



TRANSCRIPT OF ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

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START TAPE ONE, SIDE A

Identification: this an interview with Eve Garrett. The date is 29th November 1990 and I'm Ruth Thompson.

Can you first of all tell me, Eve, a little bit about your family background?
Did you have brothers and sisters?

Yes. I had quite a large family actually. Mother and father settled in Kingsford when I was a young girl and there are eight children and I came in the middle of the family; I was fourth in the family. And we had a very happy childhood.

Where did you go to school?

I went to school at Maroubra Junction Domestic Science School. I then wanted to be a nurse but it was a long time coming. But I had the education for it and I qualified. And the other girls went to higher schools than I did. They went for their Leaving Certificate. And my brother went to Sydney High School, there's quite a distinction in those days.

So what age did you leave school?

I left school, I must have been about fifteen.

And was there a reason that you left at fifteen and yet some of the others went on?

Well, there was actually. My mother died three months before I did that last exam and I was the only one that could sort of manage the household. Otherwise the children would have gone to a home. And so I kept things going and I had casual work at a bakery doing clerical work and I also did work for dressmaking at a small factory and learnt all the seasons of making clothing which I was very proud of; and that was only casual work.

Were you disappointed not being able to carry on?

Yes, I was. I was very disappointed I couldn't really do anything until I joined the Land Army. I was at home doing domestic duties most of that time until I was twenty. And one of my younger sisters left school and she thought she'd like to do what I was doing and I said, 'Fine, I'm joining the Land Army' (laughs). Oh well, you know ...

So why did you join the Land Army? Was it a kind of escape for you?

Well, not really. I'd seen my brothers and all the young people in the street go off to the services and there were quite a few deaths in the family next door to us - overseas - young boys. Actually they lost six boys in their family and I thought I'd like to contribute something of my life towards the war service.

Did you try any of the other services first?

Well, I didn't because it was a little bit sort of late in the day for me. It was already '43 and I had a hearing problem. It wasn't a big problem; nobody seemed to notice it except myself. And I've had it most of my life although I've had an operation on that ear and it's rectified most of it. But I had measles very bad and that's why I had the hearing deficiency in my young life.

Yes, I notice on your career record ...

Yes.

... it says ... mentions the hearing problem.

Well, I was a very sensitive girl and I'm very sensitive of that. That's why I thought I'd do the dressmaking and learn to be useful and independent.

And what was the reaction of your family when you said you were going to join up?

They were quite upset really. They were used to me. When I came home everything stopped, I was going to do it, you know. They were a bit too used to me. It did them good for somebody else to do it.

What about your father, what did he think about it?

Well, my father was a tram driver and he was mostly on shift work and I rarely saw my father. So it was sort of a lonely life because my eldest sister had joined the services. My eldest brother was in the air force, ferrying planes, Catalinas, from America. And the sister above myself, the third girl, she was in the air force and she was stationed in Brisbane. So really, I only had to concentrate on the younger children and get their meals and keep their clothes clean and get them off to school and there was quite a bit to do.

(5.00) And did you join up with a friend or just on your own?

On my own. No, I was very independent and very serious child, or young girl.

Can you take me through the procedure? Did you go into the office in Sydney, or what happened?

Yes, well, I can remember seeing quite a nice big article in the *Women's Weekly* and I read about it and I thought, 'Dear, I'd love to do that'. Earlier in my life I hadn't been very well when my mother was alive and I'd lived on an apple orchard and I really loved the land so I thought, it just sort of clicked into place, and I thought, 'That's what I'd like to do' and I was very happy I did it.

And where did you join up?

I went into Martin Place in Challis House and I was interviewed by Mrs Woolf there and just having forms to sign. And it was really no time at all before I was in the Land Army and I was accepted.

And so what did you do on your very first day?

Ah, actually, there was quite a little bit to do getting our uniforms together and requisition forms and packing ...

Did they tell you where your first ...

They told me almost immediately I'd be going to Camden to Mulhollands and I was met at the station. I went on train.

How were you feeling then?

I was feeling quite happy about it all. It was quite an adventure for me.

Were there lots of other girls on the train?

No, I seemed to be the only one and I met all the other girls there. They came independently by car or coach or other transport.

So you were met at the station ...

Met at the station at Camden by Mulhollands and we went miles out into the country (laughs), in an old truck I might add, and they were very nice people. People that had owned a hotel and we used to catering for meals and looking after other people. They were very nice people.

Can you describe the living conditions?

Yes. We had all our meals on a big open verandah because there wasn't room for us in the house although it accompanied all the bedrooms and I shared a room with another young girl who later became one of my best friends and it was such a pretty room. It had rosebuds on the wallpaper and little crossover curtains. We were made to feel very welcome and the meals were absolutely wonderful. They had a daughter and son who, when they were home from school, joined us picking peas. And each morning we set off quite early. It would be at least 7 a.m. in our overalls, in our old clothes, like our boots would be full of mud and we'd go off on the fields. You'd be there all day perhaps with a little pack of sandwiches and a billy and it was hot work; it was back-breaking, it was tiring. But I sort of loved it. I fitted into it straightaway.

Was pea picking the main thing you were doing there?

Yes, it was there. There were acres and acres of peas, nothing else. And we picked peas for all the time we were there.

How did your hands feel at the end of the day?

Oh, they were dirty and smudgy and your clothes were dirty and you sort of didn't take any notice of your hair after a little while. You know, you'd just tie it back and put a hat on your head. But we soon became quite used to the work.

So how many girls were there there altogether?

There were six girls. They were all sort of much the same age. Actually one of the girls came from quite a well-to-do family and her name was Janet McDowell. And, of course, you'd probably still be familiar with the fact that we had McDowell's as a big store in Sydney. And Janet said, 'Now, do you know who I am?' (laughs). Gosh, we all felt a little bit inferior there but Janet used to stay in at the hotel and have her days off at the hotel whereas we couldn't afford that sort of thing ourselves. We just went in on the milk truck and had a nice meal at the Paragon restaurant. And we were very happy with the simply life.

So how did it ... But Janet was actually in the homestead during the week? It was only at the weekends?

Oh, of course, working, yes.

It was only the weekends that she went into the hotel?

And our time off. And we could go to the dances at Mt Hunter and that was quite enjoyable. We had a nice recreation time.

So did you mix quite a lot with the local community?

(10.00) We did at the dances. We met all the young people and all the farmers and their young children and it was a real country dance. It was very enjoyable.

Can you describe it to me? What would people be wearing? What was the music like?

Oh well, in those days we had coupons for clothing and nobody was really dressed in fashionable clothes but they put their best clothes on, of course, for a dance and they were just nice country people, very friendly. And one farmer in particular, he used to wear his mother's pink jumper. I thought he was a real good sort until then (laughs). And they could all dance; they'd dance you off your feet. And nobody would sit down. There'd be barn dances and the Pride of Erin and Gypsy Tap and all those old dances.

And how did you get to the dances?

We'd go in on the back of a truck.

So all six of you?

Yes. Oh, depending who wanted to go or who wanted to stay home but, usually, yes, there'd be five or six of us.

And who used to drive?

Ah, sometimes the farmer or sometimes his wife?

Did you drink a lot?

No, we didn't drink at all in those days. Like alcohol you mean?

Yes.

No, we didn't drink at all. We didn't even see it or didn't worry about it.

Were there any men working on the farm at Mulhollands?

Occasionally we had the RAAF boys across to help work. They had a camp at Camden and we might forty boys on a truck and they'd help during the day and it was very occasional but it would be once a fortnight.

Did you get any sort of training for any of these jobs that you undertook?

No, there was no training. You just went out, hot or cold, you just went out and worked most of the day. It was very hard to do that at first.

And where did you go from Mulhollands?

... Mmm.

Where did you used to have lunch? Did you have it in the fields where you were working?

