Muswellbrook Signal Box for eight months. Worst job in Australia some said cause I was home. I used to live at home, I never minded it, and eventually someone took the job on. I moved on. I got married and we were living at Murrurundi for 3 months. I accepted a job at Hornsby where I stayed, we lived in West Ryde. I resigned in 1951 and I went back up and entered into a partnership with my brother. We bought quite a bit of land that was once owned by our grandfather. It had been passed on to his sons. One son sold out quite early in life and moved on to something else. Another son had one daughter and he did not want the land so he sold it. We were able to buy quite a bit of it back. We were in the partnership until about 1963. His boys were growing up, mine were a bit younger, still going to school. His boys were more interested in the dairying kind of thing, so he moved down on the river, had three farms down there all joining up. I bought some of the dry land and eventually my fellows came home and Terry was with me for a while, but he moved on, he went to work as a teacher. He was going to revolutionise everything on the land when he started, cause he got cold feet. He was very good with machinery, excellent, not much good with stock, not interested though he was a qualified wool-classer, but he was not interested in the stock. He was extremely good at machinery, working it. Repairing it, hence the fact he is in the power station job. He left the school teaching and went to the power station, worked for them for sometime, left them after a period of 10-12 years. Finished up in Thailand.

We split the partnership up, I retained half except I did sell some. I did sell a bit of it, could not resist the temptation. Hobby farmers came in and offered big money. Tony's back there now raising cattle, cause he's doing a bit of off farm stuff too. He's teaching science at Aberdeen. Heck of a good bloke Tony. Tony does not care, yes, probably a good attitude to adopt. I never could, but he has a very free and easy style, very cluey bloke. He spent at least eight years all over the world. He did it the hard way, his mother was his banker, used to send for money when he wanted it, but he could live on the

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smell of an oily rag. He was a geologist when he left here. He's had I suppose you could say a very interesting life. He got married and came back and settled here. For a while, when he came back, he was interested in a job with me, but I had a man and I could not sack him to take Tony on, but eventually he left. Tony took his job and eventually I turned it over to him and he has done quite well there. Built a nice home, like he built onto what was two rooms, made a nice place of it, but no doubt he will lose that when the mines take over, if they buy. I think they will but there's a down turn in coal at present.

How did your father use the property?

Mostly grazing, little bit of farming, not much farming.

Sheep or cattle?

Mostly sheep.

For wool or fat lambs?

For wool.

Was the farming that was carried out for their own use?

Yes, bit of stock feed, little bit of oats. Not much. My dad was not into farming. Those days were different too. There were five of us in the family, which they reared, fed, and got us on our feet so to speak, with not a great deal of land you know, in comparison to what we had. There was nothing much, we had a wireless, but it was a long time before that came. There was not much to spend money on. There was very little convenience in the houses. We had kerosene lamps, lot of those Alladin lamps, used to pump them up. The lighting was quite satisfactory. I think the people in the towns lived a fairly simple life in those days too. We had friends in town we used to stay with; they were quite moderate in the way they lived. There was not much entertainment, bit of music, cards. I was never in the card business. They had gone on when I was at that stage. All the neighbours used to come to our place, play euchre or 500 to 3 o'clock in the morning. Coffee and all sorts of things afterwards. There was a big open fire blazing in the room they used to play in. Us kids used to get sent to bed. No, it was a different life entirely.

Was there much sport?

There was a fair bit of sport, again it was gone before my time, and then I left. Kayuga had a very good cricket team. I think it was said they could pick a team of Lonergans. Lonergans and Caseys; there were a few other people, Adnums, Devines. They had some good cricketers, some of the young fellows used to go down and play Country Week. Produced a couple of good batsmen and bowlers. There was tennis, there were two tennis courts there.

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Was that near the hall?

Yes, the hall was there, well used, again before my time. There were dances there most weekends, Saturday nights of course, had to be finished by 12 o'clock. They were very strict on those sorts of things in those days.

Was the cricket ground near the hall?

The recreation ground was all in one piece. The hall was built on it, the tennis courts and the cricket pitch. There was a box, which might be still there, it used to hold all the cricket gear. They used to have mats used to put down mats to play on. They were all rolled up and put in this long box and for years it was outside the hall. It was up off the ground and was a wooden box, but it was covered outside with flat iron, made it weather proof and locked. Full of bats, pads and all sorts of things. Belonged to the Cricket Association. Fairly sporting type of people.

Did your uncle Patrick live out there.

Paddy built a new home right opposite, he had a piece of ground, probably 15-20 acres straight opposite the hall, like going in the direction of Aberdeen. The house is still there no doubt, but his land is now owned by Graham Sparre, as a matter of fact. He had a property there that was on the southern side of the Coal Creek Road. Paddy Lonergan sold his land to Marcus Hyndes, Marcus Hyndes was the surveyor here, is it still known as Hyndes, Bailey?

Yes, but it has been sold.

Has it, Murray was in that.

Col Murray has retired

Marcus Hyndes was the surveyor and Bailey; Geoff Bailey came there and learnt the trade from him. Marcus Hyndes bought that land well back on the Coal Creek Road, the southern side of Coal Creek Road from Paddy Lonergan and he sold it to Sparre.

Did Paddy do other work around the district since he only had a small farm?

No, he had a fair bit of land; the little piece of land was leased. He had a couple of horses, used to ride about. He also had a truck even in those days. No, he had sheep and cattle.

So he had more land further back.

That was the land I was speaking of, that Sparre owns now. Graham has been successful; he's had a go at everything. He did the pressing from my shearing one year, was not very old then. Not long home from school then.

Did Patrick have a nickname?

Paddy. I don't remember my uncles having nicknames. Bill Lonergan lived on the hill; the house has recently been knocked down. It's a shame, it was a sawn slab place on the top

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of a hill. You know where John Lonergan lives, Vin Lonergan lived there, he was a bachelor, died two or three years ago. He had a strip of ground, I remember in the early days, had a big orchard there and right down to the waterway, where the water comes out of the valley.

The Lonergan Estate, that was right out as far as Castle Rock. We finished up buying the original homestead block where Grandfather Lonergan bought. Came there in about I would say 1888; somewhere about that period. He bought that piece of land, will give you some idea of money then, it was a going concern. It was a 40-acre block of land, Coal Creek ran through it and there was lucerne growing there on both sides of the creek, nice piece of lucerne. Across the road, there were 200 acres of grazing land. There was a house on it, it was a slab house, but for the time, it was lined with that fine corrugated tin. It was big enough for a fairly big family any way and he bought it for £200 for the lot. When my brother split up he sold it to Michael Scarf's father. They tried all sorts of things.

What about Thomas?

Tom Lonergan, we also bought that eventually. Tom sold his country quite early in the piece and he moved to Muswellbrook. Moved the house to Muswellbrook. Don't know how, most likely pulled it to pieces. It's still lived in today. I think it would be done up considerably and probably built onto, but I would say the bones of the original house would still be there.

Where about is the house?

It's down on the river, down Hill Street, down pretty close to the river.

What did he do in Muswellbrook?

I'm not sure what Tom did, I think he worked for the Shire or something like that, but I could not be sure.

What about John?

Well John Lonergan was the eldest of the five brothers. He owned and lived at Thorndale, that's on the Coal Creek Road. That's as far in as the original Lonergans went. Someone owned, there was a house built on it. The name of the original people eludes me at the moment. John Lonergan owned that, reared a family there, five, only one member of that family left. Nellie Partridge, Nellie lives over in Sydney Street there in a side street. Eventually Pat and his sister bought a home, nice brick home on the corner there, can't think of the name of the street. She's the only one of the family left.

All the Box Ridge family, there all gone. There would be two or three of Leo's grandchildren left somewhere. So all these people gone, the families are gone. Ted Casey lived further down, three or four boys, they were much older. The only member left of that family would be Vin Casey; Vin Casey would be well over ninety. Lives somewhere in Newcastle, retired for many years.

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Are the Box Ridge Lonergans related?

No, well I can't say for sure. I have a feeling that two grandfathers were like 2nd cousins. So it sort of ran out. But only on one side of the family because like the Thorndale Lonergans are first cousins, Nellie Partridge because her father married a Casey and as far as I can tell you like the Box Ridge Lonergans were the only ones that were really not. The others were sort of.

Where was Box Ridge?

Box Ridge was right on top of the hill. Its been gone, the mines did a great clean up, not sure why, they bull dozed all these places and carted them away. It was right on top of the hill. As you went up, as you went out to Tony's you climb that hill, due north, 200-300 yards, there's a nice little brick home built on the corner there. They were opposite that house, it was not there in Box Ridge days. He had a home there and he did not have a lot of land. He had land leased from Macintyres. He reared a big family, much bigger than my father.

Were Devine's along Dorset Road near the school?

That was one of the old Devines. The later members, the next generation you would say lived opposite the Thorndale house on the Coal Creek Road. The last was Hilton to live there. Hilton is still living, he sold out some time back. He must be 90.

He is in a nursing home at Scone, not well, only family to visit.

Well you get to a stage when you are past it. They owned land there but the Devines that lived on Dorset Road, they're been gone many years, they were like a generation above. They would have been uncles of Hilton at least.

What about Baxters?

Baxters, yes we bought the land that Baxter had. Was owned originally by Tom Lonergan. Grandfather Lonergan, when alive put him there, bone of contention I think when he left there. Anyway he sold out, he sold to people called Nichols, I think Nichols dairied there, but he also had a little jam factory of all things. These things I have gleaned from different ones, the old hands. They used to make jam, bottle it, and no doubt sold it door to door. I would imagine that's how it was done, cause some of the older people, they used to make butter and take it around the towns of Muswellbrook and Aberdeen. That was legal in those days. He sold eventually to Edwin Baxter and in 1948-9 we leased Baxter's and my brother moved into the house when he got married. Eventually after leasing it for some years Eddie Baxter decided to sell it and he was gentleman enough to offer it to us. Would have made a lot more money if he had put it to auction. We were frightened to ask him how much he wanted and I think we bought it from Baxter for £7 an acre. He didn't have to sell it to us, but I'd say he was, he had no family and it was families that used to keep people poor, probably do today, lot of expense attached to a family, well I think Eddie Baxter was pretty comfortable when he left where he was. There was on portion of Baxter's, only 100 acres in it, that he could

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not sell cause he only had a life interest in it. Strangely enough it was left to his sister, funny way they used to make wills, Eddie was much younger than his sister and she was dead for years and years. She never saw any benefit from it, eventually her family were well catered for by Baxter's as they had no-one to leave it to so eventually her family benefited. When Eddie Baxter died I bought the land I had leased and strange enough I could never understand why I was leasing it from him for 5/- an acre, but going into it a bit I found when it was first leased that was the market value of leasing and he could not charge anymore as we had signed up a sort of indefinite lease so it went on for 5/- an acre. I bought it from the estate then. I paid £40 an acre, like in the late 50s, early 60s. That was the way that money had gone.

Galls were another family up there.

Well Galls were the owners of the land Coal and Allied want from me, plus the piece in front. George Gall as I mentioned earlier, at the turn of the hill, George Gall had a house, lot of pepper trees about. Well between there and the boundary fence his brother, Jim Gall owned the part I finished up with. Now I don't know what Coal and Allied are going to do, they want the lot of course. No doubt they will open cut.

What about Whickers?

Well the brother and I bought Whickers about early 50s, 53. He did own a lot of land around Sparre. I don't know how it happened, I think there was roughly 700-800 acres in the piece that we bought. Who got the rest originally I don't know, but a family in Melbourne, descendants of his in Melbourne, owned it when it was put up for sale. We bought it through Cliff Parkinson of Higgens, Parkinson, did a lot of business with Cliff. We bought a lot of land and stock but mainly land. We were very good friends of Cliff, he was straight as a gun barrel. You would go to an auction and Cliff would say, don't get me wrong, if I call a bid I've got it, don't think I've cheated you. Whickers, we bought Whickers for £6/5/- an acre. Strangely enough it was not a great deal but money was money, as it is today, but money must have been pretty valuable in those days because we argued for quite a long time between us and the people in Melbourne over something like 2/6 an acre. They wanted £6/7/6 and we said we would give £6/5/-. In today's money it is peanuts but in 1953 it was worth thinking about

There's another story there too. On part of that country, its on the top side of the road, the northern side of the road, there was a remittance man there in the early days. Sent out from England and paid to stop away in other words. I don't know what area he had, but he probably selected 40 acres or what ever. Do you know there are posts in the ground where he had his house built. Stockyard posts, morticed, are still there leaning at a great angle. I found a couple of bottle on the surface that had gone pink from the sun. He was a remittance man. He was only a young man of course, two or three wild young fellows there used to associate together and the story goes that one wild ride home one night from Aberdeen, they were on the scoot in there, and three horsemen they galloped, I'm not sure if its Kingdon Ponds but it's the road to Dartbrook, no bridge of course, down the bank and up the other side, the middle horse stumbled and he

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went over its head. He was probably stunned and drowned in 4-5 inches of water. The other fellows did not miss him, when they got to their turn they went that way home, horse galloped on, his name was Stafford Budd. So there's quite a bit of old history and tales you are told about.

Is the Whickers house still standing?

I don't think there ever was a house on it. It was a portion of Whickers land and where his house was I could not say, I don't think he did. There is still a fig tree growing out in the paddock and I would say it was sown by this Stafford Budd. We owned it since early 50s and the person who owned Dorset, Schmierer had leased it for many many years and it must have been when Schmierer died that the place was sold up. Don't know what sort of lease he had but he had it for a long time.

What about Abberton.

Well Abberton's. I still own Abberton's. Frank Abberton came there, well many years ago of course, two children, a boy and a girl. The son, I think went to Queensland eventually. They only had 150 acres, that all there was in it. He retired from there, I don't know what age, he bought Brighton Villa in Muswellbrook, that was originally Tom Blunt's, he built Brighton Villa. Abberton was able to go and buy that off his 150 acres cause he, well my grandfather had it leased and my father bought it eventually. So he was able to make a living off it and go and retire to town, quite a wealthy man. Some how they are, she married a Smith, I think there are Smiths still about there now.

Capper

Capper was the man that built Belgrave house, that's straight up the valley from Athlone, that's where my parents lived. When they first got married, they lived in this, Gall down the valley and eventually when old grandfather died, Mum and Dad moved into Belgrave. They moved in there, I was only a few months old, it must be 85 years since they moved in, course they're dead and gone years too, but they lived there all their lives. Cappers still I would think are storekeepers in Maitland, unless they sold out and gone, but Cappers were storekeepers of some form in Maitland.

