ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

TITLE: JOHN HENRY NORRIS

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN HENRY NORRIS

INTERVIEWER: DAVID CHALK

SUMMARY: FAMILY BACKGROUND; EARLY LIFE IN LIVERPOOL; EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA IN 1910; EXPERIENCES AS SIGNALLER ON GALLIPOLI AND IN FRANCE DURING WORLD WAR I; HOSPITALISATION IN HELIOPOLIS.

DATE RECORDED: 5 APRIL 1988

RECORDING LOCATION: PRIVATE RESIDENCE

ACCESSION NUMBER: S01194

TRANSCRIBER: C L SOAMES

TRANSCRIPTION DATE: MAY 1997

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

xxx, he was a prisoner, yes.

He was taken ... my brother - he was taken a prisoner there too.

What was his name?

Norris, same as mine.

But what was his first name?

Daniel.

Daniel Norris?

Mm. And he was taken prisoner too. Now, there's an aspect of Bullecourt which you may or may not know, and it was this - I was there - ...

Yes, I know.

I was lucky, I was in the sig section, they put me on an outpost overlooking the thing, but, of course, it was dark. And I wasn't in the actual push through - it was only just - the barbed wire was from four hundred to eleven hundred yards deep.

What it? That's that way?

That's like going from the German trenches coming out; it was from four hundred yards to eleven hundred yards deep. Now, when they used to go into action the artillery used to put down a barrage to blow up the wire. Now, that did not happen at Bullecourt.

No, I know that.

You know why?

Well, they used tanks instead.

They used tanks - and you know what happened to the tanks, don't you?

Yes, they were knocked out, or they didn't turn up.

They were knocked out before they got to the wire, and two of them were knocked out in the wire, see - because I saw the tanks, and they only used to travel at four to six miles an hour, you see.

Too slow.

No, not only too slow, but that should have been ... there was no barrage. Now, the idea was this: it was a pure experiment - pure experiment. The barrage was not put down because they wanted to see what the tanks could do, and the tanks did nothing. But I remember Bullecourt quite well.

Yes, well, I'll certainly record everything that you can remember of Bullecourt. And your brother and yourself enlisted at the same time?

No. He was several years older than me.

Was he?

See, I was sixteen, but I put my age to seventeen, and I went through sig corps school - the signal school at Broadmeadows in Victoria - that was a South Australian battalion, wasn't it?

No, the 14th was Victorian.

Victoria - the 13th was ...

New South Wales.

The 15th was Queensland.

Queensland and Tasmania.

And we were Western Australia and South Australia.

That's right, yes.

When I got back - you see, I was seventeen; well, you had to be eighteen.

Yes.

And when I got back to Black Boy Hill here in Western Australia, Colonel [Battey] was the commandant at Black Boy and someone must have told, someone must have reported the fact that I was under age.

Well, of course, it was all tents in those days - there were no buildings. As I approached the tent, the chap who was taking me up - some sergeant or somebody or other - and he said, 'Just wait here, just outside the tent'. Then I heard a loud voice - Battey - say, 'When he comes in here he is eighteen'.

You see, the point was this, that I'd just completed a course of signals.

What happened in fact? You were in Victoria?

No, no, I was here, in Western Australia. I was sent from here to Victoria to Broadmeadows to ...

To do a signal course?

To do a signal course.

After you'd enlisted?

After I'd enlisted.

And then you came back here?

Then I came back, and when I came back that's when this business of ...

They found out you were under age?

That's when somebody suddenly realised I was under age. But an ordinary soldier, they could have [put him out] through twelve months, but a signaller, trained, that was something different - because I passed the course - heliograph, flags, and lamps. Of course, they didn't have a [need] - even telephones were something which were not widely used. And so, of course, then I went away in the - I think it was in this ...

2nd Battalion?

I was in the 11th Battalion - I have two numbers - you've got one of them - 2246 - well, the other was 2555.

Oh, really.

And the reason for that is that I was transferred, and that's the reason of my being kept in the army. I was transferred from the 11th Battalion to the 16th because the 16th was sending a reinforcement away, and evidently they wanted signallers.

Yes, I see.

You get ...

Yes, I understand, yes.

So I ... rather strange thing happened. The boat we were travelling in, that we were going to Egypt on, was also carrying horses, and something went wrong with - some of the horses died, or something happened - and they took them all off. And, of course, we would be able to keep a lot of the soldiers on the boat.

Yes, I see.

It was called the [Chilka].

The Chilka?

And an extraordinary thing, after the war the Chilka went down with seventeen hundred people aboard in the Indian Ocean - that was after the war.

How do you spell the ship's name - C-H-I-L-K-A-H?

C-H-I-L-K-A - Chilka.

Chilka.

Not I, A - Chilka. Now, another extraordinary thing happened. I went from - when we arrived in Egypt and went to Gallipoli, we went over from Alexandria to Imbros - I'm not sure whether it's Imbros and Mudros, I don't know - it was Imbros Island, but I think it was Mudros was the port.

It's Imbros and Lemnos ...

Lemnos.

... and Mudros Harbour is on Lemnos.

Yes, that's where we were. And we went over on a boat which was a Mediterranean pleasure boat called the [El Kahira].

I've never heard of her.

No, you wouldn't have. I also read, after the war, where a boat had left some port in the Mediterranean and it was never, ever sighted again; it was the El Kahira.

Oh, dear.

Now, when I came off Gallipoli I didn't rejoin the - of course, the Battalion was still there - and when the Battalion came off, I didn't rejoin them in Egypt, you see, but I rejoined them in France after Pozieres, which was the first.

Do you mean, after the first Pozieres, or at Mouquet Farm?

No, I'm talking about - well, both.

Both.

That was Pozieres.

Yes, that's right.

I went over - I forget the name of the boat, but it was a White Star liner - from Alexandria to Marseilles - in France, in Marseilles - I say 'Mar-say' because it's ...

It is, it's 'Mar-say'.

After it had discharged us, and whatever it was doing - and refuelled or whatever - when it left Marseilles it was torpedoed by some German submarine. So that was three boats I was on ...

That sank afterwards?

Yes. Yet I was on Gallipoli, oh - I would say that I was on Gallipoli - I couldn't tell you what

month it was, I just don't remember - it was after 2nd May when the 16th Battalion were really mixed up in something nasty.

Yes, I'd say you would have been there for the August attacks, wouldn't you?

I was before the August business.

Yes. What reinforcement were you?

Well, it was the 7th Reinforcement, but the 6th Reinforcement never, ever got there.

Oh, do you mean that the 6th ...

My brother was on the 4th.

He was a 4th Reinforcement?

He was in the 4th Reinforcements, but I was on the last reinforcements of the 16th to get there.

Yes. Well, I know that I've talked with 7th Reinforcements from other battalions, and they went to Gallipoli for a short period.

xxx.

Well, with the 15th Battalion, the 7th Reinforcements didn't arrive until about October, but you obviously arrived earlier than that, didn't you?

Oh, yes, I arrived ... I think I must have got there June or July.

Yes, it sounds like it to me.

Yes.

Well, the 7th Reinforcements went on the Chilka - C-H-I-L-K-A - you left on the 18th June?

We left here on the 19th June.

Yes, here you are, John Henry Norris; you left on the 18th June. So you would have arrived over there ...

July.

... end of July.

Must have got there - because we weren't in Egypt July - I must have - I reckoned about July because then we were in the August - we finished up on the top of the ridge overlooking the Dardanelles.

Yes. What was that called? That wasn't Pope's Hill, was it?

No, [Chailak Dere], I think.

Chailak Dere.

I think it was Chailak Dere, or near Chailak Dere - because I'll never, ever forget that. We were lying there on the top, looking down on the Dardanelles, and ... It just reminded me of the nose-cap on the top there. I'll tell you what happened prior to that.

Prior to that - this is about half past four in the morning - the Gurkhas, they were with us, and I saw - you could just see, that was all - and a couple of Turks hopped up, oh, about fifteen to twenty yards in front of us, and one of the Gurkhas threw his kukri - you know what a kukri is?

That's a Kurd's knife.

Very heavy too. He threw one, he split this Turk's head open from back to front.

You couldn't see much, and I fell down the slope - oh, not steep - I rolled over and my knee locked. Of course, I couldn't go back - couldn't - and I had to go with them. So anyhow, a couple of the blokes got me and they got the leg and they stretched it out - it was bloody painful, I can tell you. But I went with them.

Now, when we got to the top we were lying there - of course, there was a little bit of action too - I'll tell you about the other business in a minute; you'll get a bit of a surprise. We were looking down - you could hear the zoom - zoom - zoom - zoom - I knew what it was, knew it was a shell that hadn't exploded, or it was a part of a shell, or something. Well, it was the nose-cap of a shell. And I'm lying down - and, of course, you know we had the equipment, entrenching tool, [handle], and bayonet either side. The next thing, I felt something hit us, so I was bloody lucky there because had it been that much further over and hit my head - it hit my knee - it would have, coming with sufficient force to have ... Well, the bloke next to me - George [Mace], his name was, he was a sergeant - he picked it up, you know, it was that hot he couldn't hold it. And he said, 'Oh, xxx'.

What did he say?

Did you hear the magpie call then?

Oh, yes.

He threw it up and he said, 'See what just missed you'. So that was on that particular morning.

But I was on - they did have telephones there. Did you see the picture of the Anzacs?

The television program 'The Anzacs'?

Mm.

Yes.

You saw that, and you see towards the finish, when they were calling the thing off, there's a bloke running like hell?

Yes.

That didn't happen.

No, I didn't think it did either.

That didn't happen because they had telephones, and it was hilly country and we used to signal - we used flags and helios more than them.

The telephones.

But I was on - it must have been about that time - I was on the telephone, and a call came through from Brigade, from the Battalion, and it was for the colonel. And I don't know whether it would be fair to publish this or not, but - are you alright? - I said, 'Sir, you are wanted on the phone' - the brigade major, I think it was, that wanted him. Of course, [we are in] a sort of dugout affair - together - wouldn't be as big as this room - and I said, 'You are wanted on the phone, Sir'. And he took the phone from me, and he is listening, and all I heard was his conversation, and I can only assume what was said at the other end. He said, 'No, no - well, I wont go myself, I will not send my men'.

Was this Pope?

That was Colonel Pope. Now, whether you consider it xxx - I don't know whether he still lives here, but he used to live in [Floriat] Park here - but I don't know whether it would be right to publish it or not.

Well, it sounds to me a particularly good thing to hear. I know that a lot of men thought highly of Pope; he was a good colonel, wasn't he?

Oh, yes, as far as I was concerned. Some men didn't like him; they reckoned he pulled out his

pistol and he said, 'If you don't climb that bank, or if you don't I'll shoot you'. Well, he may have done, but I don't know. I'm talking about something I actually heard. I had to take him from one place to another, you see, because we not only did signalling, but we were also, what they called, runners. If anybody was going somewhere, we'd have to go with them.

There was a little, narrow trench there - it wasn't very high - it wasn't very deep - and Pope - I was taking him. So I said, 'Put your head down', and I said, 'Get across here as quick as you can', and I went for my bloody life. He said, 'What's the hurry? What's the hurry?'. I said, 'Keep your head down and come across', because I said, 'I'm sorry, Sir, but they ...' - this is within sniper's range, and, of course, after they saw the movement then bullets started to come across. 'Oh,' he said, 'I understand now'. Of course, I got on well with Pope.

And another thing too; we were at a place called [Sigs Post] - the rise - the hill came down, and the trench was here - there was a little rise, not very much, only yards - about ten or twelve yards, say - and we saw twelve men go over that - they had to go over it to get water. Christ, you only got kerosene - you know, a petro tin of water, that's all you could get. We used to get a half of a dixie of water a day. We saw twelve men go.

Shot?

Er, thirteen, shot, either killed or wounded. And another fellow xxx, 13th and 14th - we saw twelve go - and another fellow and I were the 13th and 14th, and we both got over without any trouble.

Just hang on a minute while I just chuck a bit of meat out to the birds.

No, that's fine.

(Break in interview)

... as a water carrier.

Oh, yes, over Sigs Post. Now, somewhere around there, at Sigs Post, we saw the landing of the

Suvla Bay mob. Now, I don't know wether you've got an account of that.

Well, I know a little bit about it.

Well, [Stableton], the general, he used to go to the boat and stay there overnight - but they attacked the Turks - and from Sigs Post we could look across the country over which they were attacking. What happened was this, that they were raw recruits and the British officers were ... Anyhow, when they went up to attack the Turks, of course, the Turks mowed a lot of them down - killed them - and then, to make matters a bloody sight worse, the Turks set fire to the ...

Underground.

... underground.

And there was nothing to hide behind, and so on.

And the result was that the chaps who were wounded, and who normally would have been carried out of the business, they had no chance. That was ... Later on the thing that got me off Gallipoli ... You know that they used to tunnel underneath the Turkish lines?

Yes.

Well, we not only did signalling work, if they were short of men - like you taking the case of that Gallipoli stunt where they lost a lot of men, well, men on special duties, they'd have to go and take their places to do ... business had to go on. So I got the job of going underneath, doing a bit of tunnelling. Well, I got in the tunnel and I carried my work, and they said, 'Righto, you can come out now'. When I came out I went back on them - [bastards] - in the end [it locked again].

Oh, dear.

I could hardly walk when I got out. Well, when I went to my doctor he said to me - this is after the August stunt - he said to me, 'How old are you?', I said, 'Eighteen' - I couldn't possibly, I

couldn't be - he said, 'Like bloody hell you are'. And I said, 'I'm eighteen', and he said, 'Don't hand me that'. So I said, 'Well, no, as a matter of fact I'm not, I'm seventeen'. He said, 'Well, you've no right to be here'. But he said, 'Anyhow, your leg's pretty bad and I'm going to send you back'. I think they were awake up that they wouldn't be there very much longer; I think he was awake up to that because it was after the war xxx xxx. So I was sent back to Egypt - I left them then.

I'm not sure whether it was prior to the August stunt or after it. I was in a trench there and we could see movement in bushes down below us, and we knew there were Turks there. You'd just see something move in those (bushes). And I'm [by the side of] a bloke and bang! crack! it was. And you know the xxx rifles we had?

Periscope rifles?

No, no, the ordinary rifle.

The .303?

The .303 - that wood - and the bullet took the wood off it, that forward piece, and the chap didn't get hurt. He was lucky. And the next minute there was another crack and the bloke next to him just simply flopped - a bullet right through the forehead. So I think that I might have been a bit xxx round there. Anyhow, I got back to Egypt and I was in the [3rd] Auxiliary Hospital - my leg was crook - it was bad, you know. I wasn't sent off just because ... I think that he might possibly have said, Well, stay for a while and see how it goes, but he didn't, he got me off; I was off pretty quickly, and I think it was on account of my age that he sent me off.

The leg was just ... something was wrong with your leg joint, was it?

I can't ... The bottom part of the leg came up and it locked the knee cap - joint here - and I couldn't straighten it. I had to get my knee ... they had to pull the damn thing out and straighten it. I don't know what ... and of course, going into that tunnel, that caused it to happen again, you see. But otherwise I was there, but there was none of that ... only dashing, and tearing, and ripping around this ... that was only over very short distances.

Oh, I was telling you about xxx old bandmaster, Ted McMahon. And we were in Reserve Gully, and Teddy McMahon played The Rosary on his trumpet.

Now, his uncle, Hughie McMahon, was very well-known in Australia, and he went to England, and he was pretty well-known over there. And Teddy, later on, became [Merve Boulder].

I don't know Western Australia very well.

No, well, Boulder is like Floriat Park is to what-it's-name - Perth - only it's bigger; it's a suburb virtually of Kalgoorlie. He played The Rosary. Do you know, when he started playing - the bullets flying overhead, of course - being a Gully, they were going overhead, they couldn't fire into it - then after a while it got less, less. By the time he started on the second pause in the bar xxx - The Rosary is two versus xxx - the firing ceased, the Turkish and ours, they were all ... Now, that's something I think that this history ... it's extraordinary. I've never, ever heard of it before.

Well, I've heard of ... somebody else has told me that somebody - I don't think it was a trumpet, I think it was a clarinet or something like that, played The End of a Perfect Day one evening on Gallipoli.

Oh, may have done, I don't know, but I'm talking about this, I know it, I know perfectly well because I was brought up in a very musical family, and I can remember it as well as can be.

What actually is The Rosary? I don't quite understand quite what The Rosary is?

It's a song:

The hours I spent would be hard,
Ah, but a string of pearls to me
I count them over, every one xxx my rosary.

Oh, I see, so it is The Rosary like in the Catholic Church.

It's adapted on that principle. The chap who wrote that was probably a Catholic, I don't know, but it's a love song.

Oh, I see.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

I knew it xxx quite well.

Then I joined them out to Pozieres, which was - what-a-name? - what did you say before? - the name, the other name.

End of a Perfect Day?

No, no, I'm talking about the ...

Rest Gully?

No, I'm talking about Pozieres.

Mouquet Farm?

Mouquet Farm. I ...

(No more material on Side B of this tape)

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

That's where I joined. And I was with them then right until the 5th.

Were you?

And believe me, as the months went by it was bloody awful - if you are writing a book. The Americans suddenly realised that you not only made money out of war, but you fought the bloody thing - took them three years to get in. Well, my niece, she was born in England. Her mother came over to England so that she was born in England because they were living in Belgium, in Antwerp - xxx Antwerp. And had she been born a boy she could have been called up, had they been there long enough, as a conscript, and they didn't want that. Of course, she is over seventy now.

And I was talking to her, not very long ago - I think last year - and I was talking about cowboys - the American cowboy - and he says xxx. It reminds me of a story, I said, in France. A couple of Yanks went into an estaminet - she knew what it was, immediately I said estaminet because she learned quite a lot of ... she did a bit of schooling in France and she could speak French quite fluently. And I said, 'He said to the mademoiselle, (with American accent) "Madam, this beer's flat"', and I said, 'The girl said to him, "May oui, Messier, yes," she said, 'if you xxx because it has waited three years for you."' Haven't you heard it before?

No.

You wont forget it, that's for sure. I've heard that in Dutch French, she said, and I've heard it in English (laughs). It must have been a very common story.

No, I haven't heard that one before.

Yes, well, anyhow, I was in ... the only action that the 16th Battalion were in was the Mouquet Farm - although that's Pozieres they called it.

Yes, Pozieres.

Pozieres. And after that, I even - I'll tell you what - I even had a swim in the Somme River.

Have you?

Yes. And I'll tell you another thing too, I came out from England when I was a kid of eleven in 1912.

Oh, did you?

And when we were kids we used to get to - the back of the row of houses opposite to us were fields, they are called - not paddocks - and drains through them - they weren't streams, they were simply to drain off the land - and some of them had trees growing along them, and in them were sticklebacks - that's tiddlers - goldfish and silverfish - little tiny things - and we used to catch them. We'd sit there with a piece of strong thread and tie a piece of fat, or meat, or crust of bread, but big enough for them to swallow. Of course, some of the kids used to use a bent pin. You'd sit by the babbling brook with a little bent pin for a fishing hook - you might have heard that song, I don't know. Well, when they swallowed it, it would stick in their throat and you'd have them out before they knew where they were.

Well, I sat at a creek - a stream - in France, and the fellows (said), 'Gees, this is a great place - xxx' - 'We used to fish at places like this' - and he said, 'How?'. Of course, we had needle and threat, and what have you, in our kit, so we got some needle and thread and we did it. And do you know, by the time I left there, about thirty or forty blokes were all on that bloody stream. Gee, you can just imagine. It had its moments, as well as xxx.

The only other time I wasn't in actual - I was never in actual action in the sense of charging over xxx - because I was a signaller. Our job was just as dangerous as theirs because, you see, at Bear Wood, for instance, a piece of shell or shrapnel - some bloody thing - broke the duckboard - you know, the duckboards were like this?

Yes.

It broke the ... I stepped forward, and as I stepped forward and raised my heel I heard a crack, and I looked down; a piece of metal had broken that. So the nose-cap missed me, that piece of

shell missed me.

I was out with General [Rawson-Paul] and General Brand one day - Rawson-Paul's brigade was taking over.

That was the artillery, wasn't it, or not?