We'd just find a shady tree and have lunch under the trees and we'd boil our own billy and I remember one day the wind blew so hard that the cow manure stuck to our sandwiches and you just couldn't eat them. So we just had tea that day. But there were many days when it was very, very hot and you'd be glad of the shade for your lunch and have a nice rest.

And what did you used to do in the evenings?

Mostly there'd be a little bit of music or we'd be able to sit around and read and there wasn't a lot to do in the evenings. You'd be just too tired. After your shower you'd be going to bed; really, you were very tired at the end of the day.

So there were showers that you could have?

We had a makeshift shower with a short of a pulley on top and we'd fill the bucket and pull it up (laughs) and just pull the other rope and it'd all come down. It was quite a funny contraption but we got used to it.

How did you wash your hair?

The same way. Because the tank - it wasn't town water, it was all tank water - and we had to be careful not to use too much.

Did you heat it up or did you have cold showers?

Oh, we'd put a nice big kettle of hot water in with the cold and hope for the best (laughs).

Why did you move from Camden?

Well, because the peas were picked and they were happy with the girls and they didn't need ... require them any longer.

Were you ever actually asked to do any domestic work, or was it only pea picking?

Oh, we were never asked to do domestic work except to clean our own room and wash our own clothing.

And that was true of all the places that you were at?

Oh yes. You were independent in that way. Nobody cared about your clothing or your room. You had to do all that for yourself.

But didn't ever ask you to do any, you know, looking after children or cleaning the house

No, nothing like that.

Okay. So after Camden you moved on to somewhere near Lithgow.

Yes. We went to Lithgow. I was met there by ... We went out to Mays Estate. I've forgotten his name. It was a lovely big orchard. Actually it was the biggest orchard in New South

Wales and we were spraying the trees there - there was no crop - and we were spraying and pruning. It was very hard work. The spray itself would stick to your clothing. They'd almost stand up by themselves at the end of the day and you had to be very careful not to breath it. We had big mackintoshes back-to-front on our heads, a big cover over our eyes and hands - we had to wear gloves - and raincoats. And I drove three bullocks at that Mays Estate. And I can still remember their names: Spot, Dick and Rowdy (laughs). And you'd say, 'Whoa back', you know, for stopping them and you'd be lucky if they stopped. Or you'd say, 'Get up there', and ...

(15.00) Had you ever driven a bullock before?

Never ever driven anything like that before, no.

So how did you learn?

Very quickly. But they didn't stop if you roared at them (laughs). But it was hard work there, it was a very big orchard. And we finished all those trees in the whole orchard, just us eight girls. We stayed in a little cottage and we were looked after by a matron there. A very homely, nice person. I can't remember her name. I wish I could because she was so lovely. And she'd make scones and all sorts of nice things for us and ...

So what was her role? Basically to look after ...

Just basically to do the shopping and keep the cottage clean and cook our meals. And we washed and we chopped the wood. We had little chores like that to clean the laundry, chop the wood; just generally keep things nice.

Can you describe the cottage for me? Take me on a little tour of the cottage, through the front door.

Yes. Well, there was just an old farm cottage with an iron roof and a big open verandah and there were roses actually growing over all this verandah in the front of the cottage and I thought it was a very suitable name 'Roseneath Cottage'. We had two to each bedroom and we didn't see much of the matron really, we were out in the fields all day, in the orchard, working. And the nicest part of Mays Estate I remember were the lovely big pine trees. They were sort of like a windbreak all around the orchards and they were huge pine trees, very green. When we made our cup of tea, morning tea, we'd gather the needles and little branches and make our fire with those. And I remember very well because it was cold and we'd sit there with the smoke, blue smoke, going up. It was very nice. It was a lovely time.

And just getting back to the cottage. How many bedrooms were there and how was it furnished?

It was very plainly furnished. We actually had just open wardrobes for our clothing, just makeshift ones. Single beds, grey blankets and just a very clean little washed, scrubbed table in our dining room. Nothing very much that I'd remember actually.

What about the bathroom?

Well, the bathroom was more of an outhouse and we also had a shower that was like a bucket that came down and we had to fill it and pull the strings and rope attachments. And it was quite good. We managed very well and we had our showers every day when we came home and ...

Was there a toilet out the back?

Yes, yes, there was a toilet and we had to walk to the toilet away from the house. And it was a pan service.

Did you get scared if you had to go out in the middle of the night?

Well, I just didn't go (laughs). City girls didn't. Yes, well, other places might have had a bit pit dug and it was really a lot of blowflies, you know, in the country and it really didn't appeal to you but you managed.

So you held on?

Yeah, at night.

And was there a lounge area, room, that you congregated in in the evening?

Well, there was a fireplace and it wasn't really very roomy. No, we just had a little settee in there and we could read or, you know, sit around. That was about all. We'd be too tired at night to do very much.

So what sort of time would you have gone to bed?

Well, you'd be in bed by half past eight at the latest.

And in the rooms, the bedrooms, that you've described as being fairly plain, did you ever bring along your own decorations, sort of photographs or anything to make it more homely?

Well, you did. You sort of had a couple of photographs for yourself and books and writing material and you'd write home and perhaps send a little bit of money if you could and you'd keep in touch by radio with the news and what was happening overseas. But you sort of worried about your own family in those days. You wanted to know how they were and where they were and how the war was going and I guess there was sort of this tension not knowing how long it was going to last or when your own family would be together again. You thought of your family a lot really. Felt a bit homesick (laughs).

This would have been the first time you'd have left home?

Yes, it was the first time except for my time in Victoria when I went to the apple orchard, that was the only time away from home.

And what about ... what about letters? Did you receive many letters from your family?

(20.00) Not often. No, half the time they weren't sure where I was and I didn't receive very many letters. We were a very independent family and, as I said, my brother was overseas, my sister was in the ... two sisters in the service and the younger sister went to work and the others were still going to school.

Did they all survive the war?

Yes, they all survived the war. Very fortunate. My cousins, everybody came home from the war that I knew went away so I'm very fortunate.

Now, at ... still at Lithgow, the matron there, was she responsible for discipline?

Yes, she was.

Was there ever any need to discipline the girls?

Well, there wasn't really because there was no way we could go to town, there was no vehicle that we could drive or to take us. We'd play perhaps cards or go for walks, it was really nice evenings. There wasn't a lot of social life that I remember.

If the girl had done something wrong or against the rules or whatever, what sort of form of punishment would have been carried out?

I can't remember any punishment ever being carried out to tell you the truth. The girls all bogged in. They were cheerful and good and there were no problems.

Were you allowed to smoke?

Yes, we could smoke but there were only one or two of the girls that were smoking. It was rather costly to smoke too and they had to go out in the open to smoke; not in the cottage.

So any of the them smoking in the dunny?

Possibly (laughs).

But they weren't caught.

No. Well, there was a fair bit of freedom that way really.

What about things like parades and marches and learning to salute? Did you have to do much of that?

No, nothing like that. It was really ... it started off as a voluntary unit, the Land Army, and it wasn't only until later that they were given a uniform and a wage.

How much did you get, can you remember in your pay?

I think it was three pound fifty cents and we had to pay board out of that. I think it was two pound for board or thereabouts and the rest you had for yourself.

Did you ever think that you should have been paid more or that you should have been paid an amount equal to a male wage?

No, in those days that was equivalent to a small wage which we accepted because we had our home and clothing. There wasn't very much to spend it on. You really didn't need luxuries. If you wanted any luxuries it wasn't there in those days because clothing coupons and even butter was rationed and jam and different things like that.

What about religion? Did religion play a large part of your life?

If was very difficult to get to church but when I could I did go.

Are you Catholic or ...

Yes, I was a Catholic and I still am. And, yes, the girls used to like to go to church if they could.

I guess it was difficult to get to church. Did you pray a lot at that time because it was a very difficult time?

Well, you did. You'd have long days out in the field and you would, you'd sort of be thinking of the boys overseas or your own mother's death or ... and you would, you'd say a few prayers to yourself quietly.