Major

Major, well I don't know a great deal about the Majors, they lived in the village of Kayuga. Percy Major taught school there as a teacher, now it was his parents that lived down, I'll tell you who might live in the house today, Adnums. John Adnum, he was a smart little fellow. Johnny, he was deaf and dumb. At one stage there for a long time I used to do a lot of contract harvesting, had a couple of headers going there at one stage. I used to harvest for Macintyres and Johnny used to be riding on the header with me. We could converse you know. I could speak to him and he knew what I was talking about, could lip read, but he could make me understand and we could hold a conversation. There was not a great deal because there was other things to do when I was operating the machine, but he would be sitting there besides me. I remember on occasion David came down and said he was going to Scone today. Anyway I knew he

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was going to the races in Scone, but I thought he was the clerk of the course. We belted along during the day and I pointed up towards Scone, looked at Johnny and said clerk of course. He indicated that David was running the public address system. He was a very smart boy, if he had the opportunity of an education. He was very smart.

Tuckers

Tuckers, again, well I would say Tuckers were before, well around the time of Galls, out of my view.

Ducey

Ah well Duceys lived in the village of Kayuga, they dairied down there. I don't think there are any in Muswellbrook now, on the North Coast. They lived opposite what was the new School, that home would still be there.

What about Guys

Well the Guys at one stage between the Lonergans and the, no it must have been before that, Cappers must have taken Belgrave from Guys. Guys were teamsters and they lived, I gather they were carriers in Maitland and places afterwards, the next generation. Charlie Guy was a horse breaker here, was one of the originals. Lived, you know, the mine turned the place over to that priest. Charlie Guy lived there, he was a horse breaker.

Was the coal mine still running?

There was a coal mine still there, had been open for a good many years. When we were to move to the new Kayuga School, 1934-5, would have been about that time, they were supplying, there must have been a strike on, they opened it up again, and they were supplying coal to the meat works what was called ACF Co. in Aberdeen. There was a boy going to school there and his father had the contract to cart the coal. You know it would almost make you laugh at the size of the truck he had, it would have been a dual wheel thing but 7-8 tons at the very most. It was quite a bone of contention as he ran through part of the school yard. He was someone who came into the area with a truck and got the job of carting the coal. It did not run for a great length of time. Not sure how good the coal was, may have been all right.

Can you remember if there were any buildings around the mine?

I think there were various buildings, it was a shaft, I think they had the wheel and everything for going up and down. Don't know that there were a lot of men working there. Between there and the Thorndale house, the Thorndale people finished up owning it. They bought that portion. A Miss Smith lived in Smith Lane. Rather original was it not, Smiths in Smith Lane. I understand that's where the mine will start as I understand, the coal is only 10-12' from the ground. That's Watts, Wayne Watts, nice new home there.

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How long was Miss Smith there for?

She was there all her life I think. I don't know where they came from or what. See they were not very big pieces of land, 40 acres, and people seemed to be able to make a living off it. She had a sister, married Frank Roser. She owned the land, on the first little hill as you come out from Muswellbrook I think there's an accountant there.

Jennifer Leckie

That's where Rosers lived, they dairied, they had the flat down and joined Weidmanns. Miss Smith, she owned land, Brothertons, do you know where Brothertons were, on that built up area on the right hand side. She owned most of that land. (Collins Lane area)

Interview concluded with Allan locating places mention on a map.

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Interviewee: Tim Lonergan

Association with Mt Pleasant: Related to Lonergan Families of Kayuga

Date of Interview: 17 March 2003

Venue for Interview: 141 Hill Street, Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

This interview was held to gain some understanding of the complex family relationships between the various branches of the Lonergan family and their connection with the Casey family.

Tim was able to provide the following information:-

His great-grandparents were John and Elizabeth Lonergan. They lived at 'Belgrave'

Their children were,

John married Bridget Casey lived 'Thorndale'

Thomas married Mary Galvin lived in Muswellbrook

William very little known about him

James married Catherine Flanagan lived at 'Belgrave'

Patrick lived 'Rosevale'

Ann married Patrick Casey.

James Lonergan was Tim's grandfather, he married Catherine Flanagan at Muswellbrook on 4 Aug 1909 and had six children. Five of these children were John, Mary, Margaret, Norah and James. John was Tim's father, he was born 1910 and married Marie Ell of Merriwa in St Anne's, Merriwa in 1946. They had five children.

Part of the problem in researching this family is the continued use of the same Christian name in each generation. The problem is further complicated due to the presence of another John Lonergan who was a contemporary of John 'Belgrave' Lonergan.

This John and Rose Lonergan had two children,

James married Mary Casey lived 'Boxridge'

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Mary married John Casey

James and Mary Lonergan had nine children, one of who was Leo James, known as 'Little King'.

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Interviewee: Matt Peel

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lot 39 on EIS Plan. 'Broomfield'

Date of Interview: 6 Feb 2003

Venue for Interview: 19 Birralea Street, Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

Your property was 'Bloomfield'

'Broomfield'

Who did you purchase it from?

Les and Palmer Weidmann

When was that?

1965, right in the middle of a drought.

How big was it when you purchased it?

Just a shade over 3000 acres.

Did you add to it?

Oh yes, not exactly to it, but down the Roxburgh Road; first I bought Teddy Richardson's old place, then Harry Munn's, above it, those two places. Then I also bought a place out on the Timor Road, place called 'Rocklands', Murrurundi address it'd be.

Now, when you bought the property were there many buildings on it?

There was a woolshed and it was equipped in 1925 and the motor was put in by Cecil Sleep, which used to be Sleep, Bower and Robb. It would still be up on the wall there today. There was that and just the one shearers' quarters. I'd say just the one room and just the saddle room and shed and cowbail. That was the sum total at that stage and then we built the stables and the big hayshed.

And the homestead was there, wasn't it?

The homestead was there, yes

Did you change it much?

Well, the wife done it up terrific inside. What we did outside was a room, it was 30 by about 15, a lounge/dining room. The original old place had the kitchen separate from the main part, if you get what I mean. We did put a new bathroom in, well, it was built on the back verandah and then we put a wall along there and the boys used to sleep there, but Tommy Hartsuyker, I suppose you remember him, it was 30 by 15, we added that and of course we put the fence around the house, sort of thing.

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Were Weidmanns living there at all when you..?

The Weidmanns never lived there. Fred Rowlands, he was a brother to Dick Rowlands that used to work for Reynolds on the Bengalla Road there and then. Dick Rowland did eventually work for me for years, one of the best men I ever had actually. Fred Rowlands used to run it for Weidmann's, mainly, they did run sheep, ran cattle, dairy heifers out there as well. They had the dairy but you would know all about that.

When you moved out there, who were your neighbours?

Joe Moore was next door, 'Gilgi' was the name of his place. Arthur Gardiner, then Mrs Sparre was down the bottom end and Jack and Pat Lonergan joined on the top side there, something to do with Campbell & Co used to own the paddock joining us up the front there at that stage but its all been cut up. We did all our shopping at Campbell's Store. Didn't matter what you wanted you could get it you know. There was old John, what's his name, used to be in Market Street – John Foley.

Was it dangerous to shop there?

You could not get in there without him saying good day to you, like if you were sick of waiting you could not walk out cause he had already recognised you were there. But no he was good, no doubt, we never had a minute's trouble with him you know, or his daughter, they were terrible good. I did have 400 acres out at Antiene there. It used to belong to the McTaggart's from over the Putty way there and of course I came in wanting some fencing wire and John Foley didn't know me from a pair of boots, sort of thing. I said I haven't got any money with me. He said, don't worry about that, no trouble at all

When did you leave Broomfield?

66 actually

When did you sell, was that last year?

We sold to them before we left the place.

Was that a couple of years ago?

What did I say, 66, no 96, like we looked around at different places and this place suited us (Merriwa). The waters 100%, we are on both creeks, well half the maps call it Bow River and the others Bow Creek, but we've got a well 25 feet deep and it supplies a 25,000 gallon tank that way, about a mile away, and 5000 that way. It's just terrific plus there is a bore there, it will put out 10,000 an hour but we have never used it.

At Broomfield, what type of country would you call it?

Well you had the ironbark country in the front paddock. As it turned out it was one of the greatest assets because when I went to Merriwa we took 500 split posts that the kids had run out and I put in all lanes up there. Made the place that easy to run, you just can't compare it. If I sell vealers, sometimes I sell Mudgee, sometimes Scone, I'd sort the calves off and let the cows go back to their own paddock, give them three days and they

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come back to the yards, you don't have any worries with broken fences plus I did put in steel yards out there and it's a circular race and I can run fifty cows or fifty calves in 25 minutes on me own. They just feed around and I've got a crush at the front of the race and a drafting gate, like you are drafting sheep, cows one way, calves the other. I could not work simpler.

Is there much kurrajong out there on Broomfield?

Used to be 3000 kurrajong trees on Broomfield. I had to cut everyone of them in 82 drought. We cut a lot of scrub there.

Just to keep going? 82 would be the worst year do you think?

Well 65, of course would have been worse but we had only got there and then we got the snow that year in August. I walked out the back door and said it's snowing, cause everybody wouldn't believe me. We got six inches up on the higher part there. I rode up and had a look, it was six inches deep on the high country there but it hadn't rained for – hadn't snowed for 70 years I believe. The only time it snowed while we were there.

What do you think were the best years out there?

Well 67 turned out a good year after the drought you know, it was one of the better years, but we never had any problems like, we never feed hay or anything, we did cut the kurrajong and we did lose a few cattle that way. You are just about to fall a decent size branch, like we used to trim them hard, it's doing the tree good as well as the cattle and now and then one would walk under and get knocked out. We killed one or two, soon as you started the chainsaw they were there.

On the property, were there any signs of yards or wells or anything like that?

Yes there was a well down, we'll call it down below the woolshed sort of thing. We used that for bathwater in dry times but we had no trouble, we had a pump jack on that and pumped it up to the house. Now there used to be two dairies on that place in the olden days, the land was taken up in 1838, that was on the old deeds. Winnie White took it up and one of the Bettingtons sort of, well I don't know whether he was in share or you know he might have lent them money or something, Winnie White was the first one to take it up. Now there used to be a school there. Mrs Keast was telling me there today, she just didn't know, see her aunty used to live there and she used to go over to visit when she was a kid to visit aunty and they always came in the front gate and she is not sure but she thought the school was down towards Joe Moore's fence there, some other old person might know about it. Now, then down on the flat on the main creek there was a dairy there. Old Mr Sleep reckoned they had a steam engine there running milking machines but they must have been a real early set of milking machines. There was another dairy out on the Castlerock Road and there was two wells there, two totally different waters, they wouldn't be from here to your door (10') apart and there was a dairy there and yards. The concrete was still there, but gone there now of course. That was about all, those two wells were there, with a mill on each one. Main creek never stopped runnin' all the time we were there.

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Was that Spring Creek?

Yes, I don't know what with mines and that, but I would never have bought but for that creek, at the time I gave £26 an acre, ten years to pay it off at 6¼ %, whether that's any interest.

How long did you have to pay it?

10 years

At 6 ¼

Yes, be alright to get that today.

They often gave credit, the Weidmanns, I have seen that in a few sales.

I never had any problems with them whatsoever, never had a ounce of trouble with them, and I never missed a payment too you know which I spos.. No they were good to me as I say as far as that goes. That was pounds at the time.

Yes, I have pounds, would be cheap at dollars.

The Shire did take a bit off, was about 3003 acres originally but on the Castlerock Road where the gun club go in they straightened the road a bit there and I didn't charge them anything there for the ground at the time. They did put up a bit of new fence there, not too much but I renewed that fence, if I knew the Shire was going to take it I need not have went to all that trouble, but there it is.

What did you mainly run out there, cattle?

Beef cattle, then we had the quarter horse stud. American quarter horse, we imported two stallions from America, we had a Clydesdale stud and a Welsh mountain pony stud. I took over the Horden pony stud actually, late Sir Samuel Horden's son I ended up buying the mares off. Then we did have a donkey stud, I used to sell donkeys for people to teach their stud bulls to lead, see I always used donkeys to teach me horses to lead and But Welsh pony and we did import a Welsh cob from Wales. I also imported a Clydesdale from Scotland. Cause we had the grand supreme champion mare, grand champion, Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, one of the best mares in Australia in her day, 'course she's history now, but there it is.

Did you sell all that up when you left or have you kept some?

Well as I say I had no trouble with the mines, the chap I was buying the place off, like the place suit everything, it was right for us and we could get to the doctor. I was mustering the last lot of cattle to brand and I had a heart attack. Now that morning I went out to muster and I sort of had pains in the chest, I never ever used to get, you know and anyhow I thought it's only indigestion and anyhow I came back to the yards and the wife came down an' she said you better come and have a cup of tea an' I walked up to the house and I said I'll sit down here, can you get me a drink. She went to get me a cup of water and I couldn't lift it to me mouth and she said I'll take you straight into

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the doctor. Anyhow we got in here an' the little shop straight opposite the hospital, I had the air conditioning goin' an' she got a cool drink there and I said you better take me home so we just got over the bridge there. Over the Hunter and I said just pull up here for five minutes, under that shady tree, well I wasn't there a minute and I said you better take me back. And I was due to have a triple bypass but I opted for Chelation, 'course the doctors don't want to hear about it, you sit there for three hours and they put the drip in your arm and I haven't had a day's sickness since. When I first caught the train to Gosford I had a job to get up the steps. I had five treatments and I can walk up two steps at a time. I still go back about every two months just to keep things right.

Check up?

Not check up, chelation, the doctor comes up from Sydney and does it but the doctors, they don't want to hear about it, you know, I went to that Dr Peters at Denman to get a referral, 'I don't want to hear that mumbo jumbo'. Like I was due to have the butcher's knife and we had a friend on the Gold Coast, and she is a naturopath and she said don't let them put the butcher's knife and I have not had a day' sickness since.

Very good

Well it takes all the calcium whatever in the veins. I've still got a bit of damage in the heart like, when they did the cardiogram he said like you've got that, that was at the time, like I say, I haven't had a day's sickness.

You mentioned Rowlands, did you employ anyone else out there over the years?

Yes well, Billy Neville, the blacksmith fellow, he used to work for me there for a few years. Max McTaggart worked for me, one of the great buckjump riders. Robert George worked for me for a time too. And Dick Rowlands worked down on the river place, did the irrigation. I bought that place off Teddy Richardson down there, it had a mile frontage to Hunter River, couple of the boys still got some of that.