No, no, it wasn't.

There was a Rawson-Paul who was in the artillery.

Oh, well, of course, he may have been transferred later on, I don't know, but General Rawson-Paul, he was coming in on our sector and I had to go - I was the runner that day, I had to go out with the two of them - and we had flares - xxx xxx alley, in the main trench - it was a very deep one.

That would be before Bullecourt.

Oh, would be, yes - it could have been, I don't know, I forget. And we could here this zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom, zoom - oh, we could hear this boom, soosh, shuffle, shuffle, shuffle. We knew what it was, it was about nine-inch shell - they called them coal boxes, and they exploded, black smoke used to come up. So he said, 'Get in the trench'. So I jumped in the trench with both hands out like that, and zip! a bloody piece of shell landed between my thumb and forefinger of the left hand.

That was quite close.

That was the ... I missed out on any shots on Gallipoli - xxx knee.

How long were you on Gallipoli? How many weeks, do you think, or months?

Oh, I must have been there at least two months.

So you'd have arrived, say, in July, and been there through the August attacks.

I'd say that I'd be about between two and a half and three months all told.

So you were invalided off, let's say, at the end of September, and you went back to Alexandria, and then to Cairo.

I went to Zeitoun - no, Cairo.

You went to Cairo?

Er ...

To the Palace Hospital?

Also, coming back on the boat, had to come through Alexandria.

Yes, and then on the train out to Cairo.

And then go down to Cairo, and Zeitoun was - [Esbet-el-Zeitoun], that's the village of Zeitoun, is about seven miles out of Cairo - xxx xxx.

Yes, I'll have a look at that shortly. And you were in the 3rd General Hospital you said?

Not ...

Number 3.

It was Number 3 Auxiliary ...

Auxiliary Hospital, yes. How long were you in there?

Three months, and I'll tell you why. Mark you, I wasn't crook all the time. I don't know ... I'm

not sure ... (inaudible).

(Break in interview)

I might tape something on the mosque. What was the name of the mosque?

Mohammed Ali, I think, mosque.

Whereabouts in Cairo is that?

Oh, it's in the main part of Cairo; if you see pictures of Cairo, you'll see those towers.

Yes. And there were five thousand lights in there, were there?

Just as a quick interest; you see these?

Where are they?

They are some of my paintings.

Oh, I see.

They are all in ... they are all Australian ones. You see the town hall at the end there? I did a hundred and thirty-five - that's one of mine - one of the victory at Southhampton, you see, that's in there. But I don't do it any more.

There were five thousand lights in this mosque, were there?

Yes, five thousand lights. They used to be oil lamps, I believe, but by the time we got there they were ...

And they were all alight, were they? They were all lit?

Oh, yes.

They are like big chandeliers and so on?

Oh, yes, my word.

And you weren't supposed to take photographs in there, I suppose?

I don't think that you were - you had to take your shoes off before you could go in - I don't know. I went in, I took a chance, and I took the bloody things, and nobody said anything so I ... That's the way it is.

(Inaudible)

(Break in interview)

Coin in the skull.

It's a [gibbet buckshee].

He was an Australian soldier, you know, it was only just a joke with him.

Oh, and he had this skull?

He had that skull - and I don't know where he got the other thing from.

This here, the mask on this side - or the statue ...

I don't know where it's from - it might not be a mask, it might be some sort of engraving of some sort, probably done in ... might not be very old, it might have been just done. Oh, I don't know ...

What was he doing, this fellow with the skull? He was going round and saying, 'Gibbet

buckshees'?

Yeah - he used to say to us, just for fun.

And there was a bit of a hole in the skull or something, was there?

Oh, I don't know where he used to put it; he'd put it in somewhere round. Oh, well, you know, a skull, he might have had it upside down so that you could drop it in, I don't know.

Oh - he sounds a bit crazy to me.

Oh, well, it was just a joke. That was the skull the British or natives from the Ethiopian war, something like that, you know.

Oh, yes.

See, they were kites - hawks - keep that lot separate.

Now, that tree.

What about the kites? These are the big birds, aren't they?

They are birds, yes, they used to swoop down the ... the cooks used to throw all the rubbish and stuff round, all the leftovers and that sort of thing.

See that tree - I don't know if you are religious or not.

Not really, but sort of - I'm interested.

Well that tree, they told me - you know when Joseph, and Mary, and Jesus fled into Egypt or something?

Yeah.

That is the tree under which they rested.

Oh, yes, right.

That's what they told me - it could be true, it could not, but that's what they reckon. That is a rather cynically amusing picture - you can see what it is, can't you?

It looks to be a prison camp - is it?

It is, that's at Zeitoun.

Oh, yes, there's a barbed wire fence there, and there are Australians behind there, and so on.

You see, there's the ...

What were they in there for?

Eh? - oh, I don't know, might have over-stayed their leave or something - I'll take these other ones.

Put them on top because I might copy that one - we'll see.

Oh, I've got better ones than that.

Yes, alright - yes, that's good.

There's a bloke doing some sort of fatigue duty - some minor offence - and the blokes marching him round.

Oh, yes, round the parade ground. Was that the standard punishment, was it?

In those days, yes.

That's at Zeitoun too, isn't it?

They used to do that sort of thing - xxx - this wouldn't interest you. I knew the son of the xxx - he and I were very good friends, he was a very nice chap.

What's this one here with the Tommy cooker and so on? - not the Tommy cooker, the ...

Oh, one of those, at Zeitoun, the same place as the what's-a-name - you can keep that lot together, I'll keep these ones. What was I going to say? The same place, at Zeitoun, that one.

Are they 16th Battalion cooks, are they?

Oh, no, just general - they could be all sorts of cooks. You see, that was another place.

What's that one?

Well, that's where they cooked, and how they used to put everything out to be picked up and taken round to the camps.

Oh, I see.

Cooked in that cooker, and then put out and taken round - a meal. I've got a couple of photographs of 16th Battalion blokes here, but I don't know their names, so there's not much interest in (that) - but I wasn't looking for that. Oh, this is one.

Is that you?

That's me, Number 3 Auxiliary - does it say me on the back of it - no, I don't think so.

Yes, it says 'To Nan', I think it is, or 'Man'.

Mum - Nan or Mum, yes.

'From ...' - I can't see what that says, but - 'Norrie' - is that it?

Eh?

'From Norrie', it looks like - something 'Pyjamas in Number 2 Hospital'.

Well, it was Number 2 Auxiliary.

Number 2 Auxiliary, yes. xxx xxx.

Number 2 Auxiliary. Now, the reason why I was doing that was this. I'd served a couple of years here as an apprentice tailor.

Oh, had you?

And when ...

Mending Pyjamas?

... one of the girls was there one day and she said, 'Oh, we've got to sew some pyjamas'; I said, 'Bring them along, I'll do them for you'. And I would have only been there two or three weeks, and the doctor would come round and say, 'Well, you can go out now' - I said, 'Right' - otherwise I would have joined the Battalion if I'd come out then.

I might just copy that one later on, so we'll put that one xxx.

So anyhow, I'll show you a couple of good ones in a minute. They said, 'No, you are not, he's too handy, we are busy' - they were too - well, you saw that Gallipoli thing and you can imagine what things were like; the nurses, they were run off their feet. So they left it there and I used to repair the pyjamas. I was doing a job of work, which was essential, and it was saving women doing it who were doing another job. They taught me how to use the urethra.

Use a what?

Urethra.

What's that?

It's a thing they stick down the penis to urinate, when you can't.

Oh, I see.

And take temperatures - I used to do all sorts of little jobs there - most interesting.

There was a harlot I knew in ... I never had anything ... never touched her. [Marika Burettas] her name was, her husband was on a ship - seaman - but she was a harlot. But, I don't know, I got on ... I don't know how I ... perhaps it was the fact that I was young and I wasn't pestering her or anything like that. She was a very ... she was a nice girl really. But, of course, the old xxx, you'd see them everywhere, the old xxx.

Anyhow, there's not much else here that would be of interest, only pictures of ...

(Break in interview)

... xxx.

This is a little cart.

The little cart, and a donkey, and I bought the [yellow] donkey for about six piastres.

Can you tell me a little bit about that picture because it is really very interesting? You were at Zeitoun - this is at Zeitoun?

Zeitoun, yes.

And what were you doing with the cart, and donkey, and so on?

Well, if the cook or anybody wanted anything carried, or anything of that sort, well I used to say, 'I'll do it, I'll do it for you'. I'd say, 'You might have to wait until tomorrow when I'm not on duty'. I used to do little jobs round the place.

Well, that's good - and this is after you came back from Gallipoli?

That was after Gallipoli. That was taken too.

And that's you there too?

Yeah, that's me.

You were a good-looking man, weren't you?

The only interest of that picture is that they didn't always wear their hats with the sides up.

Oh, yes. Who are these two?

That's my brother, [Simon].

That one?

Yeah.

And that's a Englishman?

That's a friend of his.

Oh, yes - he's an Englishman, isn't he?

That would be ... I don't know when that ... that might have been taken in Egypt - oh, no, I'm not sure.

That's a good picture too, isn't it?

Mm.

You've got some excellent pictures - that's another one of the ship?

Yes, there's another one of the ship. You've got one of the ship, have you?

Yes, there's one here somewhere. What do the other three look like?

Do you want to take pictures of them.

Yes, I'll copy them, or some of them.

Well, here, take this one, that's me there.

Oh, is it? - there?

Yes.

Oh. That's the same one as this - same print, yes.

Oh, it's the same print, is it?

Yes.

It must be a better one.

Yes. What are the other ones? Are they ... I was going through ...

Oh, there's something that I particularly wanted to see.

(Break in interview)

You were in Egypt when you came back from Gallipoli; how long were you in Egypt?

Well, let me see ...

When you rejoined the Battalion ...

When was Pozieres?

That was August 1916. You stayed in Egypt, did you?

Yes.

And the Brigade went?

Oh, no. Well, I'd ... [Tidworth] in England for about three weeks, like waiting to go over to France.

Oh, I see, so you did go to England?

Oh, yes.

At what stage did you go to England?

Prior to going to France, just waiting, waiting to fill in time to ... troop ships, like there'd be so many troop ships would be sent over at once. They weren't going to send a troop ship over with a couple of dozen men, you see, so, of course, we had to ... we were at Tidworth, which is an English military camp.

Yes, I've heard of Tidworth. When you came back from Gallipoli, you were in the

hospital, and then you were doing general duties and helping, and so on, near the hospital ...

Mm.

... and then you were sent to England?

No. I was at a headquarters in Cairo, and I was a dispatch rider.

That was with a bicycle?

And not only a bicycle, but I also used to carry dispatches from Cairo to ... on two occasions I went to Alexandria ...

Did you?

... and to Ismailia, and then I went down to the - what was the camp? - was Ezbekiya where the Battalion stayed at in Egypt?

It went to Tel-el-Kebir.

Oh, yes, Tel-el-Kebir. I was there for a while, and it was from Tel-el-Kebir - that was prior to going to England, to go to France.

Yes. So you didn't go down to the Canal? The Brigade went down to Serapeum on the Suez Canal after they were at Tel-el-Kebir, and they were down there till the end of May.

No, I wasn't with them then, no. I was not with them from the time I left them on Gallipoli till the time that I joined them in France.

You were attached ... you went to the hospital, and then you were attached to headquarters?

I was attached to headquarters at Zeitoun, and I was also, at one stage, attached to headquarters in ...

Tel-el-Kebir?

... in Cairo.

What sort of headquarters were they?

Military headquarters.

But I mean, headquarters for who? Not for the 4th Brigade, obviously, so ...

Not for our brigade, general headquarters for Australian troops.

Yes, I see. So it was sort of military administration ...

Yes, military ...

... in Egypt?

Yes. But I was at Tel-el-Kebir, and there, and Zeitoun - but Zeitoun, I was there for a fair while - and Cairo, I was for a while.

Well, the Australians were camped at Tel-el-Kebir in about March - that's 1916.

The Battalion, yes - they were after that, that was March '16 - and when did you say the other one was - June?

They went across to France in the beginning of June 1916.

Yes, well I went across - when was Mouquet Farm?

August 1916.

August - well, I'd ... June, July ... I must have gone across there about July.

Yes, so you followed after the ...

See, what happened was this, that we went to Marseilles, and then we went on the [PLM] - the Paris and xxx [Little Man] - [Paris Lyon] - Lyon-Marseilles ...

Railway.

... Railway, to, oh, some French Port.

Boulogne?

Er ...

Le Havre?

Le Havre - went from Le Havre across to Dover, I think it was, and went up to Tidworth.

It sounds to me as though they were actually keeping you out of the Battalion until you'd grown up a bit, until you'd become a bit older.

I don't think so, I think they kept me out of the Battalion because I was a specialist - I specialised. You see, when I went to the war I was a specialist - a signaller - and then working as a runner, and dispatch carrier, and all that sort of thing, through offices, I knew exactly what to do. And I think that it was my knowledge of the dispatch carrying, that sort of thing, and running - carrying messages and everything.

What were you doing before the war? Whereabouts in Western Australia were you?

I enlisted at Katanning.

Katanning, yes, I've heard of it.

Mm?

I've heard of it, yes.

That's down the Great Southern - my name and my brother's name are on the ...

Railway?

Yeah, the board there. As a matter of fact, I was down there looking after volunteers for a while, during the war - the Second War - as an instructor.

You came out from England with your parents, did you?

My mother. My father, he met with an accident; he was in charge of the customs launch on the Humber at Hull - Kingston-upon-Hull - and he met with an accident. A ladder broke as he was climbing in, and he fell between the launch and the jetty. And two years after his death - that was in 1910 ...

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B

He was killed at that time?

No, no. He, very stupidly, got out of the river - like he was in charge of four customs officers, you see, and a ship, a boat, a launch. So, of course, he had to fill in details of the day's work, and everything like that.

He caught pneumonia, did he?

And he didn't honour - he had an office xxx, but they had a place where they did it - or one of the customs offices - and the result of the accident, he - and stupidly, going back to work, he got pneumonia and he died three days later.

Oh, I see.

But my niece was telling me - I was talking about that xxx xxx the last three or four years - she said, 'You know, there is some question as to whether it was sabotaged, that landing, not being safe', because, you see, they used to ... at one time there was some pipes came over from Europe, and the pipes swung and broke - it was full of tobacco, see.

The customs launch had been sabotaged.

The launch - she said there was some talk of that - I'm not ...

Anyway, your mother, and yourself, and your older brother, I assume, and your sister ...

Like the xxx in my family. I'll give you some idea. The eldest brother, he was a cartoonist of the New York Times, and he was a steward, in the first place, on a Cunard liner called the [Calmania] - and he was a steward - and then he became a Presbyterian parson in Long Island, New York, and that's where he died. He married but they didn't have any kids. So there's one xxx in America.

I've a sister. Last time I heard of her she had a bad stroke and couldn't keep in touch. She could still be alive, I wouldn't be surprised, and she's in the early nineties. This niece - the niece I was talking about - her mother died about four or five years ago and she was between ninety-six and ninety-seven. Those two sisters, that I showed you there, one of them is still alive - this one, Ada - she died not many years ago, and she was ...

What's the name of the one on the left?

Eh?

It's Ada on the right, what's her name?

Kitty - Catherine.

Catherine.

And Catherine, she died in Wales, not many years ago, and she must have been in the eighties.

Did they all come out to Australia?

No, only - another sister came out to Australia, and my brother - and a younger brother.

So there were four children?

There were eight.

There were eight children, but how many came out to Australia?

Four.

Four, yes.

And my mother.

And where did you settle?

In Katanning.

And what was she doing for work? She'd have to work, I assume?

Oh, she used to do housework and all that sort of thing, for people. And my eldest brother, like xxx, he was old enough, he'd been working in England prior to leaving - so had my sister.

Neither of them married. He went - after the war - he went to Sydney. He died there not many years ago.

He was working on a farm, not very far from xxx, at Pickering - at xxx - somewhere round there he was working. Of course, when I came out here, I was eleven years in 1912 - I was thirteen.

You were thirteen then?

Yes. And my other brother, he'd be about, oh, a couple of years younger than me - he'd be about eleven. Well, when he went to school in Katanning, they immediately put him in a higher class there than he was in England because the degree of education - standard ...

Was higher there?

... was higher there. I was thirteen, and I couldn't go to school in Katanning because they couldn't have taught me anything because the school - I was ahead of them as far as education went.

The two days before I left England I received a certificate from the school to say that I'd won a scholarship to a higher grade school, like school, something like - well, you know, the government high-grade schools, I'm not talking about colleges or anything like that. The government schools are much higher, they are a higher grade than xxx.

When did you - well, you'd been a 7th Reinforcement, so you'd have enlisted in, say, June 1915, or May 1915?

Not on your life. I was on Gallipoli in July; I enlisted in ... then I was trained as a signaller.

That's right, you'd gone to Broadmeadows, hadn't you?

Yes. I'd been to Broadmeadows - no, no, I ... my birthday was on the 2nd February so that I was 16 on the 2nd February. Well, March - I would have enlisted about March or April.

Yes, March or April.

(Break in interview)

That's the 11th.

... repatriation xxx 16th, enlisted, xxx all Englishmen - army enlistment, 18/5 [October] 3rd 1912.

Date of attestation, 9/3 '15 - that's when you enlisted?

Date of attestation was 9/3 '15.

And the age of enlistment you gave is eighteen and three months.

Mm. Date of embarkation in 19 ...

19/6.

That was in June - I must have been on the [Goatley] in July.

Yes, that's right. When you joined the Battalion again, they sent you across to England for a short time to do some training, I suppose, at Tidworth. What were you doing at Tidworth?

No, you've got it wrong. I was at Tel-el-Kebir, and left and went to England, to Tidworth; and we were at Tidworth awaiting transport to France as a reinforcement to ...

To join the Battalion again?

To return to the Battalion. Now, I should have been in Tidworth for three weeks or so.

But what were you doing in Tidworth?

Nothing.

Just waiting?

Just waiting, that's all. It was an English officers' training centre, and, of course, they xxx us - the same as when I came back. You see, when I was in London after the war, I did three months at Pitmans.

Did you?

Electrical engineering - like, that was just - not the working side of it, but the elementary side of it. And when I got onto the Plains - Salisbury Plain - awaiting transportation, when they knew about this I didn't get immediate embarkation for Australia, they put me in an electrical building. I was assisting - like the SEC - like the electrical.

And when you joined the Battalion in France, what company were you with?

I wasn't, I was in headquarters.

Oh, you were with signallers, yes.

I was in Battalion signallers.

And you were attached to headquarters, not to one of the companies?

No, I wasn't attached to a company, no. If anything happened ... See, we were Battalion Headquarters Sigs. If something happened - supposing a shell burst and killed a couple of men, or wounded them, and they wanted a sig - one of us would have to go down and do that. Like, I've been a company sig, but it would only be for a limited period, till they actually got someone. Then, xxx brigade, every so often there'd be a 13th, 14th, 15th or 16th Battalion signaller would be transferred to Brigade. You see, that's how I came xxx xxx about that piece of shell.

With Brand and [Rawson-Paul]?

I was with Rawson-Paul and Brand.

What do you remember about General Brand?

Hell of a nice bloke - good bloke. I was going to tell you - something I didn't tell you - I intended to tell you this, then you can judge for yourself.

He said, 'Hop in the trench', so ...

This is what Brand said?

His name was Charlie Brand, and Rawson-Paul's name was Charlie Rawson-Paul, it's strange to relate. And when we hopped in, after the shell burst, the noise was over, (he said), 'Righto, are you alright, runner?' - I said, 'Yes, Sir, I'm alright' - he said, 'Good. Are you alright, Charlie?' - his runner came first; I reckon that was amazing; I reckon that was bloody good. You see ...

He was a popular brigadier, wasn't he? They called him the Old Brig, didn't they?

Oh, yeah, the Brig is a good bloke - he was, he was a very, very nice fellow.

Now, Birdwood, the general in charge of us, he was a very good ... I think he was one of England's best generals, personally.