Was that a comfort to you?

Yes, it was.

And what about the other girls, did religion play any part in their life, or not so much?

I don't know. I never really worried about it. Except one girl in particular that was at Camden with me, Joyce West, she became a Seventh Day Adventist afterwards and she left every memory of the Land Army behind. She wouldn't even think about the Land Army any more and I thought it was very sad really. And her religion took over and actually I had to forget about her because she wasn't even able to talk to people in a normal way, she just let religion take over. But it was lesson to me because I really don't think religion should take over in your life; I think it's part of your life and it should be done quietly and respectfully, you know, it's just something personal.

Okay. You finished in Camden. The pea crop was picked, or sprayed rather and you then moved on to ...

To Batlow.

... to Batlow. And how did you get to Batlow?

Went on the train.

Any girls with you that you knew?

(25.00) No. I seemed to be independent. I went there by myself from headquarters and they bought the tickets and everything. I just picked them up from headquarters and away I went on the train. And it was a lovely trip. I thoroughly enjoyed it. There were nice people on the train, just country people, and when I arrived somebody was there to meet me, take me out to the camp. And I went straight to Francesco. It was about two and a half miles out, this old ... well, when I say old, it wasn't old, it was just built and it was built on army camp style. Very fresh wood smell and timber everywhere.

And could you describe the huts to me?

Yes. The huts were very long and we had bedrooms each side of the main corridor. In the front of the hut the matron had her quarters and opposite her was the field officer in each hut. I think we had two long huts there at 'Frisco' and behind those there was a laundry and separate toilets. It was built in a big open space with orchards close but right on a hill and very open ground.

What time of the year was this?

Mmm, I went up there in summertime.

So did the huts get very hot?

Yes, they were very hot during the day but at night it was cool. The weather was very changeable in Batlow. You might have a very hot day and a very cold night and the next day would be raining. It was very changeable. But no matter what the weather we went out to work on the orchards and I would walk with another girl and myself to a farm, it would be four miles away sometimes, up on another mountain - on the side of a mountain - and we could actually see prisoner-of-war men from the Italian camp working on orchards just near us.

Did you have much contact with them?

No contact whatsoever. They weren't allowed to talk to the girls. But I worked for an old German man and his wife and they rarely came near us. They let us just pick the apples and put them in the shed and we sometimes never saw them from one day to the next.

So who gave your instructions about what you were to do?

He'd just come early in the morning and he'd say, 'Well, I'd like this particular part of the orchard picked today' and we'd get our ladders and our big gear on and away we'd go and the cases and everything would be there. And he would take them to the shed.

When you say you put your gear on, what sort of clothes were you wearing?

We were wearing overalls and you had this great big canvass strap around your neck and a big bag to hold your apples in. When you climbed up the ladders you had to just half fill, as much as you could carry into your bag, and come down again. But some of the ladders were as high as twenty feet high to get up onto the high part of the trees. It was heavy work.

And who put the ladders up there, or were they there permanently?

They were there on wheels actually. You wheeled them from one part of the orchard to another or from one tree to another and the trees would be laden and a lot of the apples would be up high. You would need the ladders; most of the work was done on the ladders.

Can you describe the ladder to me because I saw a photograph of it and it was rather unusual?

Yes, they were a very big wooden ladders. Actually they were heavy and they were very hard to wheel because the ground was uneven. It would be ploughed and very uneven; very bumpy and hard ground. And that was heavy work and your muscles would feel it at first. You'd soon get used to it. But moving the ladder was harder than picking the apples.

This is the end of tape one, side a.

END TAPE ONE, SIDE A

START TAPE ONE, SIDE B

Identification: this is tape one, side two, of an interview with Eve Garrett. I'm Ruth Thompson.

Okay, you were telling me about the ladders.

Yes. Well, they were heavy; they were very heavy. And it was quite heavy in the orchard. You didn't expect it to be, you'd look at the trees and think how pretty everything looked, you know, but when it came to the itty-gritty bits you found it was a little bit harder than you thought.

The ladders looked as though they were almost vertical?

They weren't really. They had a little slope on them. They were at almost an eighty degree angle; very high but very safe.

I was going to say, did anybody have any accidents?

No, we didn't. We were very careful, you didn't want to have an accident. Sometimes when it was very windy we didn't like going up the ladders and we'd pick all the lower part of the trees.

If there had been an accident were there any facilities for emergency care?

There wasn't really. You'd probably just go on to the farmer and his wife and ask for some help if that happened. And I never found any time when it did.

Were any of you a member of a union?

No, there didn't seem to be a union in those times.

So there was no-one who had a particular concern about the safety of your working conditions?

Well, the matron would be. She'd have to make a report to headquarters if anything happened like that. She'd be a responsible person and just make a note of anything that happened or be responsible enough to send a person to casualty or hospital if necessary. Yes.

And what did you do in your leisure time at Batlow?

At Batlow there's many things. Part of a big parade we had, we sort of crowned one of the girls as queen of the Apple Blossoms and we had floats and different things in the main street and it was quite a nice time there. We had a lovely time at Batlow really. And ...

Was that part of a community day or ...

It was a community thing. It's still going in Batlow today and they have the Apple Blossom Festival which is held every spring.

And so the Land Army had a float.

They had a float and everything was beautifully done and one of our girls was queen. She was crowned queen. Whether they have a queen or not now, I'm not sure but I imagine they would have.

And did you work on the float?

No, I didn't really have much to do with it. It was a big day and everything stopped the day we had our parade. We were given a holiday.

What did you do on the holiday?

Well, we had a dance in the main hall, and I loved dancing in those days, so we had ... it's very hard to remember actually. But I can remember we had drinks and cakes and there was sort of a party atmosphere and there were lots of girls there and they all joined in, and the local people. We had a big old, well, hall I guess and that's where everything happened. If they had a wedding or a party or a function or a concert and a theatre. It was a theatre and everything at once; it held everything. But the girls also put concerts on themselves. They practised and got ready for these concerts and they were really well done. Lighting and stage effects and I remember my own particular girlfriend was very keen on theatre but I was rather ... be a spectator. I was always the one that watched or helped for the scenes or suggested something. But as for getting up on the stage, it wasn't my cup of tea.

(5.00) So what help did you give behind the scenes in the various concerts and things you put on? You mentioned that you helped with the scenery, et cetera.

Yes. We did help with the scenery and the special effects. We'd get the cellophane paper and put it over the lights and little things like this and everybody was involved. It was a good time. And the night of the concert, oh, there was a terrible lot of excitement. In particular, my own girlfriend that I have mentioned, she was a very good dancer and she did a gypsy dance I can remember and it was all shaded with lanterns and, oh, we had everything beautiful. It was really a good time.

What was her name?

Elaine Page, I'm sorry. Elaine Page, P-a-g-e.

And did the girls make friends amongst the local boys?

Well, they did. Actually there was one particular ... I was a very quiet girl myself but one particular boy was interested in Elaine. We called her Sally in those days. And only came up this week in *Reveille* that he had died. She didn't marry him but he was very, very keen to marry Sal and everybody wanted it for her but she ... her mother died suddenly and this particular boy came along and helped her in Sydney and she eventually married him. But Jimmy Brooks who was involved in many things in Batlow and is very well respected, worked with the land girls in packing sheds, and was very involved even with the other [inaudible] in recent times. Everybody in the Land Army that knew him liked him and he only just died recently.

So he'd obviously kept in touch all over the years.

Yes. Everybody sort of became more involved than I did actually. They went back on reunions and different things. But I've been nursing; I'm still nursing now and I really don't give myself a lot of time to go back for reunions.

So when you said that Jimmy had worked alongside the Land Army girls in the packing sheds ...

He was actually a supervisor. Mmm.

Right. So these were some local boys who were employed by the farms or by the co-operative. Describe that sort of set-up for me?