The boys helped you on the farm?

Well when they were kids they worked for me, you know, fencing and splitting posts and all that type of thing like. I've got five boys, there's Peter the eldest, then there's Mark, no John is next then Mark. I did have a daughter in between the second child, daughter she was, then you got Warwick and Keith, that should be the five, is it? No another daughter that's married to John Symington out at Cassilis, last two were twins, came out two at a time, you have to find the cause. George Cooper, he used to work for me, ended up having a heart attack and went over and was dead within an hour sort of thing. One of the best. He used to work for Donny McNamara before had doing the super. You never had a better fellow like you know to repair machinery, didn't matter what it was, no trouble, one of the best.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

So where were you born?

I was born at Baulkham Hills, 1928.

Did you go to school in that area?

No, I went to school at Gladesville, at the time my father had a farm at Baulkham Hills, he bought that in 1928 as a matter of fact.

So you had a farming background?

Yes, well dairying, my father used to milk up to 580 cows by hand and of course eventually put machines on. He was the first man in Australia to have bulk cartage and then we had all retail customers, over 5000, we used to deliver milk around Gladesville, Ryde, Drummoyne, Abbotsford, Five Dock and out at Vacluse and the Heights, Watson's Bay right down to the Gap there and in them days all horses, used to work up to 40 horses. Had a full time blacksmith and a full time saddler and the blacksmith was a blacksmith wheelwright and he made all the milk carts. They were made out of cedar them days. You know what it would cost today.

Were you married down there?

Yes, I was married at Seven Hills Church in 1947.

What made you come to Muswellbrook?

Well after the father died, say about 63, like I had three brothers and I thought well I would sooner go on the land cause I worked at Goondiwindi when I was first married. We were at Goondiwindi for ten years, the wife and myself and cause they were the ten flood years, as you know and when wife had to go to the doctor she had to ride the horse up to catch a taxi into town, like all over our country was flooded, was 13,000 acres there and it was all flooded, we had to pack horse out food from Carbury side, and the railway would bring the bread out. Cause there were no fridges back then, the kero fridge had just come in, the first one we bought was £11 for a kero fridge, that was the greatest thing you know. 66 and 67 was drought years and that was terrible like. Father ended up buying 1200 head of cattle to go with the place, it was old Vickery Bros. who used to own the Bective place at Tamworth and that and cause there was forty chooks on the place and he said you better buy them, well we lived on them for the first month, six weeks, we couldn't get out to get to town and more times than not the phone was out of order, it was only a single wire, you get a branch across it. No, it was cattle country of course.

So you decided here was the spot.

Well, I looked about and I had the 400 acres at Antiene there that I sort of bought off my father and it was a terrible good paddock. Old Harold Simpson, that's Col Simpson's father, he just said to my father, he said I have never been on that property but he said the best bullocks come through Singleton saleyards bar the river flats come off that property and that's the truest words he could have spoken. Clover used to grow so high and was never supered beforehand at all, 'course the dam ended up taking that

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

eventually. I did lease it back for years but I think it could be under mined now. They were getting close then.

Is there anything else I should know?

We had a good 30 years there at Broomfield

Did you put the gateposts up? Who took them down?

We took them down. We asked the mine, anyhow we have cut it up since, like when we first went up there it was a cold winter and we used the iron bark wood in the fireplace. No, how that gate came about in the first place and old Kevin McTaggart came down from Queensland and he drove past the gate see he said you want some sort of gimmick. I said I've got it in mind and we had cleaned a dam out in the front paddock and must have cut the main roots that was holding the tree up and it blew over and I thought I've got a use for that and I pushed it up there with the dozer and that and I thought I would make a tripod and put it up and the eldest boy said why don't you get the crane out. Well we ended up getting the crane out and that's how we knew it was seven ton, the crane driver reckoned there's about seven ton in that loh, had a bit of a pipe in one end, it was a bit bigger the other end. Anyhow George Cooper was working for me at the time and he cut the name in with the chainsaw like. I just marked it out and he cut it in and we burnt it with the oxy torch. Now if you've seen a black tree in the bush when you were a kid it's still black today, and if you put up a big tin sign as you know, the louts are going to blow it to pieces, you could still see bullet marks in it. I had it in mind to put a big arch gate way, but there it is.

I went past and saw it gone and thought, no, there's some history gone.

Well, this is it, we still got brochures, like we had the tourist bus calling in, that was quite good, like the wife used to feed them and I could do the washing up, like I can burn the plates and the cups you know, and that, and 'course well Mrs Keast used to come over and help the wife BBQ and that, we had no complaints at all, like bus loads, you know like. At that stage I has 33 horse drawn vehicles, like sulkies, buggies, governess's carts and the big bullock wagon with the log on and that sort of thing.

What did you do with all that gear?

Well, I've got the woolshed chock a block up there, you can't get into it, I did sell the wedding coach, girl from Gunnedah wanted it right or wrong and any how I sold it. I still have the Cobb & Co.

The bullock wagon was a beautiful bit of gear.

That's it, I bought it when Marbuck Park closed down over near Taree, might have been Port Macquarie, Marbuck Park had it there and matter of fact Glen Fellowes come over with me and he bought that big snake he used to have, that python. No, I sold that wagon, the chap out the road to Glenbawn Dam, he bought it, I don't know if he ever looked after it or not, but that was our problem up there – no sheds, well I built two big sheds, well three actually now and the stables. We nearly went out of the quarter

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horses when I had the heart attack. I give John a lot of me good mares, funny enough the top horse to come into Australia was by the same sire. He used to do 150 mares over there, its sire stands for a service fee in America at \$15,000, and he had over 100 mares. And it's only by invitation, in other words if they think your mare's not good enough they don't want you. He's a top horse, like we see him at Tamworth and the wife when she first see him said that's the best balanced horse I have ever seen, 'course everyone reckoned he would never work here, he's too heavy, he's fat, they only showed him the once at Tamworth as a three year old and you had never seen a better horse, well similar to old Mr Freckle, that horse of ours, he's gone in the Cutting Horse Hall of Fame at Tamworth. But like we would stop and pull the bridle off and show him holding a cow out you know, on his own, there it is. But now I've got a young stallion, well I stood him to eight mares last year and we got six foals this year by him and I say, got quite a few others by a different horse, that Acres Death near the bridge near Tamworth, I've gone back into them like but I have to live long enough to see them work, but there it is.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: AJ & A Riley

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lot 79 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 23 July 2003

Venue for Interview: Conducted by telephone

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

What was the size of the property when you sold to C & A?

100 acres

When did you purchase it?

1977

From whom did you purchase it?

Doug Gardiner, we purchased the front portion in 1977. The rear portion was purchased in 1984 from Al Jonas.

Do you know who the previous owners were?

I think the land was originally owned by Humphries, Googe owned it at one stage and he sold to Stan Hungerford, Hungerford subdivided his property. Al Jonas purchased some of the land and subdivided his portion into four blocks, which included 'Berrywood'.

Was there a house on the property?

Yes, on the front portion. It was there when we purchased the property.

What was your water supply?

From a well on the flat, it was a reasonable supply but not as good as some of our neighbours.

How did you use the land?

Grazing and horses, racehorses.

Do you know how the land was used in the past?

Hungerford ran a dairy there up until the late 60s or early 70s

How did you access your property?

From a lane off Wybong Road.

Who owned the land to the north of you?

Thompson in the first block, the O'Keefe then Rosebrook.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Gordon Scriven

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lot 65 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 12 July 2003

Venue for Interview: Home of Gordon Scriven, 502 Wybong Road, Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

Where were you born?

Muswellbrook

What year?

1917

Who were your parents?

James and Esther Scriven

What was your mother's maiden name?

Tomlinson

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

Who me, I've got nine half brothers and sisters.

Was your father married twice or your mother?

After, she died, my mother died before I was three.

So, you went to school in Muswellbrook.

No, Hebden.

You had property there.

Yeah, the old chap did.

Did you ever marry?

Yes

Who did you marry?

Doreen Dryce

Was she a local girl?

No, not Muswellbrook, Singleton.

How did you meet?

We met at school, the last year I had at school was her first year at school.

In Singleton

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

No, at Hebden

Where was the school at Hebden?

I believe it's still there, they moved the church within the last few weeks and they knocked the Post Office down, they put the dozer through the old Post Office house when the last girl left Hebden. They burnt a lot of the old houses around Ravensworth, coal mines, had the fire brigade out and put a match in them, and Hebden stood about four miles from Ravensworth. The building was still there a few months ago.

Did you have any children?

Half a dozen

What are their names?

Esther, Roy, Heather, Ann, Arthur, Pat.

Are some of them still around here?

One at Scone, one up Rouchel Road, ones in Maitland, ones at Barraba, ones at Ulladulla, another ones at Maitland.

They are well spread out.

Very scattered.

What did you do after you left school?

The same as I did before I left school, just work, hard work.

On the farm.

Yes, a little bit

When did you buy this property. [Wybong Road]

42, 1942 first paddock.

What size was it?

300 odd acres

Who did you buy it from?

Bill Stewart

Did you buy more land later on?

Or yes, yes.

Who did you buy it off?

200 odd acres off Jim Wallen, another 100 acres off Ross Estate, 620 acres of Bengalla Estate, nearly 700 acres off Edderton, 44 acres at Muscle Creek.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Whereabouts did you live?

Here, not this house, the old one got burnt down.

Who owned this property just here?

I missed this one, I bought this place off Mrs Miller, only 24 acres.

Did you buy it at the same time you bought the first block?

No, no, first one 42, then 44, 45, 48, 53, 59, 63, 63, and 64.

The property up here, what have you used it for?

Grazing.

Beef cattle or dairy?

No dairy, cattle and a few sheep.

Were there any houses on the property up there?

Sort of, not today's, no, houses built today they're all baby mansions. There were a couple of old houses up there, yes.

Were there any wells? What did you do for water?

I put a couple of bores down and they both went dry. I pump the water from here up there now. At one time I was moving water four miles.

I have a map here, that's the stock reserve and that's Gardiner's, did you have this land in here too, right to the Wybong Road?

Where is the reserve?

There

I'm in behind the reserve and Gardiner's, this here was Humphries and Bengalla owns it now.

Which part did you buy first?

This side [behind Humphries' block]. There were three blocks there, the 100 acres is at the end.

Who owned Colin Bates' land?

Jim Lonergan owned that when I came here, Bates own it now, Col Bates.

Who owned Broomfield when you came here?

I'm not sure when, but Weidmann's owned it at one time, I don't know when they took possession of it.

What about this big block on the east side of you?

Ken Humphries, Ken Humphries owned all that.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Who owned the land opposite the TSR.

Geoff Scholes

Down opposite Col Bates there's a little old house on a hill, was that Scholes down to there too?

No, Scholes only went to the boundary opposite Bates, 1200 acres Scholes.

Who was next up, was that Reynolds?

No, Keys, John Keys, Mrs Reynolds was Rosemary Keys.

Who bought that land later on?

I bought that, give it to the kids, they sold it to the mine.

If Skippens are there, where were the other old buildings on your property?

Old house there that has fallen down, there's a hay shed directly behind Skippen's house, not very far and directly up behind that, up on the hill, another broken down old house.

Do Gardiners live there on that property?

45 years I suppose, quite a lot, there for a long time.

Where have they gone? Are they still there?

Arthur sold out, over on the coast somewhere with his daughter. Only a hundred acres.

Where there many rabbits in this country when you came here or not?

What a question to ask, there were millions of rabbits.

There's not many left now.

There were millions of rabbits. No. These do-gooders criticise people for bringing the cane toad in but they don't have any praise to the ones who brought myxomatosis or cactoblastis in, never any praise for them. But the others, down down, they made a mistake when they brought him in, but I don't know what damage he does, just a nuisance.

So did you try and control them by trapping?

Everyone, everyway, yes, they were here in thousands, millions.

Did you employ any rabbiters?

No, had a couple of hundred rabbit traps and kept them going.

Who owned the place Eddie Watson had when you came here?

Alf Clayden owned, there's two blocks, from the kink in the fence was Alf Clayden, the other block, I never saw the man, I forget his name.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Ken Humphries owned a lot of land.

There was 600 and something acres and he had that dairy farm somewhere behind me and had two hundred acres there [opposite Gordon's house] C & A bought that a long time ago and I still don't know why they bought it. Dwyer told me they bought it because if somebody else wanted to move somewhere they had somewhere to offer them. I thought to myself – I still don't know.

Did you have any prickly pear up there?

No. The cactoblastis controlled it, would come up looking ok and then would die away. And how that little moth finds the pear I don't know. There can be one here and 300 yards away and it finds it. They were going to eat the pumpkins, they were going to do everything before they came here, there was write up in the papers, don't bring them in.

Never eaten anything else.

Never touched anything to anybody's knowledge. The road from Brushy Hill to Gundy, the back road, going along in the sulky as a little boy, the pear was as high as the sulky wheels. Up in that country there, years after another young fellow and I went in there after snakes. We got 3/6 for a carpet snakeskin if he was over 10 feet long. That was big money. We would get two or three in a day sometimes, they bred in the pear. Big non-venomous snakes, carpet snakes.

Sell them in town.

We used to sell them in Scone. Turn them inside out and fill them with sand to dry em.

Where they hard to skin?

No, they weren't hard to skin, just pull it off.

Bit like an eel.

Easier than an eel

Did your children go to school in Muswellbrook?

Yes

Was there a bus service then?

There was a bus run, when it went, sometimes it wouldn't come until 10-11 o'clock, would break down. It was a wonderful run early in the piece.

How did you go here in the 55 flood?

Almost knee deep in the house.

That was the old place.

Yes, almost knee deep in the house. Two floods in 55. One flood came through and went, it was higher than the other one, it was up. It started to rain eight, half past eight

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

in the morning and at two o'clock in the evening it was at its height and by two o'clock next morning it was gone and the next evening she came down again, she did not get as high as the first one but it lasted a couple of days. Held it up. Was six to eight inches lower than the other one, but it stayed up for a couple of days. A lot of water went down.

Were you home when the house caught fire?

No, I lived in town. I moved, it was a house you couldn't do anything with, no matter what money you put on it you still wouldn't have a house. We bought a house in town, lived in there for ten years.

Was it a very old house?