You know Mrs Craig? Oh, no, you wouldn't. The Mrs Craig here, she was a Liberal politician, but she's out now. Well, I think that she was related to Birdwood because Birdwood came over here to see them, to Western Australia. And I was in High Street, and I saw Birdwood. I walked up to him and said, 'How are you going, Sir?' - I'll say something else on that too in a minute. He said, 'Oh, I'm very well'. He said, 'Do you know me?' - I said, 'Of course I do,' I said, 'I was an Anzac'. 'Oh,' he said, 'were you?'. And we had quite a chat.

But, this will interest you more than that even, and I think that that was extraordinary. We were

at a place called [Florense] after the war ended, and we were camped in a monastery - not a monastery, a nunnery, I think it was - it was something of that nature, you know - xxx of the Virgin Mary with her child - the Virgin with a child - they say that she was carrying a basket though - I would think. But we were in the room, cleaning up the gear - oh, it would be a room about the size of this room and that room combined - and the door opened, and a voice yelled out, 'Attention!'. So we all sprang to attention.

I was doing a job, just inside from the door, and a little bloke with apricot cheeks came in - a captain, you see - of course, we knew he was coming in - Edward, Prince of Wales - Edward VIII. So of course, me being ... he practically bumped into me, and he said to me (with English accent), 'How long have you been with the Battalion?' - because xxx officer that was with him - and I said, 'Oh, I was on Gallipoli with them, Sir' - I called him Sir because he was a captain, not Your Royal Highness - I knew who it was, but I called him Sir, he was a captain - I was a lance-corporal. He said, 'You know ...' - xxx just ordinary conversation, xxx, did a bit of ... and he said, 'But, you are not wearing your A,' he said, 'white over blue', and I said, 'Well, Sir, we don't bother about those things', and he laughed.
You've not heard the joke yet; the real joke was this, that the next day there was an issue of As.

> Oh, really. Do you mean that they really didn't worry about the As much, or they did wear them? The men who were on Gallipoli I know had to wear the A on their shoulder patch. Did they really bother about doing that, or not?

You had your [own] in the colours.

> But was it definitely regulation to wear that, or didn't they really worry about it?

Look, when the shells, and bombs, and bloody bullets flying around, do you worry about things like that?

> No. But, I mean, but sort of as ...

Oh, there may have been a regulation, I don't know, but I didn't have any As on when he came in. And he evidently was a knowledgeable person because he said to me, 'Why aren't you

wearing your A?', and I said to him, 'We don't bother about them, Sir'. And that was ... you know ... Anybody, like yourself, that is interested, things like that are really unique, aren't they?

Yes, well, I've heard quite a lot of stories about ...

Okay - I simply told you of the [poem], but I can't vouch for it, but I would imagine it could be very true. The Gulf Stream runs round England and Ireland, doesn't it?

Yes.

And there is a stream runs round all peninsulas, and islands, and what have you. What I heard was this - well, we know that they didn't - the Australians - did not name the place where they were supposed to land.

Yes, that's right.

That's true, isn't it?

I know that's certainly the case.

Now, why? Now, in the Western Mail here - last year I think it was - oh, some time within the last couple of years - it said - on Anzac Day there is an article on Anzac Day - it said that the reason was the boats were caught in the current.

That's the general view, yes.

When I was in Egypt - and, mark you, I was at a military headquarters - you could imagine that what you heard would be fairly reliable - you'd hear stuff there that you wouldn't hear

Ordinarily.

... ordinarily anywhere else. I was told that the leading boat, that the compass on the leading boat was four degrees out - which could easily be.

Yes, well, you'd think so - compasses are often out, aren't they?

Yeah. Well, compasses are out because the Sun isn't in the same place, and the magnetic - there's the True North and there's the Magnetic North, and that caused the variation in the compass needle. Now, they wouldn't be travelling in daylight.

No, it was night-time, wasn't it?

It was. That could be very, very true. I don't know what you are doing, whether you are reporting things or what.

Well, I'm just going to be writing a book, so I'll be writing a little bit about Gallipoli, but the story that I'm writing begins really after Gallipoli.

But there will be some element of Gallipoli. The point ... I was also told that had they landed at the spot where they were landing, that there was barbed wire several hundred yards out to sea.

Yes, that's quite right - that's certainly the case.

So that they were lucky to land where they did.

Yes, they were. Yes, you are quite right there. I know a man in the 9th Battalion who landed at dawn, and he said the same thing, that they were lucky they did go that way because if they'd gone round to Gaba Tepe where they were supposed to land, they would have been in the barbed wire.

Well, xxx there could be quite a lot in what I'm telling you now.

I haven't heard about the compass before, but it's something that I wouldn't be surprised was right.

No. Well, I mean to say, if you are writing an introduction and a small bit about Gallipoli.

Oh, yes, I will be.

The point is this, that you can say it was ... you also understand that the compass on the leading boat was four degrees out. You see, four degrees isn't much, but it's enough on a coastline to take you clear of two or three ... to take you clear of two, three or four hundred yards, you see. So whatever it's worth to you.

I'm interested to hear that, that's of use to me.

Is there anything else that you especially want to ...

Well, I'd like to hear what you remember about Bullecourt especially. You were a signaller at that time, still with headquarters, I assume.

Oh, yes.

This is Brigade ...

I was put on an outpost.

You were attached to Brigade Headquarters or Battalion Headquarters?

Battalion.

Battalion Headquarters. And what happened when the attack started? Whereabouts were you at that time?

I was in an outpost.

Whereabouts was that?

Oh, well, it was overlooking the country, but it was ... the light, it wasn't broad daylight, sort of

affair.

No, it was early morning, wasn't it? It was still dark.

And things got that bad that somebody yelled out to me, 'Come down out of that'.

You mean the machine-gun fire got so bad?

And shells, more or less, because the Germans ... but they didn't ... but there were no shells going from our crowd, you see. And Percy Black, one of our best soldiers, he was hung up in the wire there - he was killed.

Do you know anything about Percy Black, any stories about him?

I knew him personally - no, I wouldn't say ... the story ... I don't know. Jacky [Axe] was dead now - I knew Jacky wall - I knew Dominic McCarthy - of course, he's in Melbourne - they were RVC blokes. Somebody told me - Christ! you ought to have seen bloody [Axford]. I think that he got his VC for bombing a German machine-gunner.

I don't know that story; that must have been after Bullecourt.

That was at Bear Wood, was it, or somewhere?

Yes. But you don't know anything about Percy Black before he was killed?

All I know about Percy Black is he was one of the best officers we had.

I'm sure that he was; he was one of the best in the AIF, wasn't he?

Yes.

They all said that.

Percy Black. I'm not sure if it was Percy Black - I wish I could be certain of this - or one of our other officers; he was a very good officer, highly decorated bloke.

Harry Murray?

Eh?

Harry Murray?

It might have been Murray. They said ... somebody said that ... someone asked him once ... said to him one day, 'Jesus! you must have been bloody brave to get all those medals', or something, and he said to them, 'Anybody reckons that they weren't frightened either a bloody liar or a bloody fool'. Well, I knew Murray, but I knew Percy Black very well. He was ... I think Murray went to the 4th ...

Machine-gun Company.

... Machine-gun ...

Yes, he did. He was in the 13th Battalion for a long time.

Oh, well, of course, (he was) amongst the (men in the) photograph of the blokes from the 48th Battalion, but he was once in the 16th - I forget his name, he was from Bunbury. So that was the reason why I didn't bother about it. And there's another, [Challener] - there's one of the Challeners there, he was in the 16th.

What happened ... What was your ...

But I'll tell you what ... I think it was Bullecourt, a bloody shell burst, and it left a heap of twenty-nine men, and the ones that were alive were at the bottom of the heap. You see, it threw the others onto the ...

And I'll tell you another thing too about Bullecourt. After Bullecourt I can remember that - but I

can also tell you something else about Bullecourt from the British papers. I can remember a little bit of a hole dug in a bank with - like with the mob being killed, there's a lot of stuff round that you could use - and I had two ground sheets, and I put one on the ground and one for a blanket - because I was bloody tired - and the other one over my body - my legs were out in the open. Woke up in the morning and there was snow on it.

It was snowing there, wasn't it?

It snowed up there. But there was one of our chaps - I don't know if it was Tommy Noble or not - and he defied the bloody German Army - stood over some of the wounded men that got through to the German trenches. But he and two or three other blokes were taken up to Bullecourt - they were up on charges for something or other - but there was one fellow - I don't know what his name was, but they used to call him Aeroplane Bill - he used to bugger off every chance he got, you see. In the British Army they used to shoot them, but in the Australian Army they couldn't. Do you know why?

No, why?

Because they were volunteers.

Oh, I see, yes.

And they took these fellows up, I think, and Noble - I think it was Tommy Noble - he was one of them. And a fellow said to me, he said, 'Jesus,' he said, 'you ought to have seen Noble'. He said, 'They were up, they were defying the authorities' - not fear - it wasn't a case of ... [they were blank doors] - he wanted to go into it. But the others were just doing pig-headedness, if you could put it that way - stupidity. But he reckoned if the bloody men ever deserved the Victoria Cross, they said, he did.

And this was at Bullecourt?

That was at Bullecourt. Bullecourt was the stupidest tragedy of the whole war. I saw the tanks. There used to be an officer - I don't know whether you know this or not.

Well, I don't know.

There used to be an officer in front of each tank with a walking stick, and he would point which way he wanted them to go.

Oh, would there.

Well, I'm just saying that's a little bit of information that you can use.

And what were you doing?

And I'll tell you another thing - I'm certain it was Bullecourt. We came out with about 130 men out of just on 800, and there were 127 men - not men, 127 corpses - lying there ready to be buried. And I xxx xxx Bullecourt. A bloke, he must have been so overcome with the whole business, or bloody stupid, or something, that he got that full that he was laid out with the ...

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B

START OF TAPE THREE - SIDE A

I may have been just to the rear, I'm not sure.

But you didn't go across to the German lines?

I didn't go over to the German lines because my job was to ...

Take messages.

Carry messages, if it was required, or report anything that would influence things that were going on, you see.

And what did you see? Did you see the men actually attacking, or not?

You couldn't ...

Too dark?

... the light ... no, you couldn't see them attacking.

What was the series of events as you remember them that day, when it started to get light, and so on?

Oh, all they could do was get the men in under cover who were ... that they could get to.

That's the ones coming back?

Yes. And there's nothing else they could do. It's terrifically hard to visualise just one stunt because, you see, I xxx - when did you say that Mouquet Farm was?

August 1916.

August - well, I was there from when they came out, from August ...

Right through.

... until - well, after the Armistice I was there. So you can guess that ... I think Polygon Wood, I remember that on account of the ... it was a bastard of a place, it was very muddy, loose dirt which they called [Pug Street] - that was a very muddy place. Extraordinary thing about Pug Street was this, that it was night-time and a fellow was ... they were bumping, say, gas, and whatever. There was a bird singing - oh, it was bloody beautiful. The fellow said, 'Do you know what it is?' - I said, 'I wouldn't have a clue' - he said, 'It's a nightingale'.

Now, it was at [Plucks Dirt] where we had ... shells started to come over, not frequently - infrequently - pop!

It was a gas shell?

Phosgene and - what was the other gas?

Mustard gas.

Mustard and phosgene gas - and we had seven days of that.

Going back to Bullecourt again - because I'm not really writing about the Brigade after Bullecourt - what was the mood of the Battalion after Bullecourt when they realised that so many of the Battalion had been lost?

Oh, very, very, very, very quiet; they were very subdued.

Not frightened? No?

Don't get me wrong, it wasn't that they were scared.

Oh, I know that, they were just sad I'd imagine.

Sad is a good word, would probably ... and they realised it.

They were rather bitter about it too, I'd imagine.

Very. Birdwood - I'm sure Birdwood saw us after the ...

He did, yes.

And one fellow - I forget his name - he said, 'No; if you've any complaints, boys, let us know; if there is anything you want or there is anything wrong, or something you think we should know, tell us'. And one fellow said, 'Look at my bloody boots'. (Laughs). You can just imagine, they were worn, and filthy, and water getting into them and all this sort of business. But I remember that. 'Birdie' was a very worried man, oh, he didn't know how to talk to them - oh, he was a very

worried man over that business.

To us it was ... I don't know what the other fellows think about it, but to us it was - to me - it was the biggest act of stupidity ...

Of the war.

Of the war. I think they tried to convey the idea in a different form, different way, in that picture 'Gallipoli'. It was bloody useless and stupid; the stupidest ...

I'll tell you something else which might have influenced Germany. Testing out the way that they did with those tanks was the stupidest blasted thing. I was going to tell you something - it will come back in a minute.

Oh, got it - the three wave attack - in case the line goes on me again. Bullecourt was a straight out attack. All the attacks, all the actions I remember, up to Bullecourt anyhow, were straight out attacks. Douglas Haig was the general; Kitchener, he wouldn't have the high explosives, he was shrapnel, he was a shrapnel man. He was drowned in the Hampshire xxx. And what's his name? He was related - brigadier - he was a later colonel of ours.

Not Monash?

Eh?

Not Monash?

Oh, no, Monash, he was a brigadier.

Yes, that's right.

No, I'm talking about ...

Well, there's Pope or Drake-Brockman.

Pope - he's after Pope - oh, he was xxx xxx.

Drake-Brockman?

Yes - they called him the dugout king.

Did they?

Yes. And Drake-Brockman, I think that they woke up to him and he was transferred to division.

Was he?

And he was in his right place. He should have been in division from the beginning.

Yes.

You wonder why? He was one of the men who introduced the three wave attack.

Was he?

Yes. Like in the old days, in Haig's day - well, Lloyd George - there's a picture here on xxx with what's-his-hame - Lloyd George. Was it ... might have been xxx - no, it was a British picture, I think. Anyhow this picture was, Lloyd George wanted xxx xxx attack. There was something wrong somewhere and he didn't know what it was. The difference is this, that they put down an attack, and you went over, and you stopped, and that was a Haig's attack - attack, attack, attack - put men in, xxx hammer xxx. Didn't matter what happened - that was the British Army idea. You can just imagine the bloody slaughter that was going on.

Yes, I've read about it.

Yes. Well, the three wave attack was, there were enough men to be front line of the enemy was bombarded and belted - do you know how long I've heard a barrage going down for?

Well, they used to be about half an hour, I used to think.

Yeah, well forty-eight hours is a long time, isn't it?

Yeah. Where was that?

That was after the three wave attack came in. I think Bullecourt taught them a lesson - I'm not sure - I think it would be Bullecourt that taught them the lesson. The three wave attack came in after me - after Bullecourt. And they'd bombard the first, and as soon as they'd finished - like, they might bombard it for, say, twelve hours, whatever it was - and they'd lift onto ...

Yes, the next one.

... the next position. And when the barrage was being lifted, the troops would advance to there and took that line. Now, directly behind them were two waves coming up, one coming up and then a gap, and another one coming up. Then they'd finish with the second position and go to the third, bombard that. And, of course, I could say the further we were from that front line, the less xxx resistance. And they went through from - the first line of people would stay there, then the second line mob would go in and they would stay there, and then the third line mob would go in and keep going and they'd stay there. After they'd been there for a while they would be relieved.

Now, another thing about ... which would affect - what's its name?

Bullecourt?

Bullecourt - was this, that after Mouquet Farm and Pozieres, it wasn't too long after that when the Australian troops were recognised as storm troops.

I thought that was the case.

And when those three wave attacks were coming off - well, I think Bullecourt, that might have been the first of the ...

I think it was, yes, the first of that was tried.

The first storm troop of its kind, as you say, and from then onwards. For instance, there's a bloke - we had a deserter from the British Army that came to Australia - and he was bloody lucky. The war broke out and he joined the war, but his experience was such that he was our lieutenant in charge of the sig section. He was later prosecuting sergeant for the police.

What was his name?

Harvey - Bill Harvey.

And he was your lieutenant in the sig section?

He was, he was our lieutenant in the sig section. Georgie Mace was the sergeant, but Georgie was killed, I think, later on. But Harvey, he was - I'm buggered if I know xxx.

We were at Bear Wood, and the bombardment went on, and the three wave attack went on, and, of course, we had to go up with them, even though we were not front line, we were still there.

Yes, you'd have to go.

Anyhow, we heard guns firing ahead of us - ours must have been about the third wave, evidently, or second wave, or something or other. We could hear these eighteen-pounders firing. A battery of Royal Horse Artillery went by us, and Bill Harvey said, 'Oh, they are the British Army in front'. We got a little bit further and we heard guns - eighteen-pounders - firing, and they were Australian bloody guns.

See, in the sig section, there were a couple of blokes got military medals. Oh, well, you look at it this way - but I'll tell you what, there were friends of Harvey's - one fellow called xxx bloody [Parsons] - he got off.

Just work it out. Those chaps in the trenches - and they weren't always firing and always hostile.

I know that, yes.

But bullets were always flying around - machine-gun bullets. They'd set a machine-gun, at night-time, and then they'd fire it to cover a certain area - both sides. We were the stupid bastards who, if the telephone wire was broken between companies - that's the front line and headquarters - we had to go out and fix it, you see.

But in France, how much did you use the telephones? You didn't use the semaphore or the heliograph in France, did you?

Oh, not to the extent that it was used ... but there's a sort of wireless.

Was that with the morse code - with the buzzers?

Yes - although with morse code you could semaphore, with the heliograph you couldn't - it didn't matter where the sun was, you'd have a second mirror - the reflection of the glass - one to the other ...

You could send it somewhere else, yes.

Yes.

How often was the heliograph used on Gallipoli - much or not?

Oh, on Gallipoli it was used.

But in France it wasn't?

Oh, not so much, no.

It was all with the telephone in a [buzzer]?

The telephone buzzer was the ... and this - I don't know what it was - it was wireless, but it generally didn't cover any great distance - might have been fifty yards.

Well, that's nothing, is it?

Oh, well, between companies and headquarters in some places in France, yes.

But that still had wires, didn't it?

Oh, well, wireless in those days wouldn't ... I think the limit of wireless in those days was only about fifty ... I doubt whether it would be fifty miles.

I was going to tell you something else too; the Red Baron.

I might ask you first about Aeroplane Bill; why was he called that? Why was he called Aeroplane Bill?

I couldn't say - I don't know.

Is this because he was always going somewhere, taking off, is that why?

xxx - Aeroplane Bill - oh, you mean the chap I'm talking about?

Yes.

Oh, yes, that's because he used to bugger off, if we were near a village - French village - or anything, anything to get out of the front line.

Do you know any stories about him?

No, that's all I know. I couldn't even tell you what happened to him after Bullecourt, after all the 8,000 men ...

The 800, yes.

10,000 men went through the Battalion.

Yes, there was a lot of men, I know that, yes.

I'll tell you what you want to do, if you can; ask, if you see Horrie Ganson, see if you can get some old 16th news.

Yes, I've seen some of those.

Yes, I've got a whole heap of them.

Anyway, the Red Baron; what were you saying about him?

Oh, yes. It's near a place called [Darencourt] - Darencourt.

Yes, well Darencourt - you are right, it is 'Bull-e-corr' - they don't say the 't'.

Darencourt - not 'b', 'd'.

Yes, I've heard of it.

Yes. Well, Darencourt - I don't know if I was doing that dispatching - might have been carrying messages, or something - some messages you carried because they could possibly break a code, or something like that, so of course, some messages were carried secretly.

Well, I don't know, I think I must have been taking messages from - might have been taking it from the 16th to the 13th, or the 15th - I don't know - I don't know the circumstances. You see, I was there that long that you can't possibly remember. And these bloody - we saw the Red Baron, his team.

His Flying Circus?

Flying Circus - we used to see them fairly often - frequently. And this day they passed, and I just simply stood still - I might have got a bit down - and I watched them go, and I saw this aeroplane suddenly disappear. And bugger me, when I got to where I was going, they told me that they'd brought the Red Baron down. So I saw the Red Baron's plane come down.

Did you see any other dog fights like that at all?

Oh, I saw plenty of dog fights. I'll tell you something else that I saw which I was only talking about to someone the other day, and that is, like all along the line, there were balloons up in the air. There were wires to the ground for them, and there might be one or two men in each of them. Then, suddenly from out of the blue, there come an aeroplane, just racing on - rat-tat-tat-tat-tat! - and eight or ten of them might be punctured. Well, or course, as soon as the gas, or whatever that keeps them up, escapes - started to escape - the blokes in the baskets, they escaped too.