To tell you the truth I never saw many of the boys myself. Some of the girls had been in the One girl in particular had been in the RAAF and came over to the Land Army and some of her friends used to come up to the dances and they would bring the boys from the RAAF camp to the dances occasionally. But apart from that they were either too young or too old, you know. They were very young boys still at school and there were older men, married men, that weren't able to go away. Most boys or men were away in the services.

Now, apart from your work in the orchard, did you work in the packing sheds as well?

No, I didn't have a lot to do with packing sheds. I saw them and I saw my girlfriends working in them but I really didn't work in the packing shed. But they did quite a lot of work canning

carrots, apples, juices - apple juice and all the carrot juice and all those. I really couldn't tell you exactly what went on in the packing sheds because I didn't spend a lot of time in them.

Did you get any choice about what sort of work you did when you were in an area?

No, we didn't really have a choice. When I went to 'Frisco' in Batlow I was just told I'd work on one of the orchards.

Now, was it Batlow that you were made a sub-matron? Is that right?

Yes. After the apples were picked and the winter came I was asked would I like to be a field officer which required cooking breakfast, lunch and tea for the girls. There were various jobs you had to do like stores and shopping, you were really like a sub-matron. You had to make out your menu with the cook and make sure all the stores were in order, all the girls dormitories were in order. If somebody ... there was discipline in 'Frisco'. We really had to tell the girls if they weren't keep their clothes tidy and they weren't keeping the bed linen tidy. They had to wash their own things. And there were jobs allotted to them after work like chopping wood and keeping the laundry clean.

What happens if they didn't do it?

(10.00) Ah, rarely they didn't do it ... if they didn't do it they were told they'd have to leave the camp, they'd be disciplined. We would notify headquarters and they could leave their jobs.

And did you ever have to discipline anyone?

No, I really didn't; I really didn't have a lot of discipline with them. Perhaps at the tables if they were jumping on the seats or doing something like that or, maybe just jumping over a girl or not being polite enough in the dining room you would discipline them.

So take me through a typical day as a sub-matron. What time would you get up? You'd get up earlier than ...

Well, you'd be up at six o'clock.

This is earlier than the other girls presumably?

You'd be up earlier than the other girls. You'd have the fires going. Fuel stoves. It was a very nice kitchen, it was all newly built and we had very big trestles and tables and the benches. The stoves were very big and sort of good for those times. And we would bring in the wood and start the fires early and start the porridge cooking.

Now when you say 'we', whose we?

Well, there would be at least three of us on duty.

So that would have been you, a cook?

The cook. The cook was responsible for the menu. We would discuss it but she'd be responsible for the food issued. So we'd have big trays of meat, eggs, cereals and they would all be put out early and the table set for each girl. We'd have about forty girls. And you'd start cooking on the big frypans and getting their poached eggs, or whatever, ready and have the bacon ready. If they wanted eggs and bacon you'd do it as they wanted it. So that everything was nice and fresh.

And what time was breakfast served?

Breakfast was sometimes seven. I think it was mostly seven, half past seven. And the girls would be out in the fields by eight o'clock.

And what happens if they didn't get up in time for breakfast?

If they were sick, they were given a rest in their own room and we would look after them if they were genuinely sick. Or if there is something to worry them, if we thought they had an infectious disease or something like that we'd take them into the town, see the doctor, and make sure everything was looked after that way.

Can you remember any cases of illness?

Well, there was one girl hurt her arm on the ladder on one of the orchards and we took her in by car and she was taken to the hospital.

Okay. So we've got to breakfast. The girls would then leave and what would your next job be?

Now our next job would be preparing our tea really. Actually you cooked for the next day. We would make a great big cake. The cake tins would be almost half the size of this table.

Which is about a metre across.

Yes, about a metre and half a metre across again. But they were very big slab trays and we would cook cakes enough for forty girls and that was for the next day to pack with their lunches. We would make their lunches first before we got breakfast - I'm sorry I forgot to mention that.

And what sort of things would they get for their lunch?

Well, we used to make sandwiches and cake and fruit and they'd have a nicely packed lunch.

And what would it be packed in?

Just greaseproof paper. We didn't have plastics in those days. You know, it was just in a nice open box and depending if there were eight girls on one orchard, you'd set your eight little lunches together in a box, just an ordinary packing box which would be lined and clean. And their fruit would be supplied and usually a billy can and they'd get their water on the farm.

So after they've gone off to work and you've sort of made a cake or whatever, then what would you do?

Then we would prepare for the evening meal, depending. We'd prepare the vegetables and, you know, just what we were having for tea and then you'd have a rest in the afternoon. You'd have a two hour break in your afternoon before you came on and started at four o'clock in the afternoon getting the vegetables prepared and getting the fires lit and depending if it was baked dinner or casserole. You'd just prepare your meat and sweets and have those ready.

And then the girls would arrive. Would there be a cup of tea waiting for them when they got in or ...

Well, they were able to get their own tea. There was a big urn boiling and there was a big cake and biscuits were out near the urn and they were independent that way. Milk and sugar. We had no fridges, we had cool houses. The cool houses consist of another little building outside with bagging over it and this was kept moist and water was running down the bagging to keep it cool with the breeze coming through. And at Batlow we had quite a big problem with wild horses actually. They used to come and try and get to our butter and meat in these houses. We'd run after them with brooms and chase them off as soon as we saw them coming

and it was quite a battle. Sometimes you'd get up in the morning and you'd find they'd been to demolish your stores and it was quite a problem. We'd have to go and get more stores in for the girls.

(15.00) You were responsible for the shopping?

Yes, we were responsible for shopping and keeping the stores together.

So where did you used to go and do the shopping?

Into Batlow.

And did you have accounts at different shops or how did that system work?

Well actually there was only one store and we had to walk. We didn't have any way of getting in except walking. It would be about two miles from 'Frisco' to Batlow and Mr Vandella was our grocer. I can remember he ... I can remember ordering icecream actually one time and sending the bill into headquarters and headquarters wrote back and said, 'You have to pay for that yourself. We're not supplying icecream to the girls'. So Mr Vandella said, 'Oh, that's no problem whatsoever', he said, 'I'll change it into cabbages'. So there were no real problems; it was an easy-going life.

So the system was you ordered ... Would you have a budget? I mean, how did you ...

Yes, we did, we had a budget and we were only allowed to go within our limits as far as the budget was concerned.

And was this a per capita budget; so much per girl per meal, or how did it work?

Ah, it didn't work out so much like that as how much we could spend in a week. And then at the end of the month we'd send our bill into headquarters and they'd pay the respective people.

Directly.

Grocery store or whatever. But we just put our order with Mr Vandella in Batlow and he would come out in his car and deliver. So there was no carrying, it was all delivered right to us.

And how often would he deliver?

We'd have a delivery every week.

So what about things like bread?

Bread, we had a baker and he would come out and deliver the bread every second day we had fresh bread.

And milk.

And milk.

How was that delivered?

I can't remember (laughs). I remember we did get fresh bread and milk, yes, and eggs. And ...

Did you ever get any itinerant sellers of produce like somebody selling rabbits or ...

No, we didn't actually. Everything was bought in town.

And what about any sources of free produce? You know, like ...

No, not in those days. No samples, nothing like that.

No, I'm just thinking of things like blackberries growing in the ...

No, nothing, unless the girls went out and picked them themselves. And I can remember they did. We made blackberry pies or mulberry pies at one time and, yes, the girls picked them themselves.

And what happened if you didn't spend the amount of money that was allocated for the week?

Headquarters weren't really hard with that so long as we were in their limits they weren't really strict except when we bought a luxury item like the icecream.

But would they credit you if you ...

No, they just paid for the orders.

And if you went over they would have just done what?

Yes, they just paid the bills just the same. Unless it was a lot over.

And then they would have said something to you.

Yes. Well, actually I didn't have a lot to do with bills because the matron was in charge and I was sub-matron but I had to be aware.