Well, the Apps, old Charlie died three or four years ago and he was 93 and his father built the house before he was born, it would be a 80 to 85 year old house when it burnt down. They put the fire out and the uprights, it was all pine, the uprights had been morticed into the bearers, now they just cut a bit out and stick a nail in. They morticed them all in and you wouldn't put a cigarette paper in the joint. Marvellous job when I looked at a couple of lengths that hadn't been burnt.

Where about did you live in Muswellbrook?

Barrett Street, there about ten years, been out here for 12 ½ years now.

Why did you come back out of town?

Never did like going to town, but you couldn't do anything to the house that was here, need everything doin' to it.

Was there ever a dairy here?

I dairied here for three years. Everybody told me I gave too much money for the farm and I dairied three years and paid for it and I was satisfied that I didn't give too much for it. Yes, I dairied here.

Your property was well spread out.

Yes. Bit everywhere.

You didn't try to keep it all together.

How can you, you can't do it here, you can't keep it all together, you can't buy through the fence until the old chap dies or something like that, he's a younger man than you how you goin' to get it. No you can't do it.

How big a block did the Skippens have up there?

About half an acre, I sold that to them, and I got a lot of money for it, £200. I wanted £200 clear so he paid the survey fee, transfer, everything and I got £200 for that block.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

That was very good.

Excellent, and they sold it the other day for \$350,000 or \$360,000, and the house that was on it was the same design as what's there now, but it was built of round poles and things. There, old Bill Stewart, the fire burnt him out and the neighbours had thrown in and built a house for him. Had round timber in the roof, no ceiling, it was a galvanised shed. Wooden floor, the joists underneath was all round timber and round timber in the ceiling. That's the house that was there and he [Skippen] rebuilt it as time went by and then he died.

Seems a strange spot to buy to live.

Well they had been down there rabbiting and lived in a tent, then they came, lived in Weidmann's cottage, you know, Weidmann's cottage, they lived there and they came out and they said it was much better than Weidmann's cottage cause it did not leak at all up here. In there you did not know where to go to stop from leaking. They came and lived up there, it was weather proof you know. [Gordon was now talking about Bill Stewart's house] It was well built on the cheap. That would have been early 30s or somewhere like that. When you come to think, 300 and a few acres and they had a dairy on it.

No irrigation, just dry land.

Hardly enough water for the cattle to drink

Were there any bad droughts here?

Late 40s, bad as what it is now, good fall of rain and then nothing, fall of rain and nothing and there were millions of rabbits mixed in with it then. It was not until about 1950 that myxomatosis came. There was millions of rabbits. You could trap 30-40 pair a night.

Was there a freezing works in Muswellbrook?

Yes. Just down, you know where the Blue Bird café is, the next place down is a butchers shop on the corner there, you turn down there, the big old building down there, it's a caravan park now. I think that freezing works was down there, they handled thousands. We were trappin', I was trappin' down here and Pat Dixon and Arthur Newton were up on Scrumlo Station trappin' and they used to bring their rabbits over about six miles to Antiene to put them on. Mac Evans had a pony and cart there, he came down that far and he would take 'em up to the freezing works. They used to take theirs and I used to bring mine about 3 miles across in a sulky and they were 5d a pair. And they dropped a penny to 4 pence and Pat and Arthur were going back on the dole, they weren't going to trap for 4 pence and Mac Evans said if you fellows knock off I'm out of a job too so instead of me getting 2 pence to cart 'em I'll cart for penny half penny so that meant we got 2 ½ penny and we kept on trappin'. You would be out all day planting the traps and all night lookin' for them with a lantern.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

How big a property did you father have at Hebden?

About 1000 acres.

Had he been there long, all his life?

No, he came in 1915.

Where did he come from?

Belltrees, born on Belltrees. His father and mother were on Belltrees for a long time. He was butcher, they used to kill two to three beasts a week to keep the men, in winter time they'd kill and pack horse it out to ring barkers out there and fencers out there, move it on pack horses out in the scrub, miles away from the homestead and those blokes wouldn't get into the homestead perhaps only every three months, living out in the scrub, 12/6 a week and double rations.

Was that good money?

I suppose all money's good but by Christ you want more than that. A double ration was 10, 8, 2 and ¼. 10 pounds of meat, 8 flour, 2 sugar and ¼ tea, anything thing else you bought, your salt, your pepper, your raisins, your currants or anything else you only got that out of your wages, on Belltrees at that time. Hear dad say that many times. But as he was the butcher he got a fairly big ration of meat. He set himself a fairly liberal ration of meat.

Just here, who looked after Ken Humphries' properties?

The dairyman

Do you remember who it was?

He had a dairyman on over there and he had two dairies here. Share dairies. They used keep their dry cows up the paddock. There was an old fellow, Mick Moloney up there, lived, there was a house on it, it's fallen down, old Mick Moloney, he had eight to ten children, they rabbited, they kept the rabbits down on that 600 acre block, to some degree. In 1940 or that period of time you could spend half a day in Higgens, Parkinsons' office reading their books, nearly every property in the area was on the market, you could have bought anywhere, where the milk factory is now, that paddock was on the market for six guineas an acre.

Did you pay much for this country up here?

The first paddock was 52/6 an acre, the next paddock was about 55/- an acre and the next one £4/1/- an acre and it had been on the market for years. That was not on the market today and bought tomorrow. Nearly every place, up Aberdeen Road, you know where the grape vines are up Aberdeen Road, well just on the Aberdeen side of that, it was a jersey farm, Weidmann's farm, that paddock was on the market for £18 an acre and the next one over, old Dennis was on that, 100 acres, went right down to the river, a good farm and he walked out and left it, you could have bought it for £2200. He left it.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

£2200 for that farm. Years before Weidmann's stud farm, way back in the 42,43,44 period.

Was there a depression then?

No, there was no money, everyone was away at the war. There was no money, it wasn't until after the war that money start to come. Back in the mid 30s you shore sheep at 35/- a hundred, where in 1945 big strike in Queensland, we were off for weeks in 45, we got 47/6, we struck for 50 bob and went back for 47/6 in 1945.

You were a shearer.

Only 40 years, bit over 40 years.

Was that to get some money together?

Only one thing mate, was not for the work.

Wasn't for the company.

No, it wasn't for the company, no.

Did that give you a start to buy here?

Sort of, between that and the rabbits. I dragged over a million sheep across the boards, shearing and crutching. I dragged a million sheep across the boards. At Quilpie, it was May I suppose in 1945 I shore 4100 in four weeks and one day, we used to work Saturday mornings in those times, four hours Saturday morning, 4100 in four weeks and one day. That was after the strike. That was the second, no first shed after the strike. No that can't be right there must be another shed. It was a ten-stand board and we were there four weeks and one day. Petrol rationing was on. There was kerosene lights and there was enough kerosene to do the shearing. The first weekend, those big old cars, they had engines that long, six cylinder engines and I don't know why they had a low gear in them, they would chug along in top gear. If you converted them to kerosene you'd give them half a mile on petrol until they were nice and warmed up and turn them over to kerosene you see the white smoke come out behind them. I said to the manager, how about a drop of kerosene. There's no kerosene, I said there's no kerosene, there won't be enough for tonight. What happen to it. I don't think you got enough. I know where it went, into Quilpie on Saturday evening in half a dozen big old cars, Hupmobiles, Oldsmobiles, Buicks. Three years and you would never need low gear, they would chug along and they went well on kerosene.

Did you ever shear around here?

Me and the brother shore 100,000 every year for eight to ten years then sheep started to go.

Who had some of the big sheep properties?

There were no big sheep properties around Muswellbrook. Nothing big here, had to go up Moree way.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

What about out at Merriwa.

Never went out that way, enough sheep here mate to keep us going, there would be eight to nine months shearing in this area for seven of us. Long time ago.

Who did you shear for around here?

Ah struth, everybody that had sheep, Overton has 1200, Keys had 5-6000, Broomfield, Weidmann's has 2-3000, everybody had sheep.

Not many now.

Not enough to make a decent stew. Young brother shears a lot of sheep from here to Singleton and all about. Threes, fours, ten. Got his own machine, carries his own machine down and shears them out in the paddock if they want it.

Where's he live?

He's retired. You will find him at the markets. He runs the markets selling pickles and cakes. He runs the markets at Singleton, Muswellbrook and Aberdeen.

You're had an interesting life, plenty of hard work.

In 1932 I left home to go to Charleville shearing. I arrived at Narrabri on the edge of the Pilliga Scrub at 20 to 9 that night, 200 miles on a push bike. It took me three weeks to get home. We used to have a very heavy thorn proof tyre, don't know if you can get them now, but they were very heavy and I wore the rubber off the back one in three weeks. I squibbed a bit on it. When I got to Byron Bay I got the boat, I knew people over there and they told me to get the boat to Sydney. It was only £2 and 3/6 for the bike to get from Byron Bay to Sydney, and you get a couple of meals out of that too. Crikey that would be alright. I got down there a bit early and I helped a bloke load some sleepers off his truck into the boat, I got eight bob for that, that was good, that was nearly a weeks work, but I earnt it that day, and another bloke came along with a mob of cattle. Eight to ten cows and calves and they went onto the boat. Then the people came and the sun nearly set when we moved out of the harbour and the first thing was a meal. I'd never saw those menus before, didn't know what I was looking at, half in French, and I didn't know. I'm goin' to have what that bloke over there's havin'. That was all right and they told me you get a decent meal and they brought little plates with little bit on it. God Struth. I looked across and he was having something else. I thought I'll have something else. I had a hell of a feed. You could keep goin' and they would keep bringing it to you. I went up on deck and I thought I would do sixpence, I bought a big cigar. I never smoked, I steamed her up and went down along the deck and there was a young couple. They were both horribly sick, nothing the matter with me, and then I spent another sixpence for a port wine. I was a bit tired and I went to bed and I woke up in the middle of the night, holy hell, I was sick and a bloody old cow through the wall was bellowing. So next morning the waiter, he was the waiter on the table the night before, he comes in, would you like some breakfast, no thanks mate. Every dog has his day he says, 72 for supper last night, two for breakfast this morning. When the midday meal come, brought

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beautiful bit of corn meat and salad and I couldn't eat at all so I rolled it up in a serviette and put it in a swag. I couldn't let that bit of corn meat go. When we got into the harbour at Newcastle, as soon as the boat stopped, it was good. Let me off. I got off about one o'clock in the morning and I was home by sunrise.

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Interviewee: Mrs L Skippen

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lot 121 on EIS plan

Date of Interview: 10 July 2003

Venue for Interview: 23 Peppermint Road, Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

How far back do you want me to go with my family, from when we arrived in Muswellbrook?

We will start with yourself. What was your maiden name?

My maiden name was Leila Gough, I was born in Queensland, Rosewood, Queensland. Worked on a dairy with my family. I was 21 when I went out to work in the, as the manageress of refreshment rooms between Brisbane and Southport

Who were your parents?

Annie and David Gough, my mother's name was Fullekrug, she was of German descent and my father was of Irish descent.

A good mixture.

Actually, my grandfather came out from Germany when he was 12. He used to drove cattle from Queensland to South Australia, they were held up at one stage by some bushranger anyway the bushranger traded a watch, no, my grandfather had the watch, he traded a saddle for the watch. My mother learnt to ride on that saddle, but as old things go it was thrown out as rubbish when they left the farm sort of thing. Would have been a bit of history today.

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

I had seven sisters and two brothers, ten of us, I still have six sisters and one brother alive. Lost a sister and a brother. They all live in Queensland.

What was your husband's name?

Austin Skippen, I met him during the war years, he was in the army, he was in the lieutenants training school at Boonlee and I worked at Banner Junction which was four mile up the line. So that's how we met there. Married in Queensland. That was in 1944 We had our first child in 45, we moved to Sydney at the end of the war and he got demobbed down there, Skips family lived in Bankstown, in Sydney and we stayed there for six months, then we set on the road in a car. It broke down where the Liddell Power Station is today, where that bridge goes over the road there. That's where we broke an axle. We had 100 rabbit traps in the car with us and a tent so we set up the tent there and we trapped rabbits while we were waiting for the car to be fixed. He got in with an elderly chap that lived in town by the name of Bert Bridge, they lived at 99 Bridge Street at that time. He was a poisoner of rabbits; the place was crawling with rabbits in those

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days. We got in with them and then we went out and we rabbit trapped Captain Macintyres property out at Kayuga. So we lived in a tent for just on two years, we had a little girl. Yes she was 18 months old by the time we finished that. Then we came back into town and Bert Bridge got Skip a job at the mines. Then we went out and rented the place off Gordon Scrivens, paid ten shilling a week and two shillings for wood. Twelve shillings a week, I can tell you what it was hard going in those days just the same. It was a tin shed of course when we bought the block and lived there. Then Skip had an accident at work, he jammed his thumb and it became useless to him afterwards and he got £200 compensation for it so we bought the place for £200 and Skip was a bit of a handyman, he could put his hand to anything and between the two of us built it room by room. We propped the roof up and we pulled everything out and started, we built a little home out of it, a three bedroom home. We had our second child, Sue Anne, she was born in 1949, the third child was a son, he was born in 1956. We only had the three children.

Roslyn was the first.

Roslyn was the first one, she was the one that was born in Queensland. That's a rough sketch of our life.

When you were on Macintyres in the tent, how did you manage the food and things like that?

We had an open fire, we did have a primus too, I used to cook a lot on the primus, we had the open fire with a bar across and used to hang the billy on that. Skip rigged up a sort of frame thing for me to put the frying pan on to cook bacon and eggs or whatever. If we wanted a piece of corned silverside or pickled pork or something we would just hang the boiler on the bar and cook it like that. You get around these things.

How did you keep meat or did you just cook it as you needed it?

Well we only used to shop once a week. We would sell our skins, actually see when we poisoned we used to skin. We would get up to eight – nine hundred rabbits a night. There was Bert Bridge and his wife and Skip and I, we used to skin those and bow them, then they would put another poison trail out. When the rabbits thinned out after a couple of months we did ferreting, just ferreted. Skip and I went on our own and Bert and Linda went on their own, but they put in a lot of time in town. See they were much older; he was a retired miner at the time. We stayed out there then another six months I suppose; just rabbiting like that then he got Skip the job at the mines. So we came in and stayed with them for a little while then this place came up. Actually, we went up to the shearing shed first, the little old house up the top because there were people in the other house, they left and we moved in then. That's how we started out there.

How long did Skip work in the mines?

He was 35 years in the mines, he retired at 60, had to get out then, he was 35 years there.

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The house that you built out there, what was your water supply.