And jumped out?

Jumped out - I've seen fifteen or twenty parachutes in the sky, coming to earth.

And another one too, one day, I saw, and heard the result of - I'll tell you something else which was interesting. [There seemed to be races] and one day there was an aeroplane went over, and the back of it was on fire, you see. You know the pilot stayed in his place and he bloody died, and he kept up to give his observer a chance of hopping out, getting out on his what-its-name - parachute, see. I saw that. It was a bloody shame because I reckon that was an act of bravery if ever there was one.

Oh, have you ever heard of [Alundel]?

Yes.

What do you know about it?

Well, the Battalion was there towards the end of the war, so far as I recall. That's up towards the north of France, isn't it?

Oh, it all happened [in the thick of the end], the Flanders. We didn't get out of that district, out of the same places, xxx. Let me finish first and then remind me of Villers-Bretonneux.

They had a race meeting at Arundel, and troops from the Brigade came from all over the bloody place - they had aeroplanes, pushbikes, walking, horses - all ways. And Jimmy [Gibney] - he used to be in a shop here opposite St John of God's Hospital up the street here - up Cambridge Street. He had a bet on a horse - he had a bet xxx - no, mule - mule, not bloody horse.

Oh, yes.

And they had a mule race - oh, two majors were killed in the first race.

Really?

Yes.

What happened?

Fell off the horses and, of course, they weren't jockeys, they didn't know how to get out of the road, or anything like that, when it happened - the only accident all day. Then one of the races was a mule hurdle race, over three-foot hurdles. Sixteen started and sixteen finished - mind you, it was only about three and a half bells, or something like that, but still, it was something that you don't forget - extraordinary.

Jimmy Gibney had a bet, he said, '[Fight, boys]' - our horse ran second - our mule at least.

Oh, you were on one of them?

No, he was on one - betting.

Oh, I see, yes.

He had a bet on one of them - 'Bugger it' - he tore up his ticket and threw the bloody thing away. First horse was disqualified for being falsely - wrongly - entered (laughs).

Another funny thing too. After the war was over - might have been before the war was over, I think - [Cliff Weir], I think he was killed in '18 - near the end of the war anyhow. We were xxx in the dugouts and playing cards, and somebody pushed the groundsheet alongside and stepped in, and Cliff Weir looked up and he said, 'Jesus Christ', but the voice says, 'No, your mistaken, it's Jimmy Gibney'. It must have been very near the end of the war because like the close of the war came not very long afterwards, and anybody who was on leave, they stayed on leave, or else - I make a mistake, it was after the war and it wasn't Cliff - we had that benefit. I can remember that; I can remember Jimmy as well as can be - and, of course, he lived on Cambridge Street, I was living in the street next to where he had the shop. But I'll never forget that as long as I live. Somebody says, 'Jesus Christ' - mistaken identity, he says - 'Me, Jimmy Gibney'. (Laughs) Gee, you hear some funny things.

I was going to ask you about the winter of 1916-17 because you were in France when it was very cold, weren't you?

It was the coldest - I can tell you this, for an absolute fact: it was the coldest winter France had had for thirty-five years.

It was freezing, I know that, yes. What do you remember about that winter?

I've got a photograph of myself in a jacket - it's amongst those somewhere, I think, in one of those - just half a sec, I might be able to pick it up bloody quickly.

(Break in interview)

There was a paragraph in the paper, about that big.

This is in the British Times?

I don't know whether it was in the British Times or what it was in.

One of the British papers?

One of the British papers.

And that was all there was, a paragraph about a couple of inches high?

Did you see it - hear about it?

No, I haven't, no.

Well, it says, 'The British Army suffered a defeat in a snowstorm in France', and that's practically all it had to say about Bullecourt.

Yes. Well, the Australian papers didn't say much either, did they?

No. I think that ... you see, I think Lloyd George, he was a bit lousy over things, and I don't think that Haig was too popular, and I think that politics may have had something to do with it.

(Incidental conversation)

END OF TAPE THREE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE THREE - SIDE B

How did you keep warm in France during the winter of 1916?

Well, at the age of seventeen or eighteen, nineteen, you can keep warm better than you can at eighty-seven.

You've got the ones that you want?

Oh, there were three Jewish girls that I knew at Zeitoun.

Oh, were they?

People are absolutely amazed when they see these photographs and see how well ... Oh, now, I said Villers-Bretonneux.

We were at Villers-Bretonneux - oh, from Villers-Bretonneux, but able to look into Villers-Bretonneux, if you can understand. And there was a battery - a quarter of a mile, I think it was - four eighteen-pounders, held with some New Zealanders - holding that [fort, only just] - that's all they had, the four guns and their rifles, you see - and we were there. And we saw the Germans marching into Villers-Bretonneux.

Did you?

Yes.

That was when they broke through, wasn't it, at Villers-Bretonneux?

Oh, that's where they were knocked back too.

Well, they were knocked back, yes - they broke through the British, didn't they?

Yes, and we stopped the bastards, you see - we stopped them - and that was at Villers-Bretonneux. I'll never forget, towards the finish, when we went into [Lebesgue], we had the Yanks, see, after, in 1918 - and we took a company into action, like with us xxx - sever action - xxx. And the bastards came out of the trenches in the morning, they said, 'I'll have some breakfast'. We said, 'You stupid bastards, bloody get back there. Do you want the Germans to come in on us?' - see.

Now, another thing that you don't know, concerning Gallipoli - and I was seriously thinking of bringing up the Western Australian and having a bit of a talk with them, the same as with you. It

mentions somewhere or other, some time or other, about the biscuits and the hardness of the tucker.

(Incidental conversation)

We had biscuits - square biscuits - in tins, sealed - properly sealed - had to be otherwise they wouldn't have been there. That was in 1915. Do you know who those biscuits were made for? It said on the bloody tins 'Crimea War'.

Really?

See, I was lucky. I got married - I didn't get married until xxx xxx - my mother was right. She went to work and she - after the war - two boys, I've got two sons, and they grew up. I went to [Cooper Peedie] and got a piece of opal worth between four and five thousand pounds - and therefore the house was mine. I worked until I was seventy, but I never, ever worked hard work - I couldn't. I was on the trams for a number of years, and then I did xxx jobs. So seventy - of course, I didn't put in for a pension as I could have done at sixty. When I was seventy I asked the boss, she says I'm over sixty, she says, so yes, we'll put in for the pension - this was before I went to [Cooper] - and we were paying off the house. And I also applied for a disability pension - I had a gastric ulcer and a septic xxx - appendicitis - appendicitis and this just ... So I put in, told them - gets approved then - of course, what else could it have been. Of course, they gave me the pension ten years after it was necessary, and they said no, no disability pension. So some months later I got a cheque for seventy-two pounds to say that I was allotted twenty per cent disability pension.

I thought, bugger this, so last year - April - I applied for a totally and permanently disabled pension because the doctor - I had a fall on that troop ship, but they took X-rays - in those days there was no such thing as X-ray - gastric ulcer and appendix - seven weeks it took, and they took it out in three pieces - this was in 1920 - or 1919, 1920. The doctor said to me, 'xxx formed on the base of your spine, and it's pressing on the sciatic nerve, and that's the reason why you can't pull'. So I put in, examined by a doctor - no, nothing wrong with me - and I could hardly walk. So she said, 'Of course, you can apply ...' - she said, 'All I want you to do it answer the questions that I ask you, not to ask me any questions because all I can deal with this is what I

have in front of me', see. So I get $223 a fortnight as of now, and I have to see - it's taken them from October of last year to go before a board of three - and do you know when I go before them?

Oh, I don't know, probably another year.

In July.

It's a long time.

And if they knock me back the last chance is I can go before some administrator. But the point is this, that I get $111.50 a week, so I started saving up for ... The wife said to me when she retired and I retired - she died in '75 - she says, 'We'll let the rates and taxes go'.

Well, this place, the last time it was priced was $73,000 - it's the district it's in - it's xxx.

Yes, it's a nice area, isn't it?

Oh, it was a very, very good area. And I can't look after it, and I thought, bugger it, why should I worry about it. So I put in for ... I've got to see the bastards then.

When I had the appendix at 3rd Hospital ...

(Break in interview)

What can you tell me about Cairo? Did you go into Cairo much, or not?

Oh, Lord, yes.

You were working in Cairo, weren't you?

Of course.

In military headquarters.

Cairo, at the time - this is something which is of interest to - because there were so many soldiers, so many men there, which is an interesting fact.

I'll just shut the door so it's not so cold.

(Incidental conversation)

The interesting fact is, that where you get lots and lots of men, sexuality must play its part, mustn't it?

Yes.

So I was talking to the chief of police there - a very nice chap - and he was telling me the number of prostitutes in Cairo, he said the registered number is 30,000; he said but there's nearer 300,000. That's just simply a point.

Now, Cairo itself was the most unusual place. We were told - well, I was; of course, perhaps it was on account of what I was doing - but not to talk too much about things. It's a very, very mixed population, and they were frightened of like information playing out and around the barracks. And of course, being a dispatch runner and rider, I carried messages and heard things that might have been of importance.

The mosque, as you see, was a most interesting place, and I found - I told you before, I think that there were 5,000 lights, but by the time we got there, of course, electricity was being used. And the electricity - the light - was electrical, but it used to be oil - used to be oil lamps.

I had the most extraordinary experience there, at one place - [Ezbeth-el-nahkel] I think the name of the village was - and there was a church there - a sort of a church. Well, I was brought up strictly as Church of England, and as a young - before I came to the war, I was teaching kids in Sunday School. Of course, the war knocked all religion out of me. But whilst I was there I met some Christian Copts - C-O-P-T-S.

Yes, I know.

And those Copts, they were delighted to take me in, and they gave me ... I took the sacrament with them, and I was amazed at the warmth of their welcome. That was one thing.

I met another chap, he worked on the railway line, or had done, but he got the sack because he was a drug addict. But apart from that he was quite a nice bloke. Three Jewish girls, they were also very amiable people. But Captain Bradbury, and his wife, and son, and his ... wife's sister - his sister-in-law - she was an awfully nice person, and they treated me very, very well.

What places would you go to in Cairo? What cafes or ...

We went all through Cairo. [Moadis] had a big store in the centre of Cairo, and I know [Shapic - Shupic Moadi] who's father owned the place.

How do you spell that?

M-A-U-R-D-A - I-A - no, 'a' - [Moaurdi] - no 'i' - 'i', just 'i' - M-A-U-D-I.

And what was the first name?

[Chefek] - C-H-E-F-E-K I think it is - Chefek is a common name.

And it was a he, wasn't it - that's a male?

Yes - he was much the same age as I was, he was about seventeen or eighteen, and he was a very nice person.

And his father had a store?

His father and uncle had the store - there's a photograph - there's a picture of it there - a big place it was - wealthy people.

But with Captain Bradbury, he was a captain in the Camel Corps, and I went down to where he had the camel - where the camels were - and there were 3,000 camels. So, of course, the Light Horse still retained their horses, but the camels were still used in that regard.

An extraordinary thing. As a kid, before I can remember, I went down three times in water, in a ditch, and a girl pulled me out before I went down a third time. I used to go to the baths in Hull, in England, as a kid, but I couldn't learn to swim, I couldn't swim - you'll wonder what the hell this has got to do with it. But I don't know why, what happened, I was in Ismailia, in Egypt, and I went down to the beach one day, and I thought I'll go for a swim.

This is on the Canal?

That's the lake, off the ...

The Bitter Lake?

The Bitter Lake off the Canal. And strange to relate, at the age of sixteen, where I couldn't learn to swim under competent coaches, I learnt to swim - at the age of sixteen. But I'm still frightened of deep water. Of course, that's just by the way.

But the war changed my outlook on life absolutely. It changed it - religion, I just simply - it turned me from being a strict Church of England person - or Anglican, as you'd call it - to an agnostic. My viewpoint of life is, you either know or you don't know, and that belief must be proved, and I can't see how it can be proved. But in Egypt, religion didn't seem to - Mahometans, or Muslims, or Christians, they seemed to get on alright, they didn't seem to cause any trouble. Nowadays, the opposite is taking place; why, I don't know.

What work were you doing when you enlisted?

I was an apprentice tailor.

And apprentice tailor, yes. And why did they send you to do the signals course in

Broadmeadows? What brought that about?

Because when they examined, when they were talking to me, and testing me, and everything else, I obviously had the qualities that they required. For instance, in the Second War, I had the ability to again do an exercise - I can draw a map without any trouble whatsoever, and put the contours in it, which were fifty feet, down to ten. Well, I must have displayed ability of some sort or they would never have sent me to Broadmeadows.

And at Broadmeadows, what was the training course like that you did there? Can you remember much about what they actually taught you?

Oh, well, of course, I didn't know the first thing about the morse code, for instance; I knew nothing about semaphore signalling; I'd not seen a helioscope in my life; and I learned all that and passed. I must have passed because when I got back to Western Australia, I was under-age.

And they still kept you?

No - they still wanted me to carry on, so that I must have shown something that ...

How did they find out you were under-age?

Well, I was seventeen, which I admitted, but they didn't know it was sixteen. I said then, of course, I've got a certificate here (that says) I was born on 2 February 1899.

Were you?

Yes. And that birth certificate is still around the place somewhere.

Do you remember anything about the period before Bullecourt, when you were going through [Batown] and so on - [Befall].

Yes, I remember that. The French, at Befall, on the top of the cathedral, there was a statue of somebody - I don't know who it was.

That was at Albert.

Oh, it was 'Al-bare'.

'Al-bare', yes.

Albert, it was on our side.

That was the Virgin Mary.

It was lying on one side, and the French set it there because they reckoned that the war would finish six months after it fell. I thought that was at Befall.

I'll tell you what about Bepaume. We were told, if we were going to Bepaume - of course, the Germans had gone - to be very careful about touching anything and picking up anything for souvenirs, because if you did you might be looking for a lot of trouble because it might be a trap, a booby trap. So that was another point.

Did you see any of those booby traps, or not?

No, fortunately - fortunately, no; I took very, very strict control of myself and I was anywhere where anything of that nature could happen. I think in the Anzacs it was shown where a booby trap was set; it was [a shell] - I don't know if you remember that.

No, I can't remember.

No, well, anyhow, it was just to bring out a point of what happened.

What about what they called the Buckshee Stunt at Bullecourt where they were going to attack and everything was cancelled, and then they attacked again the next morning? Can you recall that time?

No, I don't remember, I can't obviously say that I remember that, though I've some recollection of the whole thing being of more of a secretive nature. Things would start and go on, and stop and go on, but just exactly what they were, I couldn't say, you see. Because after all, I was only a private in those days - a signaller - and I wouldn't have access to knowledge. The only thing was that possibly - the only thing that could be associated with that - was the fact of seeing those officers walking in front of tanks, directing them. So the tanks were in the vicinity at the time.

Yes, they were.

And it could have been before the actual attack.

And during the attack, you were in this outpost; did you receive any messages at that time that you can recall?

I didn't know - that's a thing which rather amazes me. Everything must have gone wrong because I received no information whatsoever.

So you were in the outpost and you had a telephone, did you?

No. In that outpost, the only thing I could have done would have been to have left the outpost and go down to some dugout, or something of that sort, close, handy, next to it, or near it, to tell them what was going on, if it was necessary, or be approached and asked.

But you didn't have a telephone?

Oh, no.

Nothing at all?

No.

You were just watching?

Just watching - visual - because the point is this, that they would know that once the attack started, the Germans would most certainly put down barrages - shell fire, and rifle fire, and machine-gun fire - and therefore what was the good of putting down a telephone if the wires were going to be broken? - which they undoubtably would have been.

> You are saying that when the 16th Battalion attacked at Bullecourt, they didn't take across with them any field telephones?

Well, we didn't. As far as I'm concerned, I know nothing about ... unless, the only chance of telephones being taken over would have been by company signallers, but as battalion signallers, we had no orders or instructions about signallers, or anything of that sort. I think, myself, that the higher command thought that the thing was a xxx xxx. I think that the high command thought, well, this can't go wrong, the tanks will not go wrong, they will do what we want them to. And I think that was - well, I'm sure - that that, to me, was the reason that there was no barrage put down.

> Although they had the cavalry going through; after the 4th Brigade had cleared the way, the cavalry was going to go through.

Yes, well, you know something I don't know - we were never told much, we were simply told that we would go through and take out ... because I don't ever remember, in all the time that I was there, other than seen some officers in the back line, behind the troops, on horses, otherwise the only horses I knew were those pulling the limber - transport limbers. So no.

Of course, you've got to understand one thing, that when you get in that ... if we had about 800 of him, and the rest of the Brigade had 800 of him - and goodness knows what other troops were about the place - it's hard to know everything that's very much of what's going on.

> And you stayed in your outpost there for hours, I assume?

I was there at the finish. Evidently, must have known things had all gone wrong, and they came up and they said to me, 'Come on, get out of it'.

Were you in front of the Australian front line, or behind it? You don't know whereabouts your outpost was?

I'm not sure of it. I would be somewhere in the vicinity of where the troops started, when they went into action.

You were near the sunken road somewhere, where they started?

Yes. I'm not sure that it wasn't on the sunken road.

That would probably be where it was. Well, you didn't see anything?

No.

You saw the men trying to come back?

No, it was too dark to see anything.

But I mean, as it became light - I mean, they attacked at dawn, in the dark, and then they tried to get back about midday.

No. When they started ... Of course, we had telephone connection with the rear of the Battalion - and, of course, I had to go on duty with the others, and therefore I wasn't on top to see them bringing the people back. I saw the dead laid out on the top of the sunken road, after the stunt was over.

END OF TAPE THREE - SIDE B

START OF TAPE FOUR - SIDE A

Identification: This is David Chalk interviewing John Norris, 3 April 1988, in Perth. Tape 1.

I'll start right from the beginning, John, by getting your birth date from you.

My birth date?

Yes.

1/2/1899.

Whereabouts were you born?

I was born in Liverpool - yes, in Liverpool - and I came out to Australia in 1912 at the age of thirteen.

You did?

Yes.

Who were your father and mother? What were their names?

My father's name was exactly the same as mine, John Henry; my mother's name was Esther Ann.

E-S-T-H-E-R?

Anne - A-N-N, not ... I think it's spelt Anne now, sometimes, in some places.

And what did your father do?

He was, when I remember him, he was in the customs service in Britain, and he was transferred to Hull where he was in charge of the customs launch on the Humber.

The whole family moved to Hull, did they?

Yes - I'll put my hearing aid on.

Your brother left on a Cunard Liner?

My eldest brother - Cunard Liner - and he worked, I think, as a cartoonist on the New York ...

This is before the war, is it?

Oh, yes. He then - strange to relate, an extraordinary thing happened - he became a Presbyterian parson. And he was there - I wrote to him, as a matter of fact, on several occasions, but he later died, and he was buried at Long Island, New York.

How many were there in your family?

Eight.

How many boys and girls?

Four of each.

Were there?

The oldest sister, she came over in 1940, I think it was - '45 or ... after the war - because my niece, she's still alive, she lives in [Campie] Street. I think that she worked with her - what is it? - secret society in London - well, not actually ...

xxx.

What they call ...

Secret Service?

Secret Service - because when she left they were sworn to secrecy, not to talk about anything.

Well, my sister died within three weeks of being ninety-seven.

Whereabouts were you in the family?

My brother was the eldest one, and she was the next, then there was another sister who was just younger than she was, and there was another one younger than that - so that's what?

That's four.

Eh?

You would be the fifth, were you?

No; I had a brother who went to the war and was taken prisoner at Bullecourt.

Daniel Norris.

That's the Norris, yes; he was taken prisoner of war. Well, he was the fifth - no, he must have been the sixth, and I was the seventh - another brother died since, the eighth.

Were you?

So that's my family history.

How long were you in Liverpool? When did your father move across to Hull?

I don't remember.

You don't remember Liverpool?

No. I know Liverpool well because I went back, because a lot of relatives live in Liverpool now. I went to Liverpool when I was on leave from ... You see, I missed Pozieres and Mouquet Farm, and I joined them then at the Yser Canal, after they came out.

