



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

Accession number	S00979
Title	Hare, John
Interviewer	Martin, Harry
Place made	Not stated
Date made	4 October 1990
Description	John Hare, as a British evacuee, under the Children's Overseas Reception Board (CORB) Scheme, interviewed by Harry Martin for The Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939-45.

Disclaimer

The Australian War Memorial is not responsible either for the accuracy of matters discussed or opinions expressed by speakers, which are for the reader to judge.

Transcript methodology

Please note that the printed word can never fully convey all the meaning of speech, and may lead to misinterpretation. Readers concerned with the expressive elements of speech should refer to the audio record. It is strongly recommended that readers listen to the sound recording whilst reading the transcript, at least in part, or for critical sections.

Readers of this transcript of interview should bear in mind that it is a verbatim transcript of the spoken word and reflects the informal conversational style that is inherent in oral records. Unless indicated, the names of places and people are as spoken, regardless of whether this is formally correct or not – e.g. 'world war two' (as spoken) would not be changed in transcription to 'second world war' (the official conflict term).

A few changes or additions may be made by the transcriber or proof-reader. Such changes are usually indicated by square brackets, thus: [ ] to clearly indicate a difference between the sound record and the transcript. Three dots (…) or a double dash (- -) indicate an unfinished sentence.

Copyright

Copyright in this transcript, and the sound recording from which it was made, is usually owned by the Australian War Memorial, often jointly with the donors. Any request to use of the transcript, outside the purposes of research and study, should be addressed to:

Australian War Memorial
GPO Box 345
CANBERRA ACT 2601

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE A.

> Identification: this is tape one, side one of an interview recorded with John Hare about the Children's Overseas Reception Board evacueés. This is recorded on 4 October 1990.

> John Hare, where and when were you born?

I was born in Dagenham, Essex, England on the ninth of November, 1932.

> Tell us something about your parents. Your mother and father, what kind of people they were, what they did for a living.

Well, my early recollection of my father, and I didn't know him a great deal over my life, he was a railway signalman in Hornchurch, Essex. And my mother raised seven children. She didn't work, certainly in my time. During the war years Dad became an ARP warden, having - as well as the railway signalman - having served in the navy in the first world war. I don't know a great deal about my parents, because I was seven when I left England and thirteen when I got back, and I only stayed about three and a half years.

> What are your recollections of the manner of your father? Does he loom in your small childhood background as a sort of stern figure, or how was he?

Yes, very stern, very strict. My father loved his children, but it was one of those English families where Dad ruled the roost, you did what Dad said. For instance, you weren't allowed to talk at the meal table, and as a youngster we had very early bedtimes. There was only one word from my father and you did what you were told. Just a couple of flicks around the backside, bending over his knee, he'd just give you a couple of quilts[?] with that, and that'd smarten you up and you toed the line.

> So where did you fit in this family of seven, was it?

Yes. My brother Danny was the eldest, and then we seemed to go down in two years. I had three sisters and then myself, and when I left England during the war I had a younger brother. At the start of the war I think Danny was sixteen, Peggy fourteen, twelve, ten and I was seven. My younger brother was about four and a half. After we left England to come to Australia I had another brother born, who was .... Well, we hadn't seen till we got back. So I was fifth in the family of seven.

> Were the older children expected to sort of pitch in and do a fair amount of household chores and assume responsibility for the younger ones, and so on?

I think the girls were particularly. The boys didn't seem to do anything around the housework area, but the girls certainly were, and they all had their duties to perform in helping mother. I can't remember ever having to do the outside work, garden, et cetera. Of course, we only had a small garden. But the girls also looked after the younger children, myself and my younger brother.

> What do you recall about the circumstance in which your family was living then? The sort of house or flat, or whatever?

Well, we had a house. We were probably one of the fortunate. My father was a saver and before the war the house was owned by Dad. It was a small house in a block, I think there were about eight in the block. Two-storey, but they were very narrow. Three bedrooms, or two bedrooms and what we used to call a box room which housed three boys, at one stage. Three girls in another room, and parents in another. And that was upstairs with a bathroom. We had a lounge and a dining room downstairs, very small kitchenette. Very much working class. And we were located not far from the Hornchurch aerodrome which was the biggest aerodrome around London, and hence the reason for us being evacuated.

So you would have shared your room with others?

Yes. I can remember my youngest brother at the time, prior to the war, slept in a bed in Mum and Dad's room. I guess sometimes may have even been bed in with them. But my eldest brother and I shared a room, a very small room, and we shared a bed. It was only big enough for a small bed, a single bed, but we shared that.

(5.00) Do you have a recollection of air raids, and that sense of the war?

Yes, I can remember air raids vividly. Dad was one of the first to build a air raid shelter as most people had. In fact he built them for various people in our street - widows, et cetera - prior to the war. He had a shelter, very well equipped. We were one of the lucky ones that had beds in ours so that having a young family he could take us down to the shelter, put us to bed and invariably we stayed there for the rest of the night. Sometimes we would - the air raids would go on three or four times a night, sometimes one would last all night. So we had a pretty good shelter, and it was always equipped with food - a supply of food - so that if they couldn't get back to the house there was something there to eat. And the first thing that my parents did when a raid came - the siren warned, and it was usually at night-time in those days anyway - was to get us all down to the shelter ...

So it was out in the backyard underground, was it?

Yes, down at the end of the yard, and it was mostly underground, just corrugated iron above the ground with sandbags over it. I think if a bomb had landed on it, it wouldn't have lasted long but it was away from the house. They used to get us to the shelter and then Mum or Dad would go straight back to the house, put the kettle on, traditional English cup of tea, and they'd bring that down to the shelter and make sure the kids were bedded down for the night. And that's where we'd stay.

How did it seem to you at the time? Was it exciting, or frightening, or a mixture?

Well, to me, I can't remember ever being frightened, and I guess it was the age. It was an adventure, I think. And I can remember the first time that the air raid siren warned when war was declared. It was a Sunday, and we were all at Sunday School. When the word came on the radio that war was declared we were all told to go home immediately. And we got home, we ran home, and our parents were out the front waiting for us, with the .... The air raid sirens were blasting then. I guess it was an initial warning for everyone to practise and get down to the shelter, but nothing happened, I remember, that day. Nothing happened for a while.

Did you have any bombs fall close to the house, or in your street, neighbouring streets?

Yes, we did. A lot of our street, particularly after we left, a lot of the streets round our way were completely down. We had a hole that a landmine had been dropped in the farm - we backed onto a farm. Between us and the aerodrome was a lot of farmland and there was a hole within a hundred yards of our house that was the size of about eight houses and very deep, where a landmine had been dropped and didn't explode. The Home Guard, or whatever, came along and blew it up some time later. I guess that if it had've blown up at the time it would have been a lot bigger than it was; but they detonated it.

Do you recall any stories, your mother and father discussing that a neighbour had disappeared, or apparently been killed in an air raid, that sort of thing?

No, not while I was there. Certainly when I got back after the war we heard those sort of stories. For instance, at one stage we lost our chimney stack with a German pilot who baled out, was dead on hitting the ground; but as he went over our house his feet knocked our chimney stack off. There were times during the war years when we were in Australia that the .... I remember them telling me that the back door had been blow right through the front of the house and all the doors and windows had been shattered with the blast of bombs. So, we were fortunate. There were a few houses in our immediate area of, say, two or three hundred yards that were affected. But within half a mile there were streets, complete streets, that were wiped out.

As a small boy were you playing soldiers with your friends, do you recall?

No, I can't recall that. I don't have a great deal of memories prior to the war. Some things stick in your mind that you remember vividly. I can remember one thing: that my father bought me a set of toy soldiers just as a gift leaving England to come out to Australia. That's the only time that I can remember ever receiving toys. I guess, a working-class family, we didn't have the sort of money with, at that time, six children. So that's probably the reason I could remember that. It was the first time I'd ever had a set of toy soldiers.

Had you started at kindergarten or school?

I was at school. I was in, I think, the second grade at school. I think I started about six. And I can remember, one thing I can remember about school is, I got a truck, a tin truck and the back opened up and it was full of sweets. And I got that as a prize for a hundred per cent attendance. Now, I don't know whether it was a year or half a year, or what, but I can remember that vividly, getting that. I can certainly remember eating the lollies.

(10.00) What are your recollections then of the way of the idea of going to Australia first came up?

Well, that was an adventure, certainly was. And I know that some people now say that they [were] frightened at the time. I certainly wasn't, and I was looking forward to it, and I had no compunction about leaving home. It was a terrific adventure for me.

Can you recall how you first heard about it? Is there a moment stays with you where you can remember discussion or somebody coming to the house to talk about it?

I can remember that it came through the schools and I can remember my parents saying that they'd like us to go to Australia because I had an uncle, or my father's step-brother, who'd been out here for many years. He came out here just after the first world war in, say, 1919 or 1920. And my father wanted to come then, was engaged at the time and his future wife wouldn't migrate, and he stayed. That was a great idea for him to let the kids come out to Australia. I think the CORB program at that time was initiated well before the war, and they just did suggest that people who had relations or close friends should consider sending their children out to those people.

Well at that age, the term 'Australia' wouldn't mean much, but I suppose on the other hand your parents or others might be trying to convey to you something as to what this place was. Do you recall what sort of impressions you had about what Australia was meant to be?

I didn't know anything about it other than the basic things, such as that there were black people in Australia. I didn't know whether they were all black or there were some - well obviously there were some white. But I was worried at one stage that they didn't speak my language and I can recollect that they were telling me it was a very hot place.

Kangaroos, did they enter into it? Sheep, or anything?

I can't remember, at that time, any animal life.

What about discussion at school about it, can you recall it being discussed at school?

No, I can't remember that, other than that there was a lot of evacuation going on at that time, but not overseas evacuation. I do know now that there were over three million kids within England who were evacuated to places outside of their immediate area. Lots went to safer places within England; some only went by bus. So there was a lot of evacuation going on, and some of the kids that even came out here, were firstly evacuated within England and eventually evacuated overseas.

Evidently there were a number of reports got together: a medical report, school report, family background and so on. Do you recall any engagement in that process?