Just tanks, we started off with just an ordinary tank then we built a tank, we used to do everything together. If he was working on the car, my daughter often says to me, she said the things I used to hate about out there was when you and dad would be out working on the car of a night time. We only had old ones and you had to get to work next day we would be up doing that. He was very handy. We put in our own septic.

How did you build the tank? Was it a corrugated iron tank?

We bought the corrugation in the sheets like that, and he had a soldering iron, I would be inside with some sort of a bar thing and he would be hammering on the outside. Then he would say hang on there mum, I have to get the soldering iron. We built two tanks out there. I think one was still down the paddock where they used to burn their rubbish, the last tenants we had. They had it rolled down there and used to burn their rubbish.

How long since you lived out there.

We came into town in 1994. Skip passed away in 96, his health was giving out and he wanted to come in before but I didn't, I liked it out there. Anyway, when his health started to give out and my eyes started to go, it got a bit harder for me to drive sort of thing. He said we have to move into town which we did. It was the best thing actually but he was never much when he was in here, he liked it out there as well.

What land did Mr Scriven own out there?

He owned property towards Muswellbrook and the paddock we were in.

Who owned the land on the Wybong side of the road?

Humphries, on the left hand side as you are going up the lane. Down in that paddock there, Mr Humphries from in town, people by the name of Molony used to rent it when we first went out there, and when they left and came to town, nobody came into the house, the house was nearly falling down at that time, yes he owned that.

Where about was that house?

Just down on the left.

Near the main road.

Back up on the hill from the main road.

Did the lane ever have a name?

Skippens Lane. All the years we paid our rates and that out there it was not until, they always put it in the Ellis Shire (Parish) and the last rate papers I got 60 Skippens Lane was on it so I have kept it.

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I have not seen a sign out there.

At one stage we paid \$30 for a number or one thing, it was after we came in here. I said to Skip, we'll go out along the road and see what they have put up. We thought they would put it up at the end of the lane. It was suppose to be to let the business know where places were and there was nothing there so he said we will take a drive up the lane. My daughter-in-law and Allan were there, and on the fence post right in front of the house was the number. We both said how are people going to find that, down the end lane it should have been. There used to be people in the house down below us too when we first went there, people by the name of Philby, that little old house down the bottom. They left and Donny Mac and his wife lived there for a little while.

Donny McLean?

No Donny McNamara, they went back to Queensland and finished up at Coonabarabran way.

That old house has fallen down, was that on Scrivens?

Yes, that's on Scrivens, Scrivens owns all that right down past the reserve to the bottom where that other reserve like lane, used to be a stock route down through the bottom there out through to Kayuga. Yes he owns all that and back up behind us and down the other side to the bottom of that hill.

Were the rates much out there?

When we first bought it was Crown land, Crown Lease, we had 99 year Crown Lease and it was \$4 a year, \$2 every six months. Then Skip had it changed over to freehold, used to cost it us about \$6 or \$8 until it became in the Shire, then same rates as in town. Amalgamated with the Shire, no service and cost you to go to the dump. You had to get your own water, sewerage and things like that.

When did you get power out there?

That came much much later; Roslyn was about sixteen, probably in the sixties. Before that it was all kerosene lights, kerosene fridges that didn't work. The first one we bought was a Silent Knight and the only way it went was when you turned it up side down, it was a cow of a thing. They were no good; you had the smoke from the kerosene. Used to bubble behind, you would make up ice cream, you would get it in and one time you would get to set all right. The next time soon as you heard that bubble at the back, no take every thing out and you would go into Cheatles and they would say turn it up side down, it's the gas at the back that wants recycling.

Ours worked well in winter.

They gave up in the summer.

What about telephones, when did they arrive?

We got the telephone on, that was a lot lot later, Allan was an adult, he was growing up, about 14 I suppose.

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When was the Wybong Road asphalted?

That was late, I should have kept a record, I have a book there, a record of things I buy. Like when the kids had cars and different things. I didn't keep a record of things like that.

What about the block of ground that Eddie Watson had.

Yes

Did he go in past your place?

Yes, he went past our place, then down and up through Scrivens. That apparently was a stock route, was a lane at one stage too. Was a road through there.

Can you remember who owned the land before Eddie?

Before Eddie Watson was Allan Burton. He was the only I can remember, then Eddie Watson, actually it wasn't Eddie Watson who bought it, it Eddie's father-in-law who bought it first then when he died Eddie got a bit.

Can you remember any houses in there at all?

Well the one that we went into first was, people by the name of Stewart I think used to live out there, they had a dairy at one stage. That's the only house I can remember up there. There was another one way across in the gully but that was from the Kayuga side. Weidmanns owned that property from the Kayuga side. That was the only other house that was ever there in our time. Lonergans owned the paddock up behind Eddie Watson but that came in from Castle Rock Road out that way. Eddie's sold, I don't know if they have sold here in town, but Dawn was her name, she wanted to go over to the coast I think.

They have moved to Foster.

Did they. I used to like Eddie, he would call in occasionally, a good bloke, he was very fond of our daughter, the one we lost. He used to bring her in an orchid or something like that; he was a really nice fellow.

Did you keep chooks?

We kept chooks earlier on until they got too expensive to keep, we found it cheaper to buy eggs because we found you either have too many eggs or no eggs when you have chooks so we did away with them and the foxes were a bit of a problem there too with them.

Did you try a garden out there?

Yes, we tried rearing a couple of calves at one part of the game. Yes we had a garden, used to use mainly the bath water and sort of laundry water. With the tank and the children you could not afford water that much. Back in those days we got better rainfall, like it was pretty, like in the summer months the clouds would build up, you got a storm

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and you got rain. It was not too bad. We had ducks. It was always nice about the place. When the family grew up and it was Skip and I we bought our eggs as we needed them.

How big was the block?

Roughly a half acre.

Where did your son end up?

He's here in Muswellbrook, he lives in Humphries Street and the daughter lives up Aberdeen Road. Our daughter built a house out there, three acre block out along Aberdeen Road, about four miles out.

That's Roslyn who works at the TAFE

Yes

Did Roslyn marry a local.

No, Collin came from Mudgee actually. His sister and husband were on a dairy on Wybong Road and she met him there.

What's his surname?

Bull, Colin Bull.

Is your son married?

Yes he married Katrina Hoad from Denman, they have two children, Daniel and Tara Jane, she is in her last year of high school.

Thinking back, can I assume that if the car had not broken down you would not have stopped in Muswellbrook.

We were headed for Warialda actually. That's how things work out, that's where we were headed for. The car broke down and we had to wait, cause just after the war we had to wait for the axle and things like that and we had the rabbit traps and we started to trap, Tim Eveleigh owned the property we were first on out Antiene and was right opposite the old railway crossing used to be down there. We got to know the people had the gates, railway gates, Flosie and, can't remember what his name was, Street was their last name. Jack Street, that's right, Flosie and Jack Street.

That's interesting, people would not realise you had a start of living in a tent for two years.

People look at me and they say gee you're well for your age. Yes but it has not been easy, but in those days it never worried me. I suppose being brought up on the dairy farm, we had to work as kids, everything was done by hand, we hand milked, up to 80 cows, six of us, mum, dad and four kids. Separated milk for cream, fed pig, picked corn and spuds, cut hay, every general thing. I was the one I was the outside door one and Coleen did the cooking and that at home. It was tough but we just did it.

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When you were in Skippens Lane, how did the children get to school?

Bus, there used to be a bus come through from Wybong. Actually it came from Sandy Hollow and pick up all the way in. Used to go over Bengalla and pick up Bengalla then eventually they ran a bus out from town for Bengalla. Used to leave home about eight o'clock in the morning and get home about four.

When you came down Skippens Lane, who owned the land on the other side of the road?

On the other side of the road, Doug Munro finished up owning it, before him I can't remember.

If you look across you can see an old house, who had that.

Gordon Scriven bought that paddock years ago. Doug Munro bought opposite the lane and Arthur Gardiner bought the other block which was opposite his gate. Can't remember who had the land before, was it Charlie Wilkes from down on the flat, I'm not quite sure on that.

Were you out there for the 55 flood?

Yes, we were out there for 45 years.

You would have had a good view of the valley.

We were truly above the flood but we ran out of food of course. Harold Goodwin was down on the flat there, he and Skip and somebody else killed, Gordon gave them a sheep, and they divided it up. We had flour so we lived on scones and damper, for a couple of days.

Were there still any rabbits around then?

Yes, you could catch the odd rabbits but it was too wet to go out and chase them. Many a time we had a rabbit to keep going as well. They weren't bad food if you got a nice one.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewee: Eddie & Dawn Watson

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lot 64 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 14 Nov 2002

Venue for Interview: 11 Serrate Court, Banksia Estate, Tuncurry

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

Were there any old buildings on your property?

EW: There was one down the bottom on the bank, the old house.

DW: There was one on the top of the hill too.

EW: No, there was a well there; nobody knew where the well was.

DW: The well was there.

EW: Yes, on top of the hill.

DW: When I was talking to John once, John told me the old people owned, you know, where you said there was a snake once under the cement there, John said that's where they had their house, the old people had their house there, that's right on top of the hill.

EW: The dairy was at the old house down the bottom.

DW: Yes, yes there was another house down there too.

EW: Yes, that's where the stockyards are.

You think your father purchased it in the 1960s?

DW: Would have been, about 1960s, we took...

EW: I wasn't here in the 60s.

DW: We got it off Allan in the 70s, they must have had it ten years before that.

What was your father's name?

DW: Haynes, Allan Haynes.

Do you know who he purchased it from?

DW: No, don't know. If you got onto John Burton, John Burton would know.

EW: He owns another property there, his father, and his father sold to somebody else then this somebody else sold to her father. Then I took over and part and another fellow

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come along and he bought the rest and then it went to somebody, Hand, I think he still there.

DW: Leo Daniel.

How much did you have?

EW: I got 100 acres from her father, then I took another 120 from Adams from Scone.

DW: If you caught up with Adams from Scone, see they would know.

EW: He was away, he no longer here.

DW: That's right.

EW: He sold, it was a miracle, he got around one day and he was fix a fence and I tell him, if ever you want sell let me know. He come around about a month after he finish all a fence, it was a boundary between he and me and when he finish, he say do you want to buy. I say yes. He say it's yours any time you want. I say when we go to solicitor, he tell me next week and give me the date and we go and I got it.

DW: The windmill used to be right down the bottom wasn't it? Was there yards at the bottom of the hill where we tried to get water? Was there a house down there?

EW: No, no there was a pipe, only a pipe, there was water there, I was desperate for water and I took a bucket of water and sent it to be analysed. When they send me result it was good for nothing because they say no good for irrigation, no good for calf, no good for pig, no good for sheep, only for cow. I said it's no good for nothing because I cannot run cow and send calf over there and mother drink here. That pipe is still there. After that they come and drill, that was the third drilling around and I say any water around here and fellow say, no. I show him there is water in pipe [old bore casing]. He set up pump to see how much water in pipe. He pump for five minutes and it stop. Water was terrible, even cow would not drink. They went, when they come a drill again 40 metres from there under a tree was a good water. I say I want to put a windmill but it too late. Coal Company carry out exploration.

EW: I found more water in the other paddock see and I put a case there and they say they would drill for me if I let them use a water from the dam so we do that. They divine and say water come here. I say we put case in. They put a case, but no water then or next week.

Dry

EW: Dry, no water.

Eddie had diviners in to look for other sites. They located a site near his dams. He had a drill rig come in on the basis of no water, no pay, if water was found then the charge would be per foot. If rock was found then drilling would cease and the charge would be \$50. They hit rock.

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EW: Had drill in another place, 170 feet and no water. There's no water there. It cost me \$700 for nothing. Bloke told me don't waste your money anymore.

So you just had dams out there?

EW: Yes and we pumped water from Scrivens. I put a piston pump on Scrivens and pump to my tank.

What did you run out there?

EW: Cattle and horses.

Did your father do the same?

DW: All cattle, beef cattle. He had a bigger area, he had 500 or 600 acres, he had 600 acres. He divided it all up.

What breed did you have?

EW: I had Santa, I started with Hereford, then I breed Santa, Santa Gertrudis, then I finish up with Brahman. I have quarter horse and appaloosa horse there before that.

How many head of stock did you run out there?

EW: I finish up around, in the good time you could put 100 – 120 head of cattle. In bad time, nothing.

You ran your own breeders?

EW: Yes

DW: We didn't buy calves and things.

Why did you change breeds from Hereford to Santa?

EW: Better situation. I have problem with a Hereford, Hereford sometimes the head too big and can't come out. Santa small calf but develop quick see, better for that country in good time, in bad time they go down. I start breed Brahman, drop a tree, they eat anything, I was doing this in the last drought. I cut the tree branches, they eat ironbark which other cattle won't touch. I had two shed full of hay.

Did you buy that in?

EW: No, go halves with Scriven, we put irrigation, cutting, baling and he put the land, electricity and the water and we go that way.

What were the worst years out there? Drought.

EW: The drought in 71, we have eight year drought, it was the worst one, biggest one in 1980, I forget now.

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Do you remember the best seasons?

EW: Yes, but after we struggle like anybody on the land. Today the drought it's not that bad, when drought goes more than two years, that when problems start. 92 was good year. In 80 no grass, only dirt, even branch of tree dead, only dirt. We had to buy hay.

Besides trying to find water out there, what other improvements did you do? Any sheds?

EW: I built two shed myself.

DW: And you built the yards.

EW: I build the yards myself, everything, the hay loft.

You didn't build out there?

EW: I have permission to build a house and I have intention to build the house there, but I ask Dawn, she want to go there, then I gave a thought, I say she never go into the mud and she like a garden and water was a problem. We say no, we have house in Humphries Street, we fixed it up, we put in air conditioning. We stay in town. I was doing shift work, and I wouldn't want her on her own.

DW: That's what stopped us from going out there to live.

There were two dams on the property?

EW: No, I have a one, two, three, six dams. We put 3 dams. I clean the rest myself. I get bogged with tractor in middle of nowhere, in middle of dam. I find friend in Scone with tractor with front blade, big Ford tractor. Nobody tell me what to do, where to start, where to finish. Had to ask friend to pull tractor out with truck. Dam ended up a mess. I clean up dam with shovel and a wheelbarrow, took me weeks.

DW: Which dam was that?

EW: Near a trough. It looked good after I clean it up.

How did you get access to your property, via Wybong Road?

EW: Yes, Skippen Lane cause Skippen live there for many years, he put name up himself.

A little bit about yourself, when did you arrive in Australia?