Whereabouts?

Yser - Y-S-E-R.

That's up in Belgium somewhere?

Flanders. It isn't very far from xxx Ypres - anyhow, it's in Flanders somewhere.

So you spent your boyhood in Hull?

Yes, up to the age of thirteen.

Whereabouts were you living in Hull?

At a place called Newland; it was a suburb on the outskirts of Hull, in those days. Of course, it would be different now because whilst we were living there, another district was being erected.

Oh, yes, another suburb?

Suburb - there was another suburb being erected. Oh, it would have gone - I would imagine it would have gone well beyond that by ... Take here, for instance. When I came here forty-nine years ago. When we got out here in 1938, I think, this was all bush. So Hull - Newland ...

What kind of a suburb was it? You were living in a house, were you?

Oh, yes, we had a house. Of course, the building of houses there was different to here, they were all ...

Terrace houses?

Yes - attached. Our house was the ground floor - there was the bedroom floor, and there's an attic floor above that.

Was there? There were eight children living in that house, were there?

Oh, about xxx.

Some of them had gone, had they?

They'd xxx. As I remember it, a couple of them were married, you see - my brother was working on the Cunard - xxx - xxx other Cunard boats.

Whereabouts did you go to school?

My sister, she married her superintendent at Lamport & Holt, a shipping firm in ...

What was it called?

Lamport - L-A-M-P-O-R-T - and Holt - H-O-L-T - Lamport & Holt. And he was the superintendent - but they were living in [Belgium] at the time, they were being out from ... I can't think of the name of the place now. But then there were two sisters, and three boys - we lived at home.

Five children.

Five children lived at home with [father-in-law]. Of course, I had their bedroom, and the two girls had a bedroom, and we slept up in the attic. It was what they called the attic, it was really a room.

Oh, yes, all conveniences were there. Of course, then father, he was at work - this was in 1910 - he was getting off the boat, going off the launch, and he was climbing a ladder, up onto the wharf, and the ladder broke and he fell between the boat and the wharf. And instead of coming home, or getting [cleaned], he worked all night and cleaned up all his work. Oh, incidentally, he was born at Gibraltar.

He died of pneumonia, didn't he?

He died of pneumonia.

Shortly after that your mother came out to Australia, did she?

Yes. Mother - I don't know what xxx because I went to the Church of England primary school as a kid - down xxx Street - there is a cricket ground down there.

This is in xxx?

This is when we lived in xxx. Then we moved into town. Somebody said to her, they said, 'Look, you are a widow ...' - and, of course, through his accident being - being a government servant, she got a certain amount of compensation. So she rented xxx house. There were a couple of vacant rooms in this, and she took in lodgers. As a matter of fact, we had quite a number of ... the people she used to ... they'd go down to the station, and if a play was on at both theatres, the actors and actresses, they wanted somewhere to stay in the provinces, when they travelled, and they ... she xxx stayed at our place. They might be there for two or three weeks, but when they were gone xxx would come - xxx number.

I remember one chap, he played in the orchestra, and he and his wife, [and child], they stayed there at one stage. He used to play in some - you know, like xxx xxx. Well, his father played - I met his father later on, during the war - oh, when the war was over - I met his father - he played at the Palladium, or one of those places, in the orchestra - [Gran Pierre] was the name - Grand Pier - it's a French name, of course. Even though they were - they both spoke - I think the boy, the chap who stayed with us, he was born in England.

And then she knew a woman, and this woman came out to Australia. And they kept - they were in contact with one another. She said to my mother, 'Why don't you come out to Australia?'.

Was she in Western Australia, or not?

She was in Western Australia. So I think, at the time, we came out, and we were at Katanning

on the Great Southern Line.

How many of there were you came out?

I was just going to tell you. There was my eldest sister. Of course, she remained, because she was married, in England. And the other two [older] sisters, they stayed in England. But one sister came out here. Once they came out here - the three boys - the youngest boy was xxx third.

So that's yourself, Daniel, and what was the name of the other boy?

Albert. As a matter of fact, he was xxx xxx King of the Belgians - Albert - is that right?

Yes, I think that's right - certainly Albert was a Belgian. What was your sister's name, who came out here?

Margaret. Of course, they are all dead now, I'm the only one still alive. Except xxx, one sister - as a matter of fact, it just suddenly struck me, there was William - William [Merediddd] on the xxx - Merediddd, not Meredith - Merediddd - instead of 'th' at the end of the Welsh name, it was 'dd' - Merediddd. It's quite a common Welsh name, you see. Of course, my father's father and mother - I think his father, I think that he was a colonel - I think Pat told me xxx - he was a colonel in charge of light xxx artillery in India, and on the way back from India they stopped at Gibraltar. And whilst they were at Gibraltar my father was born. You see, they transferred from one place to another, and on the way back he must have served as xxx.

Well, my father - I was talking to my niece recently - oh, a couple of years ago - about us, and she said, 'Your father was a very, very good singer; and not only that, he was a good artist. But he was a pretty troubled man.'. And I said to her, I said, 'They must have left Gibraltar when he was very young'; she said, 'No,' she said, 'As a matter of fact, they were there for a number of years'. I said, 'He must have been at school there', and she said, 'No, he had a tutor'.

You went to school at the Church of England school?

That was a [fair] school. But then, after my father died and we moved into the xxx, I went to

one school - [Lambeth] Street School.

Lambeth Street School?

And then I went to school, I went to - next after that was [Midenhood] Street School - they were council schools - that's what they called the government schools. But whilst I was at [Middleton] School, a few days before we left England - I've got a certificate here somewhere, I don't know where it is - I won a scholarship to a higher-grade school.

But you couldn't take that up because you came to ...

I couldn't take it up because I came to Australia. And going to Katanning - when my brother - he was a couple of years younger than I was ...

Daniel?

No, Daniel was another one - he was in the army - xxx xxx in the reinforcement. No, that was Albert xxx. When he went to the Katanning School, he was put in a class higher than the one he was in in England.

The standard was higher, was it?

No - the English school was higher.

That's what I was xxx.

And it was useless me going to school there because I'd been through - even though I was only thirteen, I - there top class - the education. My education had been as high as that.

Well, I think many men left school about fourteen.

They did in those days.

Yes, that's right.

But I was only thirteen. But the type of education I'd had was as high as - in England - it was higher in England than it was in Australia. So I didn't go to school in Australia at all.

Why did your parents come to Katanning? Was that where your mother's friend ...

Only just my mother - my father, he died.

Your mother, yes, I'm sorry.

Because the person who'd written to her told her all about it.

She was also ...

She was at Katanning, that's why we went to Katanning. I enlisted in Katanning.

Did you?

Oh, yes.

And when your mother went to Katanning, what did she do there?

Oh, she did ... she did a bit of housework, you know, round the place. Of course, myself and my younger brother - the other two, they found work immediately, in those days - no trouble about work xxx. Then I was apprenticed to a tailory.

This is when you were about fourteen - thirteen or fourteen?

Yes.

This was in Katanning, was it?

Katanning. I didn't leave Katanning - when I returned from the war we were at Katanning. But mother xxx staying down xxx xxx we came up to Perth.

Well, I completed my time - served my service - as a tailor. I had ... my stomach has never been good, like since the war. Even now I - hiatus ...

Hernia?

And so I didn't work at my trade.

Who were you working with?

So I went out into the bush clearing, for a while.

But before the war you were a tailor, until you enlisted?

Yes.

Apprentice tailor?

I was an apprentice tailor.

Who were you working for?

W P [Byrd]. I'll tell you what - oh, you wouldn't know because you are an Eastern Stater - but his son, Cyril Byrd, he had a big building in St George's Terrace.

Whereabouts was W P Byrd in Katanning? Was he in the main street?

Oh, well, there were really two main streets, he was in one of them, opposite the station virtually - not very far from the Katanning Hotel.

Did he only have a small staff? How many were there on his staff?

Oh, I forget now - about three or four, that's all.

Were you the only apprentice?

Yes, at the time.

And how long was the apprenticeship?

Well, apprenticeships in those days were five years, in some trades, and seven years in others.

(Break in interview)

Did your mother have to put up a guarantee for you as an apprentice tailor?

No.

She didn't have to put so much money down?

No, no.

Insurance or anything?

Oh, no.

Were you still living at home at that time, or not?

Yes.

You were living at home up until when you enlisted, were you?

Yes.

You were helping to support your mother, I suppose.

Oh, well, I was. The little bit of ... Of course, money was different in those days, no comparison whatsoever. For instance, just to give you an example of what I mean. When I bought this block of land, in '38, it was £70; the house was £890. The woman over the road was telling me the other day, she was talking to some real estate agent, and he said to her, 'There's not a block in the street that would be worth less than $100,000'.

Really?

That's because the Boulevard is on this side, and Cambridge Street is on the other side, and this is in between the two and it's a quiet street.

I was talking to a chap in xxx about it, and he said to me, 'Well, xxx xxx' - I could have bought a block in [Lindon] Street years ago, as much as I paid for this, or less, you see. That's the way things have gone; that's xxx. You see, I used to - I forget, I think I used to get six shillings a week, or something.

That's what you were paid when you were an apprentice tailor?

Oh, it might have been - about that, or something. So I used to get sixpence a week out of it, which quite xxx.

The rest of it went to your mother, did it?

Yes. Sixpence was quite a lot of money for a young fellow.

What type of work did they get you doing - did W P Byrd get you doing?

Making suits. We used to make - you know a dress suit, of course - I suppose you'd probably have one.

Yes.

xxx. When I started, we used to make those and there would be not one machine stitch in them, they were all done by hand. That's how well I was taught.

My oldest son - like her uncle - he would have been the best dressed kid going to the public school because I used to make all his clothes. My wife, I used to make clothes for her - that is, winter clothing mostly.

What kind of hours did you work when you were working for W P Byrd?

Eight hours a day; you worked all day Saturday, but you had a half day off on Wednesday.

On Wednesday?

Yes - so that was the difference.

Did you have any friends at that time in Katanning, that you remember - very good friends?

Oh ... yes ... but I couldn't even remember their names. One chap's name was [Gully]. I'll tell you how I come to remember him, because one day we were in the street where Byrd's shop was, and we were opposite the Katanning Hotel. And there was a [shornish fellow] there with a beard, on his face xxx. And I said to young Gully, 'I wonder who that bloke is?'; he said, 'Don't you know him?'; I said, 'No'; he said, 'He's John [Forrest]'.

I don't know John Forrest myself.

Oh, well, he was Lord Forrest - he was created lord later on.

He was in the state parliament, was he?

xxx xxx St George's Terrace in Barrack Street, there's a statue of his brother - a very old family, came out from England. I don't know whether John Forrest was Australian born or English, but

he was Sir John Forrest and that's [when] he became Lord Forrest. I think he was from [Bunbury].

The reason I thought you might know him was, on the TV lately there's been - there's a pub down there called the Forrest Hotel - Old Forrest Hotel, yes.

END OF TAPE FOUR - SIDE A

START OF TAPE FOUR - SIDE B

I'll show you this here, this chap.

And that's John Forrest, is it?

That's the one there - xxx. King's Park, I think he founded that; he was the person who founded it.

My knowledge of Western Australian history is very limited; I don't know much about it at all. Were you in the cadets?

Oh, yes.

You'd have had to have been, wouldn't you?

I was ... that was the cadets; that was a sort of compulsory military force for young people, prior to the Great War.

Did they have a branch in Katanning, did they?

Oh, yes; oh, my word.

How many would there have been in that?

Oh, well, I couldn't ...

At a guess - fifty or less?

Oh, I don't think there would be fifty - not thirty - twenty or thirty - because the reason I remember it is this. I had a friend in Katanning called Frank Wright. An extraordinary thing; his brother drowned in a dam; some years later Frank was drowned in a dam. And the reason I'll never, ever forget it is this, that he was in the cadets, and I said to the sergeant major who was in charge of the cadets - regimental warrant officer - and I said to him - he was in the cadets - 'Can't we have a firing party?'. It's strange to relate, there's a firing squad fired over his grave when he was buried.

This is the younger Wright boy who was drowned?

This is the other boy that was killed. Oh, yes, that was those two - very interesting.

How regularly did you attend those meetings? Were they once a week?

Oh, I couldn't tell you that, off handedly, but they were pretty regular, yes.

And did you go away on camps?

I didn't ever go away with them - xxx xxx I don't know. They didn't whilst I was there.

You wouldn't have been involved with them for very long, would you - a couple of years perhaps?

Well, I wasn't involved with them - could not have been - because I was only there - I arrived there in 1912, and 1915 ...

Two or three years.

I was in the xxx.

Army?

I had two and a half years as an apprenticeship.

Before you enlisted?

Yes. I completed the time xxx.

You enlisted in Katanning, you were saying.

Yes.

Why did you enlist?

Oh, there was a war on, the country is fighting [the enemy].

Yes, it was for patriotic reasons.

Patriotic reasons. Well, because I thought ... that would have a lot to do with it, but then don't forget also, you see, I was from a family which had been associated with the army as well. As a matter of fact, when I was a very small kid, I read - did you ever read the book 'Westward Ho'?

I've heard of it?

Well, in 'Westward Ho' the commander of the xxx was Admiral Sir John Morris. I was told, as a kid, that I was descended from (him) - he was in the family from which we had descended.

You may well have been.

So that was the ... So you can see, it was in the Second War, in the World War, I was in the militia prior to the war because we knew the war was coming on, there was obviously going to be a war with the Nazis. And so I joined ... I was with the 11th Battalion, in that militia. A friend

of mine ...

Oh, incidentally, after I came back from the war, I knew that there was no possible hope for me worrying about being a tailor in xxx way. And so a chap said to me, 'Why don't you go and see Colonel Hope' - who was the colonel of the battalion - I don't know whether I told you before - I xxx here on the tramways.

I don't think you did tell me that, no.

Oh, well, I was on the tramways for, oh, quite a long time - for about - well, almost ten years - nine years - ten years, I think, on the trams. I had appendix trouble and had to have my appendix removed.

When you enlisted, did you enlist on your own or were there other friends of yours who enlisted at the same time?

Oh, there were a number of fellows enlisted - I xxx xxx now.

This is from Katanning?

From Katanning - yes, quite a lot. But a lot of them enlisted ... You see, Katanning was a - it was an outback country town, and a lot of them were in the 10th Light Horse.

Were they?

Oh, yes.

Were you interested in joining the Light Horse?

No, no, because I'd had nothing whatsoever to do with horses. Only once I was on a horse, and the damn thing chucked me - threw me off - and so I had to walk back into town - into Katanning - after being thrown off a horse. The horse went home on its own - knew where to go.

What did your mother think of your enlisting? Did she support it - because you were young, weren't you? You were only seventeen or sixteen.

I was sixteen. Well, she said, 'If you want to go, you'll have to go'. The money - they used to call them the 'six bob a day tourists'.

That's right.

But one shilling was deferred until the end of the war. So I said to her ... So that if you had a mother, or a wife, or dependents - I left her four shillings a day out of the one shilling a day, my brother left her three.

You were getting two shillings a day pay?

Getting one shilling a day because the other one was being accumulated.

Oh, I see, so you left your mother four, one was being deferred, and the other you had as expenses?

Well, seven shillings a week, you'd be surprised. You could live just as well on that, virtually, as you could now.

Worth a lot more than it is now. She didn't stop you going, even though you were under age?

I said I was seventeen. A rather funny thing happened. When I went to Blackboy Hill Camp, up here, out of [Midland].

Yes, I know where it is.

When I got there they wanted signallers, so I thought I'd be a signaller. So I went over to Broadmeadows. When I got back they wanted - I was in the 11th Battalion - but they wanted

signallers for the 16th Reinforcements.

It was reinforcements of the 16th Battalion.

Yes. I went into - I volunteered for that.

What I find surprising is that you were able to enlist.

What I was going to tell you is this - oh, well, I looked the age.

You looked to be eighteen?

I looked to be seventeen, as I said I was - they had no right to have taken me in at seventeen.

That's what I would have thought.

Yes, well, the result was, when I got to Blackboy, Colonel Battey, he was the commander at the time.

At Blackboy?

At Blackboy - and I was called up before him. And it was all tents then, just canvas.

Bell tents.

The sergeant said to me, 'Wait out here until I call you in'. And I suddenly heard a loud voice saying, 'And when he comes in he's eighteen'. So when I went in Battey said to me, 'How old are you?', I said, 'Eighteen, Sir' - 'Righto, Sergeant, you can take him away'.

Did your mother have to sign a release allowing you to go, or not?

No.

That's unusual, that they'd let you in.

Don't forget this, this is over seventy years ago, things have changed.

You mean it was not so regimented at that time?

Oh, no. Look, they were in the first - well, they call it now the World War - the First World War - they were actually in the first war to which so many nations went, and they had to win. In England they brought in ...

Conscription.

... conscription. Billy Hughes brought in conscription in Australia - I don't know whether you know this or not.

He tried to, I think; I don't know whether he was successful in doing it.

Somebody said, 'But you can't do that unless the soldiers have a vote'. Now, the age for voting then was twenty-one. They said, 'The soldiers have gone there and they've more right than we have to say whether there would be conscription or not'. The general opinion amongst the people who I knew in the Battalion, they turned round, they said to each other, 'Wouldn't drag a dog to it'. And the result was that when the second - other - went through ...

It was knocked out, wasn't it?

It was dropped.

When you went into Blackboy camp, you were sent all the way over to Broadmeadows in Melbourne. Why couldn't they teach you here? Didn't they have any ...

They didn't have the facilities here to do it. Then again, there was anther angle, I think now; to me there was another angle, and it was this, that had those facilities been there, in every state, the cost would have been ... It was much cheaper to send them all to one state.

Than to have different courses.

To have courses and ...

It may well have been too.

I think that was the reason - I don't know the reason, but that, to me, would be the reason.

How long were you in Broadmeadows?

Oh, I forget now - five or six weeks - I don't remember - I just don't remember.

What made you volunteer to be a signaller? Was it any particular reason - out of interest?

Just kidded myself that it was more heroic.

Oh, I see.

I thought to myself, well, we had to stand up and take a risk when we are taking messages, and when we are running with dispatches.

Yes, that's right.

That's why I thought I'd be a much braver person.

Whereabouts did you have your first medical? Was that at Katanning or in Perth?

You had to have the medical.

The doctor came out there, did he?

I forget who the doctor was - possibly a local doctor - xxx. Anyhow, they were only too glad to get as many in as they possibly could because they didn't want the war to last too long.

No. You went out to Broadmeadows and were in bell tents out there, were you?

Oh, of course, yes.

How many were there in the bell tents?

Oh, I forget - there could have been a half a dozen or more.

You used to have route marches from Blackboy too, didn't they?

Oh, well, of course.

Did you go on any?

They had route marches in the different places, wherever you went there were always - when you walked off the parade ground, you had to march, you had to walk across at attention.

Did you? - had to march across?

Yes, march across, oh, yes. You see, the whole point of the matter is this - of course, in the Second War I was the instructor, from '40 until the finish - you simply had to impress upon people that everybody had to do the same thing, according to the book, then there would be no misunderstandings. That' s what it all boils down to.

It was mainly an effort to create discipline.

Well, it was really an effort to make people understand that if everybody did the right thing at the right time, that less people would get hurt.

See, to give you an example of what I mean, to make it clear. I was in the xxx Hotel one day,

and a chap came up to me - he was just under the weather, but not too bad - and he said to me, 'Oh, I have to see you, Sergeant Major' - I was a warrant officer, of course.

This is in the Second War?

Yeah, the Second War. I said, 'Oh, chop it out, the war's been over for twelve months or more'. And he sort of sobered up and he said, 'No, the boys arranged amongst themselves, and if any of us ever met you they wanted to thank you for saving our lives'. I said, 'But, where did this happen?', and he said, 'North Africa' - I forget the name of the crowd now. I said, 'But I wasn't there - I wasn't there. In the First War I wasn't there - in the Second War.'. He said, 'No, it was what you taught us that saved us'.