I can recollect having a medical.

What did that consist of?

I think it was just a check-out to see whether we had any diseases at that time.

A stethoscope on the chest, or something?

I can't go that far, but I do remember we had to have a medical. Some of these things of course are in my mind because I've read so much about it. So whether I would actually remember if I hadn't read the various books. But I can remember leaving home, but I can't ...

What's your recollection of that? What stays with you? What happened?

I can remember my mother seeing us off at the front gate. Now, our street was a long street, 150 yards, 200 yards.

Were you dressed in your best and that sort of thing?

Yes, not that we had a great deal of clothes, but I did have Sunday best and that's how we left. I think I had a suit on, and we had our gas masks, we had cases. We were only allowed certain types of clothing. We'd had a list given to us what we'd had to get before we went. I can remember all leaving, and walking up the street, because we had to go to the local station by bus which was a couple of miles away, but we had to walk it to the end of the street first, and when we turned the corner I can remember - and I've done it now on three or four occasions, so - leaving home and turning round at the corner, waving goodbye to my mother. My father took us, and my elder brother took us, to the local station where we had ...

Did you have a little suitcase and so on?

Yes, we each had our own small case.

How many of you were going?

My three sisters and myself. They were the only ones from my family and from our immediate area that I knew of at the time. And my brother and father escorted us to the local station which was a couple of miles from home.

And from there?

From there we went to London where we were ...

That was by train, was it?

Yes. We would go to Liverpool Street station, but I'm not too sure which station we would leave for. But we caught another train from London to Liverpool. That could have been Euston station, and then we travelled by train to Liverpool. At our local station, Gidea Park[?], we met other evacueés that were going from the area and we picked up escorts there. That's where our parents said goodbye to us, or my father said goodbye to us.

Incidentally, when you recall standing at the corner and looking back at your mother, is there any recollection of feeling in the moment?

(15.00) Not for me, not at that time. As I've said, I've done that at least three times now, over my life, and there was, certainly, later on when I was older and I left home after when we went back. I migrated here at the age of sixteen and a half on my own, and I can vividly remember then feeling a bit of remorse about leaving.

Was part of that feeling on those other occasions, in a way, also sort of thinking back to when you'd gone the first time, and sort of feeling a bit touched by the image of yourself as a small child going away from home?

No, I don't think so. I think when I was older I feel that I was feeling a little guilty at that time because my mother was very upset, having lost her kids for five years during the war, getting them back again, and then having one going off again after such a short time.

Was your mother in tears the first time you were going, do you recall?

Yeah, my mother was a very tearful person. Even my father was in tears. I can remember Dad .... Each time that I've left home, or both times that I've left home permanently, and other times that I've been home to England, my father always had a tear in his eye when I left, but my mother was very upset. In fact it was my mother that didn't want us to go in the first place during the war, and my father did want us to go. And I think that he had other motives of course. I'm fairly sure, now, that he wanted us to come out as evacueés because it seemed that it was a way of him getting out to Australia eventually. And I know that was on when the war finished, he certainly wanted us to stay if he could have got out to Australia quickly, but that wasn't on, so we went home and he was looking for a lever to get out himself eventually.

What about your sisters at this time of parting, do you recall how they responded?

I think the girls, as evacueés, the girls were pretty upset. They were all emotional but as a seven year-old it was, as I say, a pretty good adventure. I hadn't been anywhere and I guess the prospect of going somewhere by ship was great. And the fear side of it just hadn't hit me. I guess later on I could have been fairly upset at different times. Well, I know I was. But at that time, no, it was great travelling with lots of other kids, and we were all going off together and I was very pleased about it.

What were your sisters' ages?

Well, they were all two years older. I think actually the ages at the time, within a few months .... I was seven, it would have been nine, eleven and thirteen, or one or two of them might have turned a year older than that at the time we left.

You said when you got to Liverpool you met up with your escorts, how did that work? Were you each allocated a particular person?

We met up with some escorts that took us to London. We met those at the local station, but they only took us to London. We also then met the ...

Were they men or women, or both?

Both, yes. Each escort had approximately ten to fourteen, around about that figure, of kids to look after. A woman would have, say, ten girls. Obviously the women escorts looked after the girls, men escorts looked after the boys. And we were in groups of roughly ten to fourteen. So we were taken by other people, school teachers, youth leaders, et cetera to London where we met the whole party, well a lot of our party, coming from London. There

were other kids that we met later at Liverpool that came from the area, from Scotland. We met our escorts that were going with us on the *Batory* in London and they took us by train, and we stayed in Liverpool for three or four days, housed in a school. It was the school holidays, 'cause we left in August and that was school holiday time.

What did you do during those days?

Well, we seemed to visit the air raid shelter quite a bit because Liverpool was one of the worst places at that time, being a dockyard area. We were housed in a school. The boys and the girls were split up into different .... We were in the main assembly hall. I was with the girls, being one of the younger boys - I was seven. I was allowed to stay with my sisters. We were sleeping on the floor on, I guess, palliasses or small mattresses-type things, and a blanket. I think during the daytime we might have gone to various trips on a bus, but I think the reason for that was to give people - throw people off the scent. I think that people knew that we were leaving the country from Liverpool and to put them off the scent when the ship was leaving, every day we'd go out in a bus, but every day we'd come back again and then one day we went and we didn't come back, and I guess that was all done to try and secrete the information of when the actual ships were leaving.

You'd suppose there was a fear there might be enemy agents who might pass on information that this ship was ....

(20.00) Yeah, and there certainly were, there's no doubt about that.

In Australia at around that time, working-class fare was sort of bread and dripping days. Do you have a recollection of the sort of food you were eating at home?

Yes. Bread and dripping was one of my favourites.

And the black bits were the tasty bits (laughs).

(Laughs Well even after the war, 'course probably we'd been fed very well during the war; but after the war when we got back to bread and dripping, it was still a favourite of mine. And it seemed to be a bit of a luxury - a novelty then because it wasn't the sort of thing that we'd been used to eating. And they were pretty good.

The three or four days at Liverpool, was there a change of food that stays with you because sometimes you can be impressed when you're small - that suddenly you're eating different sorts of things?

I can't remember the food but I can certainly remember sleeping on the floor with the girls. I can remember spending every night that we were there getting down to the shelter at some stage. I remember that well, because one of the boys in our dormitory was allowed to stay with the girls although he didn't have any sisters, and one night when we got back to our dormitory, the assembly room, they found he was still asleep on the floor. At least when my sisters woke up they made sure they got me up and clothed and down to the air raid shelter, but this poor little fellow, he was left there one night. He just slept right through the raid and they had to assign somebody to look after him after that, to make sure that if the siren went again the next night that somebody got him up and down to the shelter.

Do you have an impression as to what the manner was of those who were looking after you immediately prior to embarkation? Was there a sense that they were trying to keep you all jolly and happy, or that there was a sense of sadness?

No. The escorts had been people who had worked in the field of children: school teachers, social workers, et cetera. They certainly tried to keep us amused and, as I say, we were, from memory we were very well looked after, very well organised. And they knew that there was a danger, and I guess they tried to keep us happy and not telling us anything much about the ship, that it was going to be a great trip. And the only thing that happened that they didn't think of at the time - and I'm not too sure whether it was a mistake this - when 477 kids got on that ship there were no toys or books of any kind for us. They'd forgotten about those, so it was pretty difficult to amuse us for the first half of the - well, the first two or three weeks - of the voyage, until we got to Capetown, when the people in South Africa were told about it and truckloads of toys and books were delivered to the ship by the Red Cross, et cetera.

Incidentally, had yours been a religious family? Was church or Sunday School part of your upbringing; Grace at the table and so on?

Yes, Sunday School .... Grace was certainly part of our mealtime and Sunday School was. It wasn't a religious family. Mum and Dad did not attend church but Sunday School was something that everybody did in those days. We went to the local Methodist Sunday School, mainly because that was closest rather than that was our religion. I think we were all baptised Church of England but we went to the Methodist Sunday School which was just up the road. We went every Sunday and we were expected to go, but Mum and Dad never did.

So when you got together at Liverpool were there graces said for the meals or ...?

Oh yes, we had .... As escorts we also had priests and ministers of religion - came along as escorts on the boat.

You weren't grouped together generally on the basis of your denomination?

We weren't housed that way. We certainly attended our own church services: Anglicans and Catholics had their ...

But I mean, as children being gathered together.

No. We were all mingled together. And we weren't even put in age brackets either. For instance, my group - I don't remember a great deal about them but they certainly weren't all seven-year-olds. There was a scattering of older ones and, of course, the older ones had to help the escorts make sure that we were ready for whatever was happening and had our life jackets and things like that.

Do you recall vaccinations before you left?

No, we didn't have any vaccinations. We certainly had .... We caught diseases of different types. I think impetigo was one that I remember well. I've never heard of them in recent years, but I think that was something like chicken pox ...

Did you get it?

(25.00)Oh, everyone had it, yes. I can remember on the boat standing up on a bath with nothing on, freezing cold, while some nurse was rubbing stuff all over me. Lice was another thing that went right through the ship. Chicken pox, measles, I mean, if you name it, that had it in those days. It's a lot better these days, but in those days all those sort of things were rife amongst the kids.

What were your impressions of the ship? Do you have a vision of standing there on a wharf and seeing this huge thing in front of you and being impressed in that way?

Yes, I can vividly remember standing in a queue to get on board the ship. And I can remember, not only a line of kids, 477 of us. It was a long line. We got off the bus, we stood in this line to get on board. I can also remember the troops that were on board because there were 600 of 'em. And that stood out in my memory.

Were they already aboard when you went on?

They were lined up waiting to go. We got on first, and they were all on the dockside. I can't remember a great deal about the ship at that time.

Do you remember your cabin, or how you were bedded?