Tell me a little bit about the shopkeeper, Mr Vandella? Was he born in Australia?

He was an Italian ... he wasn't born in Australia, his children were. And they owned the green grocery shop. He was a very pleasant man to deal with and he tried very hard to talk to the Land Army girls. He wasn't very good with his English but he was very pleasant, very happy little man and very easy to do our dealings with. Everybody really liked him; he was quite a personality in the town.

And had he been there long?

He had been there about twenty-five years and settled in Batlow. Hadn't been anywhere else.

I wonder why he'd come over and settle in Batlow?

A lot of people came from those countries early on, especially Italians and there were quite a lot, especially in fruit shops and grocery stores, even in Sydney.

I meant to ask you earlier: why did you accept the position of sub-matron when it was suggested to you?

Well I really did love Batlow and when I was out I probably had the choice to come back to Sydney and get another position. But I liked Batlow very much. I was actually putting on weight for the first time in my life up there. The mountain country agreed with me and the girls at Batlow were so nice and I wanted to stay.

(20.00) So it was really a reason to stay on?

Yes. We were a good team.

And where did you go from Batlow? You went to Narrara?

I went to Narrara. Actually I went to Gosford and Narrara was the next station on from Gosford where I worked. But we were stationed at a ... Actually, another girl and myself went to a boarding house in Gosford, we were billeted there and each day we caught the train to Narrara which was one station further north. And we walked out, it would be about a mile and a half, to the viticulture government nursery. It was very interesting, very ... a lot to learn there. It was all new to me and we learnt about different diseases in the grapes and how to keep the barrier of infection away from the vines. And there was special testing done on the property by scientists.

So was this a formalised training program that you did or was this by observation?

No, it was just another job with the Land Army. We didn't really know what we were going into, that it was an experimental farm. And we weren't there very long really. But another girl and myself were stationed in Gosford and the work was easy; it was very pleasant.

Can you describe the surroundings of the buildings that you were working in?

There were many buildings there and we didn't really go into many of the buildings, we were mostly out in the field with the vines and working in rows in the vineyard.

And what were you doing?

We'd be asked sometimes just to bring the leaf or a special leaf from a certain section or part of the vine or the stem and they would experiment on it. Or some days we'd be just picking the grapes that were coming on and just taking the crop off. Just depending on what work they wanted. We were more supervised there. Not as independent as we were in the other positions I had in the Land Army.

So who was supervising you?

Mmm, I can't remember his name but we had ... we had a supervisor that just came out and told us each day what he'd like. And we really didn't go to the buildings. At the end of the day when we finished we'd just go back on the train.

And you were living in the boarding house at this stage?

We were living in a boarding house, just a room. It wasn't as comfortable as most places we'd been to but we had good meals and a fairly long day. We were glad to be back and have a rest. And there were plenty of shopping, clothes and theatres; whatever we'd like to do after our time at the nursery. We were able to visit relatives or whatever.

So I guess you were closer to Sydney at least?

We were closer to Sydney, yes, which was good. And I had an aunt and uncle that lived at Terrigal so I made the most of my leisure time. My girlfriend there, she would go back to Sydney on her time off.

But you didn't go back to Sydney?

No, I didn't very often.

Was there a reason for that?

Well, the time was short there actually and I had my father's brother living at Terrigal and it was a wonderful opportunity to get out and see them. And it was good swimming in the beach. And the shopping was good and the theatres were good there. So it was very close to everything.

So where did you go after Gosford? To Merriwagga?

Ah, yes. Well, actually I went to Mirrool House in Griffith.

Oh, sorry, yes, you went to Griffith first.

I went to Griffith and I spent time on ... every day was different in Griffith. My particular friend, Sal, was there and quite often we'd see each other just when we came home. Like we'd

be billeted on a different farm every day. It might be picking melons all day or tomatoes; there was such a variety in Griffith, it would be hard to remember everything we did pick.

And where were you actually living?

We were living in Mirrool House which was a very big old home. It seemed to be an old hospital actually it was so huge. And it was old: big verandahs and the rooms were almost dark because the verandahs were so wide. But it was pleasant. Our meals were prepared and the work was good. We might go out with three girls on a truck one day and twenty girls another day. It just depended where you were going. And I only spent about a fortnight doing that kind of work at Griffith. And I was asked would I think of a position at Hillston. And out of Hillston this place called Merriwagga with Lil and Don - I've forgotten their name now ... where are we? Can I stop for a minute? Lil and Don McKenzie, they were brother and sister actually. And it was a mixed farm. Most of my time spent there was sinking wells because it was a drought time and the sheep had to be fed and the cattle had to be fed and that was most of my work, just feeding the animals. We'd go for miles and miles in a little old truck and I'd never know where I was going from one day to the next. We'd end up in a different paddock each time. And sinking these wells was very heavy work.

How did you do that?

We had to put pipes together and they were lengthy pipes and then we'd have to put them right down into the earth and it was heavy work. And I'd work with the farmer just by myself most days. Don was a very quiet sort of man, he didn't say very much and he had a funny sense of humour. But when we came back at night Lil was always there with some kind of a meal ready. We had our main meal at lunchtime in the middle of the day.

So you'd go back to the homestead.

We'd go back to the homestead in the evening and they'd have a little yard for the pigs and the poultry; there'd be ducks and chooks and she'd gather the eggs. And they were very independent in their living. And we'd have cream and ... bread and jam and cream for tea, that was mainly our meal at night. It was a very simple way of living.

And what would you have to eat at lunchtime?

At lunchtime we'd have a three course meal. It would always be something quite good and nourishing. And breakfast was a very simple meal. But Lil was a very sober person. She had her hair pulled back in a little bun; a real country woman. You know, an old maid that had never married and never wanted to mix socially. She was very quiet and very sober and so was Don really. They were nice people.

Did you live in the homestead at Merriwagga?

Yes, I lived in the homestead. It was a very simple country home. Actually just grey boards. It was almost a very poor country home; very humble people. And their way of living was very simple. Don would be up early in the morning milking the cows and a simple breakfast and we'd be out working all day until lunchtime. We'd come back for our lunch most days. Everything, all the produce, or most of it, was around the farm. We were just independent in our way of living.

When I did have to go to the town the horses were so weak that we couldn't drive the horses and there wasn't really enough petrol to get into town so I had to get on a bicycle, which I hadn't ridden before, and go into the town to get the mail and different things at times. And I couldn't stop the bike because it had no brake. I had to come down a hill into the town and just stop it near a brick wall (laughs). But that was my only means of transport.

When we did go into a dance we had a horse and buggy and the poor little thing went very slow all the way because there were three of us.

And where did you go after Merriwagga?

Mmm. After Merriwagga I went with my friend Sal - I met up again with my friend Sal, Elaine Page - and we went to a private farm at Glenorie which was a Dural in ... closer to Sydney. It was called 'Five Mile Forest', Glenore.

I'll just stop you there. This is the end of tape one, side two.

END TAPE ONE, SIDE B

START TAPE TWO, SIDE A

Identification: this is tape two, side one, of an interview with Eve Garrett and I'm Ruth Thompson.

We were at Glen...

Glenorie, mmm.

Yes. Now, what were your jobs there?

Well, we went into My friend Elaine Page and myself went into headquarters and asked if there were any jobs available at this particular time after returning to Sydney and they asked us if we'd like to go to Dural. Well, we had to be able to do things: Sal had to be able to prune fruit trees and I had to be able to milk cows. Well I had never milked a cow before and Sal said, she could prune the trees. And they looked at me and said, 'Can you milk a cow?' and I said, 'Yes'. So I started to tremble from then on. But when I get out to Glenorie I found it wasn't as hard as I thought and I managed even though it was a two gallon cow (laughs).

What was your first experience of the cow?

Well, actually, the farmer and his wife - they were brother and sister too - Gordon and Margaret. And at first it was very hard. I looked at the cow and didn't really know what to do with it.