Well, I made them understand, right from the xxx, that they had to follow, as closely as they could, the lines of the book. To give you an example of what I mean, I was teaching some of the 16th Battalion militia - virtually educating certain men to be NCOs, eventually the officers. And one chap, I said to him, 'Take xxx' - 'Yes, Sir' - 'Take charge and teach them - right turn them, left turn them'. Of course, I made them understand that they had to learn from the beginning, going [up]. I said, 'On the command, 'right turn', this is that you do', and he turned right on his ... and he brought his right foot up, and put it down, then he turned his left foot, and he put it alongside of it, down, just like the guards at Buckingham Palace. And I said, 'Listen, the book says 'turn on the right heel and the left' - the heel of the right foot and the toe of the left foot, and bring the left foot up to the right.' I said, 'It says nothing about [bloody] stamping', you see. He said, 'But they taught us that at hight school, Sir' - the Hale College. I said, 'I don't care what they taught you there,' I said, 'You'll do what I tell you here now'. So I said, 'xxx xxx the way to do it'. I said, 'You know how because you've been taught'. I said, 'Instead of xxx, make [dad] do it'. I said, 'But don't try and make them do it until you tell them what to do, and show them', you see, because xxx never xxx that. On no occasion did I tell a man to do something if he hadn't been told how to do it before.

What were the cooking and eating arrangements like at Blackboy Camp?

Oh, pretty good.

How did they organise it?

It was fairly well organised - there was nothing elaborate about the food, it was plain, but it was thoroughly xxx - it was quite alright.

Were they cooking outside?

I just forget now. I think that ... I'm not sure whether they were under erected buildings or not, I just forget. But we used to xxx, we used to file past where the food was being dished out, whatever it was. But no, I can't ... I don't recollect ... I went through too much to remember all that.

Did you get a last leave down to Katanning before you left?

Oh, we had leave to go home, just prior to embarking - oh, yes - everybody had that.

Your parents didn't come down to the ship to see you off? I suppose it was too far, was it?

My mother didn't come down. I wouldn't have wanted her to come down anyhow. We left, we went through the Red Sea, and if I remember right, we landed at Port Said.

You went up through the Suez Canal, did you?

Oh, yes, we went through the Suez Canal. Well, we - I'm not quite - yes, we went through.

Did you go to Port Suez and go up to Cairo?

I don't think we went to Suez, I think we went to Said.

Did you?

Yes.

And then came ...

Port Said is the southern port, I think Suez is the northern port - Alexandria is just round from that. I don't xxx much about xxx. I can remember the name of the boat that we left here - the boat we went on - the [Chilta] - it's in that ...

Yes, I've seen that.

And then we went from - I think we went up to Alexandria, and we boarded a Mediterranean pleasure boat, the [El Kahira].

How do you spell that, do you know?

E-L K-A-H-I-R-A.

Sounds like it, yes.

El Kahira.

You got to Lemnos, did you?

Mm?

That took you up to Lemnos, did it?

Yes - we went over in boats to ...

To Marseilles?

We went over ...

From Lemnos to Gallipoli, yes.

To Gallipoli. I remember seeing the landing at Suvla Bay, I saw the British troops land there. Of course, I was in one of the later reinforcements.

Yes, the 7th.

Yes. We were in ... our last action was when we went to attack on [nine second one].

That's right.

They made a mess of things and that was wrong ... And we got high enough up to [centre] - Gallipoli - it rises from the coast on both sides, upwards - and we got to the top and we looked down on the Dardanelles.

You could see the Dardanelles?

We saw ...

That was during the night, was it, or early morning?

Oh, no. We started off at half past four in the morning. I saw possibly one of the worst incidents that I saw in the war, that morning in the - it wasn't really dark, wasn't quite, it was still light enough to see - two Turks. We went up with - the Gurkhas went up with us, from India, and two Turks jumped up in front of the others, and a Gurkha threw his kukri and split the Turk's head open from back to front. That's how hard he threw it, that's how heavy they were. I unfortunately looked out at that, fifteen or eighteen feet, and my knee left me locked - I had to keep going, there was no other - nothing else to do. And we reached the top and suddenly realised we couldn't do anything much because we were at the wrong place - the Turks were firing xxx from somewhere or other, and they suddenly - something - we heard a sort of a buzzing noise in the sky - we knew what it was, it was a piece of shell, or something or other, coming over - and it struck me on the xxx bayonets scattered and xxx xxx.

Did it? It didn't hurt you?

No, it didn't. Had it been a couple of inches over it would have broken me ...

Leg?

... me knee. And George ...

George Mace?

Mace - I mentioned him - he was Sergeant Mace xxx - he was killed, or he died, later on in France. He picked this thing up and it was still hot. He said, 'See what just missed you'.

END OF TAPE FOUR - SIDE B

START OF TAPE FIVE - SIDE A

The August period - like Lone Pine - I think the Light Horse were in that.

Yes, that's right.

We were north, up towards 971, away from ...

Same morning, yes.

Away from Lone Pine. So I'm not quite sure where it was. When the Suvla Bay landing took place, we saw them coming in.

You saw the English troops?

They were English troops? I think it was General Stapleton was there.

It was - some name like that - he was incompetent anyway.

There is one thing about him that I didn't like and it was this, that Stapleton used to go back to the war ship at night-time, instead of sleeping onshore like Birdwood, and Monash, and the other people, he used to go to the ... But the tragedy of Suvla Bay - I've not seen it mentioned anywhere - but I saw it, and that was that the British troops who had landed at Suvla Bay attacked the Turks. There is a lot of bush country, and, of course, the Turks fired at them and a lot of them were wounded, and some of them were killed. Then the Turks set fire to it.

You saw them doing that, did you?

We didn't see the Turks doing it, but we saw the fire that they lit.

They would be away on your left, wouldn't they?

That was on the left of us, yes - that was the left. Another thing that I've not seen mentioned, like this month is April, and 25 April is Anzac Day. Now, in Cairo I was in headquarters for a while, as a dispatch runner - sometimes Cairo through to Alexandria, Port Said, and to Ismailia at least. Someone told me - of course, I xxx - there's a stream around Gallipoli, the same as the Gulf Stream around Britain - that the Australian troops did not land at the place they were supposed to land. The official account is that the stream carried them further up xxx Anzac Cove, but I heard, in Cairo - in 1915 this was - that the compass on the leading boat was four degrees out.

That would be enough to make that distinction, wouldn't it?

Yes. Well, that could have assisted the stream - you need that distinction, as you said - but wether it was true or not, of course, I don't know. But it could be true because the army - and naturally if the mistake is made they try to keep it as quiet as possible and say nothing.

That's right. What was your job during the August attack on 971? Were you a signaller at that time too?

Yes.

Were you with headquarters, or with a company? Who were you attached to?

Battalion Headquarters - Battalion Signal Headquarters. We used to semaphore with two flags, morse code with one flag.

How would you do that? How is that done? Semaphore you are using the flags to convey the alphabet, aren't you?

Well, morse you are doing the same, but the thing is, you do it with one flag. You take it to a full right angle for a dash, and half way for a dot.

Oh, I didn't know you could do that.

Oh, yes. And another thing we had too, of course, was lamps.

Is this the heliograph, or something different?

Then there was the heliograph.

So there's three different things?

Flags, when the sun was shining - er, the heliograph when the sun was shining, with the double mirrors if you were seeing to the north and the sun was coming from the other direction. Of course, a flag was set ... another mirror was set in front of your signalling mirror.

You'd have three mirrors?

Two mirrors. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Well, supposing it was in the west, and take one like that, and this one reflected that which would convey the flash, xxx the mirror that you were using, you could set them at various angles.

How many of the troops could read what the heliograph was saying?

Oh, only signallers and people that were interested in it. See, they didn't have to be able to read because, see, companies - there were company signallers, there were battalion signallers, there were brigade signallers, that there was always someone who could ... And, of course, the telephone was used quite a lot - it was used quite a lot in France.

Not so much on Gallipoli though?

It was used on Gallipoli a bit, but not as much as it was in France, of course.

How often was semaphore, with the flags, used?

Oh, well, fairly frequently.

Was it? And the lamps, were they used at night, were they?

They were used at night.

In all cases, of course, what you are doing is using the morse code.

Always the morse code, yes. I did have an old signalling book - I might have given it to one of the boys for a souvenir, you know. See, I haven't got my medals, I've gave them to my two granddaughters.

Whereabouts were you sleeping and eating on the [Chilka], the boat you went away on? Were you in hammocks on that?

Hammocks, oh yes.

Sleeping over the mess tables, or not?

I don't remember - I'm not sure. Of course, xxx might possibly have been because - no, we weren't, because the Chilka, now that you've mentioned it, it was used to carry horses. And there's some disease, or something, happened before it got to Fremantle.

It had come from Adelaide, had it, or Melbourne?

It would have come from Adelaide, or Melbourne, or Sydney perhaps, I don't know - came from the east - Eastern Australia to Western Australia. And the result was that they couldn't hold it up because it was scheduled to go on, they wanted reinforcements. The result was that it wasn't a very crowded ...

All the horses were taken off at Fremantle?

The horses were taken off at Fremantle.

It was a cargo ship, the Chilka, was it?

Well, xxx call it a cargo ship because it carried horses and xxx. That is the reason why - I don't think the hammocks were on in the dining room.

No, you had more room, yes.

We had a lot more room.

What kind of training did they get you doing on the ship?

Oh, just physical exercises and that sort of thing.

Keeping you fit.

To keep fit.

Did they have any boxing matches on the Chilka?

Oh, they may have had them - I've no recollection of it. Like, the ship I came back on in 1919 - the [Pakia] - which is, of course, a New Zealand (ship) - white name, isn't it?

I don't know.

Pakia - it's a Maori word for white. And they had a swimming pool on that for swimming in. I think it was a swimming pool of canvas - I've got a photograph of it here. On the Chilka we had plenty of room because of the fact that they took all the horses off it at Fremantle.

Did you suffer from seasickness?

Only for a couple of days. Even coming out from England as a kid, I suffered from seasickness, but not - just a matter of a couple of days.

Yes, acclimatised.

Yes.

You'd have gone via Colombo - did you stop at Colombo?

If we did we didn't get off. Colombo, of course, that's in Sri Lanka. I have been ashore at Colombo because the passenger vessel we were on, from England to Australia, when we came out here, stopped there. It was a stop at Colombo.

Came back through Suez?

Came through the Suez Canal - through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea, and stopped at Colombo. The reason I remember it so well is that we had a meal at a restaurant. The first time I ever saw a lizard running up a wall (laughs).

Tropical, isn't it, Ceylon - Sri Lanka?

I've not been there since - I've been in Cape Town, but not ...

So you went to Port Said, you think, and from there ...

I'm not quite certain where we went - I don't remember much about going to the war. Of course, I know Egypt very well because I was in Egypt at the headquarters in Cairo, and had to carry dispatches from various places. Well, of course, I went into xxx xxx again to Britain before going to France.

Yes, that's right.

Even though I was only in Britain - in England - for about three weeks - two weeks - before going over to France.

When you arrived in Egypt, did you go to Zeitoun? Was that where you were ...

Zeitoun?

Zeitoun.

Yes. I know [Ezbet Zeitoun] they called it.

What did they call it?

Ezbet.

How do you spell that?

E-Z-E-T.

E-Z-B-E-T?

B-E-T, that's right.

Ezbet?

Ezbet el Zeitoun.

Ezbet el Zeitoun.

Yes. I'll show you some photographs.

Yes, I'll have a look at them after. This is the 7th Reinforcements - they were all taken to Zeitoun?

Oh, I wasn't at Zeitoun, I was at Zeitoun on the way to ...

Gallipoli?

It was after I came off Gallipoli.

Oh, was it? Where did the 7th Reinforcements go when they got to Egypt then?

That is something I just can't tell you.

It must have been Zeitoun of Heliopolis, that's where they all went, I'm sure.

Yes, well, it could have been ... You see, I was at Zeitoun, and knew Heliopolis and Cairo, for a length of time, after I came off Gallipoli.

You were there for months, weren't you?

Yeah, I was there for several months, yes. But I'm not quite sure where we were.

Did you ever go out to the pyramids and the sphinx?

Yes, I was at the pyramids. I'll show you something which is xxx xxx.

(Break in interview)

The other obelisk is Cleopatra's Needle on the banks of the Thames.

So this is at [Mazaria], this obelisk?

That's at - yeah. It's just, oh, within a kilometre or so of Zeitoun.

(Break in interview)

... with the shadow of the pyramid on the ground.

So you climbed up the pyramid?

Climbed up the top of it - I don't know where.

(Break in interview)

... buildings in the foreground, xxx.

That's Cairo.

That's part of Cairo, is it?

That's Cairo.

Was it very difficult to climb up the pyramids?

The blocks of the pyramid were five cubic feet square, so you had to climb five feet.

A fair jump.

As a matter of fact, I don't think that you are allowed to climb up the pyramid now. I'll tell you an extraordinary thing about the pyramid - that Cheops - I may have told you before.

No, you haven't.

I don't know. But a chap - when I was on the top of the pyramid, when I took that photograph, I saw a lot of initials carved in the top of the pyramid - visitors had been there, naturally. The chap said to me, 'Hey, come here, I want to show you something'. So I went over and xxx - two initials carved in the stone - in one of the stones - E.P. - and I said to him, 'It's only somebody has put it there, he can tell people his initials (are there)'. He said, 'You know who it was?', I said, 'I wouldn't have the remotest idea'. He said, 'Edward Prince'. Edward, Prince of Wales was later King Edward VIII, and I didn't know that I was going to meet and speak with him three years later.

You told me about that when I was here before.

Yes.

It may have been anybody.

No, no, it wasn't, it was his.

How do you know that for sure?

Oh, this chap, he told me that he knew about him being on the top of the pyramid, and that sort of thing. So it would be pretty right. So I said, 'Well, if he can put his initials there, I'm putting mine' - I put them alongside his.

Who was this other man? Was he a friend of yours, or not - the man who told you it was Edward Prince?

Oh, he was one of the soldiers I knew, but I wouldn't know who it is now. It's just the same as - my recollections [are a blur]. A lot of army mates, it's the same as xxx.

Did you have any really close friends at that time though?

No. I'm a person who has had very, very, very few close relationships, or friendships - Frank Wright, he and I was great friends.

Was he a 7th Reinforcement?

No, he was xxx prior to that.

Oh, yes, I see, yes.

xxx xxx.

You didn't have any close friends in the army?

Yes, I did, I had one, and he married, and he was on the trams with me. I knew his wife, but I'm afraid she let him down badly, and I think she ended up as a prostitute.

What was his name? What was your friend's name?

Roy Mearns.

Roy ...

Mearns - M-E-A-R-N-S. And he and I were great friends.

Was he a 7th Reinforcement too, or not?

No; I met him in France. As a matter of fact, the only 7th Reinforcement man whom I remembered - oh, he's dead now, he died some time ago - xxx xxx - his name was George Green. George and I were good mates in the army; Roy and I were good mates in the army.

We were very lucky; in France, on one occasion, we were sleeping in a sort of - it wasn't a dugout, it was a hole in the ground, and we had a piece of canvas covering it. And one day we

had to go out. As a rule, when you carried the dispatch there'd be two, you see. The idea was that if one of them - one of you - was injured, the other one could carry on and deliver the message. And when we returned, a big piece of shell had hit the top of the canvas. The canvas was dropped about four or five feet, and I wouldn't have cared to be under that piece of shell, personally.

Mearns was a dispatch runner too, was he?

Mearns, he was in the headquarters xxx.

Did you have any rides on the camels, or the donkeys, in Cairo?

No, though I did ... whilst I was in Zeitoun, I did have - I'll show you a photograph of it - I was showing you last time - of a donkey [training]. I paid ten piastres for it - there were a hundred piastres to the equal of a pound, so I bought it cheap. I used to cart rations for them on it.

A friend of mine, Captain Bradbury in the British Army, I met him and his wife, and son Nigel, and they eventually - I understand - that they came to Australia - Tasmania. After I left Egypt I was out of touch with them.

How did you meet him?

Casually in Cairo, and he was in the Camel Corps there, and he took me down one day to show me them. And I think there were about 3,000 camels.

It's a lot of camels, isn't it?

Yes. And he invited - and his sister-in-law - invited me to go down and see them occasionally - they were living in Cairo. I used to take young Nigel for walks sometimes.

How old was he?

Oh, he'd only be ... he was young, he'd be about seven or eight, somewhere around that age. And

one day I took him for a walk and he wasn't talking, and seemed to be thinking about something. I said, 'What are you thinking about? What's worrying you?', and he said, 'I've been wondering, was Jesus Christ's name Mr Smith?' (laughs). I just smiled and said, 'Oh, no, no, no, he was Jesus Christ xxx' (inaudible). Bullecourt killed all religion in me - finished it.

When Bullecourt, after we cleaned up the mess, I saw a line of 127 bodies waiting to be buried. What sort of a god would allow this sort of thing to happen? Just something ... come to one conclusion: death doesn't frighten me in the slightest. As I tell people, we are all conceived, we are all born, we all live, and we all die, and that is also accountable to everything and everybody on this earth, from the millions of microbes and molecules, and what have you.

And another extraordinary thing too, which I realised then, was that all those living creatures, which we can't even see they are that small, they are all conceived, born, live and die, and therefore it's male and female. But it made me think, well, there is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost - there's no mother in the business.

And another thing that strikes me is this, that I was taught in Sunday School and church, that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost. Now, if he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, the Virgin Mary was married to Joseph, therefore Jesus must have been illegitimate. And therefore I've sort of given it away; I'm an agnostic now, I am, and know or I don't know. It just happens that I don't know, in many cases.

Anyhow, we are getting away from ...

> We are a bit, yes. You were tunnelling, or something, on Gallipoli, weren't you, when you ...

Tunnelling? Ah, yes. When I tunnelled - I was tunnelling - we used to tunnel underneath the Turkish lines and put high explosives there, and then come out, and fire them to blow their trenches - they used to do the same thing to us.

> How long would those tunnels have been? How long was the one you were in?

Oh, they could have been twenty, thirty, forty yards in. You just tunnelled in enough to get in and out, that's all; they weren't made very, very big. Oh, yes. And I was under there, and the knee locked again, and I had to drag myself out.

END OF TAPE FIVE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE FIVE - SIDE B

And my doctor sent me off. But it happened - after that there was no more fighting or anything.

No, after August.

Yes, after August there was no more fighting. But I still think, when I told him that ... he asked me what age I was, and I told him I was eighteen. And he just wouldn't ware it - 'You are not eighteen'. 'Eigheen,' he said, 'you are younger than that. Come on,' he said, 'you can tell me what age you are.'. I admitted that I was sixteen. But he said, 'It doesn't make any difference. With the way your knee is, you'll have to go off.'. 'So,' I said, 'if that's the case ...' He was the only one who ever asked me xxx.

How's the book going?

Good.

When do you expect to get it ...

(Break in interview)

I don't know whether she was gone or not. My niece told me that she was in pretty bad shape - very, very bad.

What was her name?

Adah.

And the other one, on the other side, what's her name?

Katherine.

And this was taken when you were on leave in ... whereabouts?

Yes - that lady too, she ...

(Break in interview)

This is taken in Liverpool.

That's taken in Liverpool.

And this is when you were on leave in Liverpool, is it?

Yes. And, of course, that photograph on the grass, you see, that's that sister who's in that one.

Yes, right.

You know the one?

(Break in interview)

In the book.

This is after Bullecourt, yes.

In the book there's a letter which Birdwood sent to the commanding officer.

Yes, that's right.

But Birdwood, he came to the Battalion one day, and we were all lined up there, and he was terribly distressed, he was worried about the whole business - different to Kitchener, he was just a British soldier - but Birdwood was a man. I met him in Perth after the war.

Yes, you told me that.

And when we were assembled there, we were not assembled into ranks, we were just a group of men, you see. And at one stage Birdwood said, 'Have any of you have any complaints to make?' - that was the approach - kindly, gentle. And one chap stepped out - and, of course, we used to get a tot of rum every day, it was forty per cent proof - there were only about 120 men out of the 200 - out of the 800 - and this chap must have got stuck into it.

The rum?