I can remember where I was, and we were pretty well down at the back of the ship. I can't remember the actual - or much about the actual cabin. It was fairly large, dormitory-type, and there wasn't only our actual group in it. There were quite a few others, and I would say probably twenty or thirty in it. But it was well down at the back of the ship. I can remember things like the fire extinguisher in the passageway just outside our cabin. I can remember that well because one of the boys set it off one day and there was a foam of sorts all over the place. I know he got into a lot of trouble. I can remember well, one of the kids that had his head out of the porthole, which we weren't allowed to do when we were in dock. Of course, we weren't allowed to do it when the ship was going; but when we were in dock at one stage we were allowed to open the portholes and look out, but we certainly weren't allowed to put our heads out. One kid did and I think a hawser of some sort hit him on the head and nearly scalped him. I've read about that since and I can't recollect his name but I have read about it. He was only saved by some kid also standing behind him: when he was hit on the head he nearly fell out and this kid grabbed him by the legs and pulled him back here, and he was raced off and had stitches in his head. But apart from that I can remember .... The only thing I can remember about the ship was when we got our toys and books ...

Just before we go there, do you recall the actual departure?

No, it was in the middle of the night. I think we got out of Liverpool by midnight so we would have been well asleep. Our first recollection of moving would have been the next morning when we were woken up.

What about the voyage itself in terms of seasickness and that kind of thing?

Yes, lots of people were seasick. I can't remember being seasick, but I guess I was, because I've travelled by sea many times since, and as well as doing a stint in National Service in the navy, and I'm always seasick. So I guess I was one of the ones. I know a lot of the girls talk about that they were seasick and the books that were written about the ship, recollect that seasickness was rife amongst the kids. The ships weren't the same as they build these days.

[Inaudible passage]
END TAPE 1, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE B

Identification: this is side two of tape one of the interview recorded with John Hare about child evacueés to Australia during the war, recorded on 4 October 1990.

You were saying the Bay of Biscay was pretty rough.

Yes, and I've been through the Bay of Biscay a few times and it's always been rough. Not much else I can recall about the ship.

What about your escorts, can you recall the escorts at all?

I can't recall my own escort, but I remember two escorts, Mr Kilby, Giles Kilby, was the chief escort and I can remember Bill Oats who's in Melbourne at the moment. He was our deputy chief escort. I can remember those two fairly well.

Were they authority figures? I mean, how did they seem to loom for you, as it were? Were they figures you were a bit in awe of, or frightened of?

I think so. Both were school teachers. Mr Kilby, the chief escort, was headmaster of a boys' school and hence the reason he was picked as the chief, and Bill Oats was also a school teacher.

Was there an attempt at all at some sort of school program aboard?

Certainly not for my group. I know that the groups were split up into .... There was a scout group, for instance, and the Polish crew made a joint flag for the scout group. In fact I've got a photo of them raising the flag at some stage. That scout group was all the people that had been scouts or cubs before they'd embarked on the ship. The other thing that we were put into was choirs and we were taught to sing. Now, that was started by a Meta Maclean who was somewhat of a songwriter, pianist, and had a lot to do with choirs. And she and Bill Oats started us into choirs, hence the ship was referred to from that time on as the 'Singing Ship'. I've recollections of being on the deck, being taught songs and singing every day of the trip. And in recent times I've heard from a lass who was on another ship in the same convoy, as a private evacueé, certainly with her mother and her sister, and she can recollect hearing the singing from across the water on calmer days.

Do any of the songs remain with you?

One was called 'The Call', which was written by Meta Maclean, and that was the call to Australia. I have the words somewhere for that, I can't remember it, or remember much about the tune. But we learnt Australian songs: 'Waltzing Matilda' was one that we used to sing. And I've got a program of other songs that were sung. Not that I know much about them at this time. We had singing every day and it wasn't one big choir we had. It was several. I guess there wasn't any part of the ship where you could get 477 kids and their escorts into one group.

Do meals aboard stay with you at all?

Yes, meals were very vivid. And what I can remember mainly about the meals. I mean, we had Polish food. Now, nobody seemed to like it much. And we had what they called blancmange. Now, I don't know if you know what blancmange, but it was a sort of a - what would I say? - a sort of a jelly-type custard. And I can remember that that was the sort of thing I used to like best of all, I could get that down. I used to refer to the rest of it as sawdust. But one thing about the meals ...

What was the rest of it? What do you recall of the other sort of foods?

I don't recall much about the rest of the food except that we used to refer to the Polish food as sawdust and didn't like it, and I could only eat the blancmange. I used to go down to the troops' mess. Some of the stewards used to take us down. We'd go down to the troops' mess and they used to get us tinned beef and - I guess they called it bully beef, or corned beef - and they used to get condensed milk in tins. I can remember they used to put a couple of holes in it and give us the tin of condensed milk and I used to drink it out of the tin and eat corned beef slices (laughs). I can remember that was somewhat of a luxury.

(5.00) We used to like doing this. We were warned off doing this; as young fellows we shouldn't have been down in the troops' quarters anyway; but we used to sneak down and get this invariably for meals. We used to look forward to getting into port. For instance, Cape Town was the first time we got off and we had a week in Cape Town. And we were taken out and fed very well, particularly on fruit which we hadn't seen much of on the boat.

Do you remember sighting landfall? Was that a moment that stays with you?

Yes. The first land we saw that I could remember was Freetown, Sierra Leone. I don't know if there's any sort of a dock arrangement there but the two times that I've been to Sierra Leone, we've anchored out and what we call 'bum boats' - the little dugout canoes that the natives used to row in singles or pairs, or even fours - they used to come out to the boat. Now, at that time, when we got there, they were made to keep away from the boat. In fact the ship had hoses on that they used to hose them if they got too close - and they were pressure hoses which could overturn some of those little dugouts. But they used to come up and try to sell things and throw ropes up with little baskets on, and you'd send down the money and they'd send up the goods.

Did you have some pocket money, do you recall?

No, I didn't have any pocket money.

Your sisters?

I'm not too sure. I don't think we were allowed any pocket money at that time, but the troops certainly did, and we used to see them, and they used to buy us things and sweets and fruit. When I went back after the war we called in at Freetown and I certainly had money then. In fact, we .... Troops taught us some bad habits. We used to get silver paper wrapped round pennies and throw over and, of course after the war the natives were a bit blasé about diving for pennies, and they'd only dive for silver stuff - and they used to dive over and come up with it in their teeth and show it to you. So we used to wrap the pennies in silver paper - just a trick that the troops taught us - and throw that over. But they were pretty smart, they could tell what was happening after the first few times, and they'd see it coming down. They'd just shake their heads, they knew it wasn't silver.

You had time ashore at Cape Town?

Yes, we had, I think, six days at Cape Town. We were taken out by buses. At one stage we went to a reception and it was at General Smuts' house. He was - he became Field Marshal Smuts later - he was the governor, I guess, of Cape Town at that time, or of South Africa, and we were taken to his house and gardens, beautiful gardens. I can remember being there. I can remember some of the trees that we used to call paper trees. The bark was like brown paper. And we were allowed to take off - as the trees were peeling - we were told that we could take some of this bark. Well, you'd take it back with you but you probably lost it on the way back to the ship or threw it away anyway. It was a novelty. I can remember stripping that.

Were there African servants?

Yes.

Did that seem odd to you to see black people in numbers as you wouldn't have seen before?

Not when we got there. It certainly was when we first got to Cape Town because they lined the docks. As we walked off to get into buses they threw oranges down to us from houses on stilts, around the dockyard. They threw them down to the troops initially because they were allowed off first and I think they were walking. And when we got off we lined up to get onto buses and then they realised that there were kids on board, lots of kids, and they threw them down to us. So that was our first sight of native life in Cape Town. We hadn't seen anything but natives in Freetown, of course, in the boats. We were taken off to the ...

Did you recall being briefed that you must be careful, that you mustn't talk to strangers, all that sort of thing?

No, I can't remember that at all. I think we were pretty well looked after by the local Red Cross, because there were people that met us at Cape Town. I know that every port we went to there were local people that met us. They knew we were coming and they'd arranged things. Each place we seemed to go to .... The racecourse was one of the places. They'd take us to the racecourse where they had sports meetings. They had running races and jumping and all that sort of things to keep us amused for the day. We were also taken to the zoo at Cape Town. I'm not too sure whether it was .... I think it was every day that we were taken

out, and as I said before, it was at Cape Town when they brought truckloads of toys and books when they found out that we didn't have any.

What did you finish up with?

I can remember there was a favourite toy. It was a truck, I guess it [was] like a Tonka toy truck, these days. I can remember, you had to put your name down in line to get this to play with and I always looked forward to the day that my turn was due for this truck. But I can remember being disappointed when I did get it. The novelty of playing with it only lasted a few minutes and yet I had it for the afternoon.

(10.00) So you weren't given the toys as your own? They were just a resource.

No, they were in a sort of a library of books and toys and you put your name down for what you wanted. If you had a book of course you'd read it, but I was a bit young for reading novels and the like, so they were either picture books or toys to play with. I think toys were my favourite.

Do you have a sense of drawing closer together with your sisters? Did your older sister sort of assume the role of mother?

Not really, because on the ship I was in a boys' group, they were in a girls' group. I used to see them every day, I guess. And they had to come help - the older girls had to come - and might do our washing. They'd come and take some of my clothes and wash them because we had very limited clothing. For instance, we might have only had two or three sets of underwear. And I think in those days you didn't have a change of clothes every day. We were on a ship for ten and a half weeks and I guess there were times when 'yippos'[?] were pretty stagnant by the time they got a wash. They had to help out doing those sort of chores for you.

You said you didn't feel hurt or sad when you were leaving home but there were such feelings later. Did that come at all aboard ship? Were there moments when you can recall missing your mother or feeling homesick in that sense?

Yes, I'm sure it did. I became a bed-wetter, and I think that that was also prevalent amongst a lot of the kids, and I guess fear brought that on. I can't recall being a bed-wetter before I left England, although I probably could have been as a youngster, but I know that I was certainly a bed-wetter on the boat and that there was a lot of it. And there certainly was even two or three years after I arrived in Australia.

Were you growled at? How was that dealt with, do you recall? Being scolded? You know, this is something you mustn't do, that sort of thing?

I don't think we were on the ship. I can't remember that, and I can't remember it in some of the homes that I lived in, but I know that there were other places that I was growled at in Australia - the different ones that I lived with. I had nine homes during those five years so that might have been one of the reasons that I had so many homes.