EW: 1960 something, 62 or 66 I think I arrive here. I come up from Argentina originally, but come from Los Angles to Australia.

What made you come to Australia?

EW: Well I come to Australia for one purpose, job.

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Did you go straight to Costain?

EW: No, I come here, I stay in Sydney, look for job. I went to Transfield House, they thought I was Italian. Give me job. Send me to Muswellbrook.

That's a big step from boiler maker to taking up farming. Had you done any farming before?

EW: No.

DW: Only what others taught him.

EW: I like horse. I bought half dozen cattle, then some more and it went like that. I had no intention to go that big, no intention at all. It was like a hobby. I find I had to register brand and all paper work. I get involved big now, but I had to do it. Was big step for myself. I work for Transfield, then to power station, I was leading hand with Transfield. Left Transfield and worked for International Combustion, then for APT, left and worked for ACL.

How did you end up at Costain?

EW: Applied for job, had interview with Neil Nielson, questioned by Tommy Ferns, Bob Peters and Bob Humphries. Had a medical in Newcastle and started next week.

Dawn, where you born in Muswellbrook?

EW: Yes, no I was not born in Muswellbrook, sorry.

When you said your father had land here I thought.

DW: No, he was my stepfather. I was born in a car really. Took me to Quirindi Hospital, my father worked on the railway.

I lived in Quirindi.

DW: I only went to hospital, was on our way to Singleton, only stayed there until I could be moved, I was a prem baby. I ended up in Singleton. My father was on farms, my real father was on the railway out west. Something happened when we were kids and he left us. I think I was about eight and my mother was on her own and I lived with my grandmother in Singleton.

MOUNT PLEASANT ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewees: Wayne & Patricia Watts

Association with Mt Pleasant: Lots 23, 24, 34, 35 and 62 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 21 July 2003

Venue for Interview: 186 Castlerock Road, Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

We might start with you Pat, regarding who your parents were.

PW: Mum's name is Elizabeth Ellen, she was Lonergan, she by goes Nellie. Dad was Cecil Partridge.

What were the names of your father's parents?

PW: William Partridge and Louisa Fibbins

Where were you born?

PW: In Muswellbrook

Where did you go to school?

PW: St James then Muswellbrook High

You didn't go to Kayuga School

PW: No we lived in town see, in Barrett Street.

Where did your father come from?

PW: He was born out at Coal Creek, his mother was a Fibbins, so see we've got the tie to Coal Creek and Castle Rock as well. He was born on the corner out there and he never went to school, not at all.

At school, did you get involved in any activities?

PW: I was out here every weekend right from when I was a kid right from when I was little and every school holidays that was my sport. I sort of had my own horses out here and I think by the time we were married I had 30 head of cattle and about 60 sheep. The other kids came too when they were little but I sort of kept coming. Even when I started work, I started at the paper shop, I knocked off at two I used to come out every day then to help Pat, that's why it was willed to us. When we got married, we settled here.

Who owned the paper shop?

PW: Frank Ryan

Where about in Muswellbrook did you live?

PW: Barrett Street, mum is still there.

Gordon Scriven had a house in Barrett Street.

PW: Yes, he was up the other end, that was later in life.

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Wayne, are your family the McCully's Gap Watts?

WW: No, we are the Scone Watts, we are the poor ones. I come from Scone. We are the horsey sort of Watts. You might of heard of Reg Watts and Arch Watts.

So who were your parents?

WW: Noel and Mary Watts

How did you meet?

WW: At a rodeo.

I ask that question because it is interesting to see how people met, many met at dances.

PW: I went to lots of them, I danced at Kayuga, when we were kids they used to have the dances there at the hall, and the Christmas parties and I remember Uncle Clarrie (Fibbins) and the old fellow of Fibbins, what's his name, John, they used to come in and play the piano accordion and old tin. Dad played the piano accordion too. We had our kitchen tea down here at the hall.

How many children do you have?

PW: Three.

When did they stop using the hall?

PW: Well, we have been married 28 years and they were still using it then, must have fizzled out. Our kids didn't go to school down here, they used to ring us up and want us to send them, but we sent them into the Convent. We still used to go to Christmas parties and that; they still invited us to the school. I can't remember, I can remember after we married the polocrosse having their Christmas party down there.

WW: It would probably be 25 years since there was anything there.

Was there a cricket ground down there?

PW: The cricket ground, I've got the old photo here, did you see that in the report, I had that, it was there or was it more into Macintyres paddock. I remember Pat saying a lot of them used to play cricket. We've got Edward's old cricket bat here still. In our time it was not there.

WW: Only the pony club used to hold its pony rides there at the hall.

In the Chronicles that I have been going through there is mention of cricket at Kayuga and Coal Creek, I wonder where the cricket ground was at Coal Creek.

PW: It was most likely out on the creek flat around Fibbins I would say. This road here was Coal Creek when we were first married and somehow got changed.

Is the land where you live part of the original property?

PW: No, it was sort of bought later on, Pat and Edward bought these couple of places, Edward was the one who died, well it would have been, it was before I was born I know

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so either late 40s early 50s. Did you have a lady go to you last year about Smith, Charles Smith. He originally owned this, the old place over here (old house west of Watts house. My comment). She came out here taking photos and that so Miss Smith used to live over there when mum and them were kids. They used to go over there and she taught them how to knit and sew and lots of things. Yes, Miss Smith, she lived over there on her own. Then she took in Les Brotherton and then she bought that block in there and they built the two houses in there near one and other. She sold it to a bloke of Watt, Pat and them should have bought it then. They bought it then off him but I think it would have been late 40s early 50s sort of.

WW: This area here we inherited 12 months ago off Pat's uncle P. J. Lonergan.

PW: That's all ours too.

Is that Patrick Joseph?

WW: Yes, Pat's mother was the only one of the family that married. Des has sort of got that area from Pat. (Area marked on map). That was an original block. That was an all together original block, 500 acres in the old original block. The total area of Thorndale and Warrawee before being handed down was approximately 1570 acres.

Who originally bought this part here?

PW: Down here below us, that was uncle Pat Casey owned it, he left that to Mary, Mary, my aunty, when he died and she gave it to us what seventeen years ago, or we legally bought it, she handed it over to us same as Pat did with all of the other like. They sort of gave it to us earlier instead of waiting until they died. It's only this last bit that we sort of got when Pat died.

Who was Mary?

PW: Mary Lonergan, she is my mother's sister.

How far back did Smith's property go?

PW: It was just the 40 acres.

WW: That lane was always called Smiths Lane, went all the way through to Dorset Road. We have a gate at either end now and lease it off the Council since we own both sides.

PW: This lane goes right through to, it was known as Wiltons Lane as the Wiltons lived there when we were kids, Pat and them owned it and rented it to them. I think the Council have given it Belgrave Lane when they started to give names. I don't know why they gave it that name because Belgrave is down the other end, anyway.

Miss Smith, she sold to

PW: A bloke of Watt.

He sold to

PW: Pat and Jack bought it, I think Pat bought it off him or Edward. Pat owned one and Edward owned the other one, then when Edward died he left it to Pat, Pat gave it to us so.

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WW: Edward died when he was only 42, there was Jack, Edward, Mary was second, Jack, Mary, Nellie – Pat's mother, Edward and Pat in that family.

Who owned the small properties between your house and Kayuga Road?

PW: In our time Gavin Casey, Tom Casey owned that one, those two blocks, they split it into the two, Childs owned this one, you know, David and them, Dr Rikard-Bell bought that block and built there, and Caseys has always been the others. Grants bought it off Rikard-Bells and the mines have bought it off Grants. Richards Hasler bought this one first off Gavin then Dennis and Roslyn Roughen bought it and built the house a bit bigger then they sold and this one, bloke of Morris, was an accountant here, do you remember him, he built that big brick place.

Who owned this side of the road in the corner?

PW: When I was a kid it was Weidmanns, then Boyd (Gagelar) bought off Weidmanns, they still owned a lot of that. Boyd owned opposite us, that little one there when I was young. He had another property, which would have been in it to in on the flat, in here next to Blakes, go up that lane. He shifted in there and sold. Further along was Devines, Hilton.

So all this land was Weidmanns

PW: Yes and Boyd bought it all in the one. That land in near Terry, that was Weidmanns and Turners was Weidmanns, when they split it all up.

WW: Broomfield was Weidmanns.

PW: Yes, Broomfield was Weidmanns when I was a kid.

WW: Matt Peel bought it off them.

PW: When Matt came he used to have the quarter horses, he was the first one around here to have the quarter horses, he went to all the shows and that.

This country back in here that has been subdivided

PW: Hilton and them let Craig, that was the grandson have that block there. He has sold since too. This was their granddaughter, no Hilton's daughter Patty Lawrence, they gave them five acres there and they built a house.

Where is Hilton now?

PW: Hiltons in the nursing home in Scone, they shifted from here to a place just out from Scone, then he got bad lately. When they were kids, they lived opposite mum and them. They sort of grew up together all of those.

WW: When the mine was announced a lot of people panicked and thought it was going to happen over night, they sold out very early in the piece. They could have still been still living here if they wanted to, but it suits some people to go quickly.

PW: I can't remember who Leo Daniels bought that block off. Eddie Watson, that's getting over near Gordon. Leo comes in this way but I can't remember who he got that off.

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Does that Daniels live along Dartbrook?

PW: Yes. He has since sold. It's only in our time that he bought that block.

Where were all the old homes?

WW: Well, there people by the name of Gall had a house just here, that's why we call it Galls and there another near the, Pages, see people used to live on about 40 acres and the original Thorndale homestead was around here.

Opposite Lawrences

WW: Yes, that's where the old original homestead was, that's the only old homesteads on our country. You have Athlone there, there was a house up there called Boxridge.

PW: Boxridge was more over towards Dorset Road. Belgrave was up the laneway there. There was another place just back from Barry and Pattie's house, Mum said today that Simpsons used to live there. There's an old house they use for a hay shed. In my day it had vines over it and they rented it out but it used to be Simpsons years ago. That was Boxfield, Hiltons.

WW: Must be confusing for you Rob, there's an old school ground down here, right in the corner there is a little section marked off. Old original Kayuga school ground. Just up from it there was a house where the teacher used to live (Devines) and a little shop there. Pat's mother used to walk to school and they could buy pencils there.

PW: Devines lived there, I don't know where the teacher lived.

WW: Just over here is the old original Kayuga under ground mine.

This side near Simpsons, were there any others?

PW: There was Devines, but no not in my time, but there would have been, now I know there was one somewhere back.

WW: There is nothing up in our top country.

PW: No, there was never any houses up there. There was a house, well there is a shack in Allan's. Devines lived there.

Would that have been the original Lonergan home?

PW: No that's further up the track. Allan will know more. Mum said there used to be called 'Surrey'.

So these two places, Collins and Fell.

PW: They bought the blocks off Ben Morton, and before him, Bluford owned it when I was young. The land was originally owned by Bluford, then Ben Morton followed by Danny Payne who split it up and sold to Collins and Fell. Pat should have bought it.

This land, has it come down through the family, did it have other owners?

PW: No well, Jack gave it to us, Jack and Pat, in my time it had always been in their family. I don't know who they purchased it off many years ago. We call this paddock 'Overton' so.

WW: It's really Mount Pleasant.

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PW: Yes it's the Mount Pleasant piece but it was always called 'Overton' so I would say originally it must have been part of 'Overton'.

Blunt had some land in there.

PW: They did buy country off Blunt. Before Weidmann, Miss Christian used to own Broomfield, dad used to work for her when he was young, lopping trees and doing all that, he worked all over Broomfield when he was younger.

The mine is interesting; it ran for a long time.

WW: It did, when I show you the mine you will see that it's just like a well, when I kill I usually throw the skins and the guts down there, it's good for that. Has a square top like as if it was well with a couple of slabs across it. They must have had horse and a set up where the horses walk away and bring it up to the surface. I'm not sure how it worked.

Were all these small places dairy farms?

PW: Well, I don't know. I remember the milking, separators and the cream but I think it was only for their own use over there. Caseys and all that were dairies.

WW: Mainly sheep and cattle in this place.

PW: Even when I was little Pat used to milk three cows a day, I had my cow but he could milk two to my one, I bet he cursed me. Granny used to separate the milk and make the butter then when I was little and we had to call at Torpey's shop to get the yeast to make the bread. They still made their own bread then.

Did they have a special baker's oven in the house?

No, just the old Rayburn stove.

Where were the shearing sheds?

WW: Thorndale one was just near their house.

PW: It was, when they bought Galls over on the other road there was a house there, they pulled the house down and brought that over to Thorndale and built the shearing shed out of the house. Dad helped build that. Athlone has the shearing shed there. There was old shed right up on top of the hill; Allan can tell you about it. Not many had shearing sheds. Broomfield had one out there. All the Caseys were into the dairies.

Where there any dairies up on Broomfield?

WW: Not to my knowledge, it was in big blocks. Being Weidmanns they would muster their stock back towards the homestead.

PW: There were no improvements along Coal Creek end in my time.

Not many left now.

WW: Out of them all there is only Nellie and Allan.

PW: No there is Ken, Ken Lonergan, he was Vin's brother. He shifted to Raymond Terrace. He lived in town when I was little, they had a pub at Quirindi at one time. He's getting feeble but he's still alive.(Since died)

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What did they do for water on all these properties?

WW: Dams with the odd well.

Can you remember where any of the wells were?

WW: There's one down near Thorndale, another near the school, there used to be a creamery right down in that corner.

PW: It was the other side of the road.

WW: Mostly relied on dams and in a good season a bit would run down some of the creeks.

Who planted all the trees around the Kayuga – Castlerock Road?

PW: Mt Pleasant, when they bought it. At that stage, they were going to have the infrastructure in here, in Terry's up on the hill and they went ahead and planted the trees. The people that rented the house asked if they could do the fences up and have cattle and they said yes. They did the fence up and a couple of months later they had them shift the cattle and planted all the trees. Now all that's in there is a mob of roos.

This country is fairly open, do you think it has always been open?

WW: A lot of it would have been more farmed than what it is today, back when Pat's uncle was younger they used to farm a lot of it but as they got older they did a lot less.

PW: They used to cultivate a lot when I was a kid, they had a lot of the old sheaf hay, there is still some over there in the shed. I can remember them with corn, they used to grow corn in the paddock near the road there, they always had wheat and oats in, and as they got older, they did not worry. There was all cultivation around the house.

Was that for grain or feed?

PW: Yes, grain, they would feed it off a bit then let it go for grain.