He was pretty full. And Birdwood, of course, said, 'Start the complaints'. He said, 'Yes, look at my bloody boots' (laughs) - after he stepped up in front of the mob, you see. When I met the Prince of Wales, he asked me, when I told him I was on Gallipoli, he said, 'Why aren't you wearing your As', and I said, 'We don't bother about them'. And, of course, the next day, or the day after, there was an issue of As - xxx see. But Birdwood was very, very gentle and quiet about the whole business.

This is after Bullecourt?

Yes, after Bullecourt. He realised what a hell of a mess it was, and that it wasn't our fault, it was the fault of the tanks.

What was the mens' morale like at that time?

Well, that book tells you, if you read it, they stuck to it like glue. They went there to war, but the trouble was - I think it was Villers-Bretonneux, for instance - the British troops marched out - and we were a bit short of ammunition. We said to the chap in charge of this mob marching out - regiment it was - 'If you are going out, will you give us the ammunition? We are staying here.'.

What was it like after Bullecourt? I mean, how distressed was the Battalion at that time?

Oh, well, let's be reasonable. What I'm going to tell you might sound ridiculous, but I think it could have been very true with many people. I found that after a certain time, in France - and I was there from about September '15 until the finish - '16 until the finish - it became boring. And then, when the news started to come through that there was likely to be an armistice, it was to be finished, then it was totally different. You'd think to yourself, I wonder if it's my turn next. That was ...

No, I think that in a case like Bullecourt, after you've done the best you possibly can, it wasn't a case of regretting it, it was a case of, Oh, we did the best we could, and that's all there is to it - because the morale was wonderful. That's what you're going get, isn't it? - the morale was xxx.

Yes.

So that's ... But I found it - to me, it started to get boring until, as I say, about three months or so before the Armistice.

I'll give you an example of the way things were. At the finish, like in '18, so many men from the Battalion were left out of action as a reserve, you see. Well, of course, it didn't happen xxx - with me it only happened once. And a friend - a chap I knew very well, an Australian - [Halsey] his name was - Halsey we used to call him because he was xxx. Blue's going in, so I said, 'Well, goodbye, Blue' - I don't know whether I told you - there was two or three other fellows there with me - this was xxx xxx. I said, 'How do you mean?', he said, 'Saying goodbye'. I said, 'Listen, he's not coming back, and he doesn't think so'. I put it down to this, that you've been in conversation with someone, and he started to say something and somebody alongside of you started to say exactly the same thing. Well, I think that transmission of thought occurred between Blue and I. It wasn't anything supernatural, or unnatural, it was just the same as I've just said to you. You've got to say something, and somebody starts saying the same thing at exactly the same time. And I think that that - I got a transmission, because I'll tell you what. The chap alongside of me, even though he xxx to me, [Blue] just carried on the same as you. But I think that it was a thought transmission, just like ...

(Break in interview)

I doesn't matter.

We were at Flers, and there was a deep trench there called Flers Alley - it was about eight feet deep - and it went for a fair distance. You got that way that you heard the shell fired from a long way off, and you knew, you had a fair idea of where it was going to, see. We heard this shell coming over from the Germans. Brand turned round and said, 'Get in the trench!', so we jumped into the trench. Well, I jumped into the trench and put my hands out like that.

Both hands out either side.

A piece of shell exploded, not very far away, but a piece of shell went between ...

Thumb and your forefinger.

Thumb and forefinger. I was out one night at Bear Wood, preparing a line - a shell burst not very far away, and the next minute, crack! You know how you step forward, on your foot, you are walking. A piece of shell hit the piece of the duckboard underneath my foot. Another man, he would have been killed or wounded, see, but I didn't, it just didn't happen to me. That sort of thing.

What was that story you were saying about on the Peninsula, when the bullet hit the rifle?

On a .303 rifle, the front part, where the barrel rests in the wood - they call it the stock. The bullet hit that; you see, it struck the wood and broke it. Well, he was damn lucky it didn't go through the hand. But then the chap next to him, he got a bullet right through the forehead.

There was a trench there - of course, you know about it - xxx about the hand sticking out of the trench, and somebody xxx.

xxx.

Put something in it.

(Break in interview)

Identification: Tape 2 continued; 5/4/88.

If you like.

Well, if you take it on this, you can take whatever you like out of it. Colonel Pope - he was the colonel of the 16th Battalion on Gallipoli - and I was on the phone one day, and there was a call on the phone. They said they wanted to speak to Colonel Pope - he was our Battalion commander.

Did you take the call, or not?

I took the ... I called the colonel, and he took the call, but I listened - I was there and heard what he said. And he said, 'No, I wont, I wont send them there - where I wont go myself, I will not send my troops' - I heard that.

Afterwards, I saw on the - this was on the TV, the 'Gallipoli' picture - a place where a lot of troops went in and they were going in, and going in, and getting slaughtered and had to come out; there was a mistake, and Pope - I think we were supposed to do that, and it was done afterwards and it was a failure. Anzac Cove, Sigs Post.

Oh, we were at Sigs Post, which is in that book, and a chap called Tommy [Otis] and myself, we took a couple of - do you know the things they carry the petrol in?

Water containers? Jerry cans?

No, just the ordinary can.

Kerosene tin?

Yes. We went down, and we had to wait eight hours to get them filled with - two each.

You took two kerosene tins down to the beach?

We took two of these petrol - empty petrol tins - down for water, and we had to wait two hours to get them filled.

Two hours?

They used to dig wells, and [shaped hard] in the ground, until they came to the water, and then they would dig down so that they could dip the water out.

Whereabouts was that?

On Gallipoli.

But whereabouts on Gallipoli?

Oh, I couldn't tell you.

Down near the beach?

It would be near the beach, it wouldn't be very far off. And we ... we waited eight hours, we got them filled, and - canisters, you know - and they - when we were coming back, evidently some Turkish people spotted us and they fired on us. And they fired the bullets - we put the water down, naturally, because we had to run for cover, and there were bullets through it and we only got about half the water.

Bullets through the tins?

Yes, the bullets went through the tins - they were shooting at us, you see, and we got xxx. Some of the bullets went through the tins. When we got back, of course, we had nowhere near the

quantity of water that we expected. We used to get half a dixie of water a day.

How much would that be, half a dixie - a pint or less?

Oh, well, you know the flat-sided, rounded, dixie.

I think I do know them, yes. There'd be what, about a pint, would there, or a half a pint?

Well, there might be a pint - we had that. Oh, which brings back another memory.

We only had bread once, and the bread was being brought over in boats, and the seawater evidently splashed over it, and the only part that you could eat was the crust.

It was sodden with salt water, was it?

Yes - it went mouldy. We lived mostly on biscuits, and apricot jam, strange to relate. And the biscuits - the containers - had on them, 'Made for the Crimea War'.

These are facts, if you want them in your book, you can state, which aren't commonly known, or the average person wouldn't worry about them.

And these boxes which the biscuits came in, they had printed on the side xxx Crimea, did they?

Crimea, they were made for the Crimea War.

What were they like to eat, those biscuits?

Hard as the rocks of hell.

Could you eat them, or not? Did you have to soak them first?

Oh, well, you could eat them, but you had to soak them to really ... What they used to do is, they

used to make a sort of porridge out of them.

They'd crush them up?

Er ... well, I suppose they'd put them in and soak them down, and then crush them after.

I told you about the [handout] of the war.

Whereabouts was that?

On Gallipoli.

Was that up at Pope's Hill?

No, it was up on Sigs Post where we were.

Now, another thing that happened which is ... I've never seen it mentioned anywhere, and that is, Timmy McMahon was our bandmaster. And in a place called Rest Gully - it might also have been called Reserve Gully, I'm not sure.

Rest Gully.

Rest Gully. Teddy McMahon - of course, the Turks were firing machine-guns and what have you; they weren't very far away - and Teddy played 'The Rosary'.

This is on a trumpet?

On a trumpet - not ... a cornet - on a cornet. You see, a trumpet, of course, has a different button [to key it] - on a cornet.

He had this musical instrument on Gallipoli, did he?

He had the instrument on Gallipoli, and he played 'The Rosary'. And as he played through 'The

Rosary', you could hear the shooting dying down, and at the finish I think it stopped. The Turks were listening as well as us.

xxx xxx.

Oh, no, it wasn't, it was a safe culvert, so it was ...

A gully, yes - and it was during the daytime?

And it could have been in the daytime.

You heard that, did you?

But the point is this, that I doubt if - well, you knew nothing about it, and I'll guarantee that it's possible - I've not read about it, or heard about it, or anywhere else, see. When you are [singing] of Gallipoli you can - that's a point that you could mention. Of course, that's personal.

Whereabouts was Sigs Post?

It's in that book - in your book.

It's shown on a map, is it?

Er ... Sigs Post was [not] in from Suvla Bay because we looked down on Suvla Bay.

How far away would Suvla Bay have been - five or six miles?

Oh, it wouldn't be that far.

Not that far?

No, it wasn't that far.

What was it like, Sigs Post? It was headquarters, was it?

Well, it was our battalion.

It was your battalion headquarters?

Yeah - our battalion position.

That's where Pope was based, was it?

I'm not quite sure whether it was at Sigs Post or not, but it was from ... it definitely wasn't very big, [our] portion. But wherever it was, that conversation took place between Pope, and I would say between him and John Monash, who was the brigadier at the time.

And how many signallers were there? Just yourself or a couple of others?

Oh, there were two or three others because we had to ... we didn't ... you couldn't work all the time, you couldn't work twenty-four hours a day. Oh, no, there were several signallers. I am going to tell you about the signals section in a minute - you've got a little journey to make.

[Quibell] and Archer, they were - Quibell was the curator of the Cairo Museum; Archer was the head - Colonel Archer - was the chief of the police in Cairo. That's a private ... And Broadmeadows, well, I told you about that. [Onslo] Road - Bill Currie ...

Bill, now he ... a shell exploded, and his helmet slipped over his face, and the earth caved in.

This is on Gallipoli?

No, this was in France.

Is that at Pozieres?

And the fact that his hat come over his face, it kept sufficient air there for them to rescue him.

This is Bill Currie?

Currie - same as you spell it - CURRIE - instead of 'y' it's 'ie'.

He was in the signals section?

No, no, he was a soldier. Now, I've got Bullecourt - well, the first time the tanks were in action, and there was no barrage - well, of course, that's known.

Now, I told you I went over in the Chilka, and the El Kahira. As I told you, the El Kahira was a passenger boat on the Mediterranean.

After the war was over, El Kahira went out and was never, ever seen again. After the war - later - the Chilka caught fire in the Indian Ocean and sank with 1,500 people. And I went from Alexandria to Marseilles, from Egypt back to France, and when - I forget the name of the boat, all I can remember is, it was a White Star liner - and when it left Marseilles to go out, it was sunk by a German submarine. Well, of course, that wouldn't be in the Mediterranean. So it's an extraordinary thing, that three boats that I was on - of course, the [Pakia], I don't know what's happened to that.

Now, Chilka - Etaples - you saw the picture, 'The Monaco Mutineer'?

I saw a little bit of that, yes.

Well, of course, he wasn't killed; he, at the finish, was shot, getting out of a cab - but he didn't. He actually went overseas somewhere.

Did he?

Yes - they said that on the film. Now, there are Australians - there was a man - an officer - who had been in the line for about three weeks - three days or so - and he - they said he deserted - well, he left the line, and he was shot for deserting. Now, any Australians - there were

Australians in that - he was at Etaples - I was at Etaples when I came from England to France to join the Battalion. Now, at Etaples - it was run by the British, of course, and they were all bastards, I tell you - and there were Australians there in that mutiny. I heard - like in France, when we heard about it - they got ten years sentence. But the British were executed - they were firing squad - they were shot - some of them - and the reason the Australians were not shot - you know why, don't you?

Well, I think Billy Hughes wouldn't allow it.

They were volunteers, they were not conscripts, that's the reason why.

Now, Bullecourt and all the fighting positions - places - in France - there was Bretonneux, and Messines, all those places - I don't know how long it was, but it was fifteen miles wide, shell hole linked to shell hole.

Where is this?

That's in France. Shell hole linked to shell hole - of course, some of them would be a dozen shells - right across, for fifteen miles. Of course, it's hard to believe, but it's a fact.

At one time there there was a barrage put down - there was no barrage at Bullecourt, that's why ...

What did you see at Bullecourt? Where were you stationed at Bullecourt?

I was stationed from the Battalion ...

You were attached to headquarters [in Australia], weren't you?

Headquarters - Sigs Headquarters - and the companies were the ones that went forward. When they established, we joined them, because we had to keep in contact with Brigade, and Division, and all that sort of thing, you see.

So you stayed on an outpost on the sunken road, were you?

Yes, I was on an outpost near a sunken road.

What could you see from where you were? Could you see the German lines?

I saw the tanks come - only one tank got into the ... there were about several tanks - I think three or four tanks - I think there were twelve tanks all told.

Yes, they were spread over the two brigades.

But there were only about two - ten of them ...

END OF TAPE FIVE - SIDE B

START OF TAPE SIX - SIDE A

You were tunnelling on the Peninsula, weren't you? You were assisting with that, and your knee went, didn't it?

The knee - the lower part of the leg, the leg - and it locked - up under the upper part of [there].

Something was wrong with your knee.

That had happened - the first time it locked was when we were down - we went ...

This is Hill 971, isn't it?

Yes. The Gurkhas were with us. As a matter of fact, it's in the book, we had Gurkhas with us, and in that book you'll see that ...

What's in the book I can read at any time; it's what happened to you I'm interested in.

Well, the first time happened, that happened about four or something in the morning, and we went over country.

It was very rough country, wasn't it?

It was rough country - and I felt ...

Were you lost? Did you know where you were at that time?

We knew which way we were going; we knew where we were going; well, someone was directing us; there was an officer in charge that's directing us.

And you got right up on top of one of the ridges, and you could see the Dardanelles?

We got on the top of the .. and we looked down on the Dardanelles - we actually looked down.

What could you see?

All we saw was a stretch of water, like looking across Sydney Harbour, or something like that.

You fell several feet, didn't you?

I fell over fifteen feet, and that's when ...

This is to escape down a steep slope?

Tripped over something and fell down - a slope.

And your friends came down to get you, did they?

They had to, I yelled out to them, my knee is locked. They came down and got me, and they straightened it. And I had to keep going because you couldn't - we had to keep going, you didn't go back.

You couldn't just stay there because ...

And I couldn't stay there.

Could you walk, or not?

I hobbled.

They didn't carry you?

Oh, no, no; once they straightened it I staggered along. Once I'd exercised it over a few days it became ...

Better, yes.

I was able to move around on it because, being a signaller, I didn't have to carry out duties the same as other ...

You fell over before you reached the top of the ridge, did you?

Oh, yes.

And you kept going, and you got right up to the top of the ridge?

Till we got right up to the top.

And you were up on the top of the ridge, and you were sniped, weren't you, or there was a shell that came over, wasn't there?

I was hit by the ...

By the nose-cap?

It will be on your what's-a-name. The nose-cap of a shell struck the outer part of the entrenching tool handle, which was alongside of me, and it [scattered].

And did it smash the handle?

No, it didn't hit the handle, it just touched it.

That was a lucky escape.

Oh, it was.

And that was where the Gurkha threw the kukri, was it?

In the morning, before I fell.

Oh, that was before you fell.

Yeah, in the morning.

Were they the only Turks you saw?

Er ... the only Turks I saw ... I didn't actually see Turks, all we could see was people moving.

Along the ridge?

Not along the ridge, from Sigs Post - no, I'm not quite sure of what place it was, but we looked down and we could see them amongst the trees.

The Turks?

And they fired at us, and we fired at them, and that is when the chap got - had - the woodwork on his - the stock on the rifle - the other man was killed alongside of him.

This is the 971 attack?

No, no, no, this was in between - this was between that and the Lone Pine. It was after the ... it was ... no, no, it was a period in between. I can't just ...

You were in a trench, weren't you, leaning on the parapet?

We were in a trench - we were in trenches.

You were firing over the top of the parapet?

We were firing from the parapet.

What happened? What was that story again?

Well, we were firing - of course, the Turks were - they were firing back at us - and the chap alongside of me had the stock of his rifle blown away, and the chap next to him was shot through the forehead.

He was killed instantly?

He was killed instantly, he just simply dropped. And it was about the same time that I had to go down [and assist them] with digging a trench. It must have been some time in August.

Did you ever go swimming down on the beach?

No.

You didn't go down there?

No.

How often did you go up and down getting water? Did you do that every day?

That had to be done every day, not by me, but by ...

Somebody.

... one associated ... in turns we had to. It was just the same as going on leave; you only went on leave ...

It was very risky going down and getting water because of the snipers?

It was always risky with water, but they were just simply holes in the ground, down to the water level, and a little below, allowing the person dishing out the water to be able to stoop down and scoop it out, with a tin or something of that sort, to fill whatever tins you were carrying.

There was quite a crowd of people down there, were there, around the well?

Oh, well, of course, because if you've read that book you'll see where they reckoned that it was as precious as diamonds. The point was this, that as far as washing, or anything like that was concerned, it was simply one of those things you couldn't do.

I think another thing too that's well worth mentioning - emphasising - is that we were of so little bloody importance that they fed us on Crimea War biscuits - see.

Well, keep going, ask anything you like and I'll tell you to the best of my ability.

What was the routine on Gallipoli? You would stand to early in the morning, I assume.

Oh, well, we didn't - we weren't like ordinary troops, like the troops, we didn't stand to.

This is the sigs?

Signallers simply, when they were off duty they rested, or they might be called upon to carry

dispatches.

How would you carry dispatches? Did you have a dispatch case?

No, no, you'd just simply carried it in your hand.

And there were usually two of you that would go, is that correct?

Then, no; on Gallipoli you'd just really go on your own. Oh, sometimes, they might occasionally have two - if they had two there they could, but if there wasn't, one, yes.

And where were you sleeping? Were you in the dugout?

No. You just slept wherever you could. In France - I don't know whether I told you - but in France, after Bullecourt, I remember, like, that was four o'clock in the morning, and I didn't get to bed until after night - until well into the night.

This is Bullecourt?

At Bullecourt. And on the sunken road they'd just simply dig holes in the side of the sunken road, where they could get in out of the snow or rain. Of course, when they went in and they lost so many men, there was a surplus of blankets and ground sheets, and so I had an extra blanket and ground sheet.

You got into one of these holes?

I got into one of these holes and lay down, fully dressed with a greatcoat on, because it had been snowing. And when I lay down - because of the number of casualties I was able to get extra ground sheet - and when I covered myself with my blankets, I put a ground sheet over them. When I woke up in the morning, from my knees down, where they were out of the hole, were covered in snow.

What was the feeling amongst the Battalion at that time? because there had been so

many casualties, everyone must have been very depressed.

Well, no, not exactly. If you can imagine a xxx feeling - you weren't depressed, but you were a sort of amazement of ...

Stunned?

Stunned - yes, stunned would be the word - would be a better word. You just sort of couldn't - well, you did accept it because you had been through a lot of battles prior to that - a number of engagements prior to that - and you became used to it. But at that time, the reason that Bullecourt was such a tragedy was the indifference and lack of understanding by the then what's-a-names ... oh, the bloody ... machines.

The tanks?

Tanks - because the tank people were not organised for it, and were inexperienced. And another thing too, that they were frightened of, I think, was the fact that if they fired, that they might have dropped shells on the - which they did, as a matter of fact - one the troops or the tanks xxx.

They might have fired on their own men, you mean?

Yes. I know that the wire was about four hundred yards - four or five hundred yards - at one place - and where Horrie Ganson was taken prisoner, it was 1,100 yards.

That's how far it was across to the German lines, yes.

And had they - the idea of firing barrages is to break the wire so that ...

The tanks could go through.

... the tanks and the men could get through.

How long would it take you, generally, to deliver a dispatch?

Oh, varying times, it would all depend upon whether there were shells flying around, and bullets. [Often] you would have to jump into a trench and wait, and then, possibly when you got out, you could only travel a short distance, and get underground quick and lively in case they came on again. You might be fortunate, depending upon the country that you were in. If it was hilly country, you could pick your way through valleys and that sort of thing, but on flat country it was the most difficult; you'd have to stick to trenches.