Did you have to get the cow in as well?

No, it was all brought into the yard. He was in the yard; Gordon had brought it in. But there were a few problems. We didn't realise that the cow was going swish his tail right across your mouth unless you sat on a stool and just made sure the tail was in the right place when you started and nine times out of ten you'd forget. In the end we had it right down to a fine art and Sal would hold the tail and I'd milk the cow and we'd both sing to it. (laughs)

And did Gordon know that you couldn't milk a cow before you came?

Well, I told him I had very little experience. But, never mind, we settled in to that way of life very quickly. There were oranges and mandarins and grapefruit to be picked there and it was a mixed farm. They were very religious people and I remember one particular night they were going to give us a concert. They said, 'Oh, we're having a little concert tonight'. We thought 'This is nice'. We even did our hair in curlers during the afternoon so that we could come to this concert. And I thought there were going to be other people involved. But, no, Margaret played the organ and Gordon sang hymns to us, that was our concert. And I got the chuckles of course and it was really the funniest thing I'd ever had our concert that night. But they were very nice people and they meant well and they were very religious to the extent of forming their own church. So all this church going happened on a Sunday. They built their own church and all the people that belonged to that church came to the farm and helped with duties on the farm when they needed them. So we actually met a lot of the people in the district this way. If there was a crop to be brought in, they would help. So we had help and ...

Well, I guess it was good to be with Sal.

Yes. Mmm, we did have some adventures on that particular farm. We had a phone call one night and Margaret and Gordon were away - they were away at their church meeting - we

really didn't know where they went. We didn't even see the church. It was miles away somewhere and we were left by ourselves on this particular Sunday. We had a phone call from Gordon's brother who'd been away fighting up north in the islands and he said, 'I want somebody to meet me at the station'. Well, all we had was one old horse that was never put in the buggy and we didn't know he was quite wild actually. It took us ages to get in the buggy and it was our only means of transport - Gordon and Margaret had the car. How we got to that station in the dark with black outs and brown outs, you know, there was no light on the road. It was a very dark night. How we got there and brought him home it was a bit of a nightmare to me really. The horse actually bolted all the way. We were so pleased when we got to the station that we had this man to bring the horse home again. And I guess I never trusted that horse again. It was a really wild horse. We were lucky to come out with our lives.

(5.00) And what were your other adventures?

Actually, it was a very quiet life there. There really wasn't any social life. We didn't even get to our own church - we were both Catholic girls - and we didn't have an opportunity because Sunday was their day.

Did you ever regret joining the Land Army? I mean, at times, you know, when it was sort of particularly boring or there was nothing much to do, or it was really hard work, were there any moments that you regretted it?

Never. No, I never had any regrets. It was the richest part of my life actually and it still feels like that to me now. I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of my work on the land. I never was worried about hard work. But, see, you forget I had five years when I just looked after the house at home and nothing happened. You always thought something nice might be happening the next day or ... but the years went on and, really, even my relatives didn't come to visit. It was a very quiet time. So the Land Army was really a big adventure and a happy time.

So, I guess at home it was fairly lonely, was it, when you were at home?

Well, there was a lot of comings and goings but, yes, my main part of home with everybody at school or in the services it was ... it was very quiet.

Okay. So we're still at Glenorie.

Glenorie was a lovely little farm. It was pretty; it had orange orchards and they came close to the house. It was a pretty farm. Margaret was a very good cook. She would bottle and preserve and do all these things country women do. And she used to make beautiful green tomato jam and we'd take recipes from her. I can remember kissing Margaret when we left

and she said to me, 'Oh, that's the first time I've ever had lipstick on my face'. She was a very simple country girl. She was well in her forties I might add, but she still was a very simple person. Later Gordon married after the war but Margaret never did and she ... I heard she had died. She had some bowel trouble and died. Mmm.

And so after Glenorie you went to Cahills. Well, this was a bit of a different experience for you.

Yes. There was no work available. I don't know where everybody was at that particular time and when I went to Cahills it was coming on ... see, it was the end of winter, it was August, and it was interesting to see how everything was done and it was mainly for the troops. We used to have enormous big trays full of sliced potatoes just in front of you and you would spray them with a gun and that's about all I did. It was very monotonous work really. And that's about all I did. I used this spray gun. But it was quite a responsibility. Not many people were allowed to use the gun, they had other duties in other parts of the factory. And they showed me how to use it; it was quite a special way to use it and it had to be sprayed just gently without a lot of oil on the chips.

And which factory was this in?

It was called Cahills.

But where was it located can you remember?

It was located in Alexandria which was the industrial area of Sydney.

And did you live at home at this stage?

Yes, I lived at home and I went to work each day on the tram.

And what was it like living at home again after your couple of years of freedom?

It was nice to be home, yes. It was nice to be home and everybody was growing up and a lot of changes. And everybody was glad to see me home. Yes, it was a nice time.

And so you went to work on the tram.

Yes. I went to work. I used to have to wear a full uniform - hat and tie and ...

Was this the full Land Army uniform?

Yes. You'd just take your overalls with you and put them on when you got to work.

And did you take your own lunch with you?

No, we had a canteen.

Take me through a day? What time did you get up?

(10.00) Well, I'd be up at half past six and on the tram by half past seven.

Would you have had to have done any chores before you left, like for the rest of the family?

Not a lot. No, by this time everybody was getting very independent. And when you had your breakfast - we might all have it at different times - so you get up, get your own breakfast, you might share it with your sister. Your father would be asleep, he'd be on night shift and it was a very quiet house really in those times. I had a younger brother still at school and he was full of life and energy. Yes, we'd share breakfast quite often with three or four of us.

And then you'd get to work.

Then I'd have to walk to the tram stop which was about half a mile and go to Missenden Road, I think it was, in Alexandria. We'd have a little locker for our belongings and there was a canteen. We could have a couple of tea when our break came up and our lunch there and about four o'clock in the afternoon we'd be finished.

And who did you have your lunch with?

Oh, there were just big long trestles in this canteen and you'd just sit down with anybody who happened to sit next to you. You wouldn't have special friends.

Did everybody have lunch in the canteen or did management ...

It was staggered hours; you wouldn't all have lunch together.

And where did the ... did the office workers have their lunch there as well as the factory workers?

No. We weren't They didn't mix with factory workers. But you'd see them. There'd be supervisors and bosses and whatever.

So where did they go for their lunch?

I don't know.

But not the canteen?

Possibly, but at a different time. Possibly that was the only place they could have it, you see.

And was Were most of the factory workers members of unions?

I think so. I think they had their own union but I wasn't asked to join it.

Did you ever remember any union official coming to address the workers?

No, I never did. I wasn't there long enough actually. I worked there for two months. No, there were no problems. It was clean work. We were asked to wear special little head gear on our head. Our hair had to be covered and there were good facilities. We had to wear gloves when we worked.

What was the building like itself that you were in?

I can't remember it very well, to tell you the truth. I wouldn't to know where to find it if I went along there now (laughs). Yes, it's difficult. That wasn't a very good time. I really didn't like factory work. I knew then, I was glad I had that experience because there were opportunities later on for me to do factory work and I didn't do it.

What? You found it boring or ...

Yes, very boring. Doing the same thing constantly, there was no variety.

Was there any effort made to move workers around different tasks so that you didn't spend all day doing one task?

No, there wasn't which was rather surprising because I know now in factories there is.

What about music? Was there any music playing?

Yes, there was music piped through the factory and people were pleasant, you know, they were very nice to work with. Very pleasant people.

Were they mostly women?

There were quite a few men - quite a few young boys and men. Mostly women working. The men managed the machinery and the big ovens. There were enormous big ovens there and all this was canned, processed and the production was sent through to the troops. They were specially for the troops. They had clothes ... Cahills was a big restaurants and they had many restaurants over Sydney and through New South Wales, perhaps even in other states and they closed most of the restaurants to do this work with the troops.