So you went to Bombay, do you recall spending any time there?

Yes, at Bombay .... After Cape Town we went to Bombay and I can remember we also went to a racecourse in Bombay. I can't remember a great deal about that but we did have another six days there, and I guess we did the same sort of things in Bombay as we did in Cape Town. After Bombay we went to Colombo and I really can't remember anything of Colombo other than we didn't tie up at a dock, that we went from - we were anchored out - and we went to the wharf in small boats. I guess we did the same sort of things again. I mean, you were limited in what you could do and the locals entertained us as best they could. But I think it was at Cape Town we were taken to a beach because it was my first recollection of signs up that there [were?] coloured beaches and white beaches.

Could you read at that time? Or that was explained to you?

Yes, I could read, but I couldn't read Afrikaans, and it was explained to us that one said that it was a white beach and one said it was a coloured beach. We wandered off and went to a coloured beach and I can remember being brought back, that we weren't supposed to be on their beach. I can also remember the difference between the beaches. The white beach was a nice sandy beach like we have here, and the coloured beach was a very stony beach, like I was used to in England.

Did it seem odd to you?

Yes, it seemed unfair. And of course the older kids certainly thought it was unfair, too.

What about the relations with the soldiers? Now, I gather at first it was said that they oughtn't associate with the children but later that was relaxed. Were there games organised, that sort of thing?

The soldiers .... When we weren't supposed to get with the soldiers was down below decks, et cetera. We were certainly associated with the soldiers up on decks, concerts and the soldiers were a great help to some of the kids. In fact I can remember a couple of the soldiers being very good musicians and some of the kids were very good musicians, and one family in particular that I know now, the brother and sister were both very accomplished. He was a drummer and she was a pianist and their family had their own dance band - mother and father both playing instruments. And they got together and they formed a band with some of the soldiers who were excellent musicians at the time, but .... Above decks, during the daytime, I think the soldiers were welcomed as helping out with the kids.

(15.00) Do you have any images stay with you of the sense of the convoy?

Not much of the actual convoy. I can remember seeing ships. I can remember the name of the *Stratheden*, the *Strathaird*, were two that I remembered very well, and until recent months that I found out that there twenty-seven ships in the convoy that left England. Eight or - eleven of those were HMAS, they were naval ships of some sort, cruisers or destroyers. I think there were eight destroyers and three cruisers, and sixteen passenger ships of sorts. There could have been merchant ships amongst them. But I can certainly remember seeing the *Stratheden* and *Strathaird* at different places, and the convoy did split up. For instance, after three days we split up into what they called a fast and slow convoy, and we split up from twenty-seven ships to about nine or ten ships. We were in the fast convoy. Some of those old merchant ships would have been in the slow convoy and they had their own escort.

Were there any moments of alarm when it appeared that children were missing?

I don't remember anyone thought to be missing, but there were some moments of alarm initially. I can remember a story went around that the *Stratheden* was hit by a U-boat the first night out. But in later years - in recent months actually - a book has come out that's refuted that and said that that wasn't true. Stories get around a boat pretty quickly and when you've got so many troops and older kids on that it gets around pretty quickly. But the *Stratheden* wasn't hit. There was another moment when one of the cruisers catapulted a seaplane off, that there had been some sort of sighting of enemy planes. And the story that I can remember, whether it was true or not, was that there were two or three Italian planes lurking not far away and the seaplane had frightened them off. And I can remember when it came back the cruiser was right next to our ship, within a mile or so, and I could almost see the pilot's face. I can remembering him waving. He came over our ship in the seaplane and he waved and then he landed in the sea and was taken back onto the cruiser; I can remember that very well. They're the only instances I can remember apart from some days after - a week or so - after we left England, I can remember hearing about a ship that had gone down with a shipload of kids. That was true and I know a lot about that now.

What about the disembarkation in Singapore, when the troops left?

Well, I can remember a lot of our troops leaving at Bombay and the rest of them went at Singapore. I can remember a few things about Singapore, particularly we were taken to a school there. And I can remember almost missing the bus to get back because we were split up into groups with the Singaporeans, and they took us round their schools showing us the rubber trees and how the rubber came out and various things in the classroom. They had virtually - a group of us was with a group of them, and they took us round. They were similar ages and they took us round their school. I think it was school holidays, but they'd been taken back to look after us for a few days.

Did it give you a vague sense of being celebrities even though that term wouldn't have been one that you'd be used to, I suppose?

Yes, I can remember being asked for my autograph. I didn't know what it was, but they said, 'Well, just write your name', so I thought that was pretty good, signing our names for people. Yeah, I guess we were some sort of celebrity. Singapore of course is a different country to India and Cape Town. It was a novelty. But I can also remember that that's where we left the rest of the troops.

Were you writing, or your sisters, writing back home?

I guess that they were. I certainly wasn't. I can't remember for many years writing home. I guess I did later on, but I certainly wasn't at that time.

So where and when did you first sight Australia?

Freetown, uh, Fremantle. It was there that the fact that we were coming to Australia really hit home. When we saw land and I guess just before land we were told each time when we got near land where we were, and when we got near Australia we were told that it was Fremantle and that's when the stories came over, and the worry came into it: were they black, did they

have any white people - well, we should have known that because our uncle, who we hadn't seen, was white - and would I have to learn a new language? We were put straight then that there were plenty of white people and they all spoke English, and they were just like us except the country was a bit hotter. We landed at Fremantle and we were treated exactly the same as we were in all the other ports we went to. Locals came down to meet us, took us off to different places. I think we had a few days in Fremantle, at Perth.

(20.00) Were you in the newspapers, do you recall?

Yes, we always had press that came down to the ships. And we were pretty well feted, particularly in Australia, but we were pretty well feted in every port that we called at.

> Had you moments that you recall where you felt you just wanted to go home? Where maybe you fell or hurt yourself or just suddenly had a feeling you just wanted to go home?

No, I can't remember that. In every instance it was - until we actually got to Australia - that it was still a big adventure, and I can't remember .... It took so long to get out here, ten and a half weeks, and we were half-way round the world, and it was a long time, and I can't even remember being bored, so those sort of memories didn't stay with me.

> So from Fremantle?

Fremantle, we came to Melbourne where my sisters and I got off and we were sent to a hostel. Boys went to one and the girls went to another.

> Was there a sense of regret at leaving the ship, by the way? Did you feel that oh, a bit sorry to leave?

No, I don't think so; I think we were all glad to get off it at that stage. There weren't that many left. I think most got off in Sydney, went on to Sydney, but ...

> Had you made a few pals aboard, the kids that you played with? Were you sorry to see them ...?

Well, I think most of the ones that I knew and there would have only been a few of us, were getting off in Melbourne anyway. When we went to a hostel I was with the same group that I was with still. And that may have been the way we were split up, in hindsight, that the Melburnians were all together and so we didn't have to make friends in the last few days of the journey. We went to a hostel and I went to a boys' hostel. It was somewhere in South Melbourne because I can remember walking to the YMCA just about every day, and we were there for a few weeks, two or three weeks, until they found homes for us. I can remember one of the things I was pleased about: we were referred to as the 'Crown Jewels' were sent out here, and that came out in a book later on, but I can remember being referred to .... The chap that met us - and it may have been the Mayor of Melbourne at the time, or it may have been somebody higher than him - that referred to us as the Crown Jewels. I can remember one other place we were taken, it was in Collins Street, and it was a cafeteria downstairs. Because when we came back upstairs there were crowds of people looking down the stairwell from above and I could hear people saying things like, 'Oh, I'd like that one', or 'I'd have him', or 'I'd have her'. And ...

Was that a bit frightening?

That was the first time I started to get a bit frightened, that we were sort of being singled out by people and I did start to get a bit frightened then. The first home I went to was when it really came home to me. We were taken by some sort of car ...

You were kept together as a group? I mean you and your sisters?

No, the boys were all in one hostel and the girls in another and I don't think that we saw them in that time. But I remember being picked up by my sisters in a car. It was in a taxi or some - it might have even been a government car - but we were picked up together. They picked me up and the three girls were there. They took me to a house and the people that lived there were to become my foster parents initially. I can remember them, an older couple.

How did they strike you? What was your first impression of them?

Well, the impression that I got was that they were a lot older and they met me outside. I can't remember going in the house with the girls, and the girls drove off in the car, and I can remember chasing that car down the street. I was terrified. That was the first time that I can remember being really scared. I know that I didn't stay there very long. In fact I doubt if I was there more than a couple of weeks, when I guess they couldn't handle a seven-year-old. I don't think they had any children.

Were you difficult, do you suppose, at that time?

I don't think I was difficult. I don't think I had any bad habits other than wetting the bed. I'm sure I wasn't a difficult type of child. In fact I'd had that sort of upbringing that I doubt if I would have been hard to manage.

Do you have a recollection of different foods, and a sense of strangeness immediately?

Not there, no.

What about Australians? Did they strike you in any way as sort of a bit different?

No, I don't think so. I think they were very much like the people back home except that the country itself was warmer, freer ...

What do you mean by freer, at that point?

(25.00) Well, I think they could do more. For instance, later on when I left that first house I went to a family that had one boy and I think he was a year or two younger than me, and I was very happy there after the first place, and I changed schools. It was in the same area - around Hampton area somewhere. I changed schools, but living in the same house as another kid and with a family that were a lot younger than the first one, I was a lot happier. But the things he could do and I could do then: I could go over the road to play as long as I told 'em where I was. I mean, I couldn't do that in England a lot of the time. The climate at that time, we

arrived here on the fourteenth of October so in those two or three months, and I'm sure Australia was a lot warmer at that time of the year than it is these days. So in that sense it was freer. I was freer to be able to do so much more. I can remember I was allowed to talk at the table for the first time and I never had that fear of retaliation by your father for doing things that I wasn't allowed to do in the pre-war years.

Did you start to test that freedom? Were you conscious of just seeing how far you could go? What you could do?

No, I don't think so because the other kid living at the house, he was allowed to do certain things, so I just played along with that. I don't think that I tried to do anything out of the ordinary. It was just nice to be able to do things, and I was quite happy.