Another thing we had to do - the signallers - from a brigade - battalions - from each battalion there had to be a signaller from - go to brigade occasionally. But during the time, in the two years that I was there, I think that I might have - I wouldn't have been at Brigade more than twice.

Did you ever see John Monash?

No, but I was just going to tell you something - strange you should mention Monash because I'm going to tell you about two other generals.

We were also runners for officer - senior officers - who were looking at the country they were going to occupy. When they relieved the battalion that was in the line, the brigade officer - the brigadier or the senior officer - would go with you to have a look at the place. And the signals section was also the runners, and on one occasion I had to take a relieving brigadier, and my own brigadier ...

It wasn't xxx and Brand?

I'll tell you their names in a minute - [you don't know this?]

It doesn't matter, you can tell it again if you wish.

I told you about when he said jump in the trench, and the other piece of metal xxx. But did I tell you that the first thing that Brand said after the shell had fallen and all the pieces were gone - it was quiet - the first thing he said was, 'Are you alright, Runner?', and then he said, 'Are you

alright, Charlie?' - both their names were Charlie, as a matter of fact - Charlie Brand, Charlie xxx. I did tell you about that, did I?

Yes.

Oh, well.

That doesn't matter.

Want anything else?

You learnt to swim at Ismailia, didn't you?

Yes. And extraordinary thing - I think I may have told you before - but before I can remember, when I was very young, at the back of the houses opposite to me in [Newland], where I lived, in Hull, prior to going to England ...

Australia, yes.

I don't remember the incident, but there were what they called ditches; they were really drainage channels in the fields - we call them paddocks. And across one of them was a plank, and the youngsters used to walk across these planks. And of course, being with the other children - some other children - I walked across, because I followed them, naturally. But walking across I evidently stumbled and fell into the ditch; and I went down twice, and a little girl evidently jumped into the ditch and pulled me out. I've absolutely no recollection of it.

Later on, in Hull, swimming baths were built - men, womens', and general - and there's a children's bath there where children were taught to swim. And although I went down and tried, I could never swim, I didn't learn to swim - I couldn't swim. And I think it was the fear of what I'd been through before I could - before recollections - and there are no recollections of it.

When I was in Ismailia, I went down to bath more than to swim, and I thought, oh, well, I'll try it out - of course, it's very salty, and being salty, of course, floating was ... and although I pushed

out on the water again, I struck out with my arms and legs in the manner in which I'd been taught when I was young, and suddenly realised that I could swim. And that's how it came about. I'd be about sixteen then - seventeen then, I think.

And they sent you back from Gallipoli because you were so young, didn't they?

Well, I don't - that is only my opinion. I think that the doctor had an idea that they wouldn't be on Gallipoli much longer, and my knee had locked again - and it was pretty painful the second time - it was painful enough for me to be sent to hospital.

And you were sent back to Heliopolis?

No, I was sent back to Cairo to Number 2 Auxiliary Hospital.

How long were you in hospital treatment for that knee?

Well, actually, I could have been out, I think, within a month, but I was there for three months because the nurses learned - discovered - that I'd been the tailor's assistant - tailors apprentice - and could sew. And they had me sewing pyjamas. Well, you saw the [photo].

You were there in that hospital for another two months?

I was there for about three months.

Doing general work?

Another thing too, strange to relate, but whilst I was there I remember, quite well, that when the sisters were very busy, there happened to be an influx of patients and they were busy, that [on time] I did some of the work that the nurses do. As a matter of fact, I can remember passing an enema xxx. So I actually did work in the hospital of a nursing nature, when I wasn't sewing.

And when did you get the donkey and the cart?

Well, I got that in Zeitoun, but ...

You weren't in the hospital at that time, were you?

Oh, no, no, no.

You were three months in the hospital, and then you were discharged?

And I went to headquarters ...

In Cairo?

... in Cairo - and I was a dispatch runner. Because I was a signaller, they put me on dispatch running.

You had a bicycle, didn't you?

And I also had a bicycle, but I also had a bicycle, at one stage, in France. Well, not - the section had ...

Had bicycles, yes.

... had bicycle. The last time there I showed you a chap with his back all cut about. I had to take this fellow to - in France - it healed up, it didn't affect the spine or anything like that, fortunately - and I had to take him to a British ambulance depot, and they said to him - they examined him - and they said - he had some effect from it at the time, and we wanted him sent to a hospital. And they said, 'Oh, you'd better take him back' - and I was on a bike at the time, and I said, 'No, I'm not going to take him back because ...' - it was a couple of kilometres or so, or miles as we called them - and I wouldn't take him back. I said, 'No, he can stay here, and you can send him, as the Battalion desires, to hospital'. What happened to him after, I don't know.

What kind of dispatches were you doing in Cairo? Where would you go? You were attached to ... which headquarters were you attached to?

I was attached to ... I don't know the ... I couldn't tell you ... it was army headquarters in ...

This would be Australian Army Headquarters?

Yes, Australian, of course. And I had to carry ... I did on occasions take dispatches from (and) to Alexandria, and to Ismailia.

That's a fair way to go. Would you go on a bike - by train, of course?

By train - it's too far to go on a bike.

And you'd have a dispatch case, I suppose, would you?

No, they were just sent ... they were put in large envelopes, and I carried them. Oh, no, it's ...

Whereabouts were you staying? Whereabouts were you living?

In Cairo ... I was at ... the only place I really remember is staying in a hut at Zeitoun, because it was only a few miles from Cairo.

Yes, that's where you'd stay?

And I stayed at Zeitoun.

What did you use the donkey and the cart for? Why did you get these ...

Oh, the ... I don't know ... I think that the little cart was in the camp, or something, and I saw an Egyptian with some donkeys, and I ... I had a donkey given to me, I bought the other one for ten piastres, it was. And I used to carry the goods from wherever they were - from the station, or what have you - in the cart to the quartermasters store.

I see. But who were you attached to at that time? Is that when you were working at the

hospital?

No, no, that was the time that I was working at the headquarters, after I had xxx.

Oh, so you weren't only a dispatch rider, you were also doing transporting?

Oh, well, it was ... I only offered to do it for some of the chaps who were there. I wasn't working for the ... In an Army position, if you can understand, it was just simply to help the other chaps round the place. It was just the same as you might say to someone, if you were working in an office, and you were out of the office, and somebody said to you, Will you give us a hand, Dave?

Your Battalion obviously knew where you were in Cairo.

They may have done, I don't know. But we went from ... I went from Marseilles, not to Calais - another town opposite Dover, in France - it's a well-known place - xxx immediately.

But just back in Egypt again; you were in Cairo for quite a long time, weren't you? You'd be there from late 1915 through until June 1916, and the whole time you were in Cairo, after you came back from Gallipoli, you were in Cairo?

I was in Zeitoun.

Zeitoun, yes.

I was in Zeitoun.

You knew quite a number of Egyptian people. You told me before about some Jewish girls.

I knew a Jewish family with three Jewish girls whom I met, and also a chap called [Moadi]. His uncle owned a big store - I've got a photograph of it, I think I may have shown you.

I've seen that one, yes.

[Shapic Moadi].

And where was that store?

In the centre of Cairo.

And it was a general store, was it? What did he sell?

Yes, a store like [Mars or Barns's] - that style of store. Of course, in those days they weren't the same as they ...

No. And how did you get to meet him?

Casually, but I couldn't tell you exactly where or when. I think that he spoke to me one day - because he could speak quite good English - and he was young, he was about my age.

Was he? He was the son of the owner of the store?

He was ... I think they had an interest in the store, but his uncle actually, I think, owned the store.

And he was working for his uncle?

And I think I might have met him round Zeitoun because I remember going to his house and - of course, his - the class of Egyptian he was, in those days, the women wore face veils - and he showed me the photograph - and a couple of his sisters were in Palestine or somewhere like that, in the Near East. You know the place where all the troubles are at the present time. I think they were in Palestine.

END OF TAPE SIX - SIDE A

START OF TAPE SIX - SIDE B

And I saw the photographs of his sisters unveiled.

Did you?

But had they been in Cairo.

They would have had to wear the veils.

I would never have seen them. I would have seen them, but I would never have seen their faces. They were quite good-looking girls too.

He was an Egyptian?

Oh, yes, Shapic Moadi.

What kind of activities did you do together?

Oh, we used to meet and go to different places - that sort of thing.

What kind of places?

Oh, like went to the Cairo Museum. Whilst I was at the Cairo Museum I saw a mummy there - I met Mr [Quibell] - or he could have been Dr Quibell, or Professor, I don't know - his name was Quibell, he was a Scotsman.

How do you spell that?

Q-U-I-B-E-L-L.

Oh, yes, Quibell. He was a Scotsman?

Yes, he was a Scotsman.

He was a professor?

Well, I don't know - he was the curator of the Cairo Museum so I think that he must have had some title, but I just xxx Mr Quibell. And he showed me his discoveries - I'll show you something - and he showed me the mummy of Rameses II.

The mummy of Rameses.

Well, he was the pharaoh who drove the Israelites out of Egypt.

Oh, yes. And how did you get to meet him?

It might have been when Shapic Moadi, on one of our trips, found the place.

And he knew the curator, did he - Shapic? Is that a title, Shapic, or is it a ...

That's his name.

It's his name?

Yeah.

It's a Christian name?

Just the same as you are David, his was Shapic.

You also met some Copts, didn't you - C-O-P-T-S?

Copts - C-O-P-T-S. Copts are ... they are Egyptian Christians. Yes, I went to a service, and instead ... like in the Anglican Church, to which I belong, when you took sacrament you sipped out of a cup; but these people, they gave you a bun - a wheaten bun - for the sacrament.

Nothing to drink at all?

No. I don't remember now; I would have remembered drinking xxx - there was no drinking. I kept that bun till it was as hard as a brick, and I'm sorry I've not got it now.

Why did you go to such a service?

I suppose it was curiosity more than anything else.

And they didn't mind your coming?

They didn't mind me at all. As a matter of fact, they greeted me with open arms.

Whereabouts was that church service - or the church? Was that in Cairo?

No, it was Ezbekiah, I think, just near Zeitoun ... a village.

Not [Materia]?

Oh, no, Materia was where the obelisk was.

And you went in to one of the big mosques too, didn't you?

Oh, that was the Mahomet Ali.

What was it like in there?

I showed you the ...

The photographs, yes.

There were 5,000 lights in there.

These are candles?

Prior to ...

Were these electric lights?

They were electric lights because electricity was known then. I showed you the pictures of the interior.

You went there on your own, did you?

Oh, well, I might have gone with someone else visiting it. But we had to take our boots off to walk in, which was the custom in ... the Egyptians. There's a place called The Citadel there too. That was where that chap I told you, his brother was in xxx, he was up there. He told me about - I think I told you yesterday - six of his ... men he knew, like in the regiment he was with, they were shot - firing squads - for desertion.

And what about the Jewish girls that you knew? How did you come to meet them?

Casually in Zeitoun.

What were they doing?

The family lived round the place somewhere, but I didn't meet the family. They were just ... I thought ... I used to have a photograph of them once, but I don't know where it is now.

And what were their names?

I couldn't tell you.

And they were about your age, were they?

They ... varying ages around my age.

And what did you do when you met them? Did you go out with them?

Oh, no, there was no sexual relationship - I don't mean in the common ordinary sense of intercourse, or anything like that; I mean, it was just simply a friendly ...

What kind of activities would you do as friends?

Oh, just talk, that's all.

They could speak English?

Oh, they could speak English.

You'd make friends with anybody who could speak English, more or less?

I made friends, like Colonel Archer, the ... I met. Captain Bradbury, whom I told you of, he was a captain in the Camel Corps. Up at his house I met his wife, and son, and his sister-in-law, and they used to invite me up there; I used to go up and visit them frequently, and take Nigel for a walk occasionally.

At a party one night, English people in Cairo - I met Colonel Archer, the colonel at the Cairo Police - the English. Of course, I think Egypt was an English [colony] then. And I met Colonel Archer, and he was a very, very nice man - and I met a number of people, but I wouldn't know their names, they were mostly upper middle-class English people. Of course, they were interested in me because I was English born, but I was an Australian.

An extraordinary thing; see, in those days I had very, very little accent. You've seen the East Enders, have you?

Yes - oh, I know about them, yes.

But you've heard the talk?

Yes.

Well, then there's a Liverpool show on recently.

Oh, yes, you are from Liverpool, yes.

And, of course, I don't ... all I know about Liverpool is when I was on leave.

I was going to ask you about that; you went on leave up to Liverpool?

Because I had relatives there.

Whereabouts did you stay?

I stayed with my sister, at a place out of ... Liverpool - between Liverpool City and Aintree, where the Grand National race is run.

That's your sister's name.

Her name was ... xxx.

Well, there was Adah and Christine, wasn't there?

No, Katherine.

Katherine.

Pat - that's the one I was telling you about, she is seventy-six. I can't think of the other one's name now - my memory is starting to go. What the hell is her name - she died here about four or five years ago - she was three weeks of ninety-seven. I can picture her, I can see her in front of me now, and I'm buggered if I can [remember her name].

Whereabouts was she living? - oh, near Aintree, yes. Do you remember the street?

No, I couldn't tell you the name of the street - it was in a place called [Breeze] Hill.

And what kind of activities did you do while you were on leave?

Just went around the place, and looked at places. When we were at a place called [Ploegsteert] in Flanders - [Plugstreet] they called it - the Germans shelled us with gas shells for the seven days that we were there. It was called Ploegsteert, we used to call it Plugstreet because we camped, more or less, on the top of the ground, we couldn't dig holes - our horizon, you could dig a hole and put a canvas over it. About seven days there, then I went on leave. The leave was seven days, and I went over to Dover, and then London, and then up to Liverpool, and I stayed with my sister and her husband, and my niece - she was only xxx. After that seven days of virtually no sleep, we had our helmets on virtually ...

Gas helmets?

Yes - xxx shelter - when I hit the bed at Liverpool, I was in bed for a day and a half sleeping, I was that tired.

But whilst I was there I saw a couple of operas.

Did you?

Yes; I saw [La Boheme].

La Boheme?

I forget the name of the other one; I've not seen it or heard it since. But in London, after the war, I used to go to the Palladium in the Palace ...

This is in Liverpool?

... to see - I saw several plays - musical plays - there. One of them, 'As You Were', I had the music for it. I can remember the chorus of one of the songs there:

> A woman's a mystery of make-up,
> She makes up her nose and her eyes,
> She makes up her lips, she makes up her hips,
> She makes up a series of lies.
>
> She makes up accounts, if she's clever,
> One thing you surely will find,
> The one thing she never [can make up at all]
> [is her mind]

The one thing she can never make up at all is her mind?

Yes. That was one of the choruses. Now, when I was a little ...

And you all had to sing that, did you?

Oh, no, we were in the audience.

You didn't have to sing that?

No. And the leading actress on the stage - the Australian troops, the two front rows, they could go in free - those two rows. And the French actress, she was there one day, and one of the characters came up to her, to make love to her on the stage, and she said to him, 'Are you single? Are you married? Or are you an Australian?' (laughs). Of course, there was a loud applause. I didn't think about that, I could have written lots of things.

The photographs which you have of Adah and Katherine, they were sisters of yours living in Liverpool?

No, they lived at home with us in Hull, but Kit was - Katherine - was staying in Liverpool at the time, and Adah was over on a holiday. Since then Katherine died and she - in Wales - but she was born with deafness.

They'd be pleased to see you again, wouldn't they?

Oh, they would. The other one - Adah - at the outbreak of the war, with manpower going to the war, a lot of women did men's work, and she worked as a conductor on a tram.

This is in Hull?

In Hull.

And what about Katherine - Kit? What did she do during the war?

I'm not sure, I don't know what she was doing.

Was she married?

She ... she didn't ... neither she nor Margaret married.

(Break in interview)

... go to see those operas?

In the opera house. I'll tell you another thing that I saw - the reason it seems a bit important, to me, is that the vessel - it was a ship - featured widely in Britain, later on in the war. My step-grandfather took me down to the Mersey, and he ... Sailing up the Mersey there's a - we were on the wharf - and sailing up the Mersey was a Cunard boat - Cunarder. And later on, when it came over, it came from New York to Britain, and the captain wanted to put into an Irish port, and they said, no, keep going. He kept going and there was a fog - the Lusitania ...

Yes, that's right.

You've heard of the Lusitania? - it was the Lusitania.

You saw her in the Mersey?

I saw her in the Mersey - this is years, like. And they said, no, keep going. He kept going, the fog lifted, and a German submarine, going back to Germany, rose out of the water and put a torpedo in it and sank it. You would know about that.

Yes, I do.

I saw the Lusitania.

And you were telling me about the ... What was it that you went to see in which the actress said, 'Are you single? Or are you married?'? What was that again?

It was in a play called 'As You Were'. I think it might have been at the Palladium.

This is in London?

In London.

What happened again?

The play was a three part xxx - there were two - Sir [Billiam Boost] was the name of one of the lovers.

What was her name?

Sir Billiam Boost.

Sir Billiam - how do you spell that?

Oh, that was the actor's name - the play name - it wasn't his name.

Wasn't the real name, no - Sir Billiam Boost?

Yes, Sir Billiam Boost. And it took you - the trio - he and another chap, and the actress - it went from the 20th century, back over the years. It went right back, and at the finish, the last scene was three monkeys. It went on like that.

Well, in that particular theatre - oh, the other theatres, they were the same - there were so many seats reserved for the Australians.

And they'd sit up the front?

And they were up at the front. And when one of these chaps, making love to her.

What was he doing - holding her?

No, 'What are you doing?' sort of business - oh, and meeting her, and she said to him - that's what she said to him - 'Are you single? Are you married? Or are you Australian?'.

And another thing I was going to tell you, which ... [the other's] name was the same name as my mother.

This is your sister's name?

Sister.

Elsie?

Esther.

Esther - ah, yes.

I was going to tell you something, it's just slipped my mind. But a strange thing, when I went on leave one time - and that xxx was xxx - I showed you the picture of the woman who lived in [Netherton]. We were talking about the war, and she said she was on the east coast of England - I don't know exactly where - xxx out of London - she said to me, 'There's a very heavy bombardment over there' - it carried on, carried on. I said, 'Yes, forty-eight hours'. She said, 'You've heard of it?'; I said, 'I was in it'. When you were there, amongst it, you could pick individual guns, close, but the others would be simply a roar.

Of course, at that time, what happened was this, that they ... things were altered. What they called the 'three barrage system' came in. They'd put down a barrage, and then they'd move forward - when it lifted - and they lifted the second time, the troops would move forward again, and troops would move up to the line they'd left. And when it went the third time, troops behind them went through, so that instead of covering a hundred yards or so, they could cover up to sometimes three-quarters of a mile.

(Break in interview)

That's okay.

Are you right?

Yes. What's the 'Australian Song'?

(Recites)

The sunset glow, my bungalow,
On a South Australian farm,
A dear little boy, and a girlie too,
Were playing with a big fawn kangaroo,
In the evening's calm.

In the trees, a voice called out,
You little ones, it's time for bed,
Four little [time] sleepy eyes,

To the kangaroo then said,

'Goodnight, Mr Kangaroo,
Goodnight, Goodnight to you,
When the evening shadows are creeping,
It's time that little boys and girls were sleeping.'

'Go away, Mr Kangaroo,
We are tired of our play, and you,
We're off to our beds,
To cover up our heads,
Goodnight, Mr Kangaroo.'

And the second verse:

When the golden Moon,
Came a'peeping soon,
Mr Kangaroo, with pride,
Crept close to the door of the bungalow,
And wouldn't go away, oh no, oh no.

Tommy's playmate sighed,
From a window up above,
Two little heads were popped out wide,
'Call again, when the morning comes,
Mr Kangaroo,' they cried.

'Goodnight, Mr Kangaroo ...'

And it goes on to the chorus.

And where did you hear that? That was in England?

I learned that at school in England, and I must have been nine or ten - I might have been eleven - but I learned that before I was twelve, in England. And I've yet to meet anybody, to whom I've spoken, of it, and they don't know a note.

(Break in interview)

John Norris also stated that the men used to call him 'Babe' - 'They used to call me Babe,' he said.

END OF TAPE SIX - SIDE B - END OF INTERVIEW

5/97