Did ... Were you allowed any special staff discounts? Could you buy any of the products or ...

No, there was nothing like that. No, not like there is today. No, you really didn't have any privileges, any extra privileges. We never even got around to tasting a chip.

Did anybody try to?

Well, I think it was so wonderfully processed that this was a different room altogether. They went into cans and different things and off they went.

So what happened when it was time to go home? Did a whistle blow or a bell ring or what happened?

Yes, there was a whistle I remember. Mmm. They blew a whistle when it was time to stop because there was so much noise with the machinery. I remember it was ... that's the part I didn't like. I didn't like all the noise in those factories even though there was music piped it was not pleasant working inside. After being out in the fields it was very hard to take.

(15.00) Was there a big rush to leave at closing time or knock-off time?

Yes, everybody was anxious to go and there'd be trains or trams to catch on time and you'd get used to your routine.

And did you travel home on your own or with anybody else?

Yes, I did. There was nobody else living my way. Most of them came from around their own surroundings - Redfern, Alexandria, Newtown.

Okay, so, after Cahills did you actually request to be moved on since you didn't like it?

I can't remember actually. I can't remember how we came to leave Cahills. But I think I was only allotted that time. They just wanted to send me there for a fortnight and I think when I went to Cadells that there was a message for me from headquarters asking me to go to headquarters. That's right, I had a letter in the mail, I'm sorry. I had a letter in the mail and they asked me to go into headquarters and they said they had a position for me at Cadells property which was at Tambar Springs.

How did you feel about that?

That was a big sheep station.

Were you pleased to go?

Yes, I couldn't wait to get back to the land.

Did you mind leaving your family?

No, I didn't mind. I felt that they were happy while I was happy, you know. We all had our own life to live and we were brought up to be very independent in our family. When I got to Cadells we lived in shearer sheds. There were about six to eight girls there and we were looked after by a matron in those sheds. And the living was very much the same: our outdoor shower and our little duties chopping wood and looking after things generally.

Were there beds or ...

Yes. The beds weren't really comfortable. They were wire beds and we used to have to stuff our mattress cover or mattress casing - that was the old striped ticking mattress covers - and you'd have to go out and fill it up with straw, with hay (laughs) and sew the end up yourself. And they weren't particularly comfortable at first but they got comfortable after a while. You'd have your old grey army blankets and ...

Did you have any sheets?

I think we did have sheets. I'm pretty sure we had sheets. I think we took our own. I have a feeling we took our own sheets and pillow slips but we were supplied with blankets.

And what were your duties there?

Mostly stooking hay. We had one of the biggest pick up bailers that was imported from America. I think it was the only one in Australia at the time. It was very new and modern. And there were two girls already employed, or given the position of working the pick up bailer, and none of us girls could use it. They were just sort of specialised in handling it. One of them was Peggy George - I don't know if she's been interviewed - but Peggy was a very capable girl, a big girl, and very capable. And we sort of were the ... we had all the stooking of hay. It had to be aired and dried and so it would be ready for the pick up bailer to come along and pressed into big sort of bails that went off to wherever. Whether they went to the hayshed or went into town or to other properties.

And there were about six or eight of you you say?

Yes.

And what time would you have left for work?

Oh, we'd leave for work at seven in the mornings, early, and we'd finish early. It was a very hot, dry conditions out there. We had lots of other work to do there. There was a variety of work with the sheep and cattle. One girl had to go out of a morning and get the cattle in. And the men - there were a few men working there, older men - I remember one gentleman in particular, Mick. He used to saddle up his old horse and get everybody rounded up too at the same time and say, 'Come on, it's time to start this' or 'that' and he would almost be in charge of our duties to a degree. And we'd get the sheep into the pens for dipping or different ... worming and all sorts of different things we had to do. Variety of jobs there every day.

Had you worked with sheep before?

No, I hadn't.

So this was your first experience of sheep?

Yes. They were heavy and hard to work with. Quite often you'd be really sore getting them into their pens and there was a lot of counting and different things to do with the sheep.

(20.00) Did they have a working dog?

They did have dogs, yes. Mick particularly had two nice cattle dogs and they did a lot of the rounding up, a lot of work. And we had to get them in and out of the yards. The dogs went in the yards but we had to get them in and up a big ramp for the shearing. I have a picture of us there of all of us pushing (laughs). It helps me remember ... Actually we did such a variety of jobs there it's hard to recall everything.

There was another one you mentioned apart from the sheep. Sorry, I meant worming sheep. How did you go about worming a sheep?

Yes, well, we didn't actually do the worming but the farmer himself would ask us to get them in position for him and he would have several men to help and they had a liquid in a bottle which they had to squirt into the sheep. And this was part of the worming process. Yes, it wasn't very pleasant. And then there was the lambs had to have their tails cut and things like that. Sometimes it wasn't really pleasant. Branding of the cattle and things like that. It was smelly and hot and dusty and, you know, there were times when you thought, 'This is good experience but is it what you want?'.

What was the worst thing that you were ever asked to do?

The worst thing I was ever asked to do was catch a chook. I can remember running around the yard after that blooming chook, not being able to catch it. That was early in my days at Merriwagga.

Did you catch it in the end?

Ah, yes, I think I threw a bag over it or something like that. I did. But it was most embarrassing because I didn't know how to catch a chook (laughs). Oh dear.

And you mentioned that the social life at Cadells was pretty good.

Well, the social life there was very good because our next door neighbour, a lovely couple lived next door - when I say next door, it was five miles to ten miles away, it was a good distance - and their name was Haines and she was one of these lovely country people that could handle fifty people at a time and she'd put on a dinner for us and it would be beautiful. Do you know everything was so beautiful at that farmhouse and many times she'd invite us across and make a meal for us on our time off. And they'd take us into Quirindi and we'd go to a film or something nice. It was a good life at Cadells. Cadells were the wealthiest cattle owners and sheep station in that district. And they were sociable people.

Did you ever attend any balls or major functions in the country?

Yes we did. We ... a dance would be a ball for most country people. They'd get into long dresses and especially around Quirindi they were very social people, very nice people; came from everywhere miles and miles away and that would be the event of the month or whatever if they had a dance on.

What about the B and S balls?

B and S?

The Bachelor and Spinster balls?

No, I didn't know about them (laughs).

Any stories that you remember particularly about your time at Cadells?

Well, one very hot day we went into the hayshed to have our lunch, getting all nice and settled with our little sandwiches and laying ourselves out comfortably and we just happened to look around and there was a great big snake curled up beside us. And it was, you know, a case of scattering. But the snake went before we did but it was quite a big snake. It frightened us.

Who lived on the actual homestead?

Mr Cadell and his son, Jock, who helped on the farm. And his wife lived in another home in Quirindi where he would go home to.

What, at weekends or something?

Well, sometimes he'd be missing for a few days and Jock would take over and everything would go on as usual. He'd possibly go to buy more stock or sell stock or do all the other work that was involved with sheep station work.

(25.00) And was Cadell's the last place that you were at?

Yes it was.

So why did you decide to resign?

Well, it wasn't the matter of resigning ...

It was the end of war, I guess, yes.

The end of the war and I had stayed on longer. I think the war was over in June that year and we were asked to stay on and help until the boys came home. And they started arriving back and we were finished.

Did you regret having to leave?

Yes, I did have regrets. It was coming back to the city life that I regretted. I really did enjoy my Land Army life. And when I got back to Sydney I joined a bushwalking group where I met my husband.

So ...

So, I made for some of my open air life by getting out whenever I could.

What did you think about the fact that the soldiers were returning home and so the women had to go back home, they'd been doing their jobs for, you know, during the war ...

Well, it was a very happy time. You know, everybody was so relieved the war was over. It had gone on for a lengthy time really. We didn't know when it would end and it was an apprehensive time. You'd be worried about your own folk and all the boys overseas. You'd see truckloads of boys and you'd think, 'Oh, is the other side winning or are we winning?' and it was such a happy time to know that we came through it all and we were glorious.