How were those people?

I thought they were great. I was there for the first Christmas so I must have been there for a couple of months anyway. I can remember that first Christmas. One of the presents I got, and it's the only one that stands in my mind, was twelve pennies wrapped up in newspaper. And having come out from England with no money at all and all of a sudden I was given twelve pennies, and it just seemed like a fortune to me. I can remember I wrapped and unwrapped those pennies so many times - it was just like a toy. I never spent any of them for a long time, I think.

Were you able to meet your sisters again over the Christmas?

We did go to see my sisters. The people that I was living with at the time did take me to see my sisters. They were all living in different houses. I can remember my middle sister, Betty, she was most unhappy. She went to a home where they were very strict and she would have been eleven or twelve. And she wasn't allowed to .... I'd turned eight by this time - I was eight in the November so Betty would have been about twelve - and on the day that I was going there - I was taken by car, by the people that I was living with - on the day that I went there to see her she was allowed to walk to the corner and it was only fifty yards, or twenty yards, thirty yards, from her house, and she was allowed to walk to the corner. But she said it was the only time she'd been allowed to go out of the house. They were very strict and I guess in many ways they were fearful; they had this charge which wasn't their own child and they were I guess - took it to extreme in some instances - and I think that there were many instances of that strictness.

END TAPE 1, SIDE B

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE A

Identification: [this is tape two, side one of the] interview recorded on 4 October 1990 about child evacueés from Britain with John Hare.

What about school?

I went to two State schools in Melbourne, and I hadn't been at the second home for very long when my uncle - my father's step-brother, who was living at Bendigo - he'd been down to see us and taken us out but he wanted us living near him in Bendigo so we moved again. Now,

I'd had three homes counting the hostel and I was unhappy to leave the home I was now with but ...

Were they unhappy as far as you can recall?

Yes, I guess they were, because I got on very well there, I seemed to remember, with their son, and they didn't want me to leave; but we had to go, and eventually somebody came down from Bendigo to meet me. They took me and youngest sister. We went by train to Bendigo. That would have been early 1941. And I lived with a family in Bendigo who were fairly wealthy. He owned a big plumbing business in Bendigo. We were there for a few months, Joan and I. And Betty was with my uncle, and Peggy, my eldest sister, was with my uncle. But it wasn't that long, it was only about twelve months that we were in Bendigo, then my uncle was transferred in his work. He was an insurance agent. He was transferred to Melbourne which was a bit unfortunate because we'd been taken to Bendigo to be near him and all of a sudden he'd been moved to Melbourne. So Joan and I were together for the first time with the Smythes, and we were only there for a few months when Mrs Smythe was taken ill and had a major heart operation. They had a daughter - at that time I was eight - Lesley was two. She had this operation and we had to leave. Joan and I were then split up. I went to another home and Joan and my second sister, Betty, went together to a house where they stayed for the rest of the war. My eldest, Peggy - she would have been fourteen or fifteen - she moved to Melbourne with my uncle and his two girls, and I went to another home. And from then on, in that next four years I had another one, two, three, four, five homes, another four State schools and a year at high school. So in the five years that we were here I went to six State schools and a year at Bendigo High School.

How did you respond to this? Were you resentful? Were you becoming difficult to deal with?

I can seem to remember .... I was a bit unlucky because, as I say, the first home in Bendigo I went to the lady had a major heart operation. The second home I went to - he was a diamond miner who'd been pensioned off during the war years. A diamond miner somewhere in northern Australia, and a very strict Baptist. And I'm not too sure of the reason I left there. I was sent to another home and they had a shop attached to the house. It was a little milk bar/general store, type of shop. I wasn't there more than a few months and I was quite happy there, had a great time, but he was called up by the defence service and had to go into the army.

Had a great time - in what way?

Well, they had a shop for a start and a milk bar's a great place for a boy to go. I mean, I'd never had much experience about being allowed to spend money in shops and here I had one. So I used to be able to set up a little shop outside on the footpath and sell drinks, make cordial drinks for the kids, and they gave me lots of, I guess, samples of the lollies that I was allowed to wrap up and sell for myself and that type of thing used to happen. They had lots of kids living around them and living in a shop, I always had lots of friends and I guess from that aspect was good.

(5.00) Well starting to make friends and then having to leave them again, was that starting to get at you at all?

Yes, I guess it did, but each place I went to there were lots of kids around and I went to different schools. In fact I had three homes where I went to the one school - two homes where I went to the one school - so I knew the kids in that particular school. I also met up with another evacueé kid in Bendigo who came out in a different ship, and I used to see him fairly frequently. He was a little bit younger than me and he came on the only other ship that came out here. That chap was called up in the defence services, and I left there and I went to another home. They put me into a home of people that they knew, and I wasn't there for more than three or four weeks, and that lady got shingles which I didn't know much about, but shingles in the back which, I believe now, can be quite serious. And I left there and I went to a Dr Robinson who was an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist in Bendigo. He had a son the same age as me and he lived almost opposite the place where I lived that had the shop. So I knew Robert before that. They took me for, I guess, about eighteen months and Mrs Robinson then had another child, and so I had to leave there. And then I went out to ...

Did that upset you?

Yeah, I was disappointed. I can remember being disappointed about it.

Was it beginning to leave you with the feeling of not being wanted?

I guess that did have a bearing on how I felt, but I ...

Do you recall having moments of feeling totally miserable and nobody cared about you, or loved you, that sort of thing?

I think I did. I can't remember now, but I can remember at the time, that - why was I getting all these transfers and my sisters weren't? Because they spent four years in Bendigo and had a marvellous time with the older couple that they had. They called them 'Mum' and 'Dad' and I virtually never got to know the names in some instances (laughs) of the people I lived with.

Did you have any sense of resentment towards your sisters at all, as a reaction to that?

No, I certainly didn't have resentment. I used to see them at school sometime. I was at a State school next to the high school where they went, where I eventually went, and I'd see them sometimes during recess time or around Bendigo. And of course we were allowed to see them fairly frequently. I certainly wasn't resentful. I thought that they were lucky, and that they were with the one people for so long. I went to a family at one stage that were strict Baptists and the people that they were living with were fairly strict Baptists so I used to see them at Sunday School quite often, for a while. But I had four years in Bendigo with six different homes but I spent three and a half years with two families, so I'd had six months and I'd had four different homes.

What effect was this having on your schooling?

Well, as I said, I think I was fairly smart at school. I was never up in the top echelon but I always got through my exams - remembering that by the time I went back to England I'd only had one year at high school. It never seemed to worry me -schooling. I used to sort of breeze through without being overly brilliant. I guess I was in the middle range, average or a bit better than average I guess at school. I had the last two years with one family who didn't have

any children. I was very happy there. When the war finished .... I remember he was a bank manager and we lived above the bank - and he had horses that he rode in shows, et cetera and I remember being pretty happy there. She came from a very wealthy family in the country that owned half the town or three-quarters of a particular town. So cars were - they always had two good cars which most people only had one. And he had horses that I could ride sometimes, and I had a great time.

> How were you getting on with Australian school children? Do you recall any occasions where people commented upon your accent or that your English somehow or other made you a bit odd?

Yeah. One thing I did have trouble with. I used to take a few hidings at one stage. In fact I later on used to do a lot of public speaking at different places about life, and other things that I'd been connected with in the way of sport, and I used to refer to it as being 'Bash a Pommie Week', 'cause I can remember that one of the - the diamond miner that I lived with - decided he'd better teach me to defend myself. I mean, I was only ten or eleven but I was invariably coming home having had scrapes at school.

(10.00) What seemed to be the causes of that, do you recall?

I don't know whether I got to be aggressive because of the troubles I had by being a 'Pommie'. I remember being told that I was a scaredy-cat and I'd run away from home to get out here. Of course the same thing ...

> Did that make you angry?

Yeah, and the same thing happened when I got back to England. English kids told me the same thing, that they'd stayed, they were pretty brave, and I'd run off. But I know I was taught to look after myself by the diamond miner, and that stayed with me for the rest of my time, because I became the top of the professional boxing world here in Melbourne and am still connected with the sport. And I guess that's where it all stemmed from.

> Did it cause you any trouble though, were you then, at any schools, then seen as a troublemaker? If you become accustomed to looking after yourself, that you might been seen as the cause of fights or being overly aggressive?

I guess that could have happened because I can certainly remember being strapped. I think at the first school I went to in Bendigo, and I would have only been eight, I can remember a lady living a couple of doors away, when I walked home for lunch or after school at night, a lady always looking for her son, I think it was at the time, always asking me how I was and did I receive 'cuts' today. We used to call it the 'cuts'. And I can remember this woman standing at the front fence always asking me the same question. I don't know whether it's because I used to get a lot of them, or not. But that's the sort of thing that used to happen at the schools in those days. There was always somebody getting the cuts. They don't do it these days, but you got a lot of the strap in those days. I can remember most of the schools I went to I got the cuts, so I could have been a bit aggressive.

> During that earlier period where you'd felt that in a way you were a bit more important and maybe had your self-esteem pumped up a bit by being regarded as celebrities, was there a moment of being somewhat affronted, that somehow

or other your importance wasn't being adequately respected? Do you recall that sort of turn-around?

No, I don't remember that actually, but I can certainly remember being a celebrity. Because every school I seemed to go to, they used to get me up in the front, and I can remember lying on the teacher's table in front of the class showing them how we were supposed to lie down if bombs fell, and lying prone with your head under your arms, sort of thing, and how to put a gas mask on and things like that.

Did you make any connection as the war developed when the fall of Singapore, the news of that came through and that, perhaps a realisation, that some of the troops that had been on that ship would have gone to Changi and so on?

Yes, because we went to Changi. We were shown Changi prison.

That was on the way through, do you mean, the first time?

Yeah. Yes, I can remember the feeling at the time that that's where we dropped off a lot of troops there. And when you're hearing about the atrocities that were happening, filtering back, and you could remember that, and I guess you wondered what happened to the guys that you knew that were there. Of course later on we met some of those guys again, travelled home to England with a lot of them. And they remembered us on the ship. And some of the guys were very badly treated.

Through this period then were you getting correspondence from your parents?

Yes. They had a system of telegrams that we used to send. We had a selection. I used to just take a card over to the post office and hand them the card and say, 'Number ten'. It was just a one-line message. You were allowed to send one a month ...

Give us a bit more detail about that. What was the format? How did it work?

Each month you were allowed to send a telegram and you were given a card that had, say, twelve messages on it. I can't remember exactly the message, but things like, 'Happy and well, love John', and they were pretty standard sort of things and you used to try and pick out a different one or two.

Could you vary it yourself?

You couldn't vary it, no. You had to stick within those guidelines. One would have said, 'Had a marvellous Christmas' or one would have said, 'Hope you have a happy Christmas' sort of thing. Another one would have said, 'Had a lovely birthday', or 'Received your letter' and things like that.

Any negative ones, 'I'm terrible' (laughs)?

No, they were all positive, and you couldn't vary it in any way, and they all had a number one to twelve or whatever. I used to just go across to the local post office, hand them the card and say, 'Number four, this month', or 'Number three'.

So you had an entitlement to do that on a regular basis?

Yeah, and that was *gratis* of the Australian government. And apart from that you were allowed to write letters but they had to be screened, I guess. All letters were at that time. But I used to look forward to receiving letters, and my various foster parents used to receive them, gratefully too, because my father was a magnificent letter writer, and he had ...

What sort of things was he saying?

(15.00)Well, they weren't allowed to tell you much about the war, but I can remember when I - one thing I can certainly remember - was when I was living with Dr Robinson, that would have been about 1943, '42 or '43, and my youngest brother was born. And I can remember people - particularly those people I lived with and other people - saying, 'Well, what a cheek, here they are sending all their kids out to, or some of their kids out to, Australia to be looked after and here they are breeding more'. Well, I don't know, it was probably accidental - not the same these days. And lots of people were crooked on it, the fact that my parents were sending four of their kids out to Australia to be looked after, and they were breeding more kids at home. Of course, it only happened the once.

They were supposed to send so much money, and it was not much, it was only maybe ten shillings a month, I've forgotten the amount, but it was a minimal amount that was, or a nominal amount, that they had to send out to the different foster parents to help them. Most of the ones that I stayed with used to put it into a bank account for me. So when I went back to England there was a few pounds added up in the bank account for me. I guess some of the, probably most of the, foster parents during [?] used to spend that money on looking after the children that they housed.

How did you feel about the letters you were getting? Do you recall whether you were touched by them, or made to feel sad, or ...?

No, I was always very pleased to hear from home. Of course, it was always made out to be a great affair when a letter from England came, because not many people received letters .... Not many people that .... The Robinsons for instance, wouldn't have had any letters from overseas. I guess none of the foster homes I stayed with would have had any overseas mail other than the letter sent to me. And it was always gathered around, everybody gathered around while the foster parent read the letter out to you and made certain points about it, always made you feel pretty good. And I guess always made me have a feeling that there was somebody of mine out there, particularly in those days when I was getting chuffed around to different houses.

Had you begun to think about the future at all, in the sense that you had a feeling that, well, you liked this country, you were going to stay on, or on the other hand, you just wanted to get back home? Or was it something you never even thought about very much?

When the war started to change, I guess from the middle part of the war when things started to get better for the Allies, and there was always somebody saying, 'Well, I guess you'll be going home one day', and I think you used to think about that a bit, but it never really struck home until the day the war in Japan was over. When the VE Day came up, of course, that was a big thing here but nothing like VJ Day, and I can remember that particular day. I was

living at Eaglehawk - which was about five miles out of Bendigo - and I was at Bendigo High School, and we were let out from school mid-morning and planes were going over and waving wings and there was lots of celebrations in the street. I stayed in Bendigo all day. I didn't even think about going to Eaglehawk. I know I got into a bit of a row because my foster parents that I was with were looking for me and they'd had church services, et cetera, straight away. Called on the spot to .... And celebrations there, they were looking for me and I was having a great time around Bendigo: dancing round the streets, et cetera with all of my schoolmates that lived in Bendigo.

> Were you still at all religious yourself then? Were you in the habit of praying at night, or occasionally if things were crook, or you were feeling unhappy?

No, I wasn't that close to religion, but we had [coughs].... Every place I went to there was always Sunday School because that was the sort of thing that people did in those days. The last home I was with for two years - they were fairly close to the Presbyterian church and I used to go to Sunday School, and I used to go to church every Sunday. But I think the majority of people were more religious in those days - certainly more religious in those days than they are now - and churches were always well attended. And when the war finished there were services called on the spur of the moment and people were flocking to some service to pray for - that the war was over and their relations would be coming home. Of course, I was one that was going to head the other way.

> Had you had - to this time - any very bad relationships with foster parents? Or had it been thrown at you that, 'Look, we're only looking after you and doing you a favour and you're not even grateful', or that sort of thing?

No, I think I was very lucky with the foster homes I had. I had nothing of that nature at all. I know some of the kids did and had some terrible times.

> What sort of things did you hear about?

(20.00) Overly strict, not allowed to go out. Some people took a kid in and did it to look good, to show other people that they were looking after an overseas kid. And I know some of the kids that I know now told me stories about having the washing-up water thrown over them, beaten.

> Were then, any here who were regarded almost as sort of domestic servants and expected to do work?

Yes. One girl in particular came from a large family, I think there were five of them, we were four, but there were five of them, and she had troubles, and she was one that had the washing-up water thrown over her if she didn't do the dishes properly. She was the same age as me so she would have been seven when she got here, six or seven. Another girl had all her beautiful long hair cut off because the woman that she was living with couldn't be bothered spending the time on it that her mother used to spend on it. There were other instances of people .... One particular girl put into a - made a State ward because of the treatment that she received.

> You had said earlier that there were occasions later when you felt hurt, or there was a sense of loss, where and when did those other occasions occur?

Later on, when I got back to England things weren't the same. It was another adventure going home. I knew I'd have to go home some time ...

Well, let's deal with that insofar as when did you first get notice that you were going back?

Late in November. It wasn't long. We didn't have a great deal of warning. Some of the kids were sent home immediately the war in Europe was over, the older ones. Some had already gone home to join the English forces. When they came out here the eldest would have been fifteen, so by the time they were eighteen a lot of them had joined the forces. I know a couple that were offered the Indian Army or the British Army in India. Many elected to join the Australian forces. I know of several that joined the Australian forces. But the older ones were allowed to travel home before the war in Japan had finished. I think it was in some time in November that I was first notified about going home.

Had you been getting impatient?

No, I don't think so. The war finished and it didn't make a great deal of difference to me because the war certainly didn't affect me other than being away from my parents. I mean ...

Were you, by now, seeing the last foster people you were with as parents, or had you become cautioned against that?

No, I called them aunt and uncle, and I did that in several instances. Mostly I called my foster parents 'Mr' and 'Mrs', but this last couple I was with, 'aunt' and 'uncle', only because they had nieces and nephews around the State that I used to see periodically and they always called them aunt and uncle so I just joined in and called them the same thing. My two sisters immediately older than me called their foster parents, 'Mum' and 'Dad', as a lot of people did: they had no children of their own living at home. But when the war finished in August, I think it was about the middle of .... A couple of months later, that we were told about going home and I was ...

How did you get that notice?

Through my foster parents. I don't know whether it came by letter or phone call or what.

Was it a jump [up] and down with excitement occasion, or?

No, I don't think so. I think I was excited, but I wasn't overly excited. I knew I'd be going on a ship that was leaving Sydney. I heard about that, and that we were all meeting in Melbourne. In fact I was excited, where my foster parents were sad. But I was taken down to Melbourne. My foster father, as I said, was a bank manager, and he took us to Bendigo station. My foster mother and I went to Melbourne.

By this stage had you accumulated things that were of special value to you: odd pocket knife, or those sorts of bits and pieces? What sort of things did you keep?

Yes. I had a cricket bat and a tennis racquet that my foster mother's father had engraved my name on.

Were there things you had to part with that you cherished, that you sort of felt, well, you couldn't take them?

Well, there was a bike that I was given. When I left the doctor's place he gave him an old bike that his son had and bought him a new one and I got this bike. It was the first bike I ever had. I had to leave that. Obviously I had to leave the horses that we had and I would have liked to have taken with me. And I was the envy of all the kids when I got home that I lived in a place that had horses and used to ride them.

What other sort of things did you keep?

Not a great deal. I had a couple of model aeroplanes ...

You used to collect cards? It used to be the fashion to collect football cards and things ...

(25.00) Yes, I don't think I had, not here. I had football cards in England. But I had a couple of model aeroplanes that I used to have. I think I had a Spitfire and maybe a Hurricane, things like that, on a stand. I took those, and I certainly took my cricket bat and tennis racquet.

Was the name Don Bradman of any consequence at that time?

Yes. I was always Don Bradman when I played cricket with the kids.

Who did you represent when you played cricket, England or Australia?

Oh yes, but I always liked to bat like Don Bradman. But I can't really remember being, picking up sides, England and Australia, and me being the Pommie. We used to pick up sides, playing cricket in the street. There was always street cricket on and I had my own bat so things were pretty good from that point of view.

What about Australian Rules football? Were you introduced to that?

I played Aussie Rules at school but remembering I was only thirteen when I left so I wouldn't have played very much.

Had you come to support one of the league teams?

Eaglehawk was the only one that I knew about, and I used to go over to watch them because their ground was almost next door to the bank that I lived in. So I used to go over there. I remember playing at Eaglehawk State school once when - I think the first time I ever got a game with a school side, and I asked to be played on the wing. It wasn't a position I'd heard about and they said, 'Okay, you go out on the wing'. I stayed out there and I don't think I got a kick all day. I don't think the ball ever came there. It came from full-back to the centre and up to the full-forward and that was when I suddenly remembered that next time I played football I wanted to be somewhere down that centre line to get a kick.

(Laughs) Had you had a pet dog at all through these years?

Yes, we had two dogs at that last place I stayed with. We had a cocker spaniel and a silky terrier. 'Laddie' was the cocker spaniel, a black and white one, and I can't even remember the - 'Joe' I think we used to call the silky terrier but that wasn't its name.

Were you sorry to be leaving the dogs goodbye? Was there any sadness?

No. The silky terrier I couldn't stand - it was a snappy little thing - but I loved the cocker spaniel. I thought that was a beaut dog.

So anyway, you then went on down to Melbourne.

We were taken to Melbourne by train by, my foster mother and I, and she met a friend of hers and we had lunch and then we were taken to the Melbourne Town Hall where we all congregated. The Mayor of Melbourne was Mr Raymond Connolly, I remember. I've got a photo on the wall there with him, and he later became Sir Raymond Connolly. He put on a spread for the Melbourne - or Victorian - evacueés that were going to Sydney that night. We had various photos taken and then we were taken to ...

You were celebrities again. Was there that sense of, that you knew all this and ...?

Yes, we were certainly celebrities and where the Mayor of Melbourne put on an afternoon tea for you, and it was great. We were done up in all of our best clothes, which were pretty good by this time. I had, I can remember, a grey short pants suit on, and all my gear with me, and we were taken to Spencer Street station where we were put on an overnight .... And that's where I said goodbye to my uncle and aunt - and my foster mother.

Was that tearful?

Yes, that was.

What about for you?

It was for me, because I was leaving a home that I'd been with for two years and that was the longest of any home I'd been with and ...

Were there any parting mementoes? Did they say, 'Here take this', or offer you some pocket money, or that sort of thing?

No, I know that they gave .... Yes, they did give me .... Actually in Eaglehawk before we left the bank I was given - I think I had one pound six shillings. Now I don't know whether that was my pocket money or they'd been told not to give you too much but ...

Well, that was quite a bit in those days, wasn't it?

Yes, it was. But we were going to be on the water for a month. And I guess some of that was my own money that I'd saved but we were told not to have too much pocket money. And of course the older ones, some of them .... My eldest sister, she was working for a couple of

years as a librarian so she would have had plenty of money. I know when we got half-way to Bendigo railway station ...

END TAPE 2, SIDE A

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE B

[Repeated from side one: I think I had one pound, six shillings. Now, I don't know whether was that my pocket money or they'd been told not to give you too much.

Well, that was quite a bit in those days, wasn't it?

Yes, it was. We were going to be on the water for a month, and I guess some of that was my own money that I'd saved. But we were told not to have too much pocket money. And of course, the older ones, some of them, my eldest sister, she was working for a couple of years as a librarian so she would have had plenty of money. I know when we got half-way to Bendigo railway station ...]

.... And they'd put my money in a purse for me and -Oh God - I'd left it behind. So they had to race around and find one pound six - that I guess was a fair bit of money in those days - to give me and they picked up their own money - my money - later on. But I can remember ... [inaudible]

Identification: this is side two of tape two of the interview with John Hare about the child evacueés from England recorded on 4 October 1990.

Sorry, you were about to say you remember ...?

I remember my uncle saying goodbye to me and I've never had my hand shaken so hard. He squeezed my hand and I guess he was sorry to see us all going, but .... And I can remember that handshake today - and I felt my hand was broken he was gripping my hand so hard. I've always given a firm handshake since then, but I guess I just offered my hand and he gripped it. My foster mother was very sad to see me go. And I can remember saying, 'Well, you'll see me again because I won't be staying over there long'. I wasn't sad from going, it was still an adventure. There I was going back to England with a lot of other kids. I'd done it before it and I was going back again.

Were your sisters joining you?

Yes, my sisters were with me. And we went up to Sydney ...

What were their feelings? Did you talk about how you all felt?

My eldest sister was engaged. She was engaged to a guy who was in the air force, and of course, being engaged, she was very sad to leave Ralph.

Did she have to? Did she have no choice in the matter?

We didn't have any choice. My parents decided that we should go home, I think they're the ones that made the decision. My eldest sister didn't want to go, from the point of view that

she was engaged. But we were going on the proviso that we could all come back again. And my parents said, 'Well, we'll sort that out as soon as you get home'. We can't get out for so many years, they were told, because there wouldn't have been any shipping migration ...

> Had you expressed that? Had you written that in a letter? How did they think ...?

I don't think I had, but I'd been told that, and at thirteen I didn't have any decision to make, it was made for me. But my eldest sister was nineteen, my second sister was seventeen, and then fifteen, and then me thirteen. The girls, I think, had made up their minds that they were all coming back and I was just going to go along with that. I wanted to come back but nobody took any notice of any decision I was about to make at thirteen. So we went to Sydney; we met up other kids there and we got on board the *Aquitania*, which was the last of the four-funnel boats, Cunard White Star liner ...

> You went to Sydney by train, did you?

Yes. On the overnight train to Sydney.

> Change at Albury?

I guess we did. I think all passengers changed at Albury, but I don't remember that.

> It used to be the case also that along the railway lines where there were gangers, people would throw newspapers and lollies and things out of the window along the line. Do you recall that happening?

I've heard of that and I've seen it happen after I came back. It happens particularly if you're going, or used to, going up to Alice Springs where you'd get out and walk along beside the train, but I can't recall that happening, or any direct knowledge of that happening on our trip. But we got to Sydney and we stayed there for two or three days before we left. We were on the *Aquitania* all the time for that two or three days, and we noticed on board there were a lot of ex-POWs, some of them, the only clothing they had were boiler suits, and they were the ex-prisoners.

(5.00) Was their condition apparent, that they'd ...?

Some of them it was, yes. Some came on board, I think, were very sick, but a lot of them had been captured or been repatriated that were okay; but they weren't all ex-prisoners of war of course. In the main, there were quite a few from Changi that had been with the Argyle Regiment that was on the *Batory*.

> Did you get to hear of ...? I mean, had you got to know any fellows well enough that their names stayed with you - you were very young, of course?

No, I can remember I palled up with the chief petty officer in the English navy. And I think we got together because our local school where my eldest brother had been was called Royal Liberty School for Boys, and he had been a teacher there prior to the war, and that's how we got pally. I used to see him a bit. I can't recall his name but he did give me his chief petty officer hat. And I can remember at one stage on the boat he came up to get it because it was

the only one he had, and he had to do some sort of parade that he was on on the ship and he wanted to borrow his hat back. But lots of them didn't have hats and they were excused from that.

But the prisoners were all in boiler suits and I got to hear of a few [of] them. They didn't talk about the prison much, but you could see them sitting around decks. They used to sit like little monkeys, and that's how, I guess, they'd sat during the war: just on their haunches. I could never do that, my legs would go to sleep, but these guys used to do it. They got up to all sorts of things on the trip back: anything to make a bob out of, or anything to buy some cigarettes, 'cause they had very little. For instance, two guys set up that .... They had a goal marked, like an English soccer goal, and they had a medicine ball, and you gotta kick this medicine - it was only about a five pound medicine ball but it was too hard for me to kick but the troops - and if they could get it past them there'd be a bet on two for one for a penny. And they used to play this. A lot of the time they were just trying to get a few bob to buy some cigarettes with.

They used to have boxing matches on the ship on deck at night. I can remember it was delightful watching some of the troops - some of them were very good - boxing each other. They had a game called 'Tombola', 'Crown and Anchor', those things. They used to make these games out of any scraps and paint them. They had them all over the decks. Blokes used to play .... They were allowed to gamble. The Crown and Anchor was one that .... There were several games of that going on around the decks. The *Aquitania* went from Sydney to Fremantle and from Fremantle to Cape Town, to Freetown, to England, Southampton. I can remember vividly looking for .... They were spotting for mines all the way across the Indian Ocean, and I can only remember one instance where they saw a mine and tried to blow it up by firing a rifle at it but they didn't. They never hit it, never blew it up anyway. We got to Cape Town, where our conditions changed because we took on a lot of passengers in Cape Town - paying passengers - and any of the kids that were on board .... There were ninety of us with escorts. We had to forego our lunchtime. Instead of going to the dining room for three meals a day, at lunchtime we had to give way to the paying passengers and we had a very light lunch of soup and sandwiches, but we had that on deck from Cape Town onwards.

Was it light enough to leave feeling hungry and a bit resentful?

No, I think generally there was plenty of food. And we always had money, and we had a canteen where we could buy biscuits and things, so I don't really ever remember being short of food or short of fruit.

Did you remember any of the other children from the voyage out?

Yes, I did. I remembered Geoff Humber well because he came from the same town as us. I didn't see him during the war years, but he is one of our group now and I saw him in England after the war a few times. I don't think I actually remembered any of the others at that time from the *Batory* days, but there was a scattering of boys my age that I remember now and see now.

We left Cape Town and went to Sierra Leone, Freetown, and I remember that well because after the war they did exactly the same thing as before the war. Because apparently the Germans were rife in Africa during the wars, at one stage, and used to pay the natives to put stick bombs under the - down just below the line that you could see, the curve of the ship.

And so after the war they hosed them away just like they did during the war - wouldn't let them near the sides of the ship.

(10.00)We lost a couple of prisoners of war at Cape Town. The troops went off. It was their time on land after leaving Australia and a lot of them got drunk and I can vividly remember - we talked about this - that two or three of them tried to get on board the *Aquitania* having been brought out - they missed the ship leaving and were brought out by a little launch and fell overboard when the captain of the *Aquitania* .... It was so rough when you get out of Cape Town harbour, the sea was so rough that he wouldn't let the launch up against the ship to take these on and ordered them, and as they turned these guys fell overboard, and we were told next day, drowned. It seemed a terrible thing to lose anyone but after these guys, what they'd suffered during the war and prison camps, and only to be drowned on the way home just for being drunk, it was a terrible, terrible thing. It would have been a terrible thing for their parents.

We got home to England on about 10 January 1946, having taken a month to get home and we hit Southampton to one of the worst winters they'd had for many years. I know the *Aquitania* was 44,000 tons and we couldn't even get up the channel at Southampton. We had to anchor out off the Isle of Wight for a day and a half until the wind subsided.

Was there any sense of emotion in seeing the home country again, as it were?