Do you remember any of the skin buyers in Muswellbrook.?

PW: I can remember dad used to go up, there was a fellow, they used to do a lot of travelling with the skins, somewhere in behind Foleys shop, somewhere along there, was it Burt, I don't know I can just remember, no it was the rabbits, you took them to there. We used to take the skins up to Scone. We did a lot of trapping.

Did anyone poison rabbits around here?

WW: I do them myself now with the rabbit tablets, put them in the holes and dig them in sort of thing.

PW: The Wiltons when they used to live over here, old Benny Wilton, they used to rent the house, then there was Roger Wilton down at Kayuga they always had ferrets. They would always be going around with their stinking ferrets. (Pat shows photos.) That's dad skinning those rabbits there. That's up in the forty as we call it, that was cutting timber up there so there must have been more timber there in those days.

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You mentioned the forty, was that the name of a paddock?

PW: Yes, that's the name of a paddock, Des inherited that. **Pat**

Did any of the other blocks have names?

WW: They all got names, Top Paddock, Mt Pleasant, Outside Paddock, House Paddock, Galls, The Station, Pit Paddock.

PW: At Thorndale, there was the House Paddock, Cultivation, Down on the Hill, Rhodes Grass, all little paddocks but they all had their name.

Is the reserve or temporary common still there?

PW: We are in the process of buying that in a perpetual lease thing. There is a bit there where the road changed, we have to pay \$100 a year for a tiny little bit. The roads have changed, when that photo of Thorndale was taken the road went past the front of the house see, all these roads have changed in years.

Wayne & Pat showed me a number of photos. (One was of Pat's grandfather)

PW: That's the old fellow getting the sheep ready, they always used to show the sheep, that's out near the underground tank, there used to be a big competition between him and Allan's father to see who was going to win at the show. Jack reckons they used to send the kids over to sneak to see what uncle had. They used to have Lincoln in those days, really hairy sort of sheep. When I got some sheep, Jack was always on to me to show them so I used to show them when I was kid. Jack used to get a big kick out of it because I would be winning the prizes. I should have kept it up.

What sort of sheep did you breed?

PW: I mainly had crossbred sort of ones. When I first started off they bought ten ewes off Bill Bray and they were in lamb. When I was younger, they never had lambs, just wethers, wool cutters so they made the mistake of giving them to me, I kept a ram, and next thing there was sheep everywhere. I had a black pet dad had brought home when I was little, I reared it in town then brought it out here. Then I got a fad for black sheep which everybody hated, then every year Bill Bray from out at Wybong, would give me all his black sheep so I ended up with 60 to 70 black sheep. Now we have gone more into just for eating them, but I used to spin too then.

What other breeds did people have around here?

PW: They had the merino then for the wool cutting.

WW: Crossbreds for the fat lambs. I think there was a fair few sheep but it was mainly cattle. Allan used to farm a lot of country, wheat.

It's unusual to breed Lincoln sheep.

PW: Yes, they were a really tough wool. Then about twenty years ago when they were still having the sales at Scone Jack used to be a bugger for buying things at auction. Pat always hated it, but they had these Tukidale sheep which are carpet wool sheep, which are like the Lincolns, up at Scone, a pen of them, Jack brought them home as killers but

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cause there was ewes in them he kept them and we ended up with these hairy sheep. I think he thought it was good as he was getting back to something like the Lincolns. No one else likes them as they have to be shorn twice a year. That's what they had later on, but we finally got rid of them.

Did any of them travel away working like Gordon Scriven?

WW: Yes Jack did, he went up around the New England, he was a pretty good shearer I believe.

PW: He would have gone with Gordon a lot of the time. They were good friends of Gordon. Dad used to shear too. He used to go away with them, leave Monday and come back Friday night.

Where did the name 'Warrawee' come from?

WW: When people by the name of McCloy's were renting our old house from Pat Lonergan they called it 'Warrawee' so when we started living there we kept the name on. When Miss Smith owned it she called it 'Clear Farm'.

Additional information supplied by Nellie Partridge.

Some information from when I was young.

There were tennis courts at the following places, Thorndale, John Lonergan; Belgrave, Jim Lonergan; Boxridge, Jim Lonergan; Ducey and two at the hall.

The following owned properties in the area, John Casey, Thorndale; Michael Casey, Glenmore; Patrick Casey, Riverview; Tom Casey, Edgeway; Edward Casey, Stoney Hurst; Bill Lonergan, Rose Vale.

'Cox's Orchard' was owned by Frank Ross, followed by Gardiner, D Spowart and W Hill.

Entertainment was visiting in turns to have a day of tennis then stay for tea and play cards, 500, crib or euchre. Had dances in homes and to great music played by Dave Small, piano accordion; Herb Fibbens, violin and accordion. All the real old dances, quadrilles, lancers etc.

I walked 3 miles to Kayuga School (old), when the new school was built we use to ride horses, 'Jessie', 'Sorry' and 'Tinker'. Had a school paddock to let horses loose in and after school would have to catch them and saddle up for home.

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Interviewee: Mrs Annie Wright

Association with Mt Pleasant: Family owned Lot 45 on EIS Plan.

Date of Interview: 15 Dec 2003

Venue for Interview: 62 Sowerby Street, Muswellbrook.

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

Well what happened. My father David Spowart was a miner in the St.Heliers Pit and I think he got it in his head to, he met up with Frank Ross, he owned the orchard then and I think he thought that if he bought the orchard it would perhaps be good for the boys, you know. Start a little farm there, but he kept his job in the mine so anyway he was at the orchard for quite a while and gathered a nice little jersey herd. As kids we all had to milk, I didn't do much, the older ones and everything went lovely for quite a while and the drought hit, they had a terrible drought and a terrible depression back in those days and everyone in town here was on the dole pretty well. Mum used to say well we are lucky, we've got our milk and eggs and so forth out here and fruit and everything. The drought was so bad that it broke him. Well, he kept feeding his cattle and he was good friends with Ken Humphries and he had a big property out there and a big windmill and he told dad you can have all the feed you want Dave, he says from me and he said don't worry about the cost, I'll give you anything. All the cattle everywhere were dead and bones and dying everywhere. Dad kept feeding his cattle and he ran up a huge bill I think anyway, he decided he could not go on any longer. So he sold the place, he had sold his home in town and everything to buy this place, you know. I suppose he was paying it off to and he sold them all, sold everything up. Went into Ken Humphries and paid him all his debt and he practically walked off with nothing. So that's what I can remember. It was pretty bad you know. Ken Humphries said he had never seen anyone as honest, if you ever need anything again you know where to come, but this is what happened, the drought was so bad.

Where about was the orchard?

The orchard was at the bottom of the hill there, at the bottom of Castle Rock Hill. The whole of the flat was orchard right around and then you went from, there was like a place then for a little dairy farm on the other side and they milked their cows there and everything.

Was that close to Thorndale?

Yes, it was nearly across the road.

What sorts of fruit trees

Everything, it was the most beautiful orchard. We had everything you could think of, and the trees seemed to flourish, they were beautiful. There was a big windmill at the bottom of the place and it was quite a nice home in those days. Well, I think the people who bought it kept looking after it and doing things, it's over a hundred years. Anyway we had almonds, you name it, loquats, oranges, peaches, mandarins, everything you

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could think of, nuts, everything, growing in that place. In the depression things were so cheap, used to get the cart, it was all was horse and cart, I could count the cars, could tell you who had cars, there were only a few in the place. They would bring all that stuff in the Union, there was a big Union, that's what they called it, don't know why called it was called a Union, it was in behind the, I think it was in that bit where the ambulance station is, down there was a big square. It was a great roof and a great big veranda, I can remember this huge building and everybody brought their stuff, anything they had to sell came in there to the Union. I can remember mum packing cases and cases of fruit and of course they came out to the orchard and get buckets. It would be 1/6 for a bucket or case of fruit, they would sell eggs, anything they could get at the Union for everyone went to town to buy their stuff on a Friday. That's going back a long way.

Who did your father buy the property from?

Frank Ross.

Who did he sell it to?

Well, that's what I can't remember. I was away from home then and I just can't remember who he sold it to. My older sister and I are often saying, we never asked him any of his business.

Was the place where Hilton Devine lived?

He lived there eventually, a long time after us. Not many years ago. His brother married Dulcie White up here, she was then Dulcie Devine, they lived up there. They sold it haven't they?

Yes

No I don't know who dad sold it too.

What was your father's name?

David Spowart

What was your mother's.

Annie Ramage, they came from Scotland, as Scotch as Scots can be, they never lost their Scotch accent. They were in Scotland, I never knew any of her people. Dad's name was hard, there are not many Spowarts around.

Was he born here?

No, born in Scotland, both born in Scotland. I have a sister and brother born in Scotland and another brother and myself were born out here.

Where were you born?

North Rothbury. When they first came to the country, apparently he heard where all the mines were and he went there, he did not stay very long, it was real bush, all bush. They

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left there then and came up here and got the job in the St Heliers mine and he was there all his life.

Where did you live in town?

Maitland Road, quite a nice little home, it had verandah all round, very nice, it's been demolished now, Mrs Cousin's house went in the place where our house was.

Was the house on the farm very old?

Not real old but it was quite comfortable, quite a nice little home and if you looked at it now it's not bad. I can't remember a terrible lot about it.

Where did you go to school?

Well I was nearly left school but my other brother went to Kayuga I think but they ended up, Dad shifted and he ended up going to Overton School, that's all gone. I went there for a little while to Overton School. But you could leave school at 13 if you were over the distance. We were not learning very much, there was not much in those days for kids. Anyone one going to college had to have money and all kinds of things, anyway believe it or not I was working at 13. When I look at the kids today I can't believe it, but I did and I could do it. Mum taught me. Ken Humphries eventually asked Dad could I work there for them, but I didn't stay long.

Where did Ken Humphries live?

A big home just out on the Wybong Road, yes, and you turned off Wybong to go to Overton. Scholes lived at one side and Keys over at the other side and our little school was in the middle. The old chap used to drive out in his horse and sulky to the school. Old Mrs Wilson used to give all the prizes for the school. She was the one who gave her home to the Rectory, or she sold it to them.

How did you get to school?

Walked, we used to walk three miles, there were snakes everywhere. Sometimes we rode a horse.

Wouldn't it have been closer to the Kayuga school.

Dad had sold the orchard and moved. To a place on Wybong Road called 'Hill Tops', he bought it from a sergeant of police in Muswellbrook. Dave Jordan built a house on it for dad.

Is the house still there?

No, it was shifted after dad sold it.

Who did he work for?

He still worked for St Heliers mine. He kept his job going. It was just the farm that was all sold, he had kept it for the kids, he never wanted them to work in the mines, in those days it was a terrible job in the mines, he was a first class miner, he did it all his life from

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14, so was my husband. He worked at the old pit from when he was 14. In this depression I am talking about, I didn't know him then, he was ten years older than me, they all got cavilled out of the Muswellbrook mine for four years. I can tell you the town was a mess, everyone was on the dole, people coming up the street with all their swags on their backs. Asking at your door for a bit of bread. Dick was a first class A grade footballer for Muswellbrook and Wybong told him he could live on their property if he played for Wybong. This is what happened, he lived on rabbits he told me. He would not take the dole.

What was your husband's name?

Dick Wright.

Was he born here?

I think they were born up at Uralla, he lived in Muswellbrook all his life.

Who had all the cars?

Well, Scholes had a car when I was young, Keys had a car and the doctors had a car, cause Dick eventually bought Dr Hines' car. That was years after when we got married. He died at 76 with heart.

When were you born?

I was born in 1916, I'm almost 88 and Dick was born in 1906.

How many children did you have?

Three

What other families lived around you at the orchard?

All I knew were the Devines on the top of the hill, we weren't people to run around, I knew the Lonergans well cause they were our neighbours, they were the only ones, then there was Reg Simpson, Gordon Simpson's brother lived at a property just above us.

Can you remember how big the property was?

No I can't. I was pretty young. I might have been 11 or 12, I was 13 at the Overton school.

Did you like moving out of town?

No, I don't think mum was too keen on it, but dad wanted to do and of course he did it.

Sad to think that there is nothing out there now.

Yes, we have been out and had a look, not a tree, and there were rows and rows of fruit trees, and where the windmill is they were across there, all these nuts and all kinds of things. Persimmons, pomegranates, everything you could imagine, quinces, everything, it was really a beautiful orchard. I remember dad, he used to get men in with their

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machines, I suppose every year he did, but I can remember them going between all the trees ploughing and furrowing them. Then he had to get a man in to spray them all, he had to spend money on it, it had to be looked after. It was in good shape when we left but it gradually went down. I think they used to talk years ago about it being Cox's Orchard. I just feel I have heard that before that it was Cox's Orchard, perhaps they did it in the first place. Frank Ross just went there to live, same as we did. I don't know which of them it would be, there are a lot of Cox's around.

Was the little coal mine running when you were out there?

Yes, was it called Overton mine. All the school and everything's gone. Mr Forrest used to come out in his horse and sulky, he taught the lot of us, his wife came out once a week for sewing on the little front verandah. I have seen a lot of change around Muswellbrook. Dad drove a horse and sulky. He loved big race horses, when he first came here down at Rothbury he got in with these horses, he loved these big horses. They used to have fun racing on the roads. He always had these really good horses and he had this really light, something they called a spider, a really light sulky that he took to work every day from out there to St Heliers mine. That's a long way out to St Heliers and back every day, he did that every day. Never missed a days work .

Where did you work after you left the Humphries?

Old Mrs Wilson until she died.

What was she like?

Oh she was lovely, she was one of the nicest people, you were just like a daughter, she was wonderful. She kept telling me I was too good to be doing housework, she begged me to go to Sydney, she would pay everything, if I would be a nurse. I used to help her, she was very old, I would do things and help her. She was really something.

Did you live in the house?

Yes, she was a wonderful lady.

Where did you go after that?

Well Miss Ruth White asked me to go to Whites at Martindale, which I did. It was a long way out and very lonely. There was a cook, who took care of that, she kept the kitchen clean, I had the rest. I started early and would not finish until ten at night. I wrote to my sister in Sydney and told her what I was doing. She found me a job with a couple at Rose Bay, they were very nice, but I did not like Sydney. I came back to Muswellbrook and worked for Mrs Ted Gilder of Piercefield. She was a lovely person. I stayed there until she died of cancer.

When did you marry?

I was 19 when we got married, lived in Bligh Street in a house owned by McKenzie. Our first two children were born while we were there. Dick had bought 62 Sowerby Street when he started work, it was owned by his step-father, Cooper, and he paid him off.