Did you have trouble finding work after the war?

Ah, after the war I stayed home for a little bit and I went to work for a baker doing his books. Not for very long. I worked in David Jones for a buyer. It was a very easy job. I just had to do the books for three stores and I was doing clerical work then still thinking that I wanted to do my nursing. And in the meantime I rang the matron at Mater Misericordiae hospital at Crows Nest and I was told I could start within a short time there. And I started my nursing career soon after and I've been nursing ever since.

And how do you think that your experience in the Land Army ... did it alter how you looked on life at all? Or alter your expectations in any way?

I think it gave me a very broad outlook on life. It educated me in the way of how all farms and different districts were working and like all the variety of places I had worked at, how they functioned and how personalities were made up of the You know, it just made you accept different personalities easier.

Do you think the girls mixed No, I'll say that again. Do you think the girls mixed in a different sort of way or formed different sorts ... kinds of relationships than boys did, the males did?

That's hard to say. I think there was such a lot of good companionship in the Land Army, really good companionship. Everybody was working with the thought in mind that we were helping and I think there wasn't much variety in that. Everybody seemed to be on the same wavelength at that particular time.

This is the end of tape two, side one.

END TAPE TWO, SIDE A

START TAPE TWO, SIDE B

Identification: this is tape two, side two, of an interview with Eve Garrett and I'm Ruth Thompson.

Just finishing off now. Can you remember where you were when you heard that the war was over?

Yes. Actually I was in Sydney and I can't remember why I came to Sydney at that particular time, and it was a wonderful time. Everybody was singing and shouting, throwing their hats in the air.

And what were you doing?

I was with Sal. We'd just come to Sydney I think to visit our own families. And we happened to be in Sydney that day.

When you say in Sydney, do you mean in the city?

In the city itself, yes. And the news came over and of course it was a wonderful time. We were all so excited and happy.

And did you join any parades or ...

No, we didn't really. The Land Army wasn't connected with parades, even till recently.

And what did you think about that? Do you think they should have been invited to march every year?

No, I never really thought we were defence people. I think it's nice to have the privilege now and I think it's nice to be recognised as the unit we were. We did do a lot to help. And I don't think the farmers would have functioned without us. And they're all still grateful. There's quite a lot of reunions and meetings and they're always very welcome in the country towns, the land girls, they are still remembered for their efforts.

When you went to take up nursing was there any opportunity for you to get any sort of grant or an education grant because you'd been in the Land Army?

No, nothing like that with the Land Army. We felt that was it, we were finished and never even thought about it.

So you didn't feel that it was in any way unfair?

No. I never ever thought about it.

And what about in that post-war period, was it difficult to sort of settle back home with family and friends?

No, I was young and adaptable and I knew where I wanted to go. I hadn't really done the things I wanted to do. I had a feeling I wanted to do everything in my young life (laughs) and I practically had by that time. So I was very happy to take up nursing. Nursing was hard too but I felt I had a good background for it.

And what about friends? Did you take up with friends, you know, that you knew before the war or have you ... did you find that you drifted apart?

I didn't keep in contact with a lot of the girls but my own particular friend came to live at our family at that particular time she had problems.

This was Sal?

Yes, Sal came to live with us. And so I guess because some of the girls went to work where she was working we had ... we did meet in town occasionally and we still know those girls and meet them and we do have reunions and Christmas parties every year which are really good.

The girls that you knew in the Land Army, did most of them marry soon after the war, or not?

I guess they did. Actually Sal was married two years after the war. And I went on with my career and it was quite some years before I married.

So what year were you married?

Well, I was twenty-nine when I married and settled down and had children.

And some of the other girls had they met their future husbands during the war or were ...

(5.00) Yes, some of them had, particularly ... one or two land girls I knew, they married just after the war, as soon as it was over and they are actually on committee with our 'Roundabout' book that comes out monthly and they do quite a lot of good work. Actually I didn't know where half the other girls went because some of them were country girls themselves and some of them lived in other states or far New South Wales and away from Sydney. There weren't so many Sydney girls that I knew at that time. But since we've had our 'Roundabout' and our meetings and our reunions I have got to know a lot more and met some of the girls I worked with, which is very enriching and very good for us.

I'm just backtracking a bit here. Did you ever work interstate?

No, I didn't work interstate. Some of the girls went to the Barossa Valley and Sal and I were really keen to go too but we'd just left our run a little bit late by about two weeks. And when we got into headquarters they told us, 'No', there was nothing available that way and we went to the private farm at Dural.

Did you receive the 'Land Girl Gazette' or any of the other newsletters at the time?

Yes, I do. I receive it every month. It's called 'Roundabout'.

No sorry, I mean the 'Land Girl Gazette' that was produced during the war.
Not the most recent publications.

Yes, we did receive it and it kept us in touch with all things that were going on in the Land Army in different districts. Like even as far as Griffith and Batlow when we were working elsewhere.

Did you ever contribute to it?

I can't remember having, no. Actually ...

Did you feel more loyalty to your employer or to the Land Army?

Actually, equally to both, in my case.

Did that hold true with all employers?

I don't know really. I just ... I was a very independent person and if I was working I'd do my very best. I'd give it all I had. And I knew I had Land Army backing and I was proud to be with the Land Army actually. It was a good group.

Did you have much contact with officials, Land Army officials?

No we didn't really unless we went into headquarters. Any matron in charge was considered an official and we kept respect for those sort of people. Apart from that, no, we had a fairly easy life. It wasn't regimental like the army.

Backtracking again. What sort of things did you do when you were on leave?
Did you spend them mostly at home, or what?

Mostly at home. But there was always plenty to do around Sydney. I can remember going to the Hyde Park Servicemen's Centre. We would go there for dances or get-togethers. And there was also a *Women's Weekly* Club in the city. If you were going on a job and wanting to stay overnight you could stay there and join in the social activities and quite often meet different people from other services.

And did you used to do that?

Yes, I did.

And so did you meet ... you had quite a bit of contact with people from the other services?

Yes, I did. My sister was involved with the AWAS and my brother was in the RAAF and you'd meet quite a few of their friends, they'd come home.

What was there reaction when you said you were in the Land Army?

I didn't care what their reaction was. I mean, it was my thing to do and ...

Oh yes, sure, but what did they say to you?

Actually they thought we were an inferior race. We weren't in the smart uniform they had but there was no real reaction from my family.

No, but I was thinking of their friends or other service people that you might have met.

They just accepted you in those days. You know, most people just accepted what you were doing and said, 'Oh, what do you do?' and they'd question you about what you were doing, they were interested. It's hard to say what reactions that there were. I can't remember.

Can you remember anything special that happened in any particular leave?

(10.00) Ah, I can remember my sister getting ready to go over to meet her husband in America. She didn't get married in Sydney; she was married in America. She was working with the Red Cross and visiting the hospital where she met him and then she went ... I can remember her photo was on the front page. She was leaving on this big airliner and they were all waving. And we had lots of photos of her going. She was a very pretty girl. And she ... I had leave just to see her off. That's one occasion I can remember. Actually ...

How did you feel to see your sister go off to America?

Oh, it was terrible. You know, you were really sad about it. You felt as though she was going forever.

So was there another occasion that you remember doing something special?

To tell you the truth it's very hazy. I can't remember very much about my social life then except for our canteens and *Women's Weekly Club*, really that was about all. Oh, we were iceskating just after the war was over. I used to go iceskating a lot when the Ice Palais was open. But that was all taken over by the troops, you know, during the war, it was closed. And when I was a young school girl we used to go to the Ice Palais and skate and my sister was a champion. The one that was in the RAAF - WAAF I should say - but she was to go and travel but then everything was stopped.

Because of the war.

She was so good.

This is the end of the interview with Eve Garrett.

END TAPE TWO, SIDE B

END OF INTERVIEW.