Yeah, well there was, particularly seeing that we were there in England but we couldn't even go up to the dock to get off for a day and a half because of the wind.

What about the troops, were there any efforts to try and get ashore by some other means?

Well, they couldn't you see, we were out in the sea and off the Isle of Wight. I mean, there's a few miles to land but when we did go up the channel to Southampton we passed the *Queen Mary* on its way to America and had Winston Churchill on board and they were all decked out. They were sister ships - the *Aquitania* and they were both Cunard White Star liners and there was a lot of hooting and honking as we passed them - and we were told that Winston Churchill was on board the *Queen Mary* going to America. We disembarked in the late evening and got on the boat train to London.

Incidentally, being somewhat older now, had you got up to any sort of mischief on the way across?

I guess I - just the sort of things .... I can't remember being in real trouble. I believe the escorts that went home - in fact I've read about them in one of the girls' diaries - that they were terribly strict on the way home. They were different escorts to what we'd had and they were very strict, particularly with the older girls and having a lot of troops on board. The girls were now .... The fifteen-year olders were now nineteen or twenty-year olders, and they had to be kept in line with all those troops on board. But my sister wasn't terribly interested. As I said, she was engaged, my eldest sister; but I know some of the girls were particularly interested. I've read one of the girls' diaries and they went on strike at one stage because they weren't even allowed to talk to the troops on board. But they did cut out their restrictions somewhat. Later on in the trip when they realised that most of the girls were pretty good girls anyway. But ....

Meeting our parents for the first time was a bit strange because here we were meeting two people that .... My parents came down to meet the boat train with my younger brother. The youngest was kept at home with friends and my eldest brother was in the air force. He'd joined the air force at sixteen and a half. I think he was flying planes when he was seventeen. He was six foot four so nobody was bothered to ask them their ages. I don't think England were very fussy about who joined the air force, what age you were at that time, Battle of Britain time. They were glad to get all they could. I think Dan was twenty-two and he'd served five years' war service. So Mum and Dad and my younger brother came down to the boat train and met us. And a lot of our luggage had gone astray, we didn't find our cases for quite a few days after we got home. But it was marvellous getting home. It was late at night. We got off at Romford station. We had a few miles to go and we got taxis from there. Well, see, there were four of us, five .... There were seven in the family travelling home that night and I shared a taxi with some neighbours who happened to be at the station that night. When we got home there were banners right across our street from our house to a house across the road saying: 'Welcome Home Peggy, Betty, Joan and John', but very cold. There weren't many people out at that time of night. We had a bit of a party. We sat up till all hours and ...

> Did your parents seem different, or look different to how you remembered them?

They were very reserved, because here we were children going away and coming back, two of them at least were nineteen and seventeen, were adults, and Dad quickly learnt that he didn't have the control over us that he had prior to the war.

(15.00) How did he learn that?

Well, the first time we sat down for a meal, I think. When we'd left we were allowed to talk at mealtime and when we got home there was no stopping us, because we all talked at the table out here.

> Was there a sense ...? Do you recall your father looking a bit shocked or dismayed?

Yes, we hadn't been home many months when my father walked out, stayed away for a couple of months at least. I can't remember exactly the length of time. He left home, he had no control over my eldest sister who, as I said, was engaged.

> Did it lead to arguments between him and your mother, do you recall?

It had. I don't know whether between him and Mum, because Mum wasn't the type to argue with him, he ruled the roost and when he couldn't do the things or have the control over us that he thought he had, or had had prior to the war, it became too much for him and he moved out. But he was only away for a few months when he came back and realised that, you know, things had changed; we were different people. I know two days after we - or three or four days - after we got home, I think it was a Thursday we got home, and on the following Monday my sisters and - the whole family except my eldest brother who we hadn't seen at that time, he was still in the air force somewhere, we all got on a train and went back to London. And we visited Australia House to ask about migration back to Australia, and we'd only been

home three or four days, and we were making plans to come back again, and that was the conditions that we were being taken home. That we would make an attempt to get back.

How were you received at Australia House? What was the attitude?

Well, I know a reporter met us, and he wanted to know the things that - 'Why do you want to go back to Australia?'. Well ...

An English or Australian reporter?

An Australian reporter. And I did receive a cutting of that that made the *Sun* or the *Argus* at the time. I was supposed to have said things like: 'Oh, it's much better in Australia. You can do a lot of things at school that you can't do out here. They're not as strict in the homes as they are in England', although at that stage I hadn't even gone to school, so I guess I was saying things that people had told me, or I just presumed. I certainly couldn't remember school life in England after those years. When I found that we weren't going to be allowed to come out. There was certainly no migration thought [of?] in 1946. In fact it started in 1947, and by that time my eldest sister, Peggy, her engagement had been broken off. She'd been home for twelve months with no prospects of getting back to Australia and the other guy, I think, at that time had somebody else anyway. So that was a bit traumatic for her. My mother still didn't want to come out to Australia, so I guess those sort of thoughts were being put away. I was ...

What about your father? Was he expressing an interest in coming out to Australia?

Yeah, he was. But when they knew that they couldn't get out for a long time, that it would be some years probably, there was not much said about it. And I think he been resigned to the fact that he was going to be staying there. My eldest brother got out of the air force in the meantime. He was demobbed and he came home and brought his fianceé with him - he'd become engaged during the war, and she was in the women's army and he was in the air force - for a few months after we got home, then was looking for a job and eventually joined the police force. I think the call of the uniform, probably. And he stayed in the police force until he retired in recent years.

Incidentally, to that point, had you formed any ideas as to what you wanted to do with your life in terms of work and so on?

No. At thirteen, I didn't have a clue. In fact it was five months before I even got into a school in England so my schooling was pretty much disoriented.

What was the problem there?

Well, you see, they lost a few schools around our way. And then, what standard was I at? I'd gone home at the end of the year here to the middle of the year over there. I did sit .... I know I'd been given a week's notice .... I'd been at school a week when they sent me to a school for an examination to see whether I should go to the Royal Liberty School that I mentioned, and obviously I flunked that. I'd been to school, what, a week in five months or six months, and the standard was different. I know the first time I went to school there was an examination

that I sat for and I can remember getting a hundred out of a hundred for arithmetic and fifteen out of a hundred for maths, so ....

(20.00) And I know whenever I spelt any words in spelling, they spelt very quickly out here, and yet they spelt very slowly in England so the teachers were always telling me to slow down because they couldn't tell whether I was spelling it correctly, and I used to breeze through spelling. I was good in lots of subjects but I was different standard at others.

Had your accent changed, by the way?

Yes, I had an Australian accent when I got back, oh yes.

Did that cause you problems at school?

Yeah, well, I can't remember causing me problems at the school I went to. There was ...

But enough to make you stand out - lead to further interrogation, so to speak?

Well, people used to come and talk to you just to .... Once again I was a celebrity to start with and then it wasn't long before they started to call you names and 'scaredy-cat' and all this sort of thing, 'that you'd got away from England and we had to stay and go through all the bombs'. I think they used to make up stories about things they used to have to suffer. Some of the things they used to tell that had happened: the bombs falling around them and they were lying in the streets and buildings falling down; I just don't believe happened. At my school that I went to, which was a secondary school, there was another kid who had been evacuated to South Africa, to Rhodesia, and so there were at least two of us. But I didn't stay at school long. By the time I was fourteen, my father .... Thing were pretty crook after the war with seven of us at home, seven children. Dad was working on the railways as a signalman again and there wasn't much money about. A lot of the money, or most of the money I guess he'd had at the end of the war went on rebedding and furnishing the house for our trip home. So we weren't well off. It was very much a ...

Do you know what it cost? Did the family have to bear the full brunt of ...

There was no costs .... [Inaudible] the same ...

But going back?

There was no cost to that. That was an Australian government and the English government had some arrangement about that. But I guess there were things like sheets for the beds and new bedding and things that for five years they hadn't had to have. And extra food in, and all of a sudden you've got four more kids in the house and I guess there was a lot of extra expense that my family really couldn't afford it. So things weren't .... We weren't too well off financially, and my younger brother and the younger one again had to have their education and I had to leave school at fourteen. I had no control over that. My father just decided that he couldn't afford to send any of his younger ones to school with me still there and my education had been so broken up during the war and after the war that I had to go off. I got a job as an office boy in London.

> Did it matter to you? Had you begun to think what all this meant and feel unhappy about it?

Yeah, I was very disappointed. In fact, I didn't want to go to work, I wanted to go to school. I had no idea what I wanted to do in life, but there comes a time when .... I was upset at having to leave school and I guess I argued about it and he had no option, he said. The rest of my family apparently didn't know this because we talked about this later on, that my education had to suffer so my two younger brothers could get an education, and ...

> Your income was needed to help support the family, was that part of it?

That was part of it.

> Do you recall at all, your father attempting in some way or other to bridge the bit of the gap that had risen where, for whatever reasons, you deflected that, and chose to remain aloof or away?

No, I don't. That was the decision made. I know I didn't have a great deal to say about it. I had to accept the fact that I was there and this was what had to happen. And I was sent off to work and Dad took me to London and we got a job - why London I don't know, which was a twelve-mile train trip. I got a job in an office as an office boy at, I think, about twenty-five shillings a week, or twenty-seven and six a week, whatever it was, and had to pay board out of that. I think I paid Mum eleven shillings a week and the rest was either pocket money or in clothes or train fares, lunches and things. Things were fairly tough.

> What work were you doing?

Oh, just the postages and letters. I even learnt to type as well. That's where I became a very good two-finger typist because they didn't things like photocopies and I worked for a place that was a chemical trading company and used to send out lettters about different types of chemicals that they were importing and exporting.

> Did you feel you were missing Australia?

Yes. I hated it: I hated working and I worked for two years, and by the time I was sixteen and a half my foster parents, that I'd had for the last two years, wrote and knew I was unhappy. I'd been corresponding with them and they said, well, if I wanted to come out they would help me find a job, et cetera and so in the finish I told my father that I wanted to leave. I think they'd written a couple of times to say they'd help me and I'd said 'no' up until that time but when I was working ...

END OF INTERVIEW