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Dave Jordan built this house, my son Peter is 57 and he was born after we moved in. Dick's mother lived in the house above us and that was that was here then. Dumaresq Street was a track used for travelling stock going to the saleyards.

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Interviewee: Mrs Georgina Yore

Association with Mt Pleasant: No. 50 on EIS Plan

Date of Interview: 5 December 2003

Venue for Interview: 'Negoa' Kayuga Road, Muswellbrook

Interviewer: Rob Tickle

We might start with yourself, what is your full name?

Georgina Maskrey Yore

Your maiden name.

Currie

Where did you come from?

Far north Queensland, up on the Atherton tablelands.

Did Keith come from the same area?

No, he came from the Logan River area outside Brisbane, they had a dairy property, they had racehorse, his father was a very keen horse breeder and I think won the Stradbroke Cup one year with one of his horses, that was one of their good years.

Were your parents on a property?

No, my father was a surveyor and he worked around that area on the Tablelands, I think for the Forestry Department. He had seen this Lake Barrine and when my father and mother were married they went up there took up sort of a clearing on the edge of the lake and started their married life there. Developed it into a small tourist place because all the transport from the Tablelands in those days was by coach or car and people used to call in for morning and afternoon tea with hot scones.

Did you help with that?

Only in a minor way because I went down to Brisbane to live with my grandmother when I was about seven. Went to school in Brisbane, I never really went back to North Queensland to live, used to go for holidays. Spent most of my young adult life in Brisbane.

Did you have brothers and sisters?

I have two brothers, one is back on the Atherton Tablelands and one of his daughters now runs the tourist set up at Lake Barrine. The family is still there. My other brother is a marine engineer and used to be on ships that mostly operated out of Cairns. He is retired now and lives at Palm Woods just outside Brisbane.

What were their names?

My eldest brother, he's younger than I am, his name is Jim and the other is Ray.

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Your parent's names.

My mother was Margaret Thallon Maskrey and my father was George Harold.

What about Keith, does he have brothers and sisters.

He used to be one of seven, not all with us, I am afraid. They had the farming property on the Logan River outside Brisbane; he had one brother and five sisters. The family lived there until his mother died, then they sold the property.

How did you and Keith meet?

Well, I used to run a little school sort of affair in Brisbane for Burrows Ltd and this little school used to teach people how to operate Burrows calculators and accounting machines. One day this nice lady and a girl came in and she said she'd like to join the school. She was Keith's younger sister, we became very good friends; and still are. Eventually she invited me to go down to this farm on the Logan River for a weekend and I very briefly met Keith. I used to play golf in those days and I didn't know it at the time but he belonged to the Keperra Golf Club and some friends and I went out there to play. We had no vehicles to take us around, we used to look to people to give lift to a tram stop or something like that. So here we were eying everyone off that might have a car that we could get a lift with and Keith came in with some of his friends and one of my friends said I dare you to go over and ask him for a lift back to the tram stop. So that's how our friendship started.

You were married in Brisbane.

Yes, 52 years ago.

Where did you go after you were married?

We had a short honeymoon in Newcastle, very exciting.

Why would you pick Newcastle?

Well, actually we were heading for Denman because we had decided to buy a produce business that was for sale at Denman. Keith had come down a few months before we were married, had a look at it and decided that yes, he was very interested in agricultural things, he had an engineering degree which helped a lot in designing peoples irrigations and all sorts of different things like that. We decided we could probably make a pretty good life down here so that's how Denman was decided. He was going to go into the business with a friend of his but his friend decided it was a bit too big for them to handle so we decided that we would have a go. Scraped a bit of money together and put a deposit on it and came down here after our wedding.

How did the business go?

It was a pretty tight struggle for many many years, we managed to survive the little ups and downs. Eventually we built it into Dapkos at Denman, the name is made up of our initials, all except mine, there was no way we could fit a G into it. All the David, Peter and Sue and Annette and Keith fitted in all right, I had to be the O.

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So that was the beginning of Dapkos.

Yes, we ran the company for five or six years, before it was called Krantz's Farmers Services after dear old Cyril Krantz who started it, but we decided that was a bit much of a mouthful so we shortened it a little.

Was it in the same position that Dapkos is now?

Yes, we used to operate from the little wooden shop across the road initially, but we did build those premises, which of course burnt down a few years ago. It went well, the lifestyle we found very pleasant, Denman people very pleasant and it was something that Keith could get his teeth into and make use of the knowledge he had acquired at uni.

There were a lot of dairy farms out there then.

Yes, mainly dairy farms and just changing from flood irrigation to using pipes and needing pressure set ups to operate the sprays and so on. That's where Keith's knowledge came in handy.

Were all your children born here at Muswellbrook or Denman?

One was born, our eldest was born at Muswellbrook, the rest were born at the Denman Hospital. Within walking distance.

How many children do you have?

We had four. We have lost one daughter. Two boys and our other daughter.

What are their names?

The eldest fellow is Peter, then David and Susie.

When did you move to Muswellbrook?

We lived in Denman for about seven years in the little wooden house that was next to the little wooden shop that we used to operate from. This property came up for sale and actually we had the four children and we had really grown out of the house. To buy a place with a bigger house on we thought would be a good idea. We used to dairy here, we dairied for many years. That kept the pot boiling when we were educating our kids, also the Marr family were our share dairyman here and it educated their kids too and when everyone was finished education we shut the dairy.

Who did you buy Negoa from?

I can't remember that.

How big was the place when you bought it?

Just over 200 acres.

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Have you added any more to it since?

It still belongs to us personally but as Dapkos when we came into Muswellbrook here, we have bought other properties across the river and on the road down further.

Did you open Dapkos in Muswellbrook or was it an existing business?

No, we bought the little farm on the highway there and built the building there after we moved here.

Did you start Verona Winery?

Yes, that was in the early 1970s, we put in a couple of acres of grapes because Keith invented this simple drip irrigation system so we put in to show people how the system worked and it grew from there. We were lucky enough to be able buy a piece of Weidmann's flats. We had been looking at it from our windows here, watching all the thistles in it grow because they never did any thing on it except graze their dry cows. We thought we were terribly fortunate to buy our first patch of that then we bought a second one later one.

Another Weidmann property.

Yes, they had a big area, that whole area by the river there belonged to them, its beautiful, top class.

When did you move into the pecan industry?

Not long after the grape thing, we have a good friend who lives at Denman, Bruce McPherson, and when we bought the second bit we were looking at it and thought we really do not want any more grapes acreage as it's a fairly tense worrying affair with harvest and so on. Bruce has planted quite a few pecan trees up on his Baerami Creek property and he said why don't you go for some nut trees. That seemed like a good idea and not long after we started talking about it a nursery that had gone broke up on the Atherton Tablelands advertised to sell their nursery stock so we had an expedition to North Queensland with one of Watts trucks, Reg Watts truck. We had to comply with lots of regulations from the Agricultural Department. We had to bring the trees down bare rooted and they had to be sprayed before we could bring them across the border. We just sort of planted them all just in rows over here and eventually planted them out where they had to go, grafted them and got them going. Nobody knew anything about growing pecans, the Dept of Ag did not have any expertise on it at all and we planted the trees too close to one another because they grow into huge trees. We had a heart breaking time at some later date, I say about ten years after in the 1980s when we had to cut every second tree out or every second row to give them room to grow.

They bear well now.

They do very well there but it is very labour intensive thing to grow nuts. People don't realise what you have to do to get a nut that grows on a tree to a packet where people can eat it. We have people there all the time working on something or other also there

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are a few pests that have developed in Australia, which you have to work against all the time.

How do you pick them?

You have a tree shaker and after that, you have something like a side delivery rack and you rake what you have shaken into windrows. Then the next piece of machinery is like a big vacuum cleaner and you go along the windrow and blow all the leaves and that out. You have to watch the weather but not like grapes that deteriorate so quickly. If you get wet weather with nuts, you end up with nuts covered in mud and you have to wash and dry. We have done reasonably well with the nuts but they are a very labour intensive crop.

How many trees do you have down there now?

I think its around seven or eight thousand, we started off with eleven thousand I think.

What is the life expectancy?

Long life, as long as the borers don't attack them they live for a long while.

Do you have any problems with cockatoos?

Yes, we have a lot of trouble with birds, in the grapes as well with starlings.

Do you own the ploughed ground below Negroa?

No, it's Coal & Allied, it used to be vineyards too owned by Sydney people. They did approach people like ourselves to see if we wanted to take it over as a vineyard, but it had been run down and would have taken a lot of money to get it back in order so we said no thanks. They then leased it to Neil Raphael who has the big dairy on Burton's Lane and he has cleaned it all up and he's put that centre pivot and he is going to grow corn and all sort of things to feed his dairy herd which numbers some 800 cattle, it's a big lot, I think they milk about 600. He has also leased a place on the Kayuga Road as you come out.

Who owns Pastime.

That's David Macintyres

Does he lease it from Coal & Allied or does he own it?

I think they still own it. Their old homestead out further, Kayuga, the mines have bought that.

Have Macintyres held Pastime for a long while.

No, it used to belong to a fellow called Ben Morton before that. That was in our milking days and we had people called Wilton which is the property just beyond the end of the road, we were the smallest, but when the tanker came in he would nearly get filled up from the three dairies.

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Who lived where Jennifer Lecky is over the years?

I have forgotten who was there when we came, but they grew vegetables, they used to grow the most wonderful tomatoes. You could go and buy a big bag of tomatoes for five bob or something. They were absolute experts at it, I don't think they ever had a crop failure. Just a family, father, mother and one son. Bob Cameron lived there for a while.

What did the Camerons use it for?

They ran a few horses, but I think Bob worked for the mines. Don't recall much about them, then the Lecky's came there.

Have they been there long?

Be ten or twelve years I suppose.

What about on the opposite side of Kayuga Road, who owned that country?

Blakes owned that.

Now, what else.

I think I am the third Georgina to live here. Georgina Cox. When we came out with Clift Parkinson to have a look at Negoa our bank manager, who was a bit of a character, called Bill Thompson from Denman came out with us. The first thing Bill said was this place will have a cellar, which it does. Mr Parkinson said he joined his family company from school and if we bought it would make the thirteenth time that he had sold Negoa since he started work, that would have been about 1960. It was Frank Thorne that we bought it from.

There are a few old buildings around as you come in, what is the building right at the back of the house?

I'm not sure what that was for, there is a toilet at one end of it and another little room, might have been for staff. I think in the early days the brick part would have been the kitchen. When we built additions to the house, we found lots of sandstone pavers between the buildings. There was also a very large underground tank there which we had filled in. The other old stables, they were all here, we have not put anything up except this room.

Were there any other houses on the property?

The little cottage was on it. It's a funny little place, it started off as two rooms and has been built all the way around.

Were there any old wells when you came here?

Actually, there are two wells, what they call a dry well, down near where we join to the next property there. I think the idea was you had your well near the river and water would soak in.

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What changes have you seen in Muswellbrook? Campbell's was the main store.

Campbell's, it was a lovely store, it really was, nice graceful staircase for the ladies department upstairs, they had everything, it was just like a city department store. They had them in Scone, Aberdeen, that was a great blow to the town when they had to go. They obviously did not keep up with the trends and could not survive. I think the family was depleted over the years and no one there who wanted to carry it on.

They were the main storekeepers.

Yes, I never shopped in Muswellbrook for the first seven years really that I was here, but they had a furniture store, I always remember in Muswellbrook there were about five butcher's shops, that was impressive and they all had pretty good meat too. I didn't shop much in Muswellbrook, there was not transport for me to get in from Denman and I had little children.

There was a Campbell's in Denman.

Yes, they were such nice friendly stores, you soon got to know the people, when we moved in here I used to shop in Muswellbrook.

When you were in Denman, where there many other shops besides Campbell's?

Yes, two butcher's shops, two cafes, paper shop, chemist shop, Jack Irwin had a grocery shop near one of the banks on the corner, Commercial of Sydney I think it was. We had a bookmaker.

Denman had a doctor then.

Yes, I think it was run in conjunction with Muswellbrook at that stage. I think when I came to Denman I had been to the doctor once in my life, mind you I was 26 and by the time I had been in Denman five years I had been to seven or eight doctors. They used to change pretty regularly then.

Was John Foley's shop running?

Yes, it was a great shop that and a great loss to Muswellbrook.

Was Market Street a very active area then?

I don't think you could say it was an active area, Foley's took up the whole of that building up to the bicycle shop. I think there were one or two cafes there and the hotel.

Who were your competitors when you opened Dapkos, Campbell's?

No, that's who was in Market Street, Kirkwoods, they were a Singleton company and they were a produce company, they might have been called something else and Kirkwoods bought it. They were pretty stiff competition in the produce line. When we started business in Denman we would sell anything they wanted to buy. We had produce, farm gear, milking machine spares, that was a big learning curve I had to get

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onto soon as I started. People were just starting different spray line irrigation so we had lots of irrigation spares. Selling electric motors for the irrigation. When we bought the business there were no tractors, ploughs or anything like that. One of our early ones was New Holland, we used to sell windmills and milking machines, refrigerators, washing machines, we sold anything that was needed.

Did you have a very big staff?

No, probably would have been Keith and myself, another girl in the office, sometimes two but not very often, there would have been another man in the shop, a storeman and a truck driver.

You delivered too.

Yes, the most terrible old red Comet truck, which we inherited with the business, half anything worked on it. It was a very cranky old machine. One of the things we experienced at Denman was the big flood, water came right up the main street and was actually under the floorboards of the shop and it just came through in a few places where it was sunken. In Denman, there was shop owned by Ossie Holly, clothes and manchester, and he had twin daughters and a son and an older daughter, I can still see his wife and children hanging onto a rope to get up stream out of the shop. We had no power for ages, the butcher was giving out meat, and most of the stuff we ate was cooked on a little mentholated stove. The auctioneer at Denman at that time was Barney Morris and think Barney had sent his wife and family into town here because his wife's mother lived in here.

Was Yore Construction started by Keith?

Actually, it was a friend of ours, he has been dead now for quite a while, called John Oliver, John came to Denman, Martindale and bought a dairy farm, he had been a professional soldier, came through Duntroon. He and Keith became very good friends, he decided after sometime that dairying was not for him so we started up a wholesale irrigation place that supplied other suppliers like us with the aluminium pipe and fibro pipes and all the fittings. Keith worked that out with John and John handled that business